# PHILOSOPHY OF DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE

Part Two: Modal Ontology<sup>1</sup>

# 0. Introduction: Back from Leibniz

# 0.1. Leibniz and Intensional Interpretation of Modality with Ontological Commitment

Modal logic is a rare non-theological domain where the ways of the Eastern and Western Christian philosophies parted. Regardless of theology, the philosophical ontology of Dionysius the Areopagite<sup>2</sup> and Maximusus the Confessor was different from that of Augustinus, Boetius, and Thomas Aquinas, even if both Eastern and Western traditions shared the same classical heritage. East and West were thinking differently not only when thinking God but even when thinking creature, that is, not only in theology but even in philosophy.

The Eastern and Western modal approaches met each other somewhere near Leibniz and especially in Leibniz's own works, albeit in a quite different theological context. It is useful to understand this difference before trying to translate Dionysius the Areopagite into the modern formal language that goes back directly to Leibniz, the main inspirer of Clarence I. Lewis in his seminal monograph on the modal logic.<sup>3</sup>

The main issue is over mutual relation between purely logical possibilities and ontology. For the West, the typical approach was that which was aptly coined by Simo Knuuttila "extensional interpretation of modality," namely, that the possibilities must be "dealt with from the point of view of their actuality in history without an idea of alternative domains."<sup>4</sup> This was

<sup>3</sup> C. I. Lewis, *A Survey of Symbolic Logic*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1918, 5-18, 373-387; cf. N. Rescher, "Leibniz's Interpretation of His Logical Calculi," *The Journal of Symbolic Logic* 19 (1954): 1-13; repr. in: *idem, Collected Papers*. Vol. X: *Studies in the History of Logic*. Heusenstamm: Ontos Verlag, 2006, 141-151.

<sup>4</sup> S. Knuuttila, "Medieval Modal Theories and Modal Logic," in: D. M. Gabbay, J. Woods (eds.), *Handbook of the History of Logic*. Vol. 2: *Mediaeval and Renaissance Logic*, Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2008, 505-578, here 507, 511.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Cf. Lourié, Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite. Part One: Intensional Semantics (forthcoming). The present paper can be read independently from the Part One, but I skip here a general outline of the philosophical problems of the *Corpus Areopagiticum* (as distinct from the theological ones), which is to be found in the Part One.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> I call this author as he called himself, without the prefix "pseudo-." For the historical circumstances of composition of the Corpus, with a discussion of all available viewpoints, s. B. Lourié, "Peter the Iberian and Dionysius the Areopagite: Honigmann-van Esbroeck's Thesis Revisited," Scrinium. Revue de patrologie, d'hagiographie critique et d'histoire ecclésiastique 6 (2010): 143-212. According to this reconstruction, the Corpus was composed through the following steps: 1) vision of heavenly hierarchies by John the Eunuch at the (most probably, first) celebration of the Dormition of the Virgin in Gethsemane in 444, 2) composition of the core of the Corpus after John's death by his close friend and cellmate Peter the Iberian in the late 460s or somewhat later, and 3) pseudonymisation of the Corpus after the death of Peter in 491 by the monks of the monastery in Maiouma founded by the émigrés from Crete, who were close to Peter during his life. This procedure was destined to use the Corpus as a weapon against the Book of Holy Hierotheos, the manifesto of the Origenistic Palestinian monks of this time. This is the same monastery where Severus, future patriarch of Antioch (512-518), was tonsured monk (near 491). Severus will be the first who quotes Dionysius in a theological discussion (between 518 and 528, most probably, in the middle of the 520s). The Corpus in the present form is to be dated to ca 500 or several years earlier. The Christology of the Corpus was acceptable for the official Church of its time, whose teaching was formulated in the Henotikon of the Emperor Zeno (482) and accepted by the Eastern patriarchates, including both adversaries and partisans of the Council of Chalcedon, whereas not by Rome (from Rome's viewpoint, shared by nobody in Byzantium, the four patriarchates of the East were then in the so-called Akakian schism). Thus, the influence of the Corpus became widespread regardless of the issue of Monophysitism.

not the only available approach, however, even in the West. Its alternative, also in the West, was a "décosmologisation radicale du concept de possible," even before Duns Scot, which allowed operating with "pure" logical possibilities<sup>5</sup> and, in this way, to overcome the extensional approach. Both approaches had roots in Aristotle or, at least, in the mediaeval understanding of Aristotle.<sup>6</sup> Leibniz and, shortly before him, some Jesuits started establishing links between these logical possibilities and ontology, which resulted into the concepts of the Pre-established Harmony.<sup>7</sup>

# 0.2. "Vague Concept" of Man against "Semi-Pelagianism"

In the Byzantine East, the logical possibilities were not necessarily considered as free from any ontological/cosmological commitment, and so, some concepts in the vein of "pre-established harmony" were a matter of course. Dionysius the Areopagite's teaching on the non-existence of the evil is, in this aspect, a kind of *Theodicy*, as Leibniz would call it were he acquainted with Dionysius somewhat deeper.<sup>8</sup> The theological premises, however, are here quite different from those of Leibniz and his Jesuit predecessors.

The main difference lays in defining of the very source of perturbation of the strictly determined order of things, the concept of free will. Leibniz and like-minded Jesuits escaped the total predestination *via* doctrines of "vagueness" of the concept of each individual man. The divine predestination establishes only "vague" concepts, which are to be sharpened with the free choice made by the created beings themselves between different possibilities. The omnipotence of God is here limited with the principle of "moral necessity," that is, a necessity to God of turning the scale to the best at any outcome of creature's free choice. The concept of "moral necessity" imposed on God (by God himself, of course) was elaborated by the Spanish Jesuits Diego Ruiz de Montoya (1562–1632) and Diego Granado (1571–1632),<sup>9</sup> who were

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> J. Schmutz, "Qui a inventé les mondes possibles ?" in: J.-C. Bardout, V. Jullien (eds.), *Les mondes possibles*. Cahiers de philosophie de l'Université de Caen 42; Caen: Presses universitaires de Caen, 2006, 9-45, here 25 and n. 40. I am very grateful to Jacob Schmutz for providing me a copy of this valuable paper.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Cf. Schmutz, *op. cit.*, and, for a modern reconstruction of modalities in Aristotle in the same lines, *pace* Jaakko Hintikka's most accepted reconstruction, J. Van Rijen, *Aspects of Aristotle's Logic of Modalities*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989. Van Rijen's view is partially corroborated by Matthews' analysis of Aristotle's intensionality: G. B. Matthews, "Container Metaphysics according to Aristotle's Greek Commentators," in: R. Bosley, M. Tweedale (eds.), *Aristotle and His Medieval Interpreters*. Canadian Journal of Philosophy Supplementary vol. 17; Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1992, 17-23. This short paper is still valuable as an introduction to the topics relevant to modality in the Byzantine Aristotle. Unfortunately, the whole matter of modalities in Byzantine interpreters of Aristotle, especially in John Philoponus (the most important among them for both East and West), is still almost unexplored.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Cf., S. K. Knebel, "Leibniz, Middle Knowledge, and the Intricacies of World Design," *Studia Leibnitiana* 28 (1996): 199-210, esp. 208-210. The author is among those who argue for a direct influence of Jesuits on Leibniz. What is certain, it is the fact that, at least, some of their relevant publications were available to Leibniz.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Leibniz's mentions of Dionysius (according to the database Kumuliertes Personenverzeichnis (zur Akademie-Ausgabe):

<sup>&</sup>lt;u>http://www.gwlb.de/Leibniz/Leibnizarchiv/Veroeffentlichungen/Personendatenbank/index.php</u>) leave a feeling that he was, for Leibniz, an ancient theologian who wrote about angelical hierarchies, one among other authoritative but remote figure of the past.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Cf. especially S. K. Knebel, *Wille, Würfel, und Wahrscheinlichkeit. Das System der moralischen Notwendigkeit in der Jesuitenscholastik, 1550–1700.* Paradeigmata 21; Hamburg: Meiner, 2000, and his earlier papers: *idem, "Necessitas moralis ad optimum.* [I]. Zum historischen Hintergrund der Wahl der besten aller möglichen Welten," *Studia Leibnitiana* 23 (1991): 3-24; *idem, "Necessitas moralis ad optimum.* (II). Die früheste scholastische Absage an den Optimismus. Eine unveröffentlichte Handschrift Jorge Hemelmans S.J. von 1617," *Theologie und Philosophie* 67 (1992): 514-555; *idem, "Necessitas moralis ad optimum.* (III). Naturgesetz und Induktionsproblem in der Jesuitenscholastik während des zweiten Drittels des 17. Jahrhunderts," *Studia Leibnitiana* 24 (1992): 182-215; *idem, "Necessitas moralis ad optimum.* (IV). Repertorium zur Optimismusdiskussion im 17. Jahrhundert," *Studia Leibnitiana* 25 (1993): 201-208. Cf., more recently, with pointing out several important unclosed problems, M. Murray, "Pre-Leibnizian Moral Necessity," *The Leibniz Review* 14 (2004): 1-28.

preoccupying of avoiding both dangers of total predestinationalism<sup>10</sup> and what they called "Semi-Pelagianism."<sup>11</sup>

The danger of "Semi-Pelagianism" consisted in limitation of the divine omnipotence with the human or angelic will. Instead, Spanish Jesuits invented a peculiar way of divine selflimitation without involving any created will. God himself creates the rational beings as "vague" concepts (the attitude shared by Leibniz and defended by him against criticisms of Arnaud) and, then, pre-establishes the best consequences for any possible outcomes of their free choices. All possible "world histories" (or, shortly, "possible worlds") are equally "predestined," and so, no casual chain is created by the non-divine free will.

To a modern reader, this notion of "vague concept" of something recalls very much the wave function of Erwin Schrödinger, which was proposed as an "objective" (containing no explicit reference to the act of observation) description of a quantum object. The act of observation leads to the collapse of the wave function, when only one possible outcome of this act takes place. Similarly, in Leibnizian "vague Adam," Adam's free choice leaded to realisation of the only one of the possible scenarios.

This doctrine looked, nevertheless, as denigrating the omnipotence of God to many Catholic (including Jesuit) and Protestant scholars. However, even less it was theologically compatible with the standard Eastern doctrines on the free will.

### 0.3. "Semi-Pelagianism" in the East: the Normative Doctrine

What the West called "Semi-Pelagianism" was the normative doctrine of the whole Christian East. Such polemics as that which took place between John Cassian, an Easternminded Western theologian and a direct disciple of great monastic Fathers of the Egyptian desert,<sup>12</sup> and Prosper of Aquitaine, a disciple of Augustine of Hippo and the most prominent distributor of the Augustinian anti-Pelagian views,<sup>13</sup> would have never taken place in the East. In the East, nobody saw any problem in considering the divine omnipotence as limited by the free will of the rational beings.

The whole discussion on the free will, in both East and West, was theologically preconditioned by the discussion of the Fall and the meaning of the Baptism. The anti-Pelagianism of Augustine was based on his doctrine of the original sin as a hereditary culpability making the human will incapable to perform the right choice by itself; thus, the infant Baptism is a necessity for remission of the original sin and to free the free will. This doctrine was absolutely alien to the Christian East. Here, even the most opposite to each other Antiochene and

<sup>12</sup> For a theological exposition of his "Semi-Pelagianism," s., first of all, V. Codina, *El aspecto cristologico en la espiritualidad de Juan Casiano*. Orientalia Christiana Analecta 175; Roma: PIO, 1966, 67-73 *et passim*.

<sup>13</sup> It is still disputable whether John Cassian's polemics was aimed at Augustine himself, but, anyway, to say the least, Cassian "...was not an Augustinian in any meaningful sense of the term," as said the scholar who tried to smooth all disagreements between Cassian and Augustine (A. M. C. Casiday, *Tradition and Theology in St John Cassian*. Oxford Early Christian Studies; Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006, 102; cf. *ibid.*, 112-117, where the author tries to withdraw Augustine from Cassian's attack while sacrifices Prosper of Aquitaine). On the influence of Prosper's anti-Cassian polemics, s. forthcoming thesis of Jérémy Delmulle "Prosper d'Aquitaine contre Jean Cassien. *Le Liber contra collatorem*: introduction, édition critique, traduite et annotée et étude de la réception," to appear in the series *Sources chrétiennes*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Actual in the Counterreformation context, cf. *De servo arbitrio* by Luther (1517).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Another Jesuit, a correspondent of Leibniz and the translator of his *Theodicy* into Latin, Bartholomew Des Bosses (1668–1738), who was the first to expose Jesuit connexions of Leibniz's ideas on moral necessity (without, however, claiming any direct dependence), explained in this way Leibniz's modal thinking: no wonder, he wrote, that "non paucos" (quite a few) Protestants turn out to be not abhorring the (Jesuit doctrine of the) *scientia media*, while abhorring the Semi-Pelagianism, "[e]t hos fortasse praecipuem indigitare voluerit Leibnitius" ("and Leibniz probably would especially wish to demonstrate this," that is, his negation of Semi-Pelagianism and tacit acceptation of the Molinist "middle knowledge" doctrine); B. Des Bosses, "Monitum Interpretis," in: G. G. Leibnitius, *Tentamina Theodicaeae de bonitate Dei, libertate hominis et origini mali*, T. I, Francofurti: C. J. Bencard, 1719, [separate foliation], here f. 6v. For Leibniz and the "middle knowledge," s. esp. Knebel, "Leibniz, Middle Knowledge..."

Alexandrine theological schools were agreed that the infants need no remission of sins because they are sinless; they could be baptised, however, in order to communicate them the supernatural life.<sup>14</sup> Only a remote parallel with Augustine's teaching on the original sin as a feature of the human nature acquired after the Fall is to be detected in Julian of Halicarnassus' (first half of the sixth cent.) "aphthartodocetic" teaching on the difference of the human nature in Christ and in us after the Fall. This ephemeral teaching was abandoned by the Julianists themselves to the late sixth century.<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, it was directly the human and angelic free will that limited, in the Eastern Christian theologies, the divine omnipotence. Nevertheless, the divine providence acts in each point of the causal chain in continuous interaction with the free will of each rational creature. The latter continuously chooses whether to cooperate with the divine operation ("energy") or not. This results certainly into a kind of harmony leaded by the divine providence, and this harmony certainly is foreknown by God, but it is not to say that this harmony is pre-established by God alone. It is rather continuously established than pre-established, and not by God alone but by God in cooperation (often called "synergy" —  $\sigma \nu \epsilon \rho \gamma \epsilon i \alpha$ ) with the rational creatures.<sup>16</sup>

Diego de Montoya, when arguing that the divine knowledge and love act not only in creature in general but also in each particular created being, was referring, among others, to Dionysius' doctrine of the omnipresent divine *eros* ( $DN 4^{17}$ ): "Dionysius (see the whole chapter 4 of the *On Divine Names*) teaches, that the love for the creatures prompted God to communicate participation to his goodness to each one of them, according to its capacity."<sup>18</sup> This is the part of Jesuits' and Leibniz's theological background that they shared with the Eastern patristic tradition: the omnipresence and operating love of God reaches each particular creature without exception. They were, however, differing in further understanding of this interaction between the God and the created being. Nevertheless, in both cases, this understanding leaded to some kind of intensional interpretation of modality.

<sup>15</sup> R. Draguet, *Julien d'Halicarnasse et sa controverse avec Sévère d'Antioche sur l'incorruptibilité du corps du Christ*. Universitatis Catholica Lovaniensis. Dissertationes ad gradum magistri in Facultate Theologica... ser. 2, 12; Louvain: Univ. Catholique de Louvain, 1924, 118-127. For the most up-to-date introduction, s. B. Lourié, "Julianism," in: S. Uhlig (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*. Vol. 3. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verl., 2007, 308-310.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> D. Weaver, "From Paul to Augustine: Romans 5:12 in Early Christian Exegesis," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 27 (1983): 187-206; *idem*, Parts 2-3 "The Exegesis of Romans 5:12 among the Greek Fathers and Its Implications for the Doctrine of Original Sin: The 5th-12th Centuries," *Ibid.* 29 (1985): 133-159, 231-257. As a general but more theological than scholarly exposition, s. J. Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin. A comparative study of the sin of our ancestors Adam and Eve according to the paradigms and doctrines of the first- and second-century Church and the Augustinian formulation of original sin.* Tr. G. S. Gabriel. Ridgewood, NJ: Zephyr Publishers, 1998; cf., for a larger theological perspective, a useful review of G. E. Demacopoulos and A. Papanikolaou, "Augustine and the Orthodox: the 'West' in the East," in: G. E. Demacopoulos, A. Papanikolaou (eds.), *Orthodox Readings of Augustine*, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2008, 11-40. The most important available study in the field is now, to my opinion, that of J.-Cl. Larchet, *Maxime le Confesseur, médiateur entre l'Orcient et l'Occident*. Théologie et sciences religieuses. Cogitatio Fidei; Paris: Cerf, 1998, 77-124 (ch. II: La question de l'hérédité adamique).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> On this very central idea in Eastern patristics, s., e.g., J. Meyendorff, "Christ as Savior in the East," in: B. McGinn, J. Meyendorff in collaboration with J. Ledercq (eds.), *Christian Spirituality. I. Origins to the Twelfth Century*. World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest 16; New York: Crossroad, 1985, 231-252.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> The texts of the *Corpus Areopagiticum* will be quoted according to the critical editions: B. R. Suchla, *Corpus Dionysiacum I*. Patristische Texte und Studien 33. Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1990 (for *De divinis nominibus* = *DN*) and G. Heil, A. M. Ritter, *Corpus Dionysiacum II*. Patristische Texte und Studien 36. Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1991 (all the rest), but the references will be given within the text as following: abbreviated title (*DN*), chapter, paragraph, page of the critical edition, and, after slash (/), column and part of column (from A to D) in *PG* 3. English tr. (very often too free to be useful for any scholarly purpose) by C. E. Rolt, *Dionysius the Areopagite: On the Divine Names and the Mystical Theology*. London: SPCK, 1920; electronic edition at http://www.ccel.org/ccel/rolt/dionysius.html.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Dionysius de divin[is] nom[inibus] toto fere cap. 4. docet, amorem erga creaturas impulisse deum, ut unicuique pro suo captu suae bonitatis participationem communicaret; D. R. de Montoya, *Commentaria ac Disputationes in primam partem sancti Thoma. De voluntate dei, et propriis actibus eius*, Lugduni: Iacobi, Andreae, & Matthaei Prost, 1630, 42.

### 1. Being and Non-Being

### 1.1. Classical and Non-Classical "Statistical" Models for Modality

The free will of the creatures comprehended as a source of perturbance of the divine order entails introducing a kind of uncertainty principle in the ontology. This fact opens a door to modal thinking. In the Eastern patristic tradition, this is only one of the two such doors. The second door is opened by the conception of deification; it will be dealt with later (section 2).

In the Eastern tradition, there is no exact analogue of the "vague conception" of a rational being, but there is its logical equivalent. In the eyes of a modern reader, this equivalent could be compared with the matrix mechanics of Werner Heisenberg *vis-à-vis* the wave mechanics of Erwin Schrödinger. Heisenberg's matrices comprise possible outcomes of observations, without, however, claiming that anyone of them could reflect, more or less, the "objective" state of things. The very notion of the "objective," that is, independent from the act of observation state of things becomes void of sense. In the classical statistical physics, the differences in outcomes of the acts of observation are to be interpreted as resulting from differences in the situations defined by a stochastic process, but not from the "uncertainness" of the reality itself; all the observable values, even if being random, are considered as existing regardless of whether they are measured or not. In the same way, in the classical wave mechanics, such thing as the collapse of the wave function is impossible. Both Schrödinger and Heisenberg constructed physical formalisms similar to but different from their classical prototypes. However, Schrödinger struggled throughout his life for the objectivism of the scholarly interpretation of reality, whereas Heisenberg did not believe in an "objective reality" of the positivistic science.<sup>19</sup>

Such comparisons with different formal interpretations of quantum physics are far from being arbitrary, because the modern discussions on the reality behind the quantum phenomena were (and still are) continuing the mediaeval and ancient discussions about what reality is. The basic distinction between Schrödinger's and Heisenberg' quantum formalisms, namely, preserving of an apparent "objectivity" (Schrödinger) or an explicit refuse thereof (Heisenberg), is traceable back throughout the centuries. In Leibniz and his Jesuit predecessors we have seen an objectivistic, Schrödinger-like approach. In Eastern patristics, we will see a Heisenberg-like approach operating only with the outcomes of the acts of observations (viz. acts of free choice). The formal logical equivalency of both approaches is unable to mask the gap between their respective philosophical (ontological) backgrounds.

The latter approach has its classical prototype in one of the Aristotelian understandings of modality, which Oscar Becker (1952) and, after him, Jaakko Hintikka<sup>20</sup> called "statistical" model for modality. Simo Knuuttila defines it as following: "...the habit of associating the notion of necessity with omnitemporal actuality or actuality in all members of a species, contingency with actuality at some times or in some members of a species, and impossibility with the lack of actuality in these respects. Possibilities are dealt with from the point of view of their actuality in history without an idea of alternative domains."<sup>21</sup> Such an approach is traceable in the mediaeval and especially Scholastic sources, too. This is also the same model that could be applied to the classical statistical physics, where probability is equivalent to contingency comprised as actuality at some times.

The free will of created beings, especially taken apart from Augustinian restrictions and in a "Semipelagian" manner, leads automatically to a deviation from this classical way. If we still try to keep unchanged our Aristotelian "statistical" approach, we obtain a Heisenberg-like

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> As a concise introduction to these topics accessible to the readers without training in physics, I would recommend W. Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy: The Revolution in Modern Science*. New York: Harper and Row, 1958.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> J. Hintikka, *Time and Necessity: Studies in Aristotle's Theory of Modality*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1973.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Knuuttila, "Medieval Modal Theories...," 509.

non-classical "statistics." The only accessible created reality is now that of the outcomes of the acts of observation or, in our case, the acts of free choice. The created reality "as if there would be no acts of free choice" would look as a strange chimera having no relation to any real thing.

# 1.2. Logoi of Divine Predestination and Divine Will

In Dionysius, we will see three basic ontological categories, namely, the being, the wellbeing (deified being), and the lack (negation) thereof. This scheme is simpler and more approximative than its further (seventh-century) development in Maximus the Confessor, but it contains yet the main components of future Maximus' synthesis.

The ontology of the created being is sharply distinct but, in the same time, derived from the divine being. Its *conditio sine qua non* is the direct divine presence in each creature *via* uncreated *logoi*. The latter term has many synonyms. This teaching of Dionysius and its difference from the non-Christian Platonic doctrines of ideas and emanations of the One is described many times<sup>22</sup> and needs not to be repeated here in details. It is important not to confound these uncreated *logoi* of Areopagite and other Eastern patristic authors with the created "seminal reasons" (*rationes seminales, rationes causales*) of Augustine and Scholasticism<sup>23</sup>: in the Eastern tradition, no such created *logoi* are needed or possible.

As well as all the creatures are participating to the sun through its light, wrote Dionysius, in the way that the only sun "uniformly contains in advance" ( $\mu ovo\epsilon i\delta \tilde{\omega} \zeta \pi \rho o\epsilon i\lambda \eta \phi \epsilon$ ) all the causes of its effects,

...much more it is to be acknowledged the same concerning the cause of it [sun's] and everything, which (contains in itself) as pre-existing, according to the unique super-essential union, the paradigms of all beings, because it produces essences by outgoing from the essence. And we call "paradigms" those *logoi* which, pre-existent in God as a unity, create the essences of the beings. These *logoi* the Theology calls "predefinitions/predestinations ( $\pi$ poopi $\sigma$ µo $\dot{}\sigma$ )" and "divine and beneficent volitions," which are defining and creating the beings, according to which the Super-Essential [*sc.*, God] predefined/predestined and brought (into being) all the beings.<sup>24</sup>

"To be" is thus equal to "to participate to God *via* his *logoi*." Moreover, different *logoi* are responsible for different modes of being, which ensures the movement of creatures from their creation to their deification.

# 1.3. Evil as Negation of Being

If there is nothing having no participation to God, the origin of the evil becomes an acute ontological problem. Dionysius deals with it especially in DN 4:19-35. His answer is that the evil does not exist at all: "How can evil things occur at all if there is the Providence? The evil as such is neither being nor among those that have being."<sup>25</sup> On the contrary, it is, in fact, a lack of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Cf. esp. J.-Cl. Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines*. *Dès origines à saint Jean Damascène*. Théologie et sciences religieuses. Cogitatio Fidei 272. Paris: Cerf, 2010, 289-329.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> J. M. Brady, "St. Augustine's Theory of Seminal Reasons," *The New Scholasticism* 38 (1964): 141-158; S. Knuuttila, "Time and creation in Augustine," in: E. Stump, N. Kretzmann (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001, 103-115, here 104-105.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> ...πολλῷ γε μᾶλλον ἐπὶ τῆς καὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ πάντων αἰτίας προϋφεστάναι τὰ πάντων τῶν ὄντων παραδείγματα κατὰ μίαν ὑπερούσιον ἕνωσιν συγχωρητέον, ἐπεὶ καὶ οὐσίας παράγει κατὰ τὴν ἀπὸ οὺσίας ἕκβασιν. Παραδείγματα δέ φαμεν εἶναι τοὺς ἐν θεῷ τῶν ὄντων οὐσιοποιοὺς καὶ ἑνιαίως προϋφεστῶτας λόγους, οὓς ἡ θεολογία προορισμοὺς καλεῖ καὶ θεĩα καὶ ἀγαθὰ θελήματα, τῶν ὄντων ἀφοριστικὰ καὶ ποιητικά, καθ' οὺς ὁ ὑπερούσιος τὰ ὄντα πάντα καὶ προώρισε καὶ παρήγαγεν (DN 5:8; p. 188/824 C). Translation is mine but using Rolt's one.

 $<sup>^{25}</sup>$  Πῶς ὅλως τὰ κακὰ προνοίας οὕσης; Οὐκ ἔστι τὸ κακόν, ἦ κακόν, οὕτε ὃν οὕτε ἐν τοῖς οὖσιν (*DN* 4:33; p. 178/733 A). Tr. is mine.

existence of something: the evil appears as only "weakness, impotence, and deficiency ( $\dot{\alpha}\sigma\theta$ ένεια καὶ ἀδυναμία καὶ ἕλλειψις)" of something good (DN 4:35; p. 179/736 A).

It is worth noting that the evil is here clearly discerned from incompleteness and imperfection. The evil is not something that is planned or presupposed but not yet accomplished; it is only a lack of something that already was. This understanding is at odds with Leibniz's understanding of imperfection of the created world. According to Leibniz, the whole creation ex *nihilo* is prefigured with the binary numbering system, where all the numbers are to be produced from combinations of 1 and 0. Taken as the model of creation, this system corresponds to God's creating power (1) and its limitation (0).<sup>26</sup> Leibniz's system does not allow discerning between imperfectness and sin, or, more exactly, for Leibniz, the sin itself is an imperfection: God's will is limiting itself when taking into account in advance the sinful imperfection of the creation. Let us recall that Leibniz was not a "Semi-Pelagianist," and so, he did not allow to God's will being limited with anything except for itself.

In Dionysius, the ontology is richer because he does not equate the evil (which is always sinful) and imperfectness, although the very possibility of sinning is a consequence of imperfection. The perfect rational creature is that that became God by deification,<sup>27</sup> and so, it is not able to sin by the same reason as God himself is unable to sin. The evil is a negation of the modal state of being, but perfection is another modal state than either being or negation of being (s. below, section 2).

In Dionysius, it is not forbidden to speak about the evil in terms of existence, but two important reservations must be expressed: first, that this existence is accidental (thus, not necessary, as everything that is in accordance with the divine *logoi*, s. the next section), and, second, that even this accidental existence the evil has in something else (sc., something good) but not in itself: "One has to attribute to the evil the accidental existence and (the existence) through the other but not (the existence) from its own principle."<sup>28</sup> This is why the evil has no hypostasis (an independent individual existence) but is "parhypostatic" (this means that it is outside of any hypostasis) and "occurring through the good and not itself."29

Thus, there is no specific ontology of the evil. There is, in the evil, only a negation of the common ontology of the ordinary beings.

#### **Deontic Structure of Ontology** 1.4.

The evil and the imperfection of creation in its original (even pre-Fallen) state<sup>30</sup> are the two sources of modal "delamination" of the created world. The doctrine of creation through the increate *logoi*, on the one side, enforced the Aristotelian so-called Necessitation Rule (NR):

(NR)  $A \rightarrow \Box A$ 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> For a careful analysis of this often misinterpreted Leibniz's doctrine, s. L. Strickland, *Leibniz* Reinterpreted. Continuum Studies in Philosophy. London-New York: Continuum, 2006, 18-27. A frequent error of modern interpreters of Leibniz consists in confusing 0 with "nothing" in the sense of some alternative (to God) essence, a kind of "anti-essence" of God.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> It is important to take in mind Dionysius' definition: "...but this [salvation] is not possible otherwise than as deification of those who are saved, while deification is assimilation and union, as it is possible, with God ( $\dot{\eta} \delta \hat{\epsilon}$ [sc., σωτηρία] ουχ έτέρως γενέσθαι δύναται μὴ θεουμένων τῶν σωζομένων ἡ δὲ θέωσίς ἐστιν ἡ πρὸς θεὸν ὡς έφικτὸν ἀφομοίωσίς τε καὶ ἕνωσις) (On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy 1:3; p. 66/375 D-376 A).

 $<sup>^{28}</sup>$  Τῷ κακῷ τὸ εἶναι θετέον κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς καὶ δι' ἄλλο καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἀρχῆς οἰκείας (DN 4:32; p. 177/732 C).

 $<sup>^{29}</sup>$  Διὸ οὕτε ὑπόστασιν ἔχει τὸ κακόν, ἀλλὰ παρυπόστασιν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἕνεκα καὶ οὐχ ἑαυτοῦ γινόμενον (DN

<sup>4:31;</sup> p. 176-177/732 C). <sup>30</sup> For the problem of pre-Fall imperfection of Adam in a larger patristic context, s. J.-Cl. Larchet, *La* divinisation de l'homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur. Théologie et sciences religieuses. Cogitatio Fidei; Paris, Cerf, 1986, 178-186, and A. Radosavljević, "Le problème du 'présupposé' ou du 'non-présupposé' de l'Incarnation de Dieu le Verbe," in: F. Heinzer, C. von Schönborn (eds.), Maximus Confessor. Actes du Symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur. Fribourg, 2-5 septembre, 1980. Paradosis 27; Fribourg : 1982, 376-383.

(if something exists, then, it exists with necessity).

On the other side, however, both evil and original imperfection of creatures prevent from being true the reverse axiom, the so-called Modal axiom (M):

$$(\mathbf{M}) \qquad \Box A {\rightarrow} A$$

(if something is necessary, it is the case that it is). In fact, many things which are necessary according to the *logoi* of Providence are still or forever not present.

If we apply NR to the original condition of the created being, we have not to forget that this being is, in turn, the possibility of the eventual deification. Thus, seen from the highest layer of the ontological hierarchy, the initial condition of being is only a possibility (s. below, section 2.4).

The Providence does not lead anybody somewhere against his own will. It only supports and preserves the free will of those who have it (who are, in Dionysius' terms, "self-moving"):

This is why we do not accept the senseless argument of many those who say: "It is suiting to the Providence to lead us to the virtue even unwillingly, because the corruption of the nature is not [compatible with *or* an act of] the Providence." The Providence is making provision to preserve each nature of the self-moving ones as self-moving, for all of them in general as well as for each of them in particular, conformably to both general and particular."<sup>31</sup>

This aim of preserving the "self-movability" has priority over the necessity of the divine plan of deification/salvation, although this plan, certainly, is a necessity. This is the point where the Areopagite (and the Eastern patristic tradition in general) is incompatible with all kinds of Augustinism, even with the softest versions of Leibniz and the like-minded Jesuits. Dionysius explicitly proclaims that the free will of the rational beings is more important in the eyes of God than his own plan and his own will that all will be saved.

This is why, in the created world, it is a weaker axiom that takes place instead of the axiom M. It is the Deontic axiom (D):

(D)  $\Box A \rightarrow \Diamond A$ 

(whatever is necessary is possible). This axiom is analogous to the axiom of the deontic logic  $OA \rightarrow PA$  (whatever is obligatory is permitted), but here we are dealing with the ontology and not with norms.

Here a real parallel with Leibniz's way of thinking is striking. Leibniz derived his deontic modal logic from the alethic one. <sup>32</sup> In both cases, the point of depart was the alethic modality in Aristotle.

In the Areopagite, unlike Aristotle, the ontology is grounded on the will of God and his Providence, and so, it allows unrealised necessities, and the axiom M does not hold. As to Leibniz, any comparison here is more difficult because we still have no study of his late version of the modal logic of the possible worlds, which would take into account the "moral necessity" for God. We will readdress this issue below (section 2.3).

Before to proceed further, we can discuss shortly applicability of other well-known modal axioms to Dionysius' universe.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup>Διὸ καὶ τὸν εἰκαῖον τῶν πολλῶν οὐκ ἀποδεξόμεθα λόγον, οἳ χρῆναί φασι τὴν πρόνοιαν καὶ ἄκοντας ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρετὴν ἄγειν, τὸ γὰρ φθεῖραι φύσιν οὐκ ἔστι προνοίας. Ὅθεν ὡς πρόνοια τῆς ἑκάστου φύσεως σωστικὴ τῶν αὐτοκινήτων ὡς αὐτοκινήτων προνοεῖ καὶ τῶν ὅλων καὶ τῶν καθ' ἕκαστον οἰκείως ὅλῳ καὶ ἑκάστῳ (DN 4:33; p. 178/733 B). Tr. is mine.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> W. Lenzen, "Leibniz on Alethic and Deontic Modal Logics," in: D. Berlioz, F. Nef (eds.), *Leibniz et les puissances du language*. Histoire de la philosophie; Paris: Vrin, 2005, 341-362.

Nothing is preventing applicability of the Distribution axiom (now called K, after Saul Kripke):

(K)  $\Box(A \rightarrow B) \rightarrow (\Box A \rightarrow \Box B)$ 

The meaning of this axiom in Dionysius' world is that, in the created beings, the causality takes place, and it is distributive in the sense that the Providence governs both individual beings and their mutual relations (cf. the passage from DN 4:33 quoted in the previous section). The axiom K is normally accepted in the deontic logic, and so, we have here one more mark of deontic nature of our ontology.<sup>33</sup>

However, all the iteration axioms (S4, S5, B) are highly problematic. Out of hand, we can see inapplicability of iteration of necessity, that is, the axiom S4:

 $\Box A {\rightarrow} \Box \Box A$ (S4)

Necessity is depending directly from God (his divine *logoi*), and so, there is no room to necessitate it additionally.

Generally, we can suppose that the whole ontology of Dionysius is an alethic logic constructed after some patterns, which are more familiar to the modern reader as deontic ones, but we still have to continue our observations.

### 2. Being and Well-Being

#### 2.1. Beginning-Middle-End

The created beings were created sinless but imperfect. Thus, they have to become perfect, although they *can* to become, so-to-say, less than perfect. In Maximus the Confessor, we will see a corresponding scheme of different levels of being in a much elaborated form. He discerns between τὸ εἶναι (being), τὸ εὖ εἶναι (well-being), τὸ ἀεὶ εὖ εἶναι (eternal well-being), and even sometimes τὸ φεῦ εἶναι (bad-being). The eternal well-being is the final inconvertible deification, and the bad-being the condition of damnation.<sup>34</sup> Here the very wording of Maximus goes back to Dionysius, whereas Dionysius developed this scheme in a different direction in his doctrine of hierarchies. In one instance (DN 4:1; p. 144/696 A), Dionysius discerns between "being" (tò εἶναι) and "well-being" (τὸ εὖ εἶναι) of the rational creatures, where the latter term is clearly denoting their final condition in accordance with the divine Providence.

Nevertheless, in Dionysius, as well as in Maximus, the number of the levels of being is three, and this is to be seen not only from the structure of the threefold Dionysian hierarchies but also his ontology in general, that is, including the non-rational beings which are not members of the hierarchies. God "...contains in advance in himself, said Dionysius, the beginnings, the middles, and the ends of the beings as unrelated (to them) and drawn away."<sup>35</sup> The beginning, the middle, and the end as the three-stage way of deification are also familiar in Maximus. This three-stage scheme is universal for the whole creation and is not limited to the Dionysian hierarchies of the rational beings. The hierarchies are its particular cases.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Thus, the axioms K and NR, taken together, could lead to the well-known in the deontic logic Good Samaritan paradox. Indeed, this is a frequent question for the theodicy: whether the wounded man met by the Good Samaritan was ought to be wounded... This paradox is to be resolved in the same way as it is done in the deontic logic (the scope of the deontic operator is in fact not the situation as a whole but only its particular constituents). It is possible to trace in Dionysius a similar way of thinking (when he subtly discerns between the good which is present in every situation and the evil which is not ought to be and even has no being, cf. above), but we will not go deeper into this matter.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Larchet, *La divinisation de l'homme...*, 165-174.
<sup>35</sup> ... ἀρχὰς καὶ μέσα καὶ τέλη τῶν ὄντων ἀσχέτως καὶ ἐξῃρημένως ἐν ἑαυτῷ προειληφώς (DN 5:8; p. 187/824 B).

The logic of the way from the being to the well-being is basically the same as the logic of not to fall away from the being (that is, not to sin/to do evil) that we have discussed above. It is also an alethic logic which looks, to the modern reader, as a deontic one. The well-being is necessary because it is the aim of the divine Providence. However, it is not the case that the axiom M holds: nobody is leaded to the deification without his own free work for this. Thus, for some individuals, the necessity of deification could never be effectuated.

One can say that the sin is alethically forbidden, whereas the deification is alethically obligatory. Such a terminology could be adequate for an ontology constructed as a rational plan (implying laws and norms) which was at the beginning nowhere accomplished and can even fail in some parts.

What is alethically forbidden leads outside the being as such, to the non-being which is the evil. One can say, it this context, that the Hell is a gathering of the individuals which lost their existence without ceasing to be individuals. These individuals preserve their individualities when losing their being. Such formulations, however, would lead us beyond the texts of Dionysius, who was not elaborating on this. It is clear, however, that those who are sinning without repentance (in Dionysian terms, are not among those who are "purified," not to say of those who are "illuminated" or "perfected") eventually put themselves outside hierarchies, and so, have no accesses even to the "beginning" of the three-stage ontological staircase. They are certainly outside Dionysian ontology.

Dionysius is certainly not among those who resolve the problem of ontological status of the eternal damnation by denying its eternity<sup>36</sup> (as were, in his time, the Origenists). But he excluded the eternally damned from the being itself.<sup>37</sup>

It is important to us that both Dionysian being and well-being are to be understood within the unique modal scheme of an alethic logic which is, if seen "from the viewpoint of God," a deontic logic, whose axioms we have just started to explicate.

# 2.2. Deontic Logic of Ascetics

To go further in understanding Dionysius' ontology and the corresponding alethic logic, it is useful to see how the deontic-like alethic logic of Dionysius diverges from his own deontic logic, that is, the deontic logic which is implied in his works.

The issues dealt with by Dionysius are almost exclusively of ascetical nature and not those of the canonical law. Thus, his deontic logic is not a logic of prohibitions and their transgressions (which is to be expected in any logic of law, the Church law being not an exception), but rather a logic of, so-to-say, normative ideals, that is, the ideals which are taken as norms. These norms are not prohibitions of some acts (such as, e.g., the ten "Do not" in the Decalogue of Moses) but rather prescriptions of performing some acts.

Indeed, Dionysius almost everywhere refers to some ideal models of behaviour, whereas, normally, does not discuss another kind of norms, namely, the limits that should not be transgressed.<sup>38</sup> In Dionysius' system, these are the models which are provided by the higher hierarchical orders to the inferior ones, and especially by the angels to the humans.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Cf. *Epistle* 8:6; p. 191-192/1100 CD: a vision of the eternal abyss with snakes and *men* attributed to apostle Carpus. Cf. also the previous passage where the author explicitly claims that there are two "lots (λήξεις)" "in the eternal age (εἰς τὸν ἀεἰ ὄντα αἰῶνα)" for the humans, together with either angels or demons (8:5; p. 187-188/1096 D-1097 B).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> We have to refrain from further speculations about possible understanding of the ontology of eternal damnation in the *Corpus Areopagiticum*, because we are limited to the available texts. To my opinion, it must be considered within the patristic philosophical traditions, where the notion "hypostasis" was defined as something irreducible to its "constituents," that is, the essence and the individual *idiomata*. Cf., in the 6<sup>th</sup> cent., Eulogius of Alexandria and, in the 9<sup>th</sup> cent., Theodore the Stoudite. Cf. B. Lourié, "Le second iconoclasme en recherche de la vraie doctrine," *Studia Patristica* 34 (2000): 145-169.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> The most important exclusion from this rule forms the *Epistle* 8, where Dionysius discusses the consequences of breaking Church hierarchical order.

This corresponds to the following axiom of some deontic logics<sup>39</sup>:

 $(OM) O(OA \rightarrow A)$ 

It means that it ought to be the case that if A ought to be the case, then it is the case.

The meaning of OM as a normative axiom of ascetics (of course, far from being limited to Dionysius' works) could be shown clearer using Kripke frames. Let we have a frame  $\langle W, R, f_i \rangle$ , where W is a non-empty set of possible worlds  $\{w_i\}$  (that is, in deontic logic, possible lines of behaviour), R is the accessibility relation between the possible worlds, and  $f_i$  is an intensional in the sense of Montague, that is, an assignment function with assigns truth values to the sentences in the possible world  $w_i$ . Let R is interpreted so that  $w_i R w_j$  iff (if and only if)  $w_j \in M$ , and M is a non-empty subset of W containing only perfect lines of behaviour (those of angels and somewhat idealised saints). Thus, the axiom OM corresponds to the following truth condition (T means "True"):

 $f_i(OA) = T \operatorname{iff} f_i(A) = T \operatorname{for all} w_i \in M.$ 

In other words, there is some group of individuals (namely, the angels and idealised images of saints) for whom the deontic analogue of the modal axiom M holds. Thus, for them,  $OA \rightarrow A$ : they always perform everything that is obligatory. The axiom OM establishes that all others must follow their example (and not any other example), even if it is not always the case.

The accessibility relation *R* is in this case shift reflexive. It differs from the reflexive relation, which would correspond to the modal axiom M:  $w_i R w_i$ , that is, in our previous terms, to the case of M = W instead of *M* being a subset of *W* never equal to *W*.

Let us retain, from the above discussion, that the deontic logic of Dionysius leaves room to the possibility of not obeying the norms.<sup>40</sup> His deontic-like alethic logic will look quite different.

# 2.3. Alethic Logic with Unique Accessibility Relation

Dionysius proposes the irreversible deification as the final condition of the rational beings (and, through them, of the whole world) that *ought* to be eventually met. Those who eventually fail to be deified (= saved), will put themselves out of being. Thus, there is no *ontological* alternative to this path along which the rational creatures are leaded by the Providence. The only alternative is negation of any kind of ontology.

Such situation corresponds to the axiom CD known from a very specific kind of deontic logic:

(CD)  $\Diamond A \rightarrow \Box A$ 

which says that it is possible only what is necessary. Together with the axiom D, it results into logical equivalency between the possibility and the necessity:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Cf., for this and the next section, J. W. Garson, *Modal Logic for Philosophers*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006, 108-111.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Our survey of Dionysius' deontic logic is simplified, because it does not take into account that the same deontic scheme is recursively repeated on different levels of hierarchies. It is only important to us that the shift reflexivity is preserved in each link of these recursive chains. For "theomimetic" function of Dionysian hierarchies, s. A. Golitzin, Et introibo ad altare Dei. *The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita, with Special Reference to Its Predecessors in the Eastern Christian Tradition.* Ἀνάλεκτα Βλατάδων 59; Thessalonique: Πατριαρχικὸν «Τδρυμα Πατερικῶν Μελετῶν, 1994, 137-139.

# $A \leftrightarrow \Box A$

It is not stating that they are the same but only that they are logically equivalent while being different. Thus, if, in our case, the iteration axiom S4 is inapplicable, the same are other iteration axioms (S5 and B), which involve the operator of possibility.

The accessibility relation in the corresponding Kripke frame is unique. This means that if  $w_k R w_i$  and  $w_k R w_j$ , then  $w_i = w_j$ .

The kind of deontic logic all this reminds of is that of *The Brave New World* of Aldous Huxley (1932): it is permitted only what is obligatory. However, in Dionysius' case, it is not a deontic logic (his deontic logic, as we have seen, is quite different). It is alethic logic.<sup>41</sup>

The free will has possibility of not obeying the Providence, but the ontology has no such possibility. Thus, in the cases where the free will and the Providence become incompatible, the free will can act only as a negation of some part of being. Otherwise it acts for acquiring more being (that is, to ascend to higher levels of being).

It is interesting that Leibniz's and his Jesuit predecessor's logic of the "moral necessity" imposed on the divine Providence leads to the same kind of logic. Thus, for God, the domain of possible concerning his providential acts is restricted to the domain of (morally) necessary. This logic can be understood as an alethic logic on which the Pre-established Harmony is founded. Nevertheless, "from God's point of view," as it was formulated, it is a deontic logic whose accessibility relation is unique. Unlike *The Brave New World*, Leibniz and Spanish Jesuits imposed on God and not on the feeble humans the burden of deontic logic with the unique accessibility relation.<sup>42</sup>

To Dionysius, as well as the Eastern patristic thought in general, it would be theologically impossible to speak about God in any deontic categories. Indeed, even in the Western tradition, the idea of "moral *necessity*" for God was unfamiliar and much controversial. However, the Providence and the free will are harmonized through a similar logical structure, whereas in ontological categories related to the created being and not in the deontic categories related to God. In both cases it is unique accessibility relation that was required.

## 2.4. Hierarchies: Recursive Structures Based on Logical Square

The different levels of Dionysius' ontology are connected to his teaching on hierarchies. This part of his doctrine is and was the most famous throughout the centuries.<sup>43</sup> The hierarchies in a multi-level ontology could be interpreted, as it is clear *a priori*, as some different modal states.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Another side of this difference is that the deontic logic of *The Brave New World* becomes easily derivable from the alethic logic of Eastern patristics, providing that the ontology is changed. Such a shift would result in a rather radical change of the meaning for the situation when somebody freely put himself outside the predestined order, and so, the ontology as well. In both logics, there is some providence, but any free individual can act against it; in both logics, the final result of such actions is losing of one's being—although not in the same sense (because the ontologies are different).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> The modal logic of Leibniz is still a discussed matter. Cf. Lenzen's conclusion: "...since in Leibniz's work nothing corresponds to the accessibility relation among worlds. Therefore it is almost impossible to decide which of the diverse modern systems like T, S4, S5, etc. best conforms with Leibniz's views" (Lenzen, "Leibniz on Alethic and Deontic Modal Logics," 357). Probably, at least, in some cases the accessibility relation is defined, such as it is certainly defined in Leibniz's logic of "moral necessity." It is also doubtful that Leibniz did not have different systems of modal logic for different cases. It is in this light that one can consider apparent inconsistencies of Leibniz's modal logic; cf. F. Nef, "La philosophie modale de Leibniz est-elle cohérente ? Essai sur des problèmes d'interprétation de notions modales leibniziennes à propos du mythe de Sextus et de l'oracle de Kegila," in: D. Berlioz, F. Nef (eds.), *L'actualité de Leibniz : les deux labyrinthes*, Studia Leibnitiana supplementa 34; Stuttgart: Steiner, 1999, 277-305.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> On the Dionysian hierarchies and their theological context, s. Gollitzin, Et introibo ad altare Dei, 135-141 *et passim*.

Basically, in Dionysius, the hierarchies are particular cases of the beginning—middle end triad (s. above, section 1.3) realised in the rational creatures. In rational creatures, the beginning corresponds to "purification ( $\kappa \alpha \theta \alpha \rho \sigma \iota \varsigma$ )," the middle to "illumination ( $\varphi \omega \tau \iota \sigma \mu \phi \varsigma$ )," and the end to "perfection ( $\tau \epsilon \lambda \epsilon (\omega \sigma \iota \varsigma)$ " (with some different synonymous terms). The angels are organised into three triads, thus forming the nine  $\tau \alpha \xi \epsilon \iota \varsigma$  ("ranks") of the heavenly hierarchies. The triadic structure within each angelic triad is thus recursively repeated on the level of mutual connexions between the three triads themselves.

The human hierarchies are two, one of the ancient Old Testament hierarchy, and another one of the actual New Testament Church hierarchy (the main topic of Dionysius' book *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*). Finally, there is another kind of human hierarchy, not quite explicit in Dionysius, which is the hierarchy of human personal sainthood; its highest level is the mystical experience described in the book *On Mystical Theology* which corresponds to the human condition of the mystery of monasticism (according to ch. 6 of the *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* called "The Mystery of the Monastic Perfection" — Μυστήριον μοναχικῆς τελειώσεως).

Without going deeper into theological details, let us consider the formal structure common to all the Dionysian hierarchies. We have already touched this problem when discussing the evil as negation of being. Moreover, it is clear from the above (section 2.3) that the being in its primordial condition (which is the same as its "purified" condition) is a kind of possibility.<sup>44</sup> The created being is a possibility of further deification. The deified condition ("perfection") is necessity, that is, the full realisation of being (on the level available for a given hierarchical triad).

There is, here, a specific effect of the multi-layer ontology: what is necessary when seen from its own ontological level becomes an unrealised possibility when seen from a higher level of being.

The whole scheme looks as follows. The possibility corresponds to the state of being ("beginning"), the necessity corresponds to the state of deification ("perfection"), the external negation corresponds to the evil-being (which is not a being at all), and, finally, the internal negation corresponds to the possibility of some other being, which is, in the Dionysian system, the middle, "illumination."

The Dionysian "illumination" implies that there is something added to the original being but still not transforming this being itself, as it will be in the "perfection," when this illumination will be internalised.

The number three which is the numerical core of all Dionysian hierarchies is thus not arbitrary. However, one can add that when Dionysius writes "three," he has in mind "four," because there is always the fourth condition, that of falling away from the hierarchy (and the being as such) because of the evil.

Now we are able to provide a quite concise formulation of what is the evil, according to Dionysius, and why it is not any kind of being. From the logical point of view, the evil is a connective, namely, the external negation of the being.

# 3. Conclusion

The modal ontology of Dionysius the Areopagite is a recursive scheme of hierarchies, whose base case (repeated recursively in all hierarchies) is the unique triad "beginning middle—end," which correspond to the full logical square. Namely, the "beginning" is possibility, which is the being in its created (or purified) state; the "middle" is internal negation of possibility, that is, possibility of something else, which corresponds to "illumination"; the "end" is necessity, or dual of possibility; moreover, the external negation of possibility (=

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Here we have a striking similarity with Leibniz's understanding of being as possibility: "L'essence dans le fond n'est autre chose que la possibilité de ce qu'on propose" (*Nouveaux Essais* III, III, 15) etc. ; s., for the details, J. Vilmer, "Possibilité et existentiabilité chez Leibniz," *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 104 (2006): 23-45.

impossibility) is the result of the evil. The evil itself is a logical connective (external negation) and not any kind of being.

The axioms of the corresponding alethic logic are K + D + CD.

Such a modal ontology, regardless of its theological context and commitment, has much in common with that of Leibniz and his Spanish Jesuit predecessors, but, however, many things are different. The most striking differences in logical systems follow directly from the theological disagreements. Eastern doctrines of deification together with the "Semi-Pelagianism" were far behind the horizon of the Western thought. Moreover, the Western doctrine of "moral necessity" imposed on the divine Providence was an attempt of an "objectivist" description of a non-classical (non-Aristotelian) logical object, whereas the Eastern ("Semi-Pelagian") synergy doctrine was not an "objectivistic" one, and so, the two approaches could be compared, respectively, to Erwin Schrödinger's and Werner Heisenberg's approaches to the quantum reality.

It is noteworthy that, in both Dionysius and Leibniz, the harmonisation of the divine Providence with the ability of the free will to choose the evil is effectuated with a modal logic with the unique accessibility relation, whereas, in Leibniz, it is the deontic logic of the "moral necessity" for God, whereas, in Dionysius (and the Eastern patristic tradition in general), it is the alethic logic for the ontology of the created world.