The discourse about reality in the double perspective of science and spirituality

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Abstract

The present study proposes an evaluation of reality discourses when it comes to the ultimate instance, the ultimate reality. The formation of a reality language as such appeared in certain contexts, and I consider that we can identify two situations when such a language imposed its necessity: the explanatory needs in the quantum physics and the hesychast palamite doctrine. It is about the discursive necessities that exclude the alternative terminologies, especially those of a metaphysical kind which contain concepts such as being, world, nature etc. In these cases the present desideratum is how to get to know the reality as it is and not as we want to describe it. The present research proposes to evaluate the extent to which we can talk about a discourse approach in the two invoked situations (which belong to different epochs and contexts) and the reasons why this is happening.

Keywords: ultimate reality, science, spirituality, language

I. The ultimate instance language

The history of thinking in the European space considers that asking very radical questions, those that aim at *the ultimate instance,* is a fundamental preoccupation. Whether it was about what Aristotle called *prime philosophy*, or about the similar preoccupations that indicated the thinking of those who asked this kind of questions again, the great challenge and in the same time the fine aspect was the interrogation *language.* Each major epoch of thinking has brought along a certain kind of exigencies, has established the rules according to which we can make the *ultimate instance* interrogation. If we follow the discursive manner which was imposed in each of the great epochs of the philosophical reflections, it is obvious that the rigueur and precision demand was important in the ultimate kind matters. Nevertheless there was a different norm under which the precision was determined and the criteria were not the same, fact which

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prevented from making a unitary research over the critical discursive decisions during several epochs. Nevertheless certain terms were imposed in the rigueur language of an epoch or of another. In these decisions there can probably be identified the reason why there could be delimited a certain interval of the philosophical interrogation or of the way of making science (besides modernity, it is obvious to impose another type of rigueur, which slips from the reflection towards the experiment and the verifiability). It can be proved that the critical reporting to everything that happened in a previous interval keeps, in a good extent, in a certain epoch, to the modification of the rigueur description mode.

This philosophical preoccupation for *the ultimate instance* had to take the shape of the question about the God, about the way in which something can be said about him, about his attributes, about his relationship with the human beings: thus philosophy produces a theological language and inevitably while delimiting this language, a discourse canon, a rigueur dogma is imposed. We cannot talk about the God anyway we want, we must carefully select the words with which we can name Him, His attributes and His deeds – it can be clearly seen even since the Eleatics times. We could say that there hadn't been a greater stake than this in the interval of the Greek antiquity. Besides Christianity, to this rigueur dogma of the theological discourse which came from the rational effort and from the philosopher's contemplation was imposed another one which came from another justification. Christianity has its fundament on another difference, which had not been characterised by the horizon of the classical epoch of the Greek philosophy: that one between *created* and *not created* unlike what was valid for the Greek – Roman antiquity, that one between *generated* and *not generated*. Therefore the authors in the patristic interval bring another meaning of the rigueur which is not centred on the clarity and precision offered by *the concept*, on the conceptualisation act understood as bringing the words from the common language into the property of indicating only something, *a certain something*. The precipice between the creature and the Creator makes it impossible to support the claim that the human reason can express something conceptually about not created. The usage of the words by the patristic authors could no longer be conceptual, but a symbolical one, which sent to an ineffable reality. The rigueur which was required from the terms kept to the extent to which a certain aiming could be signalised correctly. In other words a *view* of the Ultimate Reality, which is made not by its own powers and by its own initiative, but it is the result of a *discovery*. Nevertheless,

nobody stopped using these terms suggested by the Greek philosophers when they talked about the God; these terms were supposed to aim at *the ultimate instance* (for the modern interpreters this situation was the source of several confusions, as it is the case of the interpretation made for the writings of Dionysos Aeropagitos). The value of the concepts polished by the Greek philosophical meditation, when *the ultimate instance* was understood as the discourse about the God, consists in cutting them away from the common language, this genius act made by the Greek for the first time in history by opening the possibility of a continually resumed *explanation* of what is described as the Divinity.

Therefore, the history after the classical epoch of the Greek antiquity presents us evolutions and paradigm ruptures in the continually resumed search of the rigorous formulation over *what is in the ultimate instance*. This search took place essentially in three horizons: in the horizon of the philosophical meditation, in the articulations and dogmatic explanations proper to the theology and in science. The decisions made in the language, the renunciation to a terminology and adopting another one, or changing the meanings under which the concepts are used, as a result of a new rigueur understanding, they are by all means signs of a whole cultural model; they characterise decisively a historical interval or another one. According to the adoption of a precision and exactitude discursive canon was arranged the good ongoing of a society as well as the people's behaviours to the daily ones.

We are now in an interval of paradigm rupture, not only regarding the explanation, but also regarding the norms by which the rigueur is established. More than that, even the meaning of the rigueur concept is brought to the attention because another concept decisive for the articulation of the modernity discourses (not only of the scientific one, but also of the philosophical discourse and even to a certain extent of the theological one), the concept of *objectivity,* was disputed.

Moreover the second half of the century recorded an extraordinary challenge for the discursive canon which started to function in the same time with the appearance of modernity. A greater challenge where science played a decisive role, but philosophy – precisely phenomenology - as well as neopatristics (and the different kinds of religious existentialism) brought along an important contribution. There was a dispute of the world description as it was presented by the modernity discourses from the perspective of

several insufficiencies. The science imposed as a decisive term the Reality one; in a similar way the neopatristic message of Dumitru Stăniloae uses the term and even the phenomenology implies it, even if it makes it rather indirectly. The traditional language of ontology was abandoned, and even the ontology notion with its signification area became problematic.

In order to offer an explanation to this very important change in understanding and describing *what it is in the ultimate instance,* we shall start with a brief evaluation of the explanatory paradigms which dominated the modernity (having in view the difference which they brought towards what the antiquity had established as an explanatory model).

II. Multitudinousness and the happy view

Aristotle was especially interested in the formal rules according to which the concepts could be used, the consistency of using them; thus it was possible that a language proper to science could be articulated. On the other hand Aristotle explained the scientific concepts (and not only) starting from the empirical data obtained by senses. He noticed that all the moving bodies which were not activated by any force would eventually stop; therefore he raised this observation to the level of the knowledge fundamental principle. As well, he started from the observation that the living beings had all kinds of various shapes with different qualities, and therefore he stated the idea of various fundamental shapes as a reference point of his philosophy. The Aristotelian science setting up implies the presupposition of the existence of a great shape abundance and variety. The Aristotelian concepts prove a special attention for the qualitative descriptions, but the quantitative considerations are much less present. If we have to take this aspect as a sign of the model that articulated the Aristotelian science, we can notice that this model remains the reference point of this kind of preoccupations until the modern era, precisely until the 17th century.

The change of paradigm comes in Galilee's time. Beginning with Galilee, the dominant paradigm was that of the *concept hierarchy*. From this perspective there are fundamental and non fundamental concepts; the latter ones have to be explained in the terms of the former ones, so that eventually the description of the physical world can be entirely described in the terms of a few basic notions connected together by *quantitative laws*. And as we know, in the classical physics just like in all the other sciences, this conception eventually prevailed.

With all the differences between the Aristotelian perspective and the Cartesian-Galilean one, they have in common the vision according to which the basic concepts (which are not derived) are either the obvious ones or at least, idealisations of the obvious ones: there are the familiar notions – "clear and distinct ideas", as Descartes stated – whose unquestionable validity is fully guaranteed by the common sense (e.g. by God). It has often been mentioned that Galilee, Descartes and Newton brought mathematics into physics. But it has been omitted that they used mathematics first of all in order to give *a quantitative content* to the objects designated by familiar concepts (with the validity guaranteed by the common sense)[2]. On the other hand, the involvement of mathematics into physics shall modify the understanding of the manner to describe the world: to know means to eliminate the sensible, the concrete in favour of the description only of the characteristics considered essential of an object, only those characteristics which are describable from a mathematical point of view[3]. From the strict point of view of the possibilities offered by this paradigm for the scientific research, it is an important step forward, but also a step backward. The step forward was providing an explanation of the nature idea as well as the technological exploitation of its properties, properties assessed by means of mathematical instruments. But there is also a straying from the understanding of the *alive*, from the notification of what is beyond the essential characteristics and the properties of the objects. Even nowadays, in many fields of research, it is possible to describe the data and the processes only according to the familiar concepts, being the most productive way to reach the results. An example is the case of the molecular biology where the molecules can be described as having rigid shapes and a mechanical behaviour. This approach proved its viability especially by its capacity of making truthful predictions. But there is also a great risk: considering that this paradigm can offer an absolute explanation, that there is nothing left but its assessing possibility (some scientists, not a few, believe that, even now).

The vision about world created by the classical science can be called *multitudinous*: the matter which constitutes the world is actually a myriad of simple elements, atoms or particles which are all

[2]Bernard d`Espagnat, *On Physics and Philosophy* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), 14.

[3]Michel Henry, *I Am the Truth. Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*. Trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 153.

in a relationship by means of fields. The classical perspective also states that the interaction among elements is made by means of forces which decrease when the distance increases[4]. This vision received a theoretical support from philosophy, precisely *the analysis principle* formulated by René Descartes. He states that the overcoming of the knowledge difficulties is made by dividing the difficulties in as many parts as possible and necessary in order to solve them. This work principle constituted the methodological fundament of the modern scientific research. When we have to deal with a complex physical system, we have to divide it by thinking into simple parts, by studying each of them, by taking into consideration the forces which unite them and finally by making a mental synthesis of them. The presupposition involved in this kind of investigation is that the complete knowledge of the parts realizes the whole, that fundamentally the whole is nothing else but a composition of the parts, a presupposition that describes best the multitudinous perspective. According to the multitudinous method, the number of properties considered intrinsic is limited, they are the so-called primary qualities, and all the other properties which compose the sensitive world are seen as originated in new.

The only acceptable research method from a rational point of view for the Antiquity and the Middle Ages consisted in going from universal to particular. The medieval people started by constituting an ontological conception and then they inferred from it by means of purely logical instruments all the aspects that kept to the nature concrete. If this vision can be described as centred on explaining the intrinsic properties of things, then Galilee brings along an objectivity centred on the law and less on the phenomenon. The meaning of the objectivity in the new paradigm was the identification of the order nature of law, as the fundamental structure of reality.

Besides that, Galilee starts his research in a totally different way, unlike the medieval people, considering that an authentic knowledge of „what really is" comes from the observation, but provided that some aspects of the reality are ignored, considered secondary and somehow illusory. The role of mathematics is not to establish connections between simple notions which are simple products of thinking nor syntheses of our thinking, but which we obtain from our experience and which refer to reality. This vision is constituted in *ontology*, the formulation as such belonging to Descartes. The French philosopher analyses and offers a justification to this type of realism:

[4] Bernard d`Espagnat, *op.cit.*, 17.

based on stating the Cogito, he states the ontological argument which proves the existence of an infinite Being incapable of cheating us. Consequently it is stated that anything is true to the extent in which we clearly know that it is true, reaching the statement that the notions of shape, size and movement are true because they are clear. Nevertheless the validity of this thesis is limited because it is stated that in the field of the material things only in connection with something like that can be stated. Unlike Descartes, Galilee will state and involve the movement relativity principle, which shall bear the name of Galilean relativity: this principle shall play an extremely important role in the directioning of the scientific experimentality into the physics of classical paradigm[5].

The hard core of the Galilean physics is stating a certain meaning of the objectivity: the reality described by the classical physics is independent, that is: the measurements do not interfere with the phenomena. This thesis became *the central thesis* of any kind of modern science.

It can be stated that what constitutes *the ultimate instance* for the science of modern paradigm is stating the existence of an independent reality and objectives as such. This kind of reporting is constituted in the fundamental presupposition of the modern western rationality model. But there was another presupposition with a comparable influence in the western cultural model, its source being Augustine's writings. Starting from other grounds, those of the revelation, he pronounces the interrogation of *the ultimate instance,* too as a question about the ultimate experience of the Christian life. What can be reached as the maximum of the Christian experience, what is the maximum to get in knowing God? These are questions that actually pose the problem of truthfulness, too.

Augustine considers that *esse* is not an act, but a disposition, and besides it has a static character. Unchangeability is a concept of Plato's inspiration destined to indicate the simplicity and the self identity with God[6]. God doesn't *have* the existence, but He *is* the existence, He is the self existence, *ipsum esse*. Augustine talks about an intellectual view as a first look of *the happy view* which the blessed ones will enjoy in heaven. There is an admitted possibility that *a direct view* of God is possible in this life. Simplified, the argumentative route looks like this: the fact that God is the divine essence in the ultimate instance and

[5] *Ibidem*, 34.
[6] Augustin, *De Civitate Dei*, VIII, 6.

that He can be seen directly can be achieved only through an *intellectual view*[7]. This kind of view, *the ultimate instance view,* is only and exclusively a function of the intellect.

The radical possibility of the intellect to achieve the happy view will constitute an important element in the doctrine of Thomas d`Aquino, for whom God is the supreme intelligible object. Nevertheless he maintains the nuance difference that a created intellect, not even when it is lightened by the divine light, cannot understand God as He understands Himself; the divine being remains seen, but not understood. Anyway each of the blessed ones can have that happy view so that their entire natural capacity (possibility) to see is fulfilled[8]. This view is not a succession and it implies the understanding of the created ones (the fulfilling of the natural intellect capacity implies acquiring the understanding of the created ones), since the creatures which are seen in the divine being are all seen as a whole. Being a witness to such a view means being a witness to eternity, and the one who enjoys it takes part to eternal life[9].

Unlike the East, where God is not understood as belonging to the category of the being, but above the being, the West will take over Thomas's understanding according to which God is the supreme intelligible object. This description of the intellect capacities and especially its power to inform the divine being became subsequently central premises of what is called metaphysics in philosophy.

In the western modernity co-exist two understandings of what could be the ultimate instance, and they could be called *multitudinousness* and *happy view.* In the first case it is about a paradigm overturn (with great consequences which come from physics, but includes all the science), in the second case it is an ultimate goal shared in one way or another by both the theology of Thomas' tradition (which was imposed as the official doctrine of Catholicism) and by the metaphysical speculation (which dominates a good interval in the history of the western philosophy). Various analyses of the relations between the two types of presuppositions can be made, but what matters is that they were the basis for the articulation of the Western cultural model until the 19th century. The two aims at the ultimate instance share a gnoseological optimism which emphasizes on the capacities of the intellect to reach the truth

[7] David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West – Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004), 224.

[8] Thomas d`Aquino, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, III, 59.4.

[9] David Bradshaw, *op.cit.*, 250.

unequivocally. This optimism started to be doubted about at the middle of the 20th century. The experimental research in physics had to give up the classical explanatory model, with its rationalist - positivist optimism, in order to offer another consistent explanation to the reality in front of which it was placed: *the quantum reality*.

III. Experience and Reality: the message of physics

According to Bernard d`Espagnat, physics is an empirical science and we understand it as being a synthesis of the communicable experience. This makes us inclined to the physical realism: to interpret this synthesis as being a reality description. But the actual results in physics make this statement impossible to be supported. Nowadays some physicians state that their science is actually an experience description and leave behind the question if the reality is described, while other physicians adopt a realistic position insisting on the realism evidence, with all the difficulties implied by such a position[10].

Between the two positions there appear a few important differences. First of all, a statement can be objective if certain conditions much more stringent in the realistic version are fulfilled: the objectivity of the statements is questioned. Then in the realistic perspective the explanation refers to the existence of objects and their properties, in the other version (physics is nothing else but a sum of the human experience) there is no motivation for a construction on these lines. Thirdly the discoverers of the quantum mechanics state that their theory is a complete description of reality. They also state the principle of completeness: the wave function (the state vector) of a quantum object incorporates all the values which according to the physical realism correspond to the structure and dynamic property of the object (there are no kinds of additional variables or as they are called "hidden"). Those who claim that physics is nothing else but a synthetic description of our knowledge can not claim such a thing. Claiming that an entity assumed "inaccessible" does not exist physically is a statement open to critics similar to claiming that the entity exists.

Thus there appears a serious breech in the paradigm of the physical realism, even in its more refined version, which is based on the data of the quantum mechanics. Nowadays in physics there arises the question of "the real nature", of what is called "Something" in a

[10] Bernard d`Espagnat, *op.cit.*, 48.

rather negative language. The role assigned to that *Something* suggests the presence of an integrity, of a whole, a thesis totally unknown to the classical physics. The theory of the quantum field refutes the multitudinous perspective of the classical physics: the particles no longer play the role of constitutive material of the universe; the only reality which can be conceived that it would constitute the basic reality is the *Something*[11]. There are concepts such as the non separability and the non localisation in indicating this reality model. The theory of non separability states that strictly speaking there is no distinct object. Our senses do not reveal the real constituency of the universe. There appear dramatic differences from the classical vision over the world: there is no longer an appeal to familiar concepts, there must be a passage from multitudinousness to a holistic vision, and besides the necessity to renounce to the objectivist language.

This dramatic change of vision has multiple consequences, one of the most radical ones being precisely this need to use another language. It is not just about an adaptation of the concepts with which the physicians work in order to model their theories: a change in the overall world vision is involved, which introduces the classical ontology. In order to indicate that *Something*, the imposed term was the *Reality* one, although there are discussions regarding the concept semantics.

The *per-se* reality notion is considered to be that totality *independent* from our possible ways of knowledge, correlated with the hypothesis that we have access to what we call reality (that we can state something true about it). Nowadays the reality concept includes in its semantic area *the representation* which we build about what is independent from us (it starts from phenomena, that is from human experience and it can be built without a direct reference to the *per-se* reality). It is clear that the present semantics of the reality concept in physics actually contains two major versions corresponding to the realistic description and to the representational one.

Nevertheless other acceptations of the reality notion functioned. A meaning that played an important role for a long period of time was described as *the objectivist realism*, which was present in the Galilean ontology. This realism version is based on the importance given to groups of human impressions whose relative stability leads to considering them as real. These impressions were raised to the dignity of reality elements representations. This realism version is

[11] *Ibidem*, 17.

valid within the relativity theory although the event notion is primordial, and not the object one. The objective state of any physical system is specified in each moment by a discreet or continuous set of known and unknown real numbers, cognoscible and non cognoscible; time and space are real, the localisation notion works).

Other versions for the usage of the reality notion include *the mathematical realism* (the reality notion independent from us has consistency, is cognoscible, but can be described only by mathematical means), *the ontological realism* (by means of science we can acquire an exact and exhaustive knowledge of the ultimate reality; it is a version with extreme claims), *the physical realism* (science is qualified for the qualitative description of the reality "as it is")[12]. The most radical meaning of the reality notion is called *real*, as it is about the reality independent from mind (some people also include here the empirical reality, but it is a weakening of the "hard" signification of the concept). There has been made another difference between reality and real, taking into consideration the fact that the reality would be what enters the field of our experience and power of actual or virtual investigation, whereas real is what reality would be beyond this possibility, the "Something". In connection with this kind of distinction, the concept of *ultimate reality* was formulated, by which there is designated the limit, the border that our knowledge with all the handy possibilities has over the real at *a certain historical moment*. The ultimate reality does not have a certain content, but it is always constituted from the stage of human knowledge in a historical time over the "Something ".

IV. Experience and Reality: the message hesychasm

Having in view the above, we can find out that the crucial aspect of the discussion about reality in the present science is connected to the questions: Until where and to what extent can we talk about a human experience constituted about reality? Until when and to what extent can we talk about knowing the reality as it is?

The thesis of *the happy view* can be interpreted as a version of radical gnoseological optimism, illustrated in the recent physics by the ontological realism. The presupposition that God is the supreme intelligible object has remained a decisive one in the articulation of the theological and philosophical medieval western discourse. We also find it in the statements made by Barlaam, the Calabrese monk

[12] *Ibidem*, 28.

who started a famous dispute in the 14th century, the hesychast dispute (even if Barlaam was not under the direct influence of Thomas d'Aquino's statements, even if he supports a radical incognoscibility of God, yet in the Calabrese's thinking there is an intellectualist conception of knowing God and an essentialist philosophy[13]). Varlaam had been scandalised by the prayer method he had seen at the monk in that period, a practice that also involved a body-corporal position, which proved the existence of the presupposition that the body has a role on the way to know God. Varlaam's position assumed in the Latin West was that only the intellect was capable of the supreme knowledge act, the ascesis having the role of suspending the activity of the senses and passions in order to allow the intellect to reach this ultimate knowledge. The scandalous aspect for the Calabrese was the statement of those who practiced this method (called hesychast or *Jesus' prayer*) precisely that God's view *is done with the eyes of the body*. Gregory Palamas, monk athonit, subsequently archbishop of Thessalonica, came to defend and justify the hesychast practice. But the defence of the hesychast position required explanations which could not be made in the terminological context of time. Palamas finds himself in the situation of signifying again or of explaining again the signification of certain terms. There had to be explained the signification which the hesychasm had for God's view, described as the view of the light or of God's manifestations, not of an essence. The goal of the hesychast practice is the view of Tabor's light, which can be understood only as an active process of continuous revelation of the one who is above the being. Here is involved the rejection of any possibility to know directly the divine nature, what characterises and defines God essentially. Certainly the gnoseological stake is obvious: the ultimate knowledge (just like the knowledge of any kind) involves the man as a whole, not only the intellect, the knowledge act has the dimension of a *relationship* between man an*d* God (understood as a dynamic process and not as an essential view of a stable nature) – there is an anti-essentialism which corresponds to the anti-realist position in the present physics.

A decisive term in explaining the non-essentialism of the hesychast doctrine is *energheia*, which Gregory Palamas takes over from Aristotle, but also from the usage of the previous Byzantine authors, term to which it will enrich and nuance the signification area.

[13] John Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*. Trans. George Lawrence (Crestwood, New York, St. Vladimir`s Seminary Press, 1998), 204.

Looking for a proper term for the light of Transfiguration, Palamas decides to use Aristotle's concept of *energheia*[14]. The decision of its usage is better understood nowadays when the studies (just like David Bradshaw's, invoked here) reveal the spectacular complexity and the nuance abundance of the term, but also the fact that since Aristotle's times it has been the term that received an exceptional usage. Initially Aristotle uses the term by taking it from Plato, who in Euthydemos made the difference between possession (*ktesis*) and the usage (*hresis*) of things[15]. For Aristotle it becomes a distinction not between possession and usage in general, but between usage and possession of a capacity or faculty of the soul. The simplest signification of *energhia* in Aristotle's corpus, that of activity, proves not having been its signification from the beginning.

It is important that Aristotle admits the existence of several distinction kinds of the reality degrees. Its reasoning is that life is „the real being" of an animated thing, to live means to instruct the soul, and in a rational being such an exercise is the rational thinking. Consequently, the one who is active in thinking, lives and exists more than the one who is not like that, although the highest reality degree is not described as an update (*energheia*), it is explained that a person who is at the highest degree is active (*energhie*)[16]. The understanding of *energheia* as an activity shall receive its technical signification, of *update*. Moreover, *energheia* starts to change its meaning to a more extended notion of the update, capable to contain static conditions (in *Physics* Aristotle states that energheia remains a kind of capacity exercise even if it is no longer an active exercise[17]).

The differences that Aristotle makes between *kinesis* and *energheia* have a particular significance, as Bradshaw indicates it. Thus, we can say about *kinesis*: it has a limit; it is not a finality, but it exists in view of a finality; it is complete when it reaches the thing it aims at, it has to stop before the perfect tense can be used; it contains parts which are different from each other and from the whole; the starting point and the arrival point offer them the shape of movements; it happens fast or slowly; it happens in time. Whereas we can state about *energheia:* it has no limit; it is a finality or it has a self finality; it is always complete because nothing is missing from what

[14] David Bradshaw, *op.cit.*, 231.
[15] Platon, Euthydemos, 280 b-e.
[16] Aristotel*, Protrepticul*, B 86.
[17] Aristotel, *Fizica*, VIII, 4, 225b8-12.

can be born later that fulfils its shape; in its case the present and the perfect tense are applied simultaneously; it is homogenous; it does not happen fast or slowly; it is now"[18]. It is important to emphasize that Aristotle's *energheia* is thorough in any moment; its perfection does not need a temporal process. Its function is to delimit a *higher* reality degree. *Energheia* is that kind of activity that hesychasm is its own goal and can exist only in a state of fulfilment. It is both the substance cause and the thorough reality, regardless of the appearance it takes. Therefore Aristotle calls *energheia* by the highest term, the divinity one. We have to notice that the equivalence of the term *energheia* in Latin with *operatio* does not confer the same semantic abundance as the original term (there has been another equivalence by *actus* and *actualitas*). It is one of the reasons why the term does not play an important role in the Latin tradition.

By using the notion of *energheia* to create a distinction from essence or nature, Palamas does it cautiously because the theological vocabulary of that time was too deeply marked by the essentialist categories of the Greek philosophy in order to express the existentialist reality of the Supreme Being. Paradoxically, in the context of using this concept of Aristotle, the Byzantine author shall be preoccupied to release the theological discourse from Aristotle's philosophical categories due to their inadequacy in expressing the secret. For example Palamas refuses to call the energies "qualities of God", because the quality notion cannot contain the liberty dimension in any way, whereas these energies are the expression of God's sovereign will.

Thus we understand better the stake of the term usage by Gregory Palamas in explaining a critical aspect of his doctrine: the signification of the ultimate reality (in other words what content can be given to the reality notion when the ultimate instance situation is looked for). When discussing about the divine light (as *energheia*), Palamas states that it is *a natural symbol*, by denying that it is *a created symbol*. The argumentation is that a natural symbol always accompanies what it symbolises, and its existence depends on it, just like the aurora accompanies the sunset, and the heat accompanies the burning power of the fire because of the innate association. Henceforth the syntagm "natural symbol"[19]. If *energheia* or the divine light has this meaning, then what we call a natural (or physical) reality has a much enlarged signification. The physical reality is not a

[18] David Bradshaw, *op.cit.*, 10.
[19] Grigorie Palama, *Triads*, III.1.14.

static, inert one, but matter plus energy: it is something that can be described as an active alive process where we find the presence and the intentionality of a Person, precisely of a Third of a Person, and that as a *natural dimension*. On the other hand we can state that in this description the reality is constituted by the experience in the most radical way: the ultimate reality is the human experience of the uncreated energies. Any statement that would aim at something beyond the content of this experience, such as the direct knowledge of an essence, is rejected. In the same time the gnoseological pessimism is rejected: The Supreme Personal Reality is not incognoscible due to its transcendence, because it makes itself known by these manifestations called *energheia*.

V. A surprising meeting

After following the statements in the quantum physics and in the hesychasm presented above, we notice a surprising approach between the two. Certainly there are numerous differences which come from the different context and from the different interests under which the two reality perspectives were constituted. But what approaches them is the exigency under which they exist, precisely the need to approach what we call reality in a very authentic way, precisely non speculative and non intermediate. In the case of science, as much as possible, the speculative presuppositions that are not the result of the experiment are rejected. In the Hesychasm they dispute the hypothesis according to which the access to the ultimate reality would be only an act mediated by the hierarchy of the beings. That is why there appears the syntagm *uncreated energies* (but the possibility of a *total access* to essence, to the absolute on the rational way is rejected). In both situations the experimentality is decisive, the truth criterion being provided by the appeal to experience. In physics this thing is clear, and in Hesychasm there was the same kind of exigency when Palamas, in the dispute with his adversaries, used to invoke repeatedly *the appeal to experience* as a criterion. The Hesychasm is different from other spiritual practices in the Christian space by the fact that it emphasises the experience in the shape of the experiment, which supposes the existence of a method, of the verifiability criterion, as validation – henceforth the interest for the ultimate reality or in the hesychast language for the uncreated energies. There is a symmetry regarding some discussions about the nature of the ultimate reality as well as the extent to which this syntagm sends to a human being.

In the quantum mechanics, as well as in the hesychast doctrine, there appeared wonderful language difficulties when there was the question about formulating adequate terms in order to indicate the content of the ultimate instance reality. For example when Gregory Palamas talks about the uncreated energies, he explains that these do not have a hypostasis or their own existence, but they result from the divine hypostases and constitute for us *signs* of God's existence. Palamas also explains that the divine essence if it didn't have a distinct energy, it would be totally inexistent and it would be only a product of the imagination[20]. Palamas states that the energies cannot be separated from the essence, but they are not identical with it. They are "something else" than the Holy Spirit, but they are not the divine essence[21]. This "Something" which the energies are and which cannot be identified with the Divine Person, nor with its essence, is very much like the "Something" of Bernard d`Espagnat. The experiments in the quantum physics led to the renouncing to the *physical realism;* the hesychast controversy led to stating the verifiability need of the spiritual experience, of the *appeal to experience*: thus the two investigation methods have their important convergence degree in the way they aimed at the reality.

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[20] John Meyendorff, *op.cit.*, 216.

[21] *Ibidem*, 225.