

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PÍSTIS, DIÁNOIA AND NOÛS IN THE GNOSEOLOGY OF CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

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Abstract: *An analysis of Clement's gnoseology highlights the existence of a double faith theory, identifiable in Aristotelianism and Stoicism, which will be introduced by the Alexandrian to the Christian philosophy. That theory will infuse the whole medieval philosophy of Scholasticism, especially the Jewish, Islamic and Christian. The Hellenistic instances of faith and the way faith relates to reason are taken over by Clement and given further to the Jewish East, to Saadia Gaon for instance, but also to that Arab Islamic, to Averroes. We find the same theory by Augustine of Hippo and later by Thomas Aquinas in the West. It is about what Clement called prólepsis and pístis épistemonokón. Hence a certain understanding of the relationship between philosophy and theology, but also an outlining of what was called the theory of double truth by Maimonides.*

Keywords: *reason, faith, intellect, gnosis, contemplation, logos.*

The analysis of the relationship between *reason* and *faith*, a favourite subject of medieval thinkers, was established as a classical theme for historians in this branch of history of philosophy and caused major consequences for an even broader topic: the relationship between *philosophy* and *theology*. Only in the 13th century, from Thomas Aquinas, you'll see a clear distinction between *dogmatic theology* and *philosophy*. The latter, alike other sciences, would be the result of the efforts of human reason. Theology instead, besides the amount of truths derived from human reason, would also work with revealed, immutable truths. However, by Thomas Aquinas, theology is different from philosophy not by the object under research, but by *the method of knowledge* it requires and by the *type of truth targeted*. Divine mysteries can not be simply analyzed by means of the methods of reason. The fact of God's existence is accepted by a theologian through faith and unconditional acceptance of revealed truths. The philosopher, however, will have to build up rational arguments, conditioned by a sum of pyramid-logical presuppositions, in order to reach the same conclusions the theologian had reached.

As theology had not been constituted yet in the 2nd century AD as an autonomous discipline of the spirit, Clement of Alexandria did not distinguish between philosophy and theology, but between *philosophy* (generally meant as the amount of philosophical schools and doctrines in historical order) and *true*

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philosophy i.e. Christian philosophy¹ (Bardy, 1949, p. 97-108; Chadwick and Oulton, 1954, p. 15-40 and 93-171; Malingrey, 1961, p. 204 *et passim*; Eric Osborn, 2005, p. 197-205; *idem*, 1993, p. 1-69 and 240-299; Stead, 1994, p. 54-65; Hadot, 1995, p. 71-144; Fiskå Hägg, 2006, p.1-71; Richardson, 2006, p. 225-228; Robertson, 2008, p. 29-45; Itter, 2009, p. 79-108).

Therefore, the major difference between Clement and Thomas, on understanding the relationship between philosophy and theology, is that for the first, “theology” is also a sort of philosophy, but one in which rationality and intuitiveness (more accurately, suprarationality) coexist. For Aquinas, the philosophy will be the exclusive domain of rationality, of discursive thought.

Clement of Alexandria used three terms to name philosopher and philosophy: *philósophos*, *philosophía* and *philosopheîn*. These classic terms have got new meanings. Philosophy is all three: science of divine things² (Clement of Alexandria, 1982, II, 46-47), art to live virtuously and spiritual exercise that starts with cleansing³ (*idem*, 1982, IV,54). A philosopher is the perfect Gnostic, the contemplative who has attained virtue and deification. In a different place⁴ (*idem*, 1982, IV, 55), *philosopheîn* tantamount to being simply a Christian, and sometimes *philosophía* equates simply the Christian doctrine.

Clement has established a *common origin* of Jewish spirituality, barbarian and Greek philosophy and of Christian philosophy. This origin is common because it is *divine*. An important note: he does not limit Christianity to a set of prescribed actions, the rite, but insists on the need for an intellectual aspect of doctrine. As a rational exercise, philosophy is essential for driving the Gnostic to truth and protecting him from error. We see that by Clement, *critical history of philosophy* is nicely intertwined with the effort of *defining the status of philosophy*, of

¹ See G. Bardy, „*Philosophie*” et „*philosophe*” dans le vocabulaire chrétien des premiers siècles in „Revue d’ascétique et de mystique” 25 (1949), Toulouse, p. 97-108; Henry Chadwick and J.E.L. Oulton (eds.), *Alexandrian Christianity. Selected Translation of Clement and Origen*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1954, p. 15-40, 93-171; A. M. Malingrey, „*Philosophia*”. *Étude d’un group de mots dans la littérature grecque des Présocratique au IVe siècle après J.-C.*, Klincksieck, Paris, 1961; H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1956; Eric Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria*, Oxford University Press, Cambridge, 2005, p. 197-205; *idem*, *The Emergence of Christian Theology*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, p. 1-69 and 240-299; C. Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 54-65; P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Live: Spiritual Exercises from Socrate to Foucault*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1995, p. 71-144; Henny Fiskå Hägg, *Clement of Alexandria and the Beginnings of Christian Apophaticism* (Oxford Early Christian Studies, eds. Gillian Clark and Andrew Louth), Oxford University Press, Oxford New York, 2006, p. 1-71; Cyril C. Richardson (ed.), *Early Christian Fathers*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 2006, p. 225-228; David Robertson, *Word and Meaning in Ancient Alexandria. Theories of Language from Philo to Plotinus*, Ashgate Publishing Limited, England, 2008, p. 29-45; Andrew C. Itter, *Esoteric Teaching in the Stromateis of Clement of Alexandria* (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae. Texts and Studies of Early Christian Life and Language), vol. 97, Brill, Leiden Boston, 2009, p. 79-108.

² *Stromateis* II, 46-47. See all citations in editions: Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus*, translated and commented by Nicolae I. Ștefănescu, Ed. Library of Theology, Bucharest, 1939 and Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* in: *Texts*, translated and commented by Dumitru Fecioru, Bucharest, Ed. I.B.M. of B.O.R., 1982.

³ *Stromateis*, VI, 54.

⁴ *ibidem*, IV, 55.

identifying its *purpose*, and also of indicating *methodological instruments* to be used by the Christian philosopher.

Philosophy has at least a twin role: one in relation to cultural past of mankind and one in agreement with what Christian culture should appoint from now on. In the first case, therefore, Greek philosophy was for the Greeks a master, a moral teacher, in exactly the same way the Jewish law fulfilled that same function in the Jewish cultural space. Philosophers were no other than prophets called to convey to the Greeks what Hebrew prophets conveyed to the Jews. The consequence of this statement is more important than obvious. For Clement, he who does not admit that philosophy is a good thing, given to people by the creator of all perfections, disfigures and mutilates the idea of providence. It is painless to recognize here Epictetus's ideas on the subject. Alike Epictetus, Sextus Empiricus and Plutarch, Clement held that philosophy was given to us *katà hépekolouthema*, "trailing", "consequently", "indirectly" by God, not *katà proegoumenon*, i.e. "by itself" "essentially" "directly" or "in principle".

There are, however, places wherein Clement speaks of a philosophy provided *directly* for the Greeks¹ (Clement of Alexandria, 1982, I,28). More often, however, he indicates certain intermediaries responsible for having spread the truth: the Jews, the angels or even a universal wisdom, *phrónesis*, extending and being there for all mankind. *Phrónesis*, the last path offered to the Greeks to know partially the truth, is in fact the immanent reason designed by Stoicism, present in all things and taking various forms depending on how it is conceived: *noésis*, *gnósis*, *épistéme*, *pístis* or *téchné*. The meaning of these terms is essential in the gnoseology developed by Clement of Alexandria. But the theme of intellectual knowledge can not be separated from the problem of the human soul.

There is nothing more difficult than trying to corroborate the Alexandrian's conception of the soul (as far as it is Platonic, Stoic and Gnostic) with his view on the intellectual faculties of man. But in the *Stromata* philosophy there is a term mediating these necessary convergences: *hégémonikón*, a term of Stoic inspiration, situated in the heart and appointing the coordinating faculty of the soul which governs all other mental faculties. Clement changed its location, but what's more regarded it as no internal principle, but as an *advanced faculty acquired from outside*.

In *Stromata* VI, Clement claims that the soul is assisted by *hégémonikón* through which we reason, as it is not bodily, but that rational soul inspired by the *face*. The exterior origin of *hégémonikón* was perhaps first pointed out by Anaxagoras and Pythagoras, but reached us through Philon (who spoke of the *noûs* placed in man from his exterior) and hence, Clement. That uses the word in a biblical context: "The head is the one leading (*hégémonikón*)". Located in the head, not in the heart, that is meant to act correctively on desires. So it has got not only a vital moral function, that of leading the soul by rational commandment, but it is a source of knowledge, too. In *Paedagogus*² (Clement of Alexandria, 1939, II,

¹ *Stromateis*, I, 28.

² *Paedagogus*, II, 28.3.

28.3), Clement called that power *logismós-hégémonikón*, but in other texts he gives that role to the *noûs*.

Clement's conception on *noûs* (intellect) can be best understood when compared with previous doctrines. Regarding the cognitive faculties of man, in ancient gnoseology it was the operational distinction between *reason* and *intellect* that worked. Apparently both of them designated the thinking capacity or the spiritual, where a separation has to be felt between *distinguishing by reason* and *understanding by intellect*. Intellect was located "above" reason, as a superior faculty of human thinking. Both terms (*diánoia* and *noûs*) root in the verb *noein* - to think, to know, originally - to meditate, to intent something. Hence the term *dia-noémai*: I think, reflect on something, or meditate on something.

With Plato, we see clear segregation of *diánoia*, *noûs* și *noésis* (reason, intellect and direct intuition). If *diánoia* designates all operating and analysing processes of thought or the methodological progress in knowledge, *noésis* explains our capacity to contemplate Ideas by insensitive means, i.e. understanding, direct intention, suprarationality. In its turn, *noûs* names "the eye of spirit", the "tool" that enhances contemplation and allows access to contents free of sensitivity. In short, *noûs* was a kind of "perception" (with a special status) of spiritual realities. The contemplation of ideas has been described as a kind of undiscursive thinking, as a kind of "mental view", a "something" "inside thinking" and not a conceptual thinking similar to *operate through thinking with something*. In other words, reason (*diánoia*) produces knowledge of conceptual type, while the act of contemplation, which is done through the *noûs* is undiscursive in itself. For Aristotle, *noûs* is something divine and a life lived according to it is also divine in comparison to human life. First Principle, the pure Act, is pure Intellect and Intelligible, so that a man who lives according to the *noûs* is loved by gods (*theophiléstatos*), as shown in *Nicomachean Ethics X,9*.

Although he firmly distinguished between reason (*logistikón*) and intellect (*noûs*), Clement of Alexandria sometimes equalled the faculty of *noûs* and that of *hégémonikón*¹ (Clement of Alexandria, 1982, VI, 135.1). Nonetheless, he permanently hesitated when giving names to the directive and superior faculty of soul, calling it here *hégémonikón*, there *pneuma*, *noûs*, *logos*, *logistikón* or *logismós*.

We believe that the explanation of his partial abandoning the use of the distinction between reason and intellect, when he inserted in the speech *hégémonikón*, relates to the same operating-reductionist method he applied in the relationship between soul and body. If we talk about man as a *compound* of soul and body, in that case it is understandable that *hégémonikón*, the faculty which governs morality and knowledge, should contain in itself the *rational faculty* too. Or it can be all about a simplification meant to emphasize as accurate as possible not only the part that will save the soul (*pneuma*), but also the role of thought (discursive or intellectual) in salvation. Furthermore, many texts bring to the fore the theory of divine illumination through *Logos*. But *Logos* is universal Reason which floods into human *hégémonikón*, into the *image*. And as in that Reason the

¹ *Stromateis*, VI, 135.1.

human mind finds its eternal and necessary truths, it is understandable why *hégémonikón* is intended by Clement as rational too. Moreover, *hégémonikón* is the faculty by which *logos* expresses its force of attraction upon all parts of the soul, bringing them to unity¹ (Clement of Alexandria, 1982, V, 80.4). It is also a vital centre of being, a principle that not only animates carnal *pneuma*, but also coordinates both knowledge and action.

The Alexandrian used thus five terms to describe reason: *diànoetikón*, *psyké logiké*, *logismós* and *logistikón* and *hégémonikón*. But *hégémonikón* is an equivalent in other places of *noûs* and *pneuma*. This is why most of Clement's interpreters did not notice the distinction he operates between reason and intellect, a distinction he used when he examined strictly philosophically, the sources, processes and types of knowledge. In this case, he always opposes to rational direct knowledge - *diànoetikón*, intellectual or spiritual knowledge, by *noûs*. However, when Clement starts explaining the mechanism of human knowledge *spiritually*, i.e. the relation of human thought to divine thought, he no longer applies that distinction out of a very clear reason. This analysis addresses the man as *eikón*, as image of God, possessor of that *hégémonikón* we mentioned, conceived by Clement as a generic term for all human intellectual activity. In this case, *hégémonikón* names both conceptual discursive knowledge, and intuitive knowledge, being synonymous with both *diànoetikón*, *logismós* and *logistikós* and the *noûs* and *pneuma*.

If that philosophical distinction between reason and intellect is left unnoticed, no analysis of the ratio between faith (*pístis*) and reason can be based on correct assumptions anymore. Clement undertakes for the first time in the area of Christian philosophy an *analysis and critics of philosophical and Gnostic conceptions on faith*, establishing and imposing the desirable meanings they should get in Christian philosophy. We find in his texts indications about *nature* and *principle of faith*, about its *subject* and *role*, about its *relationships with reason*, and also with the free will.

First, faith has a necessary character: as anticipation of thinking (*prólepsis*), it must be assumed for purposes of research or substantiation of all the issues raised by the human mind. Faith, therefore, is necessary in relation to understanding and acquires a double meaning: 1) preconceived notion of an object and 2) adherence of spirit to first principles. Epicurus had already asserted that without anticipation, without pre-conception one can not investigate, prove or reject something. However, Clement says the adhesion of spirit is clearly *original, non-reflective, and spontaneous*. Compared to it, the other faculties of thinking are passive. The very moment when one passes from *faith as adherence* of the spirit to the *faith by demonstration*, that is reflexive, aided by reason, is the moment when faith becomes a moral act, a free consent (*synkatáthesis*). Thus, at the origin of all views and doctrines, Clement puts an original content of spirit, spontaneous at first, and then deliberately none other than faith. In what way is then science different from faith?

¹ *Idem*, V, 80.4.

For Clement, the distinction between them is obvious and he points at it several times: science is essentially demonstrative and builds up starting from data of experience, while characteristic of faith is to declare its object, with no demonstration at all, an object that is immaterial and invisible. However, *èpistème* and *pistós* track each other, an opposition between them being unconceivable. Science presupposes faith, i.e. the raw indemonstrable principles themselves, making up though the entire fabric of demonstration. Faith provides those principles to science. So, in Clement's view, obviously imbued with Aristotelianism, any demonstration takes as its starting point the belief in primary principles. From this point, senses and reason take over and provide, without doubt, the principles of demonstration. Brilliantly, Cognat¹ (Cognat, 1858, p. 171-205) notes that in order to be demonstrative indeed, the findings of science must conform to the principles of which they were deduced. Therefore, faith must be declared superior to science and the decisive criterion of any demonstration, too.

This natural belief is seen by Clement both in the sense of Epicureans anticipation, and of Aristotelian judgement. In *Protrepitkos*, Clement sees faith as the foundation of the moral sense, an innate something that dictates to a human spontaneously and prior to any reasoning, what he should do. Separate from *noûs* and *logos*, from intellect and reason, *faith* is also different by the way it understands its object, and also by its method. *Noûs* proceeds by intuition, *logos* by reasoning and demonstration, while Faith works through feeling (*períphasis*).

All the people include the unique and common idea on the existence of an absolute Being. This idea (*prólepsis*) en-trusts us, therefore persuades us on the existence of that sovereign Being and of that divine providence. To know God by *períphasis* means knowing Him *within this idea (prólepsis)*, not as a conclusion of any judgement or result of any argument, but as a spontaneous movement of the spirit. Therefore, *pístis* is dissimilar by means of its object, God *known by heart*, not through intellect or reason, which stands for a different way of "perception" and of living the truth. This belief is witnessed as an *earliest feeling*, self-obvious, of the human being, a feeling that is not produced by reason² (Clement of Alexandria, 1982, II, 2): "The faith the Greeks insult as a barbarian, useless thing is a voluntar anticipation, a pious consent, the fundament of things we should believe in and the conviction that those things we credit will prove to be up to our expectations".

There is also another kind of faith, which we called *by demonstration*, which is neither common to all, being unnatural, nor necessary in relation to human nature. It involves intellectual acts and will, too. In relation to the intellect, any act of faith involves some knowledge not only of God, which is announced, but also of the *meaning* contained in this announcement. Thus, in relation to intellect, faith is at its highest level in *gnósis*, and in relation to the will, in *hómoiouis*, in the likeness of God, in deification.

¹ J. Cognat, *Clément d'Alexandrie. Sa doctrine et sa polémique*, Paris, E. Dentu, 1858, p. 171-205.

² Stromateis, II, 2: „The faith the Greeks insult as a barbarian, useless thing is a voluntar anticipation, a pious consent, the fundament of things we should believe in and the conviction that those things we credit will prove to be up to our expectations”.

Clement discusses the relationship between faith and reason in *Stromata* I¹ (Clement of Alexandria, 1982, I,24), *Stromata* II² (*ibidem*, II,9-12) and *Stromata* V³ (*idem*, V, 1-2). If faith, as anticipation of thought, is required to adhere to truth, *reason* is no less needed to prove this truth. Thus in *Stromata* philosophy, *faith* is in a certain relation not only to *reason* but also to *intellect*, as faculties of knowledge with distinct functions. Related to *reason*, faith is the basis, *the keystone of any knowledge and of any science*: “Philosophers define science as a material which cannot be shaken by reason”⁴ (Clement of Alexandria, 1982, II,9-4). If rational proof is “seen consent of an unknown thing”, faith is the consent which “unites us with things unseen”⁵ (*ibidem*, II, 9-1). The confrontation of faith and reason will result in what Clement called *faith gained through argued study*.

There is a relating of faith to intellect too, that is when faith requires *generic wisdom*, the “perception” of spiritual realities, which doesn’t make use of discursivity. That would be, if we go back to the connotations of faith, that faith “given by grace”, which “rises us from the joys requiring no proof to the simple and universal principle”⁶ (Clement of Alexandria, 1982, II, 14-1). In this respect, faith gives access to *illuminative, suprarational, unitive* knowledge.

Summarizing what has been said here, seen from the perspective of reason, faith must be understood as *projection*, as “preconception of the mind” (as idea pointed to something obvious), currently a-logical, but later on rationally argumentable; from the point of view of intellect, faith means unitive knowledge of man and God, or *gnosis*. We see, therefore, that as said by Clement, between faith and knowledge there is a nearness that verges on identification.

The apology of knowledge in line with Clement needs, however, a few clarifications. It is evident that the philosopher in question breaks with the Pauline encouragement to abandon secular wisdom. Reason is crucial for access to wisdom, but any requiring of proof of the existence of God seems to him a futile act because, since for the rational human being, who notices the order of the universe, that existence is *obvious by itself*. Precisely our need of knowing God requires, in Clement’s vision, the intervention of the incarnate *Logos*, of an Instructor, to lead us and let us seize the divine mysteries. Had faith been enough, then we would have been in the position of believing in something we do not know: “Faith should not be inactive and alone, but accompanied by research. I do not say: don’t you dare investigate! Because the Lord said: <Search and find out!>”⁷ (Clement of Alexandria, 1982, V, 11-1).

J. Cognat has taken up perhaps the most comprehensive analysis of Clement’s conception on the faculties of knowledge. He notes that natural skills of knowledge are not all knowledge in the vision of the Alexandrian. Reason is the

¹ Stromateis, I, 2-4.

² Stromateis, II, 9-12.

³ Stromateis, V, 1-2.

⁴ Stromateis, II, 9-4.

⁵ Stromateis, II, 9-1.

⁶ Stromateis, II, 14-1.

⁷ Stromateis, V, 11-1.

most important of them, but it has to be expanded by the study of encyclical sciences. Science is not innate, but acquired, just like virtue, propped up by personal freedom of attaining or not attaining culture, and by keenness to deal with it until it becomes a *habitus* of our being. Cognat¹ (Cognat, 1858, p. 141) quotes P.E. Speelman² (1855), who had discovered in the writings of Clement of Alexandria, “one of the most intriguing analyses of the human ego”. Man knows God *katà émphasin*, *katà diáphasin* and *katà períphasin*. J. Cognat himself explains the etymologies of those terms: from *phaiso* (hence *phásis*), combined with *èn-*, *diá-* and *perí-*, there are the resulting derivatives *to appear in* (*émphasin*), *to appear through* (*diáphasin*) and *to appear around* (*períphasin*).

The term *émpphasis* appears in *Stromata* V³ (Clement of Alexandria, 1982, V, 13). Speelman states in the passage in question that Clement shows three ways of knowing: intuitive, deductive and of the common sense. They correspond to the three faculties of the soul: *noûs* (or pure reason), *logos* (or deductive reasoning) and *pístis* (or belief located in the heart but also in intelligence, and can be considered rather a moral faculty than an intellectual one). *Noûs*, according to Speelman, is part of the natural light, of the eyes of the spirit or contemplative skills, representing the image of God in man. The way intellect achieves its object is no discursive operation, no judgement or reasoning resulting from an act of comparison, but according to Speelman its perception is magical i.e. intuitive, contemplative. In short, it is “the sight of the eye perceiving something in a mirror or water reflection”⁴ (Clement of Alexandria, 1982, I, 19). If this object, “perceived” through *noûs* is the Absolute Being, God gave us his face in ourselves, reflecting himself thus in our intelligence. The first idea on God becomes for the human spirit the measure of the truth of all beings, the light in which all the other appear us as intelligible. In other words, the idea of God as absolute being, as a being in itself, is innate and present in us. Lastly, it is neither the result of sensitive experience, nor a product of intellectual activity. The soul, consequently, notices it directly in the mirror it carries inside himself. God does not manifest himself only in the human soul through his *eikón*, which he printed in the deeper background of his nature; He turns up in sensitive creation as well. Here begins the role of the second ability of the soul: the *logos* or *deductive reasoning*.

In *Stromata* VIII, Clement defines *logos* as a “natural faculty of the soul which either lasts and binds or fights and deletes”⁵ (Clement of Alexandria, 1982, VIII, 3). It presents us with the logical laws and demonstration. *Logos* is the root of *noûs*, extracting its full power, but differs through its immediate subject, by its way of “perception” and effects. The immediate object of discursive, deductive reason is not the pure intelligible, the Absolute Being, but the sensitive and material universe in relation to its Creator. So, the reason does not know God

¹ J. Cognat, Clément d’Alexandrie. Sa doctrine et sa polémique, E. Dentu, Paris, 1858, p. 141.

² P.E. Speelman analyses Clementine gnosis in an article in «Revue Catholique» nr. 4-5-6, 1855.

³ *Stromateis*, V, 13.

⁴ *Stromateis*, I, 19.

⁵ *Stromateis*, VIII, 3.

directly, but *diaphasically* i.e. it only pictures and scrutinizes the relations existing between creation and its Creator, a relation full of harmony and unity.

The exercise of deductive reasoning requires the presence inside the mind of some notions about the existences provided by sensitive perception. The distinctive character of reason is to notice the *relations between notions*. Products of reason vary from those of *noûs* since they are complex synthetic ideas, not simple and undivided ones. Alike *noûs*, the rational faculty is natural and common to all people. Cognat's¹ (Cognat, 1858, p. 140) conclusion is that the Alexandrian admits a double source of knowledge: on the one hand, *supernatural revelation*, on the other *deductive reasoning*, that is, in its turn, illuminated naturally by the light of divine *Logos*. This is, in fact, the relationship between faith and reason.

But reason can neither know God by its natural constitutive powers, nor conceive Him, nor understand Him, nor fully prove His existence. The Alexandrian seems to recognize the acquisition of some obscure knowledge of God through reason, but of a clear one, too, through divine *Logos*, i.e. in unity with Him. The idea that all people possess the notion of the true God does not clash with the assertion by Clement of the idea that this notion can be for some more or less distinct, more or less pure and more or less sophisticated.

The theme of the limits of reason, of competence of intellect, of the faith ordinarily planted in the human, is supported by Clement with the idea of *apophatism*, because it is hard to find, in his view, an *appropriate definition* for the infinite Being who is God. On the other hand, this observation becomes one with a general principle of teognosis: *scientific proof is unacceptable in terms of proving God's existence, because it would look at Him in relation to a cause outside itself*. For this reason, Clement can not conceive his appeal to the deductive demonstration itself in the matter of God's existence. Supernatural knowledge is needed to assert, not to prove God's existence.

In conclusion, in Clement's view, there is a kind of *knowledge common to all, natural*, fruit of *eikón* planted in us, nevertheless not equally developed in all people. But there is also a *superior knowledge*, philosophical, result of rational exercise and of education or instruction, having dialectics as foundation. By philosophical knowledge, the mind rises to a much clearer and more distinct notion of nature. Another type of knowledge, the *supernatural* or *mystical*, different from both common and philosophical knowledge, is *undiscursive, intuitive*, having another object and another purpose than the previous forms of knowledge. In turn, supernatural knowledge, accomplished by *noûs*, is the knowledge where man actually joins his Principle. The human *noûs* and God enter an intimate communion, according to man's spiritual quality. Thus, Clement called *épigñósis* the intellectual knowledge of God by the Hebrews, a primitive knowledge to be understood as a first step towards *gnósis*, to the perfect knowledge of the Christians. In its turn, *gnósis* becomes *ecstasis* when the beatific vision or the "face to face sight" with God is accomplished.

Thus, along with Clement we identify four types of knowledge: a) *rational, natural knowledge* b) *épigñósis* or *knowledge through positive revelation*, found

¹ J. Cognat, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

at the Hebrews, and *knowledge through indirect unspecial revelation*, at the Greeks, c) *gnósis*, which exceeds the previous ones and requires *contemplation*¹ (On intellectualist spirituality see Aalst, 1964, p. 151-168; Crouzel, 1962, p. 373; Crouzel, 1989; Clark, 1992; Stead, 1994 and Wolfson, 1956) specific to the Christians and d) *ecstasis*, a state-knowledge of the perfect, seemingly a kind of *absolute knowledge*, at the same time negative, *apophatic* in relation to the others. Eventually it is still unclear whether human beings can acquire *ecstasis* during their earthly life.

The idea of Clement of Alexandria about *gnósis*, the perfect knowledge, is the last level where we need to examine the relation between faith and reason. It is worth repeating that *gnosis* means to Clement both rationally established science and the spiritual understanding subsequent to contemplation (*theoría*).

Most ancient philosophers preferred the use of the terms *gignósko* or *gnóme*, less of *gnósis*, to describe research, judicial inquiry, knowledge, intelligence, judgement, decision or intention. The Greeks used the term *gnósis* to indicate a *decision taken knowingly*, or to introduce into a discourse the idea of faith backed up by knowledge. The latter option is taken up by Christian philosophers and, of course, by Clement. This, however, uses this term, as we will see, in a rich variety of implications.

For Clement, *gnósis* means perfect knowledge, knowledge of being as being (hence of God), but *knowledge adapted to contingent* as well. It is about a knowledge that has, on the one hand, a single object, God, but once acquired, conveying the likeness of man and *Logos*, allows access to knowing the meaning of creation. Thus, *gnósis* is not just knowledge of God but also knowledge adjusted to the real world, to existing or only possible beings, seizing their formal, divine reason.

Therefore knowing God means two things: a transfiguring and saving knowledge, but also knowledge with effects in the understanding of the real, since it can add to our mind supplementary meanings that were lacking before. Perfect knowledge, if reached by the contemplative, should not be restricted to the plan of invisible realities, as it prompts a higher, transfigured understanding, of visible realities. As by Aristotle metaphysics had its object in the study of being as being, Clement uses an exclusively philosophical language to describe teognosis, the supreme knowledge of the God-Principle, as well as the similarity with the *Logos* via which salvation occurs. Perhaps he preferred to use the term *gnósis* owing to two main reasons: α) being rarely used, it gave name more explicitly to the *science of Being as being* in the “new” philosophy and β) it resorted thus to a specific terminology, to terms both of the New Testament (Pauline) and Gnostic.

¹ On intellectualist spirituality see P. van der Aalst, *Contemplation et Hellénisme* in: „Proche-Orient Chrétien” 14 (1964), p. 151-168; H. Crouzel, *Origène et la „connaissance mystique”*, Bruges, 1962, p. 373; H. Crouzel, *Origen*, Harper & Row, San Francisco, 1989; E. A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, Princeton Univ. Press, Princeton, 1992; C. Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity*, Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge, 1994 and W. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, Cambridge, Harvard Univ. Press, 1956.

Conclusions. Clement will provide a certain scheme of relating faith to reason, not only for the benefit of Christian philosophers, but also for the Jewish or Arab ones, as well as for Western and Eastern mystics. We can talk about a *theory of double faith*, identifiable in Aristotelianism and Stoicism, initiated by Clement of Alexandria in Christian philosophy. His theory will permeate the whole medieval philosophy, especially Jewish, Islamic and Christian scholastics. Hellenistic instances of faith and the approach of the relationship between faith and reason were taken over by Clement and carried on to Jewish East, to Saadia Gaon¹ (Agus, 1998, p.156;; Gilson, 1995, p. 340-341) for instance, and to the Arab Islamic, to Averroes² (Corbin, 2005, p. 280-288; Jolivet, 1997, p. 129-134; Gilson, 1995, p. 333). We find the same theory by Augustine of Hippo and later by Thomas Aquinas in the West. It is about what Clement called *prólepsis* and *pístis èpistemonokón*. These are phrases used by him to emphasize the two types of faith³ (Wolfson, 1943).

The first type of faith, *prólepsis*, is primitive universal faith, but superior to the other one, designating either the preconceived notion of an object (in Stoic suggestion), or the spontaneous adherence of spirit to the first principles (in Aristotelian key). Since this type of faith is, in fact, a brief awareness of the truths indispensable to science, it is, as Clement puts it, “reason given to man by grace”. It is about a universal fondness of faith, as one of the first movements of the human spirit, over and above the condition of the entire intellectual education. When he called *prolepsis* faith, he merely asserted that some truths are believed, accepted as such, before any demonstration and understanding, so that faith necessarily precedes the exercise of reason. Elsewhere, by contrast, he acknowledged the logically previous existence of reason against faith, as the simple judgement on faith claims the existence of reason “before” it. Clement admits, therefore, the existence of a primitive faith as the starting point for the faith through demonstration.

¹ J. B. Agus, in *Evolution of Hebrew Thought. From Biblical Times until the Early Modern Era*, Hasefer, Bucharest, 1998, p. 156, quotes a passage from the introduction to the treaty *Vedeoth Emunoth* by Saadia: “For, after having finished their studies, the disciples did not suffer from either confusion or challenge... Lord has indicated that complete clarity will emerge only when searching through judgments, every part of the revelation passed to His prophets will be known, and He ensures us that His opponents will find in Torah no counterargument against us; those who contest the way we see things have no absolute certainty on their side”. It is the same idea of the content of faith that can be rationally demonstrated, leading to what Saadia called „absolute certainty”. The believer who doesn't practice the steady, guided exercise of reason misses that certainty. Also to read: E. Gilson, *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1995, p. 340-341.

² Henri Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, Herald, Bucharest, 2005, p. 280-288; Jean Jolivet, *Averroès* in: *Dictionnaire de l'Islam. Religion et civilization*, Encyclopaedia Universalis et Albin Michel, Paris, 1997, p. 129-134. E. Gilson, *idem.*, p. 333, notes on the relationship between faith and reason by Averroes: „He (Averroes) said that the conclusion of reason is necessary, not that it is true; nor does he declare the doctrine of faith to be true, but embraces it fervently. No doubt that he places philosophical knowledge on top of his knowledge hierarchy, but so does St. Thomas: science is a better knowledge than faith; could we doubt that for Averroes faith - although less obvious - is as real as reason? Although Averroes says that by the Prophet, faith and reason, religion and philosophy coincide”.

³ H. A. Wolfson, *The Double Faith Theory in Clement, Saadia, Averroes and St. Tomas and its origin in Aristotle and the Stoics* in: „The Jewish Quarterly Review”, (Saadia Studies), nr. 33, 1943.

This second type of faith, *pístis èpistemonokón*, is the reflective faith, aided by reason. Such belief is not shared by all, being neither natural, nor necessary in relation to human nature. It requires intellectual acts on top of will, representing, in fact, the strong and safe arguing of the contents of faith. In other words, that is the faith rationally confirmed. This proves that the Alexandrian not only discussed the question of the nature of faith, but also the relationship between faith and human capacity to produce science along with the *problem of rationality of faith itself*. Showing the quality of faith of being a species of knowledge, operating as a gnoseological principle, Clement pioneered the way to Aquinas's viewpoint on faith, as it appears in *Summa Theologica*.

And so a certain understanding of the relationship between *philosophy* and *theology*, but also the outlining of what was called the *theory of double truth*, erroneously attributed by Boethius of Dacia. That seems to have, however, another paternity: the Jew Maimonides. To be sure, this Maimonides, influenced by the Arabic contraposition of *kalam* and *falsafah*, indicated a relationship of neutrality between philosophy and theology, subjects that would lead to the assertion of only outwardly conflicting truths.

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