

**Vadim Lourie (with the assistance of Vladimir Baranov),
The History of Byzantine Philosophy: The Formative Period,
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Focusing on the “formative period” of Byzantine philosophy, Basil Lourié limits the upper chronological limit of his book by the twelfth century. In the Introduction, Lourié offers a distinction between the two types of philosophy in Byzantium – the Byzantine philosophy proper and “the classic philosophy in Byzantium.” The former is understood as philosophical framework used for expressing Christian theological doctrines in Byzantium. The latter kind of “Byzantine philosophy” is understood as the tradition of studying and commenting upon classic philosophical texts in the Byzantine period. However, that type of philosophical thought did not formulate nor solve the problems crucial to the Byzantine philosophy proper (pp.15-16). While Lourié considers the fourth century to be the beginning of the Byzantine Empire as a political structure, he thinks that in fact the beginning of the (pre-) Byzantine philosophical thinking started in the second century, thus claiming that the philosophical tradition of Byzantium predated its own civilization (p.17). After reviewing some Trinitarian doctrines of the third-early fourth centuries, Lourié turns to the development of such fundamental categories of Byzantine philosophy as “substance” and “hypostasis,” related to the need of describing the triune God. Lourié offers a conceptual framework for understanding the divine unity and triplicity in Byzantine thought, giving an example from the realm of quantum physics, where one and the same phenomenon may be described in a mutually exclusive manner (pp.68-69). In his analysis of the theological doctrines of the Arians, Athanasius of Alexandria and the Homoiousians, particular attention is paid to the history of the concept of consubstantiality as well as the role of the Anomean doctrine for the development of the conceptual tools for the notions of hypostasis and hypostatic “idiomata” by the Cappadocian Fathers (pp.73-76).

Reflecting on the Arian controversy in the fourth century, Lourié argues that the Orthodox Trinitarian concept, developed in the fourth century, implied the soteriology consonant with the principle of complementarity (in the sense of Niels Bohr) –

namely, the concept of deification (“both God and man”), while the Arian Trinitarian doctrine implied the soteriology which could not transcend the logic of the excluded middle of Aristotle (“either God or man”) (p.74). After a brief overview of the Christological doctrine of Apollinaris of Laodicea and the debate with this doctrine on the part of Gregory of Nazianzus, Lourié dwells on the Cappadocian doctrine of substance and hypostasis.

Lourié points to the Aristotelian background in the Nicene understanding of the category of substance, and raises the question on the general understanding of the problem of universals in Byzantine theology. On the basis of L. Benakis, Lourié comes to the conclusion that moderate realism (with some occasional inclinations to nominalism) was the general trend in the understanding of universals in Byzantine philosophy. According to Lourié, this position was definitively codified in the Byzantine philosophical thought through the School of Ammonius of Alexandria, which was influential for the Christians (p.82). In our view, this claim is not entirely correct, since starting with Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (*De div. nom.* V3, 5-6), the concept of the hierarchy of the universal principles underlying created beings, was introduced. This hierarchical structure implied the understanding of universals in the sense of traditional realism. Pseudo-Dionysius took this concept from Proclus (*Instit. Theol.* 101; *Theol. Plat.* 3,3,131); following Dionysius it was taken up by Maximus the Confessor (*Amb.* VII: PG 91, 1080A-B), John of Damascus (*Exp. fidei* 4 XIII 86), Gregory Palamas (*Particip.* IX–XI, *Dial. orthod. et Barl.* XLVII; *Acind.* V, 27; *De un. et dist.* XVI), and other Byzantine writers. Thus, we may say that at least two ways of interpreting universals co-existed in Byzantine philosophy – moderate realism and “traditional” realism. Moreover, when Lourié refers to the novelty of the Cappadocian philosophical system which manifested itself in the development of the concept of hypostasis and the hypostatic idiomata as well as in the formulation of the concept of three hypostases of the Trinity, he, unfortunately, does not mention the background of the concept of hypostasis in Christian philosophy. This concept was already used by Origen (*In Joann.* II 10,75,1-2) and was borrowed by the Nicene Fathers probably from the Homoiousians together with the concept of “hypostatic idiomata” (Epiph. *Panar.* 73,16; 288,20–31). Further, on the basis of the words of

Gregory of Nazianzus who defines hypostasis as “that in which (τὰ ἐν οἷς ἡ θεότης)” (*Or.* 31,14,10) the substance is, it is suggested (p.83) that the Cappadocian Fathers understood the hypostasis as a “container” for substance (in this passage, without acknowledging it, Lourié was probably following John Meyendorff, (in: *Le Christ dans la theologie byzantine*, Paris 1968, p.88).

According to Lourié, the balance between oneness and triplicity of the Godhead is maintained in the theological language of the Cappadocians by the simultaneous use of two different conceptual systems – the Aristotelian concept of individuals and species, and the concept which viewed the hypostasis as a kind of container for substance (pp.84-85). Further, speaking about the distinction of substance and hypostasis, Lourié makes another controversial statement. According to him, besides the distinction between the substance and the hypostasis as the general and the particular, the Cappadocians believed that hypostasis contained nothing else but the substance (pp.84-85; 89). This claim is objectionable since the language of the general and particular, going back to Aristotle, implied the concept of hypostatic *idiomata* which singled out a particular hypostasis while not being a part of the general substance (*Arist. Metaph.* B 3,998b23-27; cf. (ps.) Basil. (Greg. Nyss.), *Ep.* 38 2,11-16). In this respect, hypostatic *idiomata* is something in the hypostasis which does not belong to substance.

Turning to the fifth century, Lourié makes a general overview of the Christian polemics with Platonism, considers the understanding of the concepts of “person” and “hypostasis” in the Antiochene School, in Nestorius, and at the Council of Ephesus, as well as the formula *μία φύσις* in the Christology of Cyril of Alexandria. The doctrine of the Council of Chalcedon is briefly analyzed. For explaining the scope of the theological developments in the sixth century, an image of three conventional coordinate axes is used. Each of the axes had a non-zero projection in the theological disputes of the sixth century: 1) the relation of the hypostasis of the Incarnated Logos to other hypostases of the Trinity; 2) the problem of a single or double subject of the Incarnated Logos, and 3) the relation of Christ’s flesh to the hypostasis of the Incarnated Logos prior to the Resurrection (pp.131-132). The doctrines of such Monophysite theologians as Philoxenus of Mabbug and Severus of Antioch are presented in accordance with these themes. In the

same context Lourié examines the polemics of John the Grammarian and Leontius of Jerusalem with Severus of Antioch on the understanding of Christ's "consubstantiality with us," built upon interpretations of the human nature of Christ as a general nature or particular nature. The doctrine of the Chalcedonians associated with the formation of the single-subject Christology is analyzed with a particular attention to the Theopaschite controversy (pp.140-145) and the teaching of the Fifth Council of Constantinople (pp.145-148). The history of Origenism in the sixth century is outlined along with the Origenist features in the doctrine of Leontius of Byzantium (pp.154-157). After reviewing the Agnoite doctrine, Lourié turns to the early polemics around the single or double activity of Christ and goes on to describe two different currents inside the Monophysite movement, the Severians and the Julianists (pp.172-201), and their views on (in-)corruptability of the body of Christ before the Resurrection, drawing in a wider context of the polemics concerning the qualities of the dead body of Christ in the Latin West in the fifth–sixth centuries. On the basis of different understanding of the notions of inherited and original sin, grace, corruptability, and human nature, in his detailed analysis of these controversies Lourié distinguishes four anthropological models and five soteriological models. In addition, he provides a detailed table of the Julianist divisions (p.199). In his discussion of the Trinitarian and Origenist controversies within the Monophysite movement, Lourié sees the foundations of the Monophysite Trinitarian doctrine, first, in the adherence to the principles of the Aristotelian logic which mandated only one nature for one hypostasis, and, secondly, in a specific understanding of the doctrine of Cyril of Alexandria. Considering the Tritheism of John Philoponus, Lourié again addresses the problem of the universals, and argues that the Tritheist Trinitarian doctrine of John Philoponus implies the nominalist understanding of the universals (pp.321-322; however cf. pp.210-211). This claim does not seem to be accurate. Even though John Philoponus denied the real existence of a single substance common for the individuals, he claimed that the same common substance is ontologically different in each of the individuals. This suggests that these individuals belong to the same species (cf. *Arbit.* 7) in the sense that they share certain common properties regardless of whether they share a common substance. Thus, according to John Philoponus,

a certain commonness with respect to individuals exists in reality, and in this sense we can speak of his understanding of the universals in the sense of moderate realism (This understanding of the Philoponian doctrine of the universals is shared by: U. Lang, *John Philoponus and the Controversies Over Chalcedon in the Sixth Century: A Study and Translation of the Arbiter*, London 2001, pp.56-57. Instead, John Philoponus is regarded as a nominalist (position probably followed by Basil Lourié) by: E. G. T. Booth, *John Philoponos, Christian and Aristotelian Conversion*, London 1982, pp.407-411; R. Cross, *Perichoresis, Deification, and Christological Predication in John of Damascus*, "Mediaeval Studies", 62 (2000), pp.76-77; Id., *Individual Natures in the Christology of Leontius of Byzantium*, "Journal of Early Christian Studies", 10 (2002), pp.251-252 John Philoponus is regarded as a nominalist. The latter position was probably followed by Basil Lourié).

In the subsequent part of the book, Lourié analyzes the important but little-studied doctrine of Eulogius of Alexandria who polemicized with various trends of the Monophysite Trinitarian doctrine concerning the understanding of divine simplicity in the context of discussion about hypostasis as a "composition" of substance and the hypostatic "idiomata".

The chapter on the Iconoclastic controversy was written jointly with Vladimir Baranov. The Origenist inspiration behind Iconoclastic doctrines is discussed as well as doctrines of worship and veneration, body and soul of Christ, and the Eucharist from the viewpoints of the Iconoclasts and the Iconophiles. The concept of the "intrinsic image" (χαρακτήρ) (pp.412-415), the place of the theory of names in the Iconophile theology, various concepts of the symbol and image (p.451ff.) as well as Christological doctrine of non-reduction of the hypostasis to the combination of nature and hypostatic properties are analyzed in the chapter (pp.459-460).

This study of the formative period of Byzantine philosophy is concluded with brief description of some major problems which Byzantine thought faced in the ninth–eleventh centuries, including the controversy over theology of icons and Christology between Leo of Chalcedon and Eustratius of Nicaea (pp.462-489).