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ESSENCE AND ENERGIES: BEING AND NAMING GOD IN ST GREGORY PALAMAS

Tikhon Pino



Essence and Energies: Being and Naming God in St Gregory Palamas

St. Gregory Palamas (ca. 1296–1357) is among the most well-known and celebrated theologians of Late Byzantium. This book provides a comprehensive account of the essence–energies distinction across his twenty-five treatises and letters written over a twenty-year period.

An Athonite monk, abbot, and later Metropolitan of Thessalonica, Gregory is remembered especially for his distinction between God’s essence and energies, and his celebrated doctrine still generates a great deal of debate. What does Palamas actually mean by the term *energies*? Are they ‘activities’ that God performs, and if so, how can they be eternal and uncreated? Indeed, how could God be simple if he possesses energies distinct from his essence? Going beyond the *Triads* and the *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, this book explores Palamas’s answers to these long-standing questions by analyzing all the treatises produced by Palamas between 1338 and 1357. It seeks to understand what Palamas means when he speaks of God’s *energies*, how he seeks to prove that they are distinct from the divine essence, and how he explains that this distinction in no way violates the unity and simplicity of the one God in Trinity.

Essence and Energies is a useful resource for upper-level undergraduates, postgraduates, and scholars interested in Byzantine theology in the fourteenth century.

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Preface

The present work is not devotional reading. Nor is it intended as an *apologia* for the person and theological positions of St Gregory Palamas. It seeks, rather, to give an objective and well-documented account of Gregory's teaching on essence and energies in order to help scholars and students make sense of a difficult topic and understand what Palamas himself actually taught. Although this study frequently endeavors to make sense of and explicate Gregory's ideas and formulations, it does so through a close exegesis of Gregory's own writings and broader theological context, without attempting to adjudicate the theological debates in which he was involved. It would nevertheless be disingenuous to pretend that I do not consider St Gregory Palamas a great saint and Father of the Church or that I have not enjoyed spending the last several years of my life in the close company of his writings. It is always a privilege to undertake research that one finds meaningful and personally rewarding, and this has certainly been the case with the present study.

This book began as a doctoral dissertation in the Department of Theology at Marquette University, and I am grateful to the teachers, colleagues, and friends at Marquette from whom I learned so much and with whom I spent one of the most enjoyable periods of my life. The research presented here is especially indebted to Michel Barnes, Mark Johnson, Michael Cover, and, above all, my supervisor, Marcus Plested, without whom this project could not have been completed. I am also grateful to Fr Maximos Conostas, who first taught me, and showed me, what it means to be a scholar. I have benefited endlessly from his time, guidance, and experience over the last decade, and he was, in many ways, the inspiration for this study. Special thanks go also to John Mark Miravalle, who generously read the manuscript and whose friendship has contributed in a unique way to the sharpening of my mind and ideas over these many years. Further thanks are due also to Norman Russell, Fr Alexis Torrance, and David Bradshaw, who have been exceedingly gracious and generous in their feedback and support.

On a different level entirely, this book would not have been possible without the support of my wife, Daria, who has done more to encourage me, professionally and emotionally, than any person reasonably should. I was able to pursue this work only because she fills every other aspect of my life with meaning and comfort, and I am grateful to her, and to our children, Tamara, Nikolai, Maksim, Ilaria, and Kallistos, for their companionship and unconditional love.

Abbreviations

CAG	Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca
CE	Gregory of Nyssa, <i>Contra Eunomium</i>
CCSG	Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca
DN	Dionysios the Areopagite, On the <i>Divine Names</i>
ECQ	<i>Eastern Churches Quarterly</i>
EO	<i>Échos d'Orient</i>
GNO	Werner Jaeger et al. <i>Gregorii Nysseni Opera</i> . Leiden: Brill, 1960–.
JÖB	<i>Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
OCP	<i>Orientalia Christiana Periodica</i>
PG	J.-P. Migne, ed. <i>Patrologia Graeca</i> . Paris, 1857–1866.
PS	Panagiotes K. Chrestou, ed. <i>Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ συγγράματα</i> . 5 vols. Thessaloniki: Kyromanos, 1962-1992.
REB	<i>Revue des études byzantines</i>
SC	Sources Chrésiennes
SVTQ	<i>St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly</i>

Abbreviations of the works of St. Gregory Palamas

<i>Akind.</i>	<i>Antirrhetics against Akindynos</i> . A. Kontogiannes and B. Phanourgakes, ed. PS 3:35–506.
<i>Bas.</i>	<i>On Basil</i> . Panagiotes Chrestou, ed. PS 4:382–389.
<i>Cap.</i>	Robert Sinkewicz, ed. and tr. <i>The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters</i> . Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988.
<i>Conf</i>	<i>Confession of Faith</i> . Giannes Matsoukas, ed. PS 2:494–499.
<i>Cyr.</i>	<i>On Cyril</i> . B. Phanourgakes, ed. PS 4:101–107.
<i>Dial.</i>	<i>Dialogue of an Orthodox with a Barlaamite</i> . Giorgios Mantzarides. PS 2:164–218.
<i>Log.</i>	<i>Expository Oration (Logos Diasaphōn)</i> . Vasileios Phanourgakes, ed. PS 4:85–100.

- Barl.* *That Barlaam and Akindynos Are the Ones who Divide the Godhead.* G. Mantzarides, ed. PS 2:263–277.
- Ekth.* *Ekthesis.* Vasileios Pseftongkas, ed. PS 2:579–586.
- Energ.* *On the Divine Energies.* G. Mantzarides, ed. PS 2:96–136.
- Greg.* *Against Gregoras.* P. Chrestou, ed. PS 4:231–377.
- Hom.* V. Pseuftongkas, ed. *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ συγγράματα.* Vol. 6. Thessaloniki: Kyromanos, 2015.
- Part.* *On Participation.* G. Mantzarides, ed. PS 2:137–163.
- Ref. ep.* *Refutation of the Letter of Kalekas.* V. Pseftongkas, ed. PS 2:587–624.
- Ref. Ign.* *Refutation of Ignatios, Patriarch of Antioch.* V. Pseftongkas, ed. PS 2:625–648.
- Ref. int.* *Refutation of Kalekas’s Interpretation of the Tome.* V. Pseftongkas, ed. PS 2:649–670.
- Theo.* *Theophanes.* G. Mantzarides, ed. PS 2:219–263.
- Tom. hag.* *Hagioretic Tome.* V. Pseftongkas, ed. PS 2:569–578.
- Tr.* Jean Meyendorff, ed. and tr. *Grégoire Palamas, Défense des saints hésychasts. Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes.* Louvain: Spicilegium Lovaniense, 1959.
- Union Ann.* *On Union and Distinction.* G. Mantzarides, ed. PS 2:69–95.
Letter to Anna Palaiologina. Nikolaos A. Matsoukas, ed. PS 2:544–547.
- Arsen.* *Letter to Arsenios the Studite.* N. A. Matsoukas, ed. PS 2:315–324.
- Asan.* *Letter to Paul Asanes.* N.A. Matsoukas, ed. PS 2:363–374.
- Athan.* *Letter to Athanasios of Kyzikos.* N.A. Matsoukas, ed. PS 2:411–454.
- Ep. Barl. 1-2* *Letters to Barlaam.* J Meyendorff, ed. PS 1:225–295.
- Bess.* *Letter to Besarion.* N.A. Matsoukas, ed. PS 2:501–504.
- Dam.* *Letter to Damianos the Philosopher.* N.A. Matsoukas, ed. PS 2:455–477.
- Dan.* *Letter to Daniel of Ainos.* N.A. Matsoukas, ed. PS 2:375–394.
- Dion.* *Letter to Dionysios.* N.A. Matsoukas, ed. PS 2:479–499.
- Elders* *Letter to the Elders of Athos.* N.A. Matsoukas, ed. PS 2:509–515.
- Ep. Akind. 1-3* *Letters to Akindynos.* John Meyendorff, ed. PS 1:203–224; 296–312.
- Gabr.* *Letter to John Gabras.* N.A. Matsoukas, ed. PS 2:325–362.
- Mak. 1-2* *Letters to Makarios.* N.A. Matsoukas, ed. PS 2:505–507; 539–543.
- Phil.* *Letter to Philotheos Kokkinos.* N.A. Matsoukas, ed. PS 2:517–538.
- Sym.* *Letter to Symeon the Nomophylax.* N.A. Matsoukas, ed. PS 2:395–410.



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Introduction

The person and theology of St Gregory Palamas (ca. 1296–1357) achieved remarkable popularity in the twentieth century.¹ A once esoteric name in a neglected period of ecclesiastical history, Gregory Palamas has today become a central figure of academic and ecumenical theology.² Famed for his defense of hesychasm and his doctrine of deification and the uncreated light, Gregory's reception has been linked especially to his distinction between God's essence and energies. This distinction, in its broadest terms, states that God is not only an ineffable *ousia*, essence, or substance but also the plenitude of attributes, names, powers, and activities that human beings predicate of God. These latter, called *energeiai*, activities, or operations, are not only divine but also uncreated and eternal without, at the same time, being reducible to or confused with the divine essence. Although God, in his essence, remains transcendent, unknowable, indefinable, and incommunicable, the properties that characterize God can be known and participated in, so that human beings can share in the divine powers, names, and activities to the extent that these are imparted to creatures.

The merits and orthodoxy of the distinction between God's essence and energies were the cause of vehement controversy in Gregory's own time, sparking bitter polemics and mingling with the animosities of a civil war to produce a protracted theological controversy that would span three decades.³ Beginning in 1337, Gregory had appealed, in his response to Barlaam the Calabrian's anti-Latin treatises, to the category of 'things around God' (τὰ περὶ θεόν) to show that, although God was indeed inconceivable in his essence, there was nevertheless a category of divine realities that could be known and demonstrated.⁴ This same distinction would be invoked again when Barlaam attacked the hesychasts of Thessalonica and Mount Athos, and their method of prayer, in his treatise *Against the Messalians* in 1339–1340.⁵ In defending the hesychasts' vision of God, Palamas would again draw a distinction between God's unknowable essence and the communicable *energeia* 'around the essence,' focusing this time on the uncreated light that was seen by the apostles on Mount Thabor and experienced by the saints as the deifying grace and energy of the Spirit.⁶ In 1341, Barlaam would be condemned by a council in Constantinople for accusing those who distinguished between the divine essence and an eternal, uncreated grace of preaching two Gods.⁷ Yet, at this

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time, ‘another Barlaam’⁸ would raise his head to criticize the Palamite doctrine of grace, the former friend of Palamas, Gregory Akindynos, who continued to argue that only the divine essence and the divine hypostases were uncreated.⁹ Akindynos was particularly opposed to the idea that there was in God anything subordinate and actualized in addition to the active, transcendent divine essence in three Persons. Any *energeia* that was not simply God’s essence or one of the three divine Persons could only be a creature.

Between 1341 and 1347, Akindynos would write copious treatises against Palamas, acquiring numerous allies at the highest levels of ecclesiastical power, including the Patriarch of Constantinople, John Kalekas (who had initially participated in the condemnation of Barlaam) and the Patriarch of Antioch, Ignatios. These ‘successors of Barlaam,’¹⁰ as Palamas called them, would hold sway in the Church until 1347, during which time Palamas and his supporters, including the future patriarch Isidore Boucheiras, suffered imprisonment and persecution.¹¹ Yet it is also during this time that Palamas wrote some of his most important treatises (more than fifteen) on the distinction between God’s essence and energies. The changing of the political tide in 1347 would bring Palamas and his party back to the ascendancy in Constantinople, resulting in another council, which this time condemned Akindynos and his patron Kalekas. At this time, Isidore was installed as Patriarch of Constantinople, and numerous Palamite bishops, including Palamas himself, were elevated to episcopal sees around the empire.

With the supporters of Palamas firmly in power, the theology of the uncreated light and the distinction between God’s essence and energies would continue to be attacked but without any further changes in the fortunes of the Palamite party. The leader of the anti-Palamite movement after Akindynos was the philosopher and polymath Nikephoros Gregoras, against whom Palamas, now Metropolitan of Thessalonica, continued to write antirrhetic treatises. Gregoras and his associates were condemned by another council in Constantinople in 1351, although both Gregoras and Palamas continued their polemic afterward. With the forced abdication of Kantakouzenos in 1354, Gregoras attained an even greater freedom, appearing in a public debate with Palamas in 1355 and going on to write two important *Antirrhetics* against the essence–energies distinction.¹² Over the following decade, important figures of the late Byzantine intelligentsia would continue to resist the official Palamite theology of the Church. But in 1368, some eleven years after his death, Palamas and his theology would be definitively canonized by his friend and ally, the Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos, as integral parts of Orthodox Christian piety and doctrine.¹³

The Scope of the Essence–Energies Distinction

In modern scholarship, it has sometimes been argued that the work of St Gregory Palamas seeks rather to defend the foundations and principles of spiritual experience than to expound an exhaustive and systematic metaphysics of divine being.¹⁴ Clement Lialine summarizes this widespread feeling by

saying that “all his theology tends towards one end, the explanation and justification of a mystical experience.”¹⁵ As an insight into Gregory’s theological project, this point has the merit of reflecting the specific origins of the phase in the controversy that begins with Barlaam’s accusations against the hesychasts. It also has the merit of reflecting Gregory’s own narrative about the motivations behind his polemical project. Although the debates between Palamas and Barlaam had begun, as Marcus Plested notes, “not over techniques of prayer or the vision of divine light but over the correct application of Aristotle,”¹⁶ still, Palamas himself roots the controversy over essence and energies not in their earlier epistemological disagreements but in the debate over the light of Thabor.¹⁷ As we hear in the debate with Nikephoros Gregoras,

The bishop of Thessalonica explained that, when others were ruling the Church and raging, he was called forth on this account, out of necessity, to speak with boldness. This was the beginning of his discourses concerning the divine light of the Lord’s Transfiguration. For Barlaam, and those after him who think like him up until today, said that this light is created, while the bishop of Thessalonica demonstrated that it is uncreated.¹⁸

The nature of the light of the Transfiguration would remain at the center of the debate through every stage of the controversy.¹⁹ Indeed, Palamas himself identifies the uncreated light of Thabor as the underlying concern of his apologetics:

It is necessary to see that our aim and struggle is neither over divinity, simply, nor divine energy, but over the divine and ineffable light, according to which the Savior, shining on the mountain, revealed the brilliance of the divine nature, according to which he communes with the saints. For Barlaam dared to say that this is created, circumscribed, and sensible in the strict sense, coming into existence and then ceasing to exist; and he most necessarily compelled us towards the defense of our common hope, the light of the age to come and of the present age.²⁰

Clearly, for Palamas, the purpose of his theological enterprise was to defend the principle of human communion with God and the content of eschatological beatitude, a reality that has its beginning already in the present life. At one point in his refutation of Akindynos, he will even interrupt a lengthy exploration of essence and energies to remind the reader that, “still, our discussion with Akindynos is not about the *creative* energy, but about the brilliance of God, according to which Christ flashed like lightning around the disciples upon the mountain.”²¹ In this way, even though Palamas’s apologetics involve broad discussion of other, related topics, he always retains the reality of the light of Thabor as his ultimate focus.²² This is seen even in his polemic with Gregoras, where the controversy, having reached the height of

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its philosophical and speculative dimensions, continues to return to the problem of Christ's splendor on Mount Thabor. For this reason, the final two books of the antirrhetics *Against Gregoras* are devoted to "a refutation of the manifold blasphemy of Gregoras against the divine light of the Lord's Transfiguration, and an affirmation, by way of opposition, that it is truly uncreated and eternal."²³ As we have just seen, this is important for Palamas not only as a piece of abstract exegesis but also because the light of Thabor is identified with the deifying light that is the inheritance of the saints, both in this life and in the age to come.²⁴

Still, it must be recognized that Palamas's distinction between essence and energies does not limit itself only to practical considerations. To speak of the essence–energies distinction as "entirely auxiliary" to other doctrinal concerns, even that of deification, as Anna Williams has done, risks minimizing the place of the distinction within Gregory's theological vision in a way that is entirely alien to his discourse.²⁵ Even if Palamas roots his apologetic concerns in the defense of the light of Thabor, he does not subordinate the essence–energies distinction to this point as a matter of principle. Indeed, for Palamas, the uncreated and eternal character of the light of Thabor is, logically, a consequence and byproduct of the more general distinction between essence and energies in God.²⁶ As such, deification, even as its most important outworking, is still only *part* of a theological doctrine with more far-reaching, if relatively less immediate, implications. This is already obvious in the earliest discussions between Palamas and Barlaam, where the distinction between essence and energies arises not in the context of deification proper but as it relates to epistemology and human knowledge of God.²⁷ Indeed, the universal import of the essence–energies distinction is frequently on display in Gregory's writings, and Palamas will occasionally make it explicit. In his letter to Dionysios, he avers that, "indeed, our struggle with the gainsayers is not only about deifying grace, but about *every divine power and energy*. For they denigrate all of them to creatures."²⁸

Regardless of the actual starting point of the controversies with Barlaam, then, or the ultimate scope of the debate with Akindynos, the consequences of Palamas's theology extend far beyond one or two components of the essence–energies distinction and touch on numerous related questions. These include the problem of divine simplicity, infinity, causality, relation, predication, actuality, change, and many others. This is especially true in the controversy with Gregoras, where the dispute, not unexpectedly, becomes more philosophical in tenor.²⁹ Often in Palamas's writings, pragmatic ramifications are far from view, and Palamas is clear that what we say about God and how we conceive of him is, in itself, of vital importance.³⁰ The essence–energies distinction, therefore, cannot be seen simply as subservient to Gregory's more pragmatic concerns. Rather, it constitutes for him a foundational principle of Christian theology that is, in many ways, an end in itself. Indeed, for Palamas, the rejection of the essence–energies distinction is the "conglomeration of every wicked heresy" and has ramifications not only for hesychast experience but for all theology as well.³¹

The Scope, Outline, and Structure of this Study

In attempting to explicate the essence–energies distinction in St Gregory Palamas, this study focuses on the distinction itself and leaves aside many directly related problems and themes. These include, among other things, the sensibility and experience of the light of Tabor, the relationship of the uncreated light to *gnosis* and *theoria*, the nature of theophany generally, the dynamics of deification and human participation in the divine, as well as hesychast prayer and eschatology. Indeed, to the extent that Palamas has much to say about the divine energies themselves beyond their distinction from the divine essence, this book does not seek to present an exhaustive summary of the theology of divine energies *per se*. It leaves aside, for example, a comprehensive account of divine grace and the doctrine of creation, which are otherwise understood by Palamas in terms of the divine and uncreated energies. However, the thought of St Gregory Palamas, which was elaborated in an occasional and prosaic manner over many treatises and letters, does not lend itself to fragmentation and compartmentalization. The focus on one specific theme, therefore, at the expense of others naturally risks distorting the overall portrait of Palamas as a theologian.³² Yet the present study is not intended as a full synopsis of the voluminous and intricate writings of Palamas himself, where the personality and integral theological vision of the saint can be encountered in full. Instead, it seeks to offer a synthetic account of a specific doctrine that has hitherto remained beyond the reach of many precisely because it is developed across a wide range of untranslated texts and embedded in a complex network of related ideas and themes.³³ It is therefore the purpose of this study to draw out this doctrine and bring its constituent parts clearly into view without pretending to offer a complete overview of Palamas and his theological system. One of the things that this book avoids, therefore, is litigating the fidelity of Palamas to earlier patristic tradition. While the relationship between Palamas and his patristic sources is important, a rigorous comparison would require both a comprehensive analysis of Palamas himself and a competent contextual analysis of each patristic author with whom he is being compared. The present study seeks to fill a long-standing gap in the study of St Gregory Palamas by attempting only the former.³⁴ In doing so, it sets out, for the first time, to give a comprehensive overview of the essence–energies distinction across Gregory’s entire corpus by looking closely and carefully at what Palamas himself has to say on this subject.

In seeking, then, to give a new, more complete account of the essence–energies distinction in Palamas, Chapter 1 of this book begins with an exposition of the interpretive paradigms that have dominated the reception of the essence–energies distinction in modernity. This entails a discussion of some of the major figures and secondary literature that have shaped how scholarly and popular audiences alike have understood the idea and the language of uncreated, divine energies (and their relationship to the divine essence) from the early modern period until today. Chapter 1 moves on to explain why a

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new, more exhaustive and far-reaching account of the essence–energies distinction in Palamas is necessary, in spite of all the ink that continues to be spilled on this topic. Specifically, this focuses on the pressing and long-overdue need to study Palamas’s writings in their entirety.

With the second chapter, the book begins an analysis of essence and energies proper, asking specifically what Palamas’s writings reveal to us about the ways that he understands the terms *ousia* and *energeia*. Going beyond the lexical and etymological dimensions of these two Greek terms, it examines the full scope of what Palamas has in mind when he talks about ‘essence’ and ‘energies’ across his many treatises and letters on the subject. In addition to outlining the parameters of *ousia* and the precise referents of *energeia*, this chapter looks at the broad range of synonyms and equivalents that Palamas uses for these terms in order to expand our conception, and the semantic range, of the technical terms *essence* and *energies*.

The third chapter extends the conversation about *energeia* and looks at the ways that ‘energy,’ as God’s activity, operation, or actualization, functions in the theology of St Gregory Palamas. It is particularly concerned with the question of whether the divine energies can be conceived as ‘acts’ or things that God ‘does,’ either in eternity or in time. This question is especially relevant for the metaphysical problems of potency, motion, and change in God, issues with which Palamas had to wrestle in the course of his disputes with Barlaam, Akindynos, and Gregoras.

After these attempts to penetrate and understand the language of essence and energies, and their metaphysical implications, the book turns in its fourth chapter to the actual arguments used by Palamas to defend and justify the distinction *per se* between God’s transcendent *ousia* and his communicable *energies*. It seeks, for the first time, to organize and catalog the many syllogisms, proofs, and arguments for why God’s eternal, uncreated energies cannot simply be identified with his essence. In doing so, it looks especially at the issue of ‘antinomy’ and the vision of God, as well as the problems of participation, deification, and creaturely communion with the uncreated.

The fifth chapter turns next to the problem of unity and divine simplicity. If essence and energy are distinct, in what sense do they constitute one single God? And how can a God whose energies are distinct from his essence be simple? Historically, the problem of divine simplicity as it relates to Palamas has often been bound up with the question of whether the essence–energies distinction is a ‘real distinction.’ This chapter seeks to answer precisely how Palamas himself conceived of God’s unity and the simplicity of God on the basis of his lengthy writings on the subject. Although Palamas himself never uses the term *real distinction*, this chapter also attempts to answer how metaphysics and epistemology are ultimately related in Palamas’s understanding of God, probing Palamas’s corpus for details of his theology that have seldom been uncovered in secondary studies to date.

Finally, the sixth chapter of this book brings together the questions of unity and distinction and examines how Palamas relates his doctrine of essence and energies to Trinitarian theology. Going beyond the simple analogy between the

distinction of Persons and the distinction between essence and energies, this chapter looks at how Palamas roots the very distinction between essence and energies in the theology of the Trinity and relates the problems of his own theological system to traditional questions of Trinitarian theology. This includes, specifically, the problem of the divine names, the particularity of the hypostatic idioms, as well as the simultaneity of unity and distinction in the Divine. For Palamas, it is not simply that the essence–energies distinction is comparable to the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine of essence and energies is itself a feature of Trinitarian theology, without which God could not be who he is, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a single, indivisible essence.

In the Conclusion, the overall findings of our study are brought together to offer the reader a new understanding of the essence–energies distinction, based not on philosophical or theological reflection but on the words of Palamas himself. Here we gesture, also, to some of the work that remains to be done, especially regarding the study of the wider Palamite school and those figures who not only collaborated with St Gregory in his articulation of the essence–energies distinction but also canonized it and transmitted it for future generations in the Church.³⁵

Notes

- 1 For a reasonably up-to-date overview of the life and times of St Gregory Palamas, with an extensive bibliography, see Robert Sinkewicz, “Gregory Palamas,” in G. and V. Conticello (eds.), *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition* 2, 131–188. For an even more comprehensive bibliography, see Mikonja Knežević, *Gregory Palamas (1296–1357): Bibliography*. See, also, Stiennon’s annotated bibliography, “Bulletin sur le palamisme,” *REB* 30 (1972): 231–341, which retains its value as an introduction to the growth of Palamas studies.
- 2 For the popularization of St Gregory Palamas in modern theology, especially in relation to the *Nouvelle théologie*, see Norman Russell, “The Reception of Palamas in the West Today,” *Θεολογία* 3 (2012): 7–21; and id., *Gregory Palamas and the Making of Palamism in the Modern Age*. For a sense of the wider ecumenical reception of Palamas, see Ivana Noble, “The Reception of Palamas in the West Today: A Response to Norman Russell,” *Θεολογία* 3 (2012): 55–62. Cf. O. Raquez et al., “Sur la ‘réintroduction’ de la fête de Grégoire Palamas dans la liturgie Melkite,” *Istina* 19 (1976): 55–64.
- 3 On the Civil War (1341–1347) between John VI Kantakouzenos and the house of John V Palaiologos, see Donald Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium, 1261–1453*, 191–216; id., *The Reluctant Emperor: A Biography of John Cantacuzene, Byzantine Emperor and Monk, c. 1295–1383*, 45–83.
- 4 This is discussed in Gregory’s two *Letters to Barlaam* (PS 1:203–295), on the demonstrability of divine things. On ‘the things around God,’ associated especially with the theology of the Cappadocians, see Chapter 2, pp. 63–66.
- 5 On Barlaam and his theology, see the invaluable work of Antonis Fyrigos, *Dalla controversia palamitica alla polemica esicasta (con un’edizione critica delle Epistole greche di Barlaam)*; id., *Opere contro i latini: Introduzione storica dei testi, edizione critica, traduzione e indici*.
- 6 Beginning especially at *Tr.* 3.1.3 (ed. Meyendorff, 561).
- 7 See the *Tomos of 1341*, 3 (ed. Karmires, 299).
- 8 See *Energ.* 50 (PS 2:135.11).

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- 9 On Akindynos in general, see the work of Juan Nadal Cañellas, “Gregorio Akindinos,” in G. and V. Conticello (eds.), *La théologie byzantine* 2, 189–237; id., *La résistance d’Akindynos à Grégoire Palamas. Enquête historique, avec traduction et commentaire de quatre traités édités récemment*, vol. 2.
- 10 *Energ.* 47 (PS 2:132.16).
- 11 See the critical study of this transitional period by Antonio Rigo, *1347: Isidoro patriarca di Constantinopoli e il breve sogno dell’inizio di una nuova epoca*.
- 12 See Hans-Veit Beyer, ed. *Nikephoros Gregoras Antirrhetika I. Einleitung, Textausgabe, Übersetzung und Anmerkungen*. Cf. Maurizio Paparozzi, “Gli Antirrhetici posteriores de Niceforo Gregoras.” On the debate between Palamas and Gregoras, see Chapter 1, p. 33.
- 13 On the canonization of Palamas and its significance, see Antonio Rigo, “La canonizzazione di Gregorio Palama (1368) ed alcune altre questioni,” *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici* 30 (1993): 155–202.
- 14 See Jugie, “Palamas,” 1742; Lossky, *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 71; id., *The Vision of God*, 156; Florovksy, “Grégoire Palamas et la patristique,” *Istina* 8 (1960–1961): 123; Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 279–280; Torrance, “Precedents,” 48; Tanev, *Energy in Orthodox Theology and Physics*, 6; Yannaras, “The Distinction between Essence and Energies and Its Importance for Theology,” *SVTQ* 19 (1975): 234; P. Miquel, “Grégoire Palamas, docteur de l’expérience,” *Irenikon* 37 (1964): 227–237. John McGuckin asserts that late Byzantine writers generally “shifted the field of battle away from metaphysical matters to the more intimate scenario of the proper manner of mystical meditation” (“The Formation of the Patristic Tradition,” in A. Kaldellis and N. Siniosoglou [eds.], *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium*, 311).
- 15 Lialine, “The Theological Teaching of Gregory Palamas on Divine Simplicity,” *ECQ* 2 (1946): 269.
- 16 See *Orthodox Readings of Aquinas*, 53. Specifically, the original debate concerned the value of syllogisms for resolving the vexed problem of the Filioque, even if it already involved the philosophical question of whether there was in God anything distinct from *ousia*. See R. Sinkewicz, “A New Interpretation for the First Episode in the Controversy between Barlaam the Calabrian and Gregory Palamas,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 31 (1980): 488–500; id., “The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God in the Early Writings of Barlaam the Calabrian,” *Medieval Studies* 44 (1982): 181–242.
- 17 The reasons that Palamas excludes the earlier encounters with Barlaam from his hermeneutic framing of their dispute are open to interpretation and debate. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the disagreements between Palamas and Barlaam did not rise to the level of a full-fledged ecclesiastical controversy until the hesychast problem came into view.
- 18 George Phakrases, *Debate* 2 (ed. Candal, 328.26–31).
- 19 This remains true even after the death of Palamas: see, for example, the *Tomos of 1368* (ed. Rigo, 107.245 – 108.252), to say nothing of the numerous treatises on the subject by subsequent Palamite and anti-Palamite authors. See, for example, Philotheos Kokkinos, *On the Light of Thabor*, ed. T. Boyadchiev, G. Kapriev, K. Yanakiev, *Philotheus Kokkinos. De Domini Luce Sermones Duo. Editio princeps*, 26–142; Theophanes of Nicaea, *On the Light of Thabor*, ed. Ch. Soteropoulos, *Θεοφάνους Γ’ ἐπισκόπου Νικαίας περὶ Θαβωρίου φωτός, λόγοι πέντε*, 79–206; Prochoros Kydones, *On the Light of Thabor*, ed. J. Polemis, *Theologica varia inedita saeculi XIV*, 327–379.
- 20 *Dan.* 18 (PS 2:390.14–23).
- 21 *Akind.* 6.22.49 (PS 3:446.17–19).
- 22 A similar remark is made earlier in the work: “But this is the aim of all our words ... to show clearly that the brilliance of the divine nature, which is uncreated, and which is called divinity, neither prevents nor destroys the unity and simplicity of

- the divinity” (*Akind.* 2.5.13; PS 3:94.10–17). Cf. *Akind.* 7.4.6–7 (PS 3:465.4–32), which classes as “the whole struggle and intention of our words” the reality of divinizing grace, “which is called light, Spirit, divinity, and deification,” and its distinction from the divine essence.
- 23 PS 4:321, 341.
- 24 A full exploration of this particular aspect of Palamas’s theology exceeds the scope of the present study, but see *Dam.* 9; *Sym.* 12, 15; *Athan.* 8, 19; *Conf.* 9; *Ref. Ig.* 24, 27; *Disc.* 4; *Phil.* 9–10; *Akind.* 1.7.36, 3.7.19, 6.7.15, 6.9.21; *Greg.* 3.12, 3.21–22, 3.27–32, 4.16, 4.35, 4.43–44, 4.66; *Reply* 7; *Cap.* 66–67, 147.
- 25 Williams, *Ground of Union*, 156. It is also factually incorrect to claim, as Williams does, that “Gregory expends far greater attention on other matters” (*ibid.*). Such an unsubstantiated claim merely represents Williams’ exclusive reliance on the *Triads*, in which the essence-energies distinction is introduced relatively late, and the *Chapters*, which uniquely attempt to contextualize the refutation of Akindynos in a wider theological context.
- 26 For a good example of how the one is enfolded in the other, see *Triads* 3.1.34 (ed. Meyendorff, 625.1–13).
- 27 See, especially, *Ep. Barl.* 2.31–32 (PS 1:278.1–279.2). Cf. the remarks of Sinkewicz, “The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God,” 221.
- 28 *Dion.* 11 (PS 2:489.19–22). Cf. *Akind.* 1.11.58–59 (PS 3:80.6–26), where the inter-relationship and connection between essence-energies, hesychasm, *nepsis*, and prayer are outlined in relation to the synodal condemnation of Barlaam. Indeed, Palamas asserts that Barlaam himself denied that *every* energy was uncreated, not only the light of Thabor; see *Sym.* 12 (PS 2:406.28–407.1).
- 29 A good example of this can be seen in *Debate* 17–18, where Palamas is asked to parse the distinction between essence and existence (ed. Candal, 346–347).
- 30 See, especially, *Akind.* 7.3.5 (PS 3:464.6–29). I believe Papadakis is correct when he states, “The philosophical and theological principles of hesychast doctrine were actually the core of the controversy.... At all events, the more immediate question of the ascetical practices of the monks of Athos was soon relegated to the background” (“Gregory Palamas at the Council of Blachernae, 1351,” 334). Kiprian Kern, “Les éléments de la théologie,” 26, notes that the controversy, while initially dealing with “questions of mysticism and asceticism,” at the same time involved profound dogmatic issues.
- 31 *Akind.* 6.23.86 (PS 3:452.14–17). Cf. the remarks of Georges Florovsky, “Grégoire Palamas et la patristique,” 125; and Chapter 6, pp. 177–184, which deal with the Trinitarian dimensions of the essence-energies distinction. This is not to say that Palamas will not return to the problem of syllogisms and profane learning even after his first two *Triads*; see, for example, *Akind.* 3.1.3 (PS 3:162.17–18).
- 32 Cf. Sinkewicz, *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, 55, who notes the inseparability of “the natural, the theological, the moral and the ascetical” in Palamas.
- 33 The fact that Palamas does not develop his theology in a systematic way is often noted by commentators; see, for example, Grumel, “Grégoire Palamas, Duns Scot et George Scholarios devant le problème de la simplicité divine,” *EO* 34 (1935): 89; Alexis Torrance, “Precedents for Palamas’ Essence-Energies Theology in the Cappadocian Fathers,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 63 (2009): 48.
- 34 For the many assessments of this question, both *pro* and *contra*, see the numerous titles listed in the bibliography. This is not to say that more work does not also remain to be done in explicating Palamas’s actual use of patristic sources, but a thorough study of this topic exceeds the space available here.
- 35 All translations throughout this book, except where otherwise noted, are my own.

1 The Interpretation of the Essence–Energies Distinction and the Complete Writings of St Gregory Palamas

Essence and Energies in Modernity

Soon after the vindication of St Gregory Palamas in 1347, changes were made to the libellus, or confession of faith, required of bishops at their ordination to ensure that future hierarchs of the Orthodox Church would continue to uphold the theology of the fourteenth-century Palamite Councils.¹ Later, this same theology would be enshrined in the *Synodikon of Orthodoxy*, annually commemorating the memory of Palamas and his supporters alongside other champions of the true faith throughout history.² After the canonization of Palamas in 1368, therefore, and the final vindication of his memory in the Church of Constantinople, critiques of the essence-energies distinction would emanate almost exclusively from outside the Orthodox Church, from Roman Catholic sources, which continued to polemicize against Palamite theology long after the Fall of Constantinople in 1453. These critiques would continue well into the twentieth century, mingling with more scientific approaches to the history of Palamite theology so that, even today, the question of God's essence and energies in Byzantium is rarely separated from the theological problematics of confessional or inter-church controversy.

As Gregory's popularity grew in the twentieth century, and as the topics of hesychasm and deification have entered the ecumenical arena and the discipline of systematic theology, debate over the distinction between God's essence and energies has only been renewed. Today, scholars remain divided not only over the coherence and legitimacy of the essence–energies distinction, but even over what Palamas himself meant by the terms *essence* and *energies*, to say nothing of how they are supposed to differ and how they can be reconciled with divine simplicity. Many of the hermeneutical paradigms that are operative today developed as the product of renewed research into the thought of St Gregory Palamas. But many have also been inherited from earlier epochs and constitute a kind of classic critique of Palamism. In the present chapter, we examine the main lines of the modern interpretation of the essence–energies distinction, tracing three distinct, if broad, phases marked especially by the way in which the concept of 'energies' has been characterized over time. We begin with the 'traditional' Roman Catholic

approach, centering on the divine names and divine attributes, before moving onto the Orthodox retrieval of Palamas in the twentieth century, which helped shape a conception of *energeiai* as outward forces of the Divinity, and ending with a look at the scholarship of the last two decades, which has largely redrawn the parameters of the debate over essence and energies. The second part of this chapter goes on to elaborate why new research, based on a thorough exploration of the primary sources, is necessary in order to fully understand what Palamas himself actually thinks about all these matters. This entails something of an overview of the corpus of St Gregory Palamas as it developed over his long career spent defending the essence–energies distinction.

The Roman Catholic Critique: Early Modern Scholarship on Palamas

Discussion of the essence–energies distinction, especially as a feature of the tensions between Catholics and Orthodox, continued, in some form, almost without interruption from the late Byzantine period through the early modern period. Among the authors who continued to write on this topic were Mark Eugenikos (d. 1445),³ Gennadios Scholarios (d. 1456),⁴ Damaskinos the Studite (d. 1577),⁵ Nikephoros Melissenos (d. 1635),⁶ George Koresios (d. ca. 1659),⁷ and Sevastos Kymenitis (d. 1702)⁸ on the Orthodox side, and Manuel Kalekas (d. 1410),⁹ Maximos and Andreas Chrysoberges¹⁰ (d. 1425 and 1451), and Cardinal Bessarion (d. 1472)¹¹ on the Catholic side. By the seventeenth century, historians in the West were beginning to apply a more scholarly approach to the study of Palamas. Among these were Denis Pétau (Petavius), in the first volume of his *De theologicis dogmatibus* (1644),¹² and Leo Allazi (Allatius), in his *De Ecclesiae Occidentalis atque Orientalis perpetua consensione* (1645).¹³ Although both works retain an overtly confessional orientation, they also serve as an important bridge between the theological invective of previous centuries and the more scientific historiography developing in the modern period.¹⁴ By focusing on the work of Petavius in particular, it is possible to see how traditional Latin views on the essence–energies distinction made their way into modern scholarship in what may be characterized as the first phase of the modern reception of the essence–energies distinction.

Like anti-Palamites before him, and like much of Roman Catholic scholarship for centuries to come, Petavius is concerned especially with the question of the divine attributes and the problem of divine simplicity. Petavius characterizes the uncreated ‘energies’ of which Palamas speaks as not merely God’s activities (*actiones*) but also his properties¹⁵ and attributes.¹⁶ Indeed, Petavius discusses Palamas and the issue of essence and energies in his volume on “God and the Properties of God.”¹⁷ Here the essence–energies distinction is said to be a ‘real distinction’ between God and his attributes, a technical phrase that Petavius introduces into the scholarly literature from the polemical writings of the anti-Palamite Niphon formerly attributed to Demetrios Kydones.¹⁸ God’s operations and properties, Petavius tells us, differ from his

substance *reipsa*.¹⁹ That is, they are distinguished from the divine substance not only by human reason (*ratione sola*) or thought (*cogitatione sola*) but in actual fact as well. The distinction of reason is identified, in turn, with the distinction according to *epinoia*, or the ‘notional distinction,’ to which Petavius dedicates a good deal of space.²⁰

On the topic of the *distinctio realis*, Petavius compares Palamas to Latin authors who historically rejected the absolute identity between God and his properties. This naturally includes Duns Scotus, whose ‘formal distinction’ had been compared to Palamas since the time of Gennadios Scholarios.²¹ Yet the most direct analogue that Petavius finds for Palamas is Gilbert de la Porrée, famously opposed by Bernard of Clairvaux and putatively condemned at the Council of Rheims in 1148 for asserting that God’s attributes differ ‘really’ from his essence (i.e., from God himself).²² As a reference point for Catholic dogmatic theology, Gilbert would serve for a long time as a lens through which Catholic theologians saw Palamas. Among other things, Gilbert is widely thought to have distinguished not only (a) *Deus* from his *divinitas* but also (b) particular attributes like goodness and wisdom from one another other, as well as (c) the hypostatic properties of the Persons (such as *paternitas*) from the Persons themselves, and (d) the individual Persons from the divine essence.²³ In his own work, Petavius reveals that such are precisely the questions involved in the ‘real distinction.’²⁴

Critical to the interpretation of both Petavius and Allatius is the idea that the energy of God for Palamas is “something distinct from God himself” (*diversum quid ab ipso Deo*).²⁵ Although Petavius recognizes that the hesychasts identified the uncreated light with God himself (*Deum ipsum*),²⁶ he ultimately sees the divine energy as “existing in God and being ‘really different’ from God” (*in Deo et a Deo reipsa diversum*).²⁷ In this way, the divine energy is said to be “between God and creatures,” a *tertium quid* between God and the world.²⁸ It is not, properly speaking, God but belongs to God, and for this reason, Petavius sees the essence–energies distinction as a *separation* of God’s attributes from his essence (i.e., from God as such).²⁹

For both Allatius and Petavius, the Byzantine anti-Palamites were therefore correct to equate the distinction between essence and energies with polytheism. Since the energies themselves are said to be manifold and various,³⁰ this can only mean that there are in the Palamite system not just two Uncreateds and two Gods but a multiplicity of Uncreateds and many Gods:³¹ a multiplicity of deities (*deitates*) or divinities (*divinitates*).³² Indeed, Petavius transmits to future generations the idea that Palamas speaks openly of the divine energies as ‘divinities’ in the plural. He substantiates this with a citation of the *Adversus Palamam* attributed to Demetrios Kydones, where Palamas is quoted as saying,

The divinity or nature and superessential essence of the three hypostases is one, simple, invisible, inconceivable, and altogether inconceivable. But the others which the saints call divinities (θεότητες) are either one or two or more.³³

These energies or ‘divinities,’ which are of varying greatness and exaltation (*modo superiores, modo inferiores*),³⁴ are likewise understood to be subordinate to the divine essence, so that each *deitas* is said to be not only distinct but infinitely distant from the divine substance.³⁵

The estimations of Petavius and Allatius, derived in great part from earlier confessional and anti-Palamite theological treatises, would dominate scholarly interpretation of Palamism for centuries to come and can be recognized even today.³⁶ Even as access to the primary sources of Palamas’s theology increased over the following centuries, it would prove difficult to overturn these judgments, which have firmly taken their place in Western theological consciousness.

Reading More of Palamas: Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Scholarship

In response to Allatius, in particular, and the new wave of anti-Palamite literature that his work set off, Orthodox churchmen and scholars throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries would redouble their efforts to defend the essence–energies distinction and the memory of St Gregory Palamas, perpetuating the polemic between East and West that had begun over this issue in the late Byzantine period.³⁷ The most important figures in this regard are Dositheos of Jerusalem (d. 1707) and Nikodimos the Hagiorite (d. 1809), both of whom were involved in the publication of Palamas’s writings.³⁸ With the production of more scholarly research, however, in the field of Byzantine studies in the nineteenth century, the study of hesychast theology, and St Gregory Palamas, would enter a new era. At the forefront of developments in this period was a Russian archimandrite, later bishop, named Modest, who wrote the first monograph on Palamas: *St Gregory Palamas, Metropolitan of Thessalonica: Champion of the Orthodox Teaching on the Light of Thabor and the Energies of God* (1860).³⁹ During this time, the writings of Palamas would attain an unprecedented mainstream status by being printed in the *Patrologia Graeca* of J.-P. Migne.⁴⁰ Another cache of original source texts from the Palamite controversy and wider hesychast movement would also appear in Porphyry Uspensky’s *History of Athos* (1891).⁴¹ Around this same time, Palamas would also feature in the survey of Byzantine theological literature written by Albert Ehrhard for the *History of Karl Krumbacher* (1897).⁴² By the early twentieth century, Greek scholars like Gregorios Papamichail and Themistokles Chatzistavrou would also begin composing monographs on St Gregory Palamas, complemented by the articles of the Byzantinist Jean Bois.⁴³

Throughout the early part of the twentieth century, however, the scholarly study of the essence–energies distinction in particular remained very much in its infancy. This would begin to change with the work of Martin Jugie, who began writing on the Palamite controversy in his 1926 *Theologia Dogmatica Christianorum Orientalium*.⁴⁴ In 1932, Jugie went on to produce the first specialized studies of Palamas and his theology for the *Dictionnaire du théologie*

Catholique. Although Jugie writes very much in the spirit of Allatius and Petavius, he attempts in these writings to give an objective analysis of Palamas's theology on the basis of the primary sources, albeit within the confessional framework of Roman Catholic dogmatics.⁴⁵

For Jugie, the essence–energies distinction is still a 'real distinction,'⁴⁶ concerned, above all, with the problem of the divine attributes.⁴⁷ According to Jugie's reading, in the system of Palamas, "There are in God two things, really distinct: the essence and that which flows from the essence; nature and the properties, qualities, operations, and attributes that subsist in that nature."⁴⁸ The notion of 'essence' that Jugie imputes to Palamas is that of *un noyau central* in the Godhead, absolutely inaccessible to human perception, thought, or contact, pouring forth a multitude of rays with a relation to created natures.⁴⁹ Palamas is said by Jugie to distinguish between "a primary element and a secondary element" in God, which Jugie contrasts with the concept of an absolutely and infinitely simply God, an *actus purus*, in which everything is "really identical," and in which all perfections are distinguished only as the result of limited created intelligence.⁵⁰ Jugie repeats the accusation of Petavius that Palamas calls the divine energies 'divinities' (θεότητες)⁵¹ in the plural; and he sees some merit to the historical accusation of Nikephoros Gregoras that Palamas espouses an essentially Neoplatonic metaphysics by placing intermediaries, in this case *inferior divinities*, between God and creatures.⁵² Jugie will specify that the distinctions drawn by Palamas (not only between essence and natural properties but also between nature and Persons, substance and accidents, etc.)⁵³ are *distinctiones reales minores*. Although this is to be distinguished from the *distinctio realis major*, whereby God would actually be composed of separable parts, for Jugie, the distinction nevertheless destroys divine simplicity⁵⁴ as this was upheld by the First Vatican Council, which teaches that God is *omnino simplex*.⁵⁵ This, Jugie believes, is Gregory's "fundamental error,"⁵⁶ "the same error," as Petavius had said, made by Gilbert de la Porrée.⁵⁷

In the end, Jugie's interpretations of Palamas, while being more firmly grounded in the primary sources and original scholarship, would do little more than set the received hermeneutic of the essence–energies distinction on a more solid textual footing. Although his research certainly helped to advance the study of Palamite theology, Jugie himself does not mark a significant step forward in the theological and philosophical critique of the essence–energies distinction.⁵⁸ But the work of Jugie would certainly help perpetuate certain truisms about Palamite theology as well as cement the parameters within which Roman Catholic scholars would continue to engage the essence–energies distinction.

Throughout the twentieth century, scholars would continue to refer to the essence–energies distinction as a 'real distinction' whose import centered on the problem of the divine attributes and divine simplicity. In 1933, this would be the subject of a published dissertation by Sébastien Guichardan: *La probl me de la simplicit  divine en Orient et en Occident aux XIVe et XVe si cles: Gr goire Palamas, Duns Scot, George Scholarius*.⁵⁹ In 1960, scholars like

Mauricio Gordillo still spoke of the *realem nescio quam distinctionem* of the Palamites,⁶⁰ seeing the essence–energies distinction as real, not only *cum fundamento in re*, but *a parte rei*, “independent of human cognition.”⁶¹ Here again, the heart of the debate is whether the divine energy is a *divinitas* (or *deitas*) *inferior* (θεότης ὑφεμένη), even an infinite multitude of inferior divinities between God himself and the world.⁶²

Bulgakov, Florovsky, and the Rise of Neo-Palamism

In addition to the work of Jugie, the period leading up to and including the Second World War also saw a burgeoning Orthodox retrieval of the figure and thought of St Gregory Palamas, building on the work of Greek and Russian scholars and eventually merging with the work of Western critics to give rise to a global conversation concerning the merits and value of the essence–energies distinction. A by-product of the broader patristic *ressourcement* taking place in Europe, this movement would include such figures as Georges Florovsky, Basil Krivoshein, Vladimir Lossky, and Kiprian Kern, whose ideas and writings would give shape to what has since come to be called the Neo-Palamite movement. Yet even before the rise of Neo-Palamism, the theology of St Gregory Palamas had already become a contentious part of the Sophiology of another émigré theologian, Fr Sergius Bulgakov.

Around 1914, Bulgakov related in a letter to Pavel Florensky that he had recently discovered the *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* and *Theophanes* of Palamas, available at that time in the pages of Migne.⁶³ In 1917, Bulgakov also mentions the essence–energies distinction in his celebrated *Unfading Light*.⁶⁴ In a follow-up essay, “Hypostasis and Hypostaticity (Scholia to *The Unfading Light*),” published in 1925, Bulgakov would begin to defend his conception of Sophia more explicitly by aligning it directly with the concept of ‘energy’ in St Gregory Palamas.⁶⁵ In this work, Bulgakov identifies Sophia-energy with the revelation and manifestation of God (“God for the world”) contrasted with his incomprehensible and transcendent essence, or ‘God in himself.’⁶⁶ He will specify that the divine energy is θεός, without the article, but not ὁ θεός, that is, divine but not ‘God’ himself or God as such.⁶⁷

Bulgakov’s appropriation of Palamas did not arise out of thin air. The theology of St Gregory Palamas and the distinction between God’s essence and energies had already become a central feature of the Russian theological controversy over the worship, or more precisely, the ‘glorification,’ of the divine name in the 1910s. On the basis, especially, of the Byzantine *Synodikon* that included condemnations of Barlaam and Akindynos, Russian authors such as Sergei Troitsky, Pavel Florensky, Anthony Bulatovich, and Anthony Khrapovitsky had debated whether the divine energy, and the divine name as such, could be called ‘God.’⁶⁸ As Dmitry Biriukov points out in his forthcoming essay on this topic, it is against this important background that Bulgakov’s own understanding of the essence–energies distinction would be formulated.⁶⁹ Among those who would come to criticize the Sophiology of Bulgakov, and his interpretation of the essence–energies distinction, was his friend and

colleague Fr Georges Florovsky, an important figure of the Neo-Palamite movement. As early as 1926, the same year that saw the publication of the first volume of Jugie's *Theologia Dogmatica*, Florovsky had begun to study the work of Palamas under the encouragement of Bulgakov himself.⁷⁰ In 1928, Florovsky published his own reflections on cosmology and the creative activity of God in a seminal article entitled "Creation and Creaturehood,"⁷¹ laying the groundwork not only for his own subsequent meditations on Palamas but also for the Neo-Palamite movement as a whole.

With his now-famous call for a 'neo-patristic synthesis,' Florovsky urged Orthodox theologians, especially in the academy, to move away from the "manières de penser étrangères à la tradition" and to embrace a methodology, and sources, more consistent with the life and piety of the Church.⁷² For this purpose, Florovsky saw St Gregory Palamas as a paradigm and prime example of how one should do theology, helping to inspire the broader enthusiasm for Palamas in Orthodox academic theology and beyond, even without publishing extensively on Palamas himself.⁷³ In treating the patristic antecedents of the essence–energies distinction, Florovsky concludes that "the energies of God are a true revelation of God himself" and, in this sense, a "real presence."⁷⁴ Consistent with his belief that Gregory's historical concern was for Christian experience and not an abstract philosophical system, Florovsky understands the language of 'energy' to refer primarily to the uncreated grace that regenerates and divinizes human beings,⁷⁵ although he also focuses on the distinction between God's nature and will.⁷⁶ The distinction, for Florovsky, is ultimately the difference between God *existing* and *doing*. Although the former is necessary, the latter is entirely free.⁷⁷ In concert with almost all the scholarship of his time, Florovsky calls the distinction between nature and will a *distinction réelle*, opposed to a purely logical distinction, although he also urges that this should not be taken in a technical sense.⁷⁸

Another central but lesser-known figure of the wider Neo-Palamite renaissance, writing in Romanian, was Fr Dumitru Stăniloae.⁷⁹ Although Stăniloae's importance in the *ressourcement* movement of the first half of the twentieth century is being increasingly recognized, his interpretations of Palamas have not had a wide circulation.⁸⁰ Still, it would be a mistake to underestimate Stăniloae's contributions in this area. As a pioneering scholar of patristic and Byzantine theological texts, Stăniloae was among the first to discuss the essence–energies distinction in a modern textbook of dogmatic theology. His seminal monograph on Palamas, published in 1938, was also well known to John Meyendorff, who recommended it in his own groundbreaking study twenty-one years later.⁸¹ Stăniloae's reading of the essence–energies distinction is distinctly 'personalist' in tenor and mirrors many of the developments of the wider Neo-Palamite movement. Like the work of Florovsky, Stăniloae's interpretations were put forward as a form of resistance to Western theological paradigms, and there can be no doubt that he formed an integral part of the shifting Orthodox conception of the divine energies.⁸²

Among the group of Neo-Palamite theologians whose writings are better known in the West, the work of Basil Krivoshein is among the earliest to

appear in a western European language.⁸³ Krivoshein, like many authors of the period, stressed the apophatic dimensions of Palamas's theology, helping to determine one of the key features of the profile of St Gregory Palamas as a theologian.⁸⁴ Regarding the divine essence, Krivoshein states that "no attributes, definitions or statements whatsoever can be applied to God as He is in Himself," since he is totally unknowable and inaccessible in his substance.⁸⁵ Yet in addition to the divine ineffability, Krivoshein points to an "antinomy" between the inaccessible, transcendent nature of God and (in language reminiscent of both Bulgakov and Florovsky) his "self-revelation to and immanent and real presence in the world."⁸⁶ Although God's substance is hidden and not-proceeding, the energies are described by Krivoshein as the "exteriorisation" and manifestation of God, or his procession and "coming forward" (πρόοδος).⁸⁷ Krivoshein, like Bulgakov and others of this period, knows Palamas primarily from the *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* and *Theophanes*. Like Jugie and others before him, Krivoshein attributes to Palamas the explicit definition of the essence–energies distinction as a 'real distinction' (πραγματική διάκρισις), a phrase that does not appear in Palamas's writings. Krivoshein likewise aligns Palamas's distinction with the *distinctio realis minor* of Scholasticism, which he believes Palamas himself intended to contrast with the 'conceptual distinction' (διάκρισις κατ' ἐπίνοιαν).⁸⁸ He stresses that substance and energy in God are "objectively different" yet inseparable "both in reason and in reality."⁸⁹ Following the scholarship of the period, he believes that Palamas refers to essence and energies as "higher" and "lower" divinities, respectively. The "antinomial character" of the distinction, on the other hand, is meant to preserve the *unity* of essence and energy, since knowable and unknowable are not different "parts" of God.⁹⁰ Though the divine essence is "incommunicable as such," it is communicated through the energy.⁹¹

Krivoshein's interpretation of the essence–energies distinction, and especially his emphasis on apophaticism and antinomy, remains eminently recognizable. Although he perpetuates certain older paradigms received from the extant scholarship, Krivoshein clearly contributes to a shift in the way that the divine energies are understood, particularly in speaking of them as the "exteriorization" of God. One finds a similar approach in the most influential of the Neo-Palamite theologians, Vladimir Lossky, whose reading of Palamas would contribute even more directly to the Shift away from older Scholastic categories. For Lossky (a student of Gilson), Palamas was opposed, above all, to "a conception of God which saw him, primarily at any rate, as a simple essence."⁹² Although he seems to approve of calling the distinction a 'real distinction,' this is precisely because "the doctrine concerning energies is not a mere abstract conception, a purely intellectual distinction. We are dealing," he states, "with a strictly concrete reality of the religious order."⁹³ Consonant with the work of Stăniloae, and other Orthodox thinkers of this period, Lossky is keen to emphasize the personalist, dynamic character of God's being and attributes. He defines the divine energies or operations as "*forces* proper to and inseparable from God's essence, in which

he goes forth from himself, manifests, communicates, and gives himself.”⁹⁴ He is willing to call these energies ‘attributes’ of God, “provided, that is, that one remembers that these dynamic and concrete attributes have nothing in common with the concept-attributes with which God is credited in the abstract and sterile theology of the manuals.”⁹⁵ Once again, the very concept of divine energies is here being put into the service of a more fundamental shift away from the Scholastic theological method.

As “the outpourings of the divine nature,” the divine energies, for Lossky, are decidedly *ad extra* and again “signify an exterior manifestation of the Trinity.”⁹⁶ The energies, he says, “are external to the very being of the Trinity.”⁹⁷ “The energies might be described as that mode of existence of the Trinity which is outside of its inaccessible essence. God thus exists both in his essence and outside his essence.”⁹⁸ In this way, essence and energies correspond for Lossky to the unions and distinctions of Dionysios so that the *ousia* of God is equivalent to “the secret mansions which are but seldom thrown open,” while the energies are identified with the divine processions.⁹⁹ Lossky nevertheless acknowledges that the divine energies, though exterior to God, are not coextensive with creatures.

Even if creatures did not exist, God would none the less manifest himself beyond his essence, just as the rays of the sun would shine out from the solar disk whether or not there were any beings capable of receiving the light.

Lossky is therefore quick to qualify the sense of ‘manifestion’ and ‘beyond’ as being still within the realm of the uncreated. He therefore speaks, somewhat paradoxically, of “the absolute, non-relative character of the natural and eternal expansive energy, proper to God.”¹⁰⁰ The reader of Lossky might therefore characterize the divine energies as *ad extra essentiae* but not necessarily outside God himself.

The energies occupy a middle place: on the one hand they belong to the theology, as eternal and inseparable forces of the Trinity existing independently of the creative act; on the other, they also belong to the domain of ‘economy,’ for it is in his energies that God manifests himself to creatures.¹⁰¹

Lossky, following the scholarship of the period, resigns himself to the idea that Palamas calls the divine energies ‘divinities’ in the plural. Yet Lossky also seems, at times, to want to reduce the divine energy to one, equating the various divine energies specifically with the uncreated light, or grace.¹⁰² In this regard, even though it is the divine energy that ‘effects’ creation, the manifestation itself, which is eternal, is identified with the glory of God.¹⁰³ Towards the end of his essay on the “Uncreated Energies,” Lossky will summarize the identification by saying, “The [divine] will has created all things *by* the energies in order that created being may accede freely to union with God *in* the same energies.”¹⁰⁴

Bulgakov, Florovsky, Stăniloae, Krivoshein, and Lossky were joined in 1945 by Kiprian Kern, who would continue the trend of situating the essence–energies distinction within the popular framework of an apophatic theology and a theory of ‘antinomy,’¹⁰⁵ emphasizing the divine mystery and the lived experience of the saints over abstract formulae.¹⁰⁶ For Kern, the divine energies had a decidedly theophanic, or economic, revelatory role. “The energies,” Kern says, “are that in the absolute and imparticipable divinity which is oriented towards the world, which reveals itself, and makes itself accessible to it.” They are, above all, the Dionysian distinctions, processions, communications, and participations¹⁰⁷ “that whereby God is turned towards the world.”¹⁰⁸ Kern’s translator, Clement Lialine, would echo this way of speaking by associating the divine essence (like Lossky) with “the divine darkness,” identified with the Trinity *in se* “without any relation to the world.”¹⁰⁹ The energies, by contrast, are processions “by means of which this super-essence reveals itself.”¹¹⁰ Thus, even when these processions are not *ad extra* but “within the essence,” they are, nevertheless, “turned towards creation.” Thus, the divine energies are “spread about in the world” while also being “one with the energy that is in God,” emphasizing the active self-diffusion and manifestation of God in the world through his energy.¹¹¹

The Neo-Palamite paradigm, emphases, and even vocabulary, clearly mark a shift away from (and an intentional rejection of) earlier Roman Catholic discourse surrounding the essence–energies distinction. Writers like Lialine will continue to repeat the idea that the distinction between essence and energies is a *πραγματική διάκρισις* (a real distinction) and not a distinction *κατ’ ἐπίνοιαν* (i.e., a ‘conceptual’ distinction), even employing the Greek phrases in a way that gives the impression that they are quotations from Palamas himself.¹¹² Yet the defining feature of the Neo-Palamite paradigm is clearly its insistence on the identity of God’s energies as that which enables and effects divine immanence: they are ‘God for us’ as opposed to God ‘in himself.’ Gerard Philips, reflecting the influence of the Neo-Palamite movement, will therefore say that “Les energies ne sont pas des attributs mais comme des effluves de Dieu vers les créatures. Aujourd’hui, les savants diraient: c’est *Dieu-pour-nous*.”¹¹³ Even a far more specialized student of Palamas like Robert Sinkewicz will therefore explain *energeia* by stating that,

The term refers to the operations and activities and manifestations of God *ad extra*. ... God as he is in himself, in his divine substance, remains ever inaccessible; God’s manifestation and self-communication in the economy of creation and salvation take place through his divine energies.¹¹⁴

Even today, this distinction continues to be cast in terms of *theologia* and *oconomia*, “between the inner being of God the Trinity and this God’s economic activities.”¹¹⁵ As we shall see, such dichotomies do not necessarily hold up to close scrutiny when examined against the actual writings of Palamas himself. But they remain the legacy of the Neo-Palamite movement, which

originated against the backdrop of Roman Catholic critiques stretching back to the fourteenth century.

Debating Essence and Energies Today

The work of Vladimir Lossky and other neo-Palamites would prove instrumental in the popularization of St Gregory Palamas and the gradual cessation of long-standing prejudices. Yet it was not until the work of John Meyendorff that the Orthodox retrieval of Palamas passed from the realm of systematic theological reflection to that of proper historical and philological scholarship. After Jugie, Meyendorff was the first researcher to delve extensively into the theology of Palamas on the basis of his unedited writings.¹¹⁶ Although he is sometimes keen to cast hesychast thought in the fashionable terms of postwar European theology, Meyendorff, as the first truly specialized student of Palamas, also introduced a number of precisions and qualifications into the popular narrative concerning the essence–energies distinction. For one, Meyendorff corrected the notion that Gregory ever spoke of the divine energies as ‘divinities’ (θεότητες) in the plural. He also showed that, in the extant writings of Palamas, essence and energies are never referred to as ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ divinities, respectively.¹¹⁷ And in dealing with the characterization of the essence–energies distinction, Meyendorff attempted to finally strip the doctrine of its association with the ‘real distinction’ by invoking the testimony of Gregory’s most influential promoter and collaborator, Philotheos Kokkinos. On the authority of the great patriarch, Meyendorff sought to show that there is room in Palamite theology to conceive of God’s energy as being distinct ‘conceptually’ (διακεκριμένον ἐπινοίᾳ) from essence, thereby avoiding the negative connotations of separability and composition in God.¹¹⁸

Although Meyendorff’s work added relatively little to the hermeneutical paradigms used to interpret the distinction between essence and energies, his seminal contributions to the study of St Gregory Palamas would bring about a new era in the reception of the essence–energies distinction.¹¹⁹ As Norman Russell has noted, Meyendorff’s *Introduction* was written at a time when Western readers were “ready to receive it.” Appearing just before the Second Vatican Council, Meyendorff’s book elicited an unprecedented response from Roman Catholic scholars, who began for the first time, in the early 1960s, to celebrate the person of St Gregory Palamas on a wide scale. Western scholars also began to sympathize with the possibility of an essence-energies distinction as a viable, alternative theological paradigm that was not, in fact, opposed to Catholic dogma. This was the case with Jürgen Kuhlmann, a pioneer in the reconciliation of Palamite theology with Roman Catholic thought,¹²⁰ and especially with André de Halleux. In two articles from 1973 and 1975, De Halleux contested the idea that the “distinction réelle” between God’s essence and attributes was an untraditional innovation foreign to the dogmatic parameters of historical Christianity.¹²¹ De Halleux offers constructive criticism of Meyendorff

and other Neo-Palamites, although he, too, interprets the essence–energies distinction as part of the apophatic, “antinomic,” and broadly Platonic orientation of the Christian East, which he sees as complementing the rational, Aristotelian emphases of the Christian West.¹²²

Still, alongside the novel and growing enthusiasm that Meyendorff’s work would generate for the legacy and theology of St Gregory Palamas came a revival of old criticisms. These included, especially, a renewed critique of how the essence–energies distinction was supposed to violate divine simplicity. This is evident, for example, in the work of Martin Strohm, who opposed Kuhlmann’s attempt to reconcile Palamite and Catholic theology, even if he embraced what he saw as Palamas’s creative attempt to move past the traditional doctrine of divine simplicity.¹²³ Bernhard Schultze, on the other hand, argued that the distinction, which was supposed to be a triumph of apophaticism, was actually excessively cataphatic and ultimately incoherent.¹²⁴ A main concern for non-Orthodox theologians in this period remained the concept of higher and lower divinities (*Ober- und Untergottheiten*),¹²⁵ and critics continued to label the essence–energies distinction a ‘real distinction’ (*ein reale/wirklicher Unterschied*,¹²⁶ *Realdistinktion*¹²⁷).

In certain respects, the pioneering work of Meyendorff did little more than make the existing paradigms for interpreting the essence–energies distinction more widely available to Western audiences. Modern critics of the essence–energies distinction, especially in the field of systematic theology, have extended these interpretations to the present, continuing to fault Palamas for making the experience of God, and communion with him, indirect, evoking the traditional critique that the energies are “between” God and creatures.¹²⁸ Because Palamas is said to ‘ontologize’ the purely logical distinction in God, researchers like Podskalsky insist that the hesychast doctor creates a sphere of mediated beings between the transcendent essence and creatures.¹²⁹ The essence–energies distinction is thus said to indicate an “inner reserve” or ‘part’ of God not shared with human beings, on the one hand, and a part that is—“‘an area’ of God that is shared as demarcated against another area that is not.”¹³⁰ In this way, God does not give himself fully to creatures, since there is always something that is ‘held back.’¹³¹ In the era since Meyendorff, this view is especially associated with Hans-Georg Beck and Endre von Ivánka, although it continues to influence contemporary systematic theology.¹³²

The Last Twenty Years

Secondary literature on Palamas and his theology has continued to multiply exponentially since the time of Meyendorff. And while the hermeneutic categories of today have not entirely eclipsed the interpretive paradigms of earlier Roman Catholic polemic and the Neo-Palamite movement, scholars in the last twenty years have introduced a far greater diversity to the interpretation of the essence–energies distinction than was seen in the previous century. Among the most important milestones of this period is David Bradshaw’s *Aristotle East and West*, which sparked a new wave of discussion in the field

when it appeared in 2004. Though not a specialized study of Palamas, Bradshaw's monograph examines the philosophical and theological history of the concept of *energeia* that he believes comes to fruition in the works of Palamas.¹³³ For Bradshaw generally, the essence–energies distinction is once again a distinction “between God as he is known to himself and as he is known to us,”¹³⁴ although he rejects the term ‘real distinction.’¹³⁵ Significantly, Bradshaw regards the divine energies as “acts which God performs.”¹³⁶ This is true even of things like God's goodness, being, life, wisdom, and power.¹³⁷ *Energeia* therefore indicates “both that which God is, and that which God does.”¹³⁸ Among the more controversial corollaries of this interpretation is Bradshaw's idea that, while some of the divine energies are eternal, others are temporal.¹³⁹ This interpretation logically leads Bradshaw to believe that some of the divine energies are even unnecessary, contingent, and mutable. “Just as some *energeiai* are fully temporal, some could be different than they are.”¹⁴⁰ “Some are eternal and others temporal; some are contingent and others necessary; some are best conceived as ‘realities’ or ‘energies,’ others as activities or operations, and yet others as attributes.”¹⁴¹ He includes in the category of contingent realities the energies “of creation, providence, and foreknowledge, as well as the gifts of the Spirit.” These could be different than they are “or could not exist at all.”¹⁴² Such an interpretation naturally flows from the idea that the divine energies are acts that God performs. “If they are the sphere of personal action ... then at least some of them could be different; otherwise they would be a kind of emanation rather than the free acts of a free Creator.”¹⁴³

Bradshaw's work on *energeia* has elicited many responses. Among the most important are those by Antoine Lévy. Like De Halleux and other Catholic irenicists before him, Lévy has been keen to stress the continuities and similarities between Palamas and Catholic theology, emphasizing especially the congruity of Palamas and Aquinas. Like readers before him, Lévy sees parallels between the essence–energies distinction and the theology of Gilbert de la Porrée, although he is decidedly more optimistic about these parallels.¹⁴⁴ Lévy identifies the essence–energies distinction not with the *distinctio realis* but with the conceptual or subjective distinction (διάκρισις κατ' ἐπίνοιαν),¹⁴⁵ finding parallels to this line of thinking in the *distinctio rationis cum fundamento in re* of Latin Scholasticism. Things distinguished ‘by reason with a foundation in reality,’ he notes, “while pointing out a real mode of distinctiveness in God, ... do not prevent him from remaining an absolutely simple unity.”¹⁴⁶

A feature of Lévy's reading of the essence–energies distinction is the idea that “God's energy seems to ‘bend’ according to the relativity of created time and space.”¹⁴⁷ He refers to this as “the relativistic aspect of God's operations *ad extra*.”¹⁴⁸ Contrary to Bradshaw, Lévy believes that “[t]he ‘natural energies’ from which creation stems preexist creation and are eternal.” Yet Lévy relates the same energies to the contingency of creation. “One and the same *energeia*,” he says, “is to be conceived as simultaneously without beginning and with a beginning, depending on the point of view chosen.”¹⁴⁹

He therefore speaks of the divine energies as “simultaneously finite and infinite,” finite as they relate to creation and infinite as they exist in God.¹⁵⁰ Lévy connects this reading of the simultaneous eternity and relativity of God’s energies to the notion of analogy, whereby the divine energy is multiplied in proportion to those who partake of it. In this, Lévy endorses the reading of Eric Perl, who identifies the multiplicity of the divine energies with the relative and analogical self-multiplication of God’s creative procession into a plurality of creatures.¹⁵¹ Lévy nevertheless criticizes Perl for identifying the divine energies exclusively with God’s decision to create. This, Lévy believes, would make the divine energies purely relative, leaving God’s absolute being to be synonymous only with the divine essence. “What,” he asks, “about *energeiai* such as wisdom, kindness, etc.?”¹⁵² The divine energy, he believes, must be both relative and absolute.

Other scholars in the last twenty years, particularly in the Orthodox world, have begun to push back on the notion of a real distinction by stressing that in spite of the distinctions in God, the divine essence, Persons, and energies all denote the same “ontological” reality, namely, the holy Trinity.¹⁵³ Against the claim that the divine energies are ‘impersonal’ mediating forces, theologians like Nikolaos Loudovikos insist that, “Palamas wanted to show, through this doctrine, that the Triune God—the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit—indeed enters into personal communion with created beings.”¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, “God is always more than his essential expressions,” that is, in creation.¹⁵⁵ For Loudovikos, the divine energies of Palamas are equivalent to the divine names in St Basil, the ‘processions’ and ‘participations’ of Dionysios, the *logoi* of St Maximos, and ‘the things around God’ of the Cappadocians, as well as the divine glory, philanthropy, wisdom, power, art, and divinity.¹⁵⁶ They are “expressions of the divine loving will” and are thus inherently relational and participational.¹⁵⁷ Essence and energies are therefore not “ontologically different” but share “a fundamental ontological identity.”¹⁵⁸ Unlike the formalities of Duns Scotus, Loudovikos argues, “it is impossible” to see the divine essence and energies “as two or more logical ‘forms’ of divine being, because they are, in this sense, totally and numerically one.”¹⁵⁹ Indeed, their identity is such that, for Loudovikos, the divine energies are the essence “expressed.”¹⁶⁰ In this way, to participate in the divine energies is to participate “in God as he is,” a phrase reserved by other interpreters for the transcendent divine essence.¹⁶¹ Other researchers, like Torstein Tollefsen, have likewise suggested that the divine energies should not be conceived strictly as God *ad extra*,¹⁶² cautioning against the notion that the divine energies are quasi-material forces flowing through the cosmos.¹⁶³ Although certainly indebted to the Neo-Palamite movement, such interpretations clearly seek to transcend and refine the categories operative in the last century.

Increasingly, historians and theologians have joined the call to jettison, or at least qualify the label of *distinctio realis* altogether, whether major or minor or otherwise.¹⁶⁴ Georgi Kapriev, for example, points out that Palamas does call the divine energies ‘things’ or realities (*πράγματα*), but “in the

general sense, not necessarily as an autonomous substance or a *res* in the sense conveyed by Scholasticism” so that “the determination of the energy as a thing or reality (πράγμα) ... does not presuppose a *distinctio realis*.”¹⁶⁵ In other quarters, the label of ‘real distinction’ persists with tenacity.¹⁶⁶ This is especially the case in the work of John Demetracopoulos, whose lengthy article on the reception of Palamas up to the fall of Constantinople, *Palamas Transformed*, undertakes one of the fullest and most well-documented analyses of Palamite theology as a whole that has appeared to date.¹⁶⁷ What we see, overall, therefore, in the last two decades, is an eclectic mixture of categories and verbiage, some of which has endured from the early modern period and the Orthodox revival of the twentieth century and some of which has begun to abandon the old models and formulate entirely new positions on the controverted issue of God’s essence and energies.

The Need for New Research

The manifold and often contradictory interpretations of the essence–energies distinction in the last century seem to indicate that the increasing popularity of St Gregory Palamas has not brought any kind of consensus concerning the saint’s celebrated and controversial teachings. Indeed, as Gregory’s popularity has grown over the last century, scholars have not only remained divided over the coherence and legitimacy of the essence–energies distinction but have also added to the confusion about what Palamas himself meant by the terms *ousia* and *energeia* and how they differ. Yet the problem in interpreting the essence–energies distinction lies not only with the proliferation of scholarly opinions. It lies also with the character of the research that has appeared so far. The writings of St Gregory Palamas on the question of God’s essence and energies fill five volumes in the modern printed edition.¹⁶⁸ Yet there has not existed, to date, a single monograph or dedicated study that analyzes how Palamas himself explicates and develops the essence–energies distinction across this voluminous corpus. Although scholars have given ample attention to the essence–energies distinction generally, whether in attempting to justify it, defend it, or simply make sense of it, little effort has been made to explicate the topic through a sustained analysis of the primary sources. The most important monographs today on the question of essence and energies, for example, do not pretend to offer a comprehensive overview of Palamas’s teaching. Rather, they limit themselves to specific theological insights or to arguments concerning the broader logic and function of the ‘energies’ in Palamas or in theology more generally. Alternatively, secondary sources have often focused on the philosophical and theological background of the essence–energies distinction. Bradshaw’s *Aristotle East and West*, for instance, limits itself to a single chapter on “Palamas and Aquinas,” in which a mere eight pages are dedicated to Palamas in the context of a comparison with Augustine, Barlaam, Gregory of Sinai, and Aquinas.¹⁶⁹ Similarly, Jean-Claude Larchet’s *La théologie des énergies divines*,¹⁷⁰ although centering on the doctrine of Palamas,¹⁷¹ is consciously limited to the patristic sources of the term *energy*

through the eighth century, as evidenced by book's subtitle, *Des origines à saint Jean Damascène*. Among other studies, the work of Jacques Lison, *L'Esprit répandu*, is exceptional for its broad foray into Palamas's writings, but is focused specifically on Gregory's pneumatology without pursuing a comprehensive analysis of the essence–energies distinction.¹⁷²

The earliest pioneers in the study of St Gregory Palamas, on the other hand—up to and including Meyendorff—carried out their research at a time when the writings of Palamas had not been fully edited. They also stopped short of an exhaustive treatment of the subject of essence and energies. This is the case, for example, with such specialists as Panagiotes Chrestou, George Mantzarides, Vasileios Phanourgakes, Vasileios Pseftongkas, and other editors of Palamas, none of whom produced any extensive studies of the essence–energies distinction. Even Meyendorff, who remains the high-water mark of intimate familiarity with Palamas's writings, never intended his magnum opus, the *Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas*, to focus on just one aspect of Palamas's theology. Indeed, his chapter on essence and energies signals the important need for future studies “basée sur l'ensemble des textes palamites.”¹⁷³

Premises and Methodology of this Study

The Whole Palamas: Essence and Energies across the Complete Corpus

In view of the need for a focused study on the essence–energies distinction, it is the contention of this book that the voluminous writings of St Gregory Palamas complement one another in a way that does not allow his thought to be fully understood from one or two works alone. Gregory's voluminous polemical writings were produced over a twenty-year period and fill hundreds of pages in the modern printed edition. Of these, the longest by far is a set of seven antirrhetics *Against Akindynos* (467 pages combined), written between 1342 and 1347,¹⁷⁴ followed at a distant second by four antirrhetics *Against Gregoras* (146 pages), written between 1348 and 1355.¹⁷⁵ These are joined by twelve shorter treatises and fourteen letters on essence and energies, which, together, run to more than five hundred pages.¹⁷⁶ Gregory's most famous work, the *Triads*, at 336 pages, comes close to the antirrhetics *Against Akindynos*, but only treats the essence-energies distinction at any length in its final installment.¹⁷⁷ Likewise the *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, a comparatively short work (at 83 pages), only dedicates about fifty percent of its contents explicitly to the question of God's essence and energies, often reproducing material from the earlier treatises.¹⁷⁸

Studies of the essence-energies distinction in Palamas have not made substantial use of this voluminous corpus. Scholarship has tended to focus, instead, on two texts in particular: (1) the *Triads*, an early, wide-ranging rebuttal of the accusations of Barlaam against the hesychasts, and (2) the *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, a late composite work that seeks to place the essence–energies distinction in its wider theological context. The tendency to rely on these two works is due, in part, to a real sense of their importance,

which led, in turn, to their being the only works available, for decades, in accessible translations. In addition to Meyendorff's French translation of the *Triads*,¹⁷⁹ and some English selections published by Nicholas Gendle,¹⁸⁰ the only complete work by St Gregory to appear in English was, until recently, the *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, edited with a facing translation by Robert Sinkewicz.¹⁸¹ Even before the appearance of Sinkewicz's translation, the *Chapters* were among the few writings by Palamas available to scholars prior to the publication of his complete works. In the pages of Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*, reprinted from the Greek *Philokalia* (1782), Western audiences were given unique access to the *Chapters* (PG 150:1121B–1225B), alongside shorter texts such as the *Theophanes* (PG 150:909A–960C),¹⁸² *Triad* 1.2 (PG 150:1101B–1118A), the *Hagioretic Tome* (PG 150:1225D–123D), the *Confession of Faith* (PG 151:763D–768C),¹⁸³ and the *Letter to Anna Palaiologina* (PG 148:1010C–1012D).¹⁸⁴

Early specialists made up for this deficit in primary source material by accessing the manuscripts directly. This includes, especially, such pioneers as Martin Jugie,¹⁸⁵ David Balfour,¹⁸⁶ and Dumitru Stăniloae.¹⁸⁷ Much more visibly, Fr John Meyendorff acquired an unprecedented mastery over the source material that allowed him to speak with great insight and familiarity about the full range of Gregory's writings long before most of the texts had been edited.¹⁸⁸ By citing from lesser-known works, Meyendorff helped popularize a number of important passages in St Gregory that would, otherwise, have remained unknown to most students of the essence–energies distinction. Thus, one continues to find citations from the treatise *On Participation*, the *Letter to Daniel*, the *Letter to Gabras*, and the antirrhethics *Against Akindynos* in articles by more recent scholars, drawn not from the published versions of the texts but from Meyendorff's *Introduction*.¹⁸⁹

For the majority of scholars, the texts reproduced by Migne, of which the *Chapters* were by far the longest, constituted for a time the only accessible writings of Palamas on the essence–energies distinction.¹⁹⁰ Almost a century after Migne, Meyendorff's survey of the writings of St Gregory still listed more than thirty writings on the essence–energies distinction as *texte inédit*.¹⁹¹ For this reason, it is not surprising to find that the vast majority of scholarship before and immediately after Meyendorff relies almost exclusively on the *Chapters*, with some minor reference to the *Theophanes* and occasional mention of the *Triads*.¹⁹² As Meyendorff noted with regard to Migne in 1959, "Quels que soient les défauts de cette édition, elle fut jusqu'à nos jours la principale source des renseignements sur la théologie de Palamas."¹⁹³

Meyendorff had noted two years earlier that such a state of affairs was obviously unsatisfactory for obtaining a complete understanding of Gregory's theology:

On ne peut cependant prétendre encore porter un jugement suffisamment objectif sur ce penseur vivant et original, tant que son oeuvre, exceptionnellement riche, n'est publiée que dans une petite partie.¹⁹⁴

It is only natural to expect, then, that with the publication of Gregory's complete writings, scholarly analysis of the essence–energies distinction would have grown in proportion to the number of newly available writings of this popular figure. Indeed, Chrestou's *Συγγράματα* was greeted with enthusiasm by specialists.¹⁹⁵ In spite of real criticisms, and reservations about the critical scope of the editions, the publication of Gregory's works was rightfully hailed as a new chapter in Palamas studies.¹⁹⁶ Yet scholarship did not continue apace. Even after the publication of the Chrestou editions, commentators continued to rely almost exclusively on the *Chapters*, *Theophanes*, and *Triads*. This is the case, for example, in the popular essay by Rowan Williams, some fifteen years after the *Συγγράματα* began to appear.¹⁹⁷ Even more dedicated specialists, like André de Halleux, continued to rely disproportionately on the *Chapters*.¹⁹⁸

The other writings of Palamas, it seems, have proved too imposing for most researchers. Andrew Louth has described them as “labyrinthine”¹⁹⁹ and confesses to finding them “tedious to read.”²⁰⁰ The result, in large part, has been that the vast majority of Gregory's writings have been completely overlooked in the literature, even as studies on the essence–energies distinction have multiplied. This is not to say that Gregory's wider corpus has been entirely ignored. We have already mentioned the monograph of Jacques Lison, *L'Esprit répandu*, which attempts to grapple with Gregory's entire corpus in articulating Palamas's doctrine of the Holy Spirit.²⁰¹ His success is such that Andrew Louth has characterized his work as a kind of “Gregorian breviary.”²⁰² Reinhard Flogaus likewise makes ample use of Gregory's writings and does not limit himself to the *Triads* and the *Chapters*. The result, in his work on *theosis*, is a far more nuanced presentation of Palamas than is usually available otherwise.²⁰³ Loudovikos, too, and other Greek scholars make refreshing and ample use of the antirrhetics *Against Akindynos* and other neglected writings.²⁰⁴ Yet such voices remain in the minority, and scholarship as a whole has not made proportionate use of the five volumes that make up Gregory's published writings on the essence–energies distinction.²⁰⁵ The need to move beyond an exclusive emphasis on one or two works of Palamas should be obvious and is long overdue. If scholarship on the essence–energies distinction is to be rigorous and comprehensive, it cannot ignore entire treatises on the subject, filling hundreds upon hundreds of pages of theological exposition on this very topic.

Even apart from the objective merits of scholarly diligence, there are specific reasons for looking beyond the *Triads* and the *Chapters* in attempting to understand essence and energies. These reasons emerge from a closer examination of the corpus itself, wherein it is clear that the core of Gregory's theology was articulated not against his initial opponent, Barlaam, but against subsequent interlocutors. Although Gregory's theology remains more or less consistent, not to say repetitive, throughout his career, the polemic with Akindynos and Gregoras would bring greater refinement, and greater clarity, to his articulation of the distinction between God's essence and energies. When seeking to understand this topic, then, the picture becomes significantly

clearer when one looks beyond the *Triads* and the *Chapters* to the rich exposition that Palamas develops throughout his highly productive career.

The Limits of the *Triads* and *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*

Without minimizing the value of the *Triads*, it is important to note that even a treatise as influential and profound as the *Triads in Defense of the Holy Hesychasts* has its limits in the broader context of Gregory's polemic career. As is well known, the *Triads* are among Gregory's earliest forays into the problem of essence and energies. In the polemic with Barlaam, they introduce the distinction only gradually, as a progression of the debate over secular wisdom, the practice of *hesychia*, and the light of Thabor. The distinction itself appears in *Triad* 2.3 (written during the first half of 1339),²⁰⁶ or even as early *Triad* 1.3 (spring 1338).²⁰⁷ But a full exposition of the distinction is not undertaken until *Triad* 3 (spring/summer 1340), and even there is introduced only gradually, in defense of the light of the Transfiguration and the deifying grace of God.²⁰⁸ The presentation of the essence–energies distinction in the *Triads* is therefore part of a larger set of theological questions. And while this lends the work an obvious advantage as an overview of Palamas's deeper theological concerns,²⁰⁹ it must also be recognized that, as an early work, in which the essence–energies distinction as such is not yet the primary concern, the *Triads* are also far from exhaustive. Nor would they be Gregory's final word on the issue. Palamas will go on to defend the essence–energies distinction for another twenty years, in which he will supplement the *Triads* with dozens of treatises that, for all their repetition, significantly expand on his initial formulations.²¹⁰

The *Chapters*, dated to 1349/1350 but possibly even later, are, on the other hand, a comparatively late and relatively systematic work.²¹¹ The text is appealing for both of these reasons and has continued to attract attention. As a highly synthetic work, it excerpts heavily from Gregory's earlier writings²¹² and seeks to place the essence–energies distinction in its widest theological framework, paying particular attention to cosmology.²¹³ In the opinion of Sinkewicz, the *Chapters* belong to “a relatively tranquil hiatus between two periods of polemic,” after the final condemnation of Akindynos and before the controversy with Gregoras.²¹⁴ They thus represent a kind of mature retrospective on Palamas's theology,²¹⁵ and it is in this sense that Jugie spoke of them as a *summa* of Palamas's theology.²¹⁶

Yet the *Chapters*, too, in spite of their reputation, also remain far from exhaustive. Contrary to the expectation that they will offer a synthesis of the preceding decade's polemics, the *Chapters* do not seek to recapitulate Palamas's writings as a whole. Indeed, the *Chapters* exclude many fundamental features and details of the essence–energies distinction that are developed elsewhere in Palamas's writings—details which serve to supplement the *Chapters* considerably.²¹⁷ Instead, this unique work brings together only selected passages from a handful of earlier treatises, expanded with new material, in the form of terse chapters. The result is a pithy and largely

composite work wherein many texts have been removed from their original context. At this level, the work's synthetic character can actually be a liability to the casual reader, and students of the *Chapters* have often failed to realize that certain passages have been excerpted from a longer discussion. To cite just one example, commentators have often drawn attention to *Cap.* 127, where Palamas refers to the divine energy as a 'quasi-accident' (συμβεβηκὸς πῶς).²¹⁸ Yet they have generally failed to notice that this language is drawn from an extended exegesis of St Gregory Nazianzen in the antirrhetics *Against Akindynos*.²¹⁹ Relying exclusively on the *Chapters* may therefore cause one to not only miss key details of the essence–energies distinction but also to misunderstand the wider context even of the passages in the *Chapters* themselves.

The Writings against Akindynos (1341–1347)

In assessing the interrelationship of Gregory's different works, it is often easy to identify specific texts that Palamas himself saw as important articulations of a given topic. This is because Palamas will often cite or recommend specific treatises "where we have made a lengthy investigation of these matters."²²⁰ Very often, these are not merely bibliographical cross-references but signposts to the foundational loci for understanding a given concept in Gregory's theology.²²¹ Among the works to which Gregory refers most frequently is the short treatise *On the Divine Energies*. This particular treatise plays a special role in the articulation and qualification of the essence–energies distinction, and its enduring value in the mind of Palamas is evident from the way that he will continually direct his reader back to this work as a basic summary of his theology.²²²

Gregory's habit of referencing and cross-referencing his writings includes frequent mentions of the *Triads* as his earliest and foundational work.²²³ But his most frequent allusions are reciprocal references between the antirrhetics *Against Akindynos*²²⁴ and the *Letter to Athanasios of Kyzikos*.²²⁵ The longest of Gregory's letters, the *Letter to Athanasios* is explicitly intended to guide its recipient through a dossier of texts forwarded to the addressee by Palamas, where the reader can see for himself the theology laid out by either side of the controversy.²²⁶ It seems to refer, especially, to an early version, or earlier parts, of the antirrhetics *Against Akindynos*, whose final form would likewise contain references back to *Athan*.²²⁷ As a map of Gregory's polemics, the letter provides a unique overview of the controversy with Akindynos. Yet it is also a place where Palamas lays out his theology in a summary fashion, and he is able to recommend the work as a positive outline of what he teaches about essence and energies.²²⁸

The importance of the controversy with Akindynos for the articulation of Palamas's theology is reflected in the manuscript tradition. At a relatively early stage in the reception of Palamas's works (beginning in the fifteenth century), there developed a distinct syllabus and ordering of Palamas's polemical writings that gave obvious priority to the writings against Akindynos, setting

them at the head of Gregory’s corpus.²²⁹ The fact that Palamas’s works admit of a traditional order has not generally been part of the popular narrative concerning Palamite theology.²³⁰ Nevertheless, as Meyendorff noted in his early survey of the materials, the polemical writings of Palamas were collected early on into three ‘books,’ associated especially with three codices of the *katechumeneion* of the Great Lavra on Athos.²³¹ These books now reside at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, in the Coislin collection (gr. 98, 99, and 100).²³² Sinkewicz refers to these codices as “the official collection.”²³³ Within these three ‘books,’ the polemical writings belonging to the period between 1341 and 1347 form Books One and Two, referred to collectively as “the antirrhetics against Akindynos,” for example, in Bodleian Library, Laud gr. 87.²³⁴

As the point of entry into Palamas’s theology, Book One begins with the *Letter to Athanasios*, unsurprisingly providing something of a summary of the subsequent material. Even in the modern edition, this work bears the otherwise unintelligible title of *Logos protos*, although it numbers sixth among the printed letters of Palamas.²³⁵ This letter is followed by the treatise *On Union and Distinction*, whose importance more generally is signaled by its absorption into the *Chapters*.²³⁶ In the curriculum of Palamas’s writings, it serves as something of a propaedeutic for the articulation of the essence–energies distinction in the writings that follow by tackling the basic problem of the one and the many (i.e., unity and plurality) in God himself.²³⁷ It is primarily an exegesis of Dionysian *procession* and, as such, constitutes one of the most difficult and dense treatises of the entire corpus. Its ambiguities, stemming from seminal difficulties in the Dionysian corpus itself, are transmitted, in turn, to the *Chapters*, magnifying the already dense character of that work. Yet, within their original setting, and especially as a propaedeutic for a more systematic exposition of the essence–energies distinction, the difficulties of *On Union and Distinction* are largely mitigated in their original context by a fuller narrative exposition.

Third in the order comes the lengthy antirrhetics *Against Akindynos*, a work whose prominence in the corpus is consistent with its status as the refutation *par excellence* of Palamas’s most significant opponent.²³⁸ As the longest theological treatise that Gregory ever wrote, the importance of *Against Akindynos* is difficult to overstate.²³⁹ The work contains one of the most detailed and careful expositions of the essence–energies distinction in Gregory’s corpus. Like the treatise *On Union and Distinction*, *Against Akindynos* is excerpted heavily in the *Chapters*. Yet, as Sinkewicz recognizes, the antirrhetics *Against Akindynos* develop their discourse much more contextually, lucidly, and expansively than what appears in the *Chapters*. In their original context, these protracted discourses take the form of a detailed and lengthy dispute over specific patristic texts, their exegesis, and a host of theological problems that unfold in conversation with the writings of Akindynos himself. Indeed, *Against Akindynos* in places gives the impression of a point for point response to treatises written by Palamas’s opponent.²⁴⁰ Yet in the *Chapters*, “the digest and reworking of the arguments lose something of the coherence and clarity of their original form in the *Contra Acindynum*.”²⁴¹

Against Akindynos is itself a highly synthetic work, reproducing passages from earlier writings, expanding on topics that are dealt with in earlier texts, and giving them fuller treatment.²⁴² Yet even the seven books *Against Akindynos*, for all their length, do not offer an exhaustive account of the essence–energies distinction. The work is followed in Book One by two letters that add much to Gregory’s articulation of the distinction between essence and energies. These are the letters *To Damianos* and *To Dionysios*. The *Letter to Damianos* is unique in its engagement of Akindynos’s *Verses*, or *Iambes*, which have not otherwise attracted much attention.²⁴³ The *Letter to Dionysios* is a relatively short text, concerned with the fundamental nature of heresy and situating the contemporary errors of Barlaam and Akindynos in their broader historical context. It contains, as an appendix, Gregory’s *Confession of Faith*, presented to the Council of 1351. Both of these works live up to their placement at the front of Palamas’s writings, providing, as we will see, considerable and important information about what Palamas means by ‘energies.’

The manuscripts of Book Two begin, in turn, with the treatise *On the Divine Energies*, already noted above, followed by the remaining treatises and letters from 1341 to 1347. These are the treatises *On Divine and Deifying Participation*, *That Barlaam and Akindynos are the Ones Who Divide the Godhead*, the *Dialogue of an Orthodox with a Barlaamite*, the *Theophanes*, and the letters to *John Gabras*, *Daniel*, *Symeon*, *Paul*, *Arsenius*, *Philotheos*, the *Elders*, *Makarios*, *Bessarion*, and *Anna Palaiologina*—sixteen texts in all.²⁴⁴

Book Three contains all the works of Palamas written before 1341 and after 1347, that is, before and after the controversy with Akindynos.²⁴⁵ It includes the early letters to Barlaam and Akindynos, the *Triads*, the antirrhethics *Against Gregoras*, the *Chapters*, and the opuscula *On Basil* and *On Cyril*.²⁴⁶ This grouping serves to further foreground the polemic with Akindynos, since it combines the earliest writings directed against Barlaam with the later writings against Gregoras together at the end of the collection. This reflects the fact that the writings against Akindynos are not only the largest part of Gregory’s extant writings but also the most developed and detailed in their articulation of the essence–energies distinction.²⁴⁷ And while Palamas would never reference his *Chapters* in the period after the controversy with Akindynos,²⁴⁸ he would continually invoke and refer to his *magnum opus*, the *Antirrhethics Against Akindynos*, to the end of his life, this being the only work cited authoritatively in the treatise *Against Gregoras* written in or after 1355.²⁴⁹ For Palamas, it seems, the earlier treatises *Against Akindynos* already contained, in themselves, the fullest response to Gregoras’s errors about God’s essence and energies. There, he says, the teachings of Gregoras were “more thoroughly refuted” so that he has little need to repeat what he had laid out so extensively in that massive work.²⁵⁰

After Akindynos

Regarding the diachronic development of Gregory’s theology, it is sometimes remarked that Gregory himself did not consider all of his early polemical

writings to have been precisely and flawlessly composed.²⁵¹ The warrant for this claim rests on a statement made at the Council of 1351, where Palamas seems to apologize for his earlier writings, asking critics to look to his *Confession of Faith*, rather than his polemical writings, as the standard by which his theology should be judged:

Polemic (ἀντιλογία) on behalf of piety is one thing, and confession of the faith is another. In disputation, it is not necessary for the polemicist to quibble (ἀκριβολογεῖσθαι) over words, as the great Basil says,²⁵² but in a Confession, precision (ἀκριβεια) is everywhere preserved and sought. For this reason, together with my antirrhetic discourses directed at Barlaam and Akindynos, I have drawn up a confession of the faith that I received from the saints, so that those who come across our works may learn from this Confession the intention (σκόπος) of my polemic.²⁵³

This declaration has usually been taken as an admission by Palamas that the heat of battle gave rise to certain infelicities, if not outright mistakes, in his early formulation of the essence–energies distinction.²⁵⁴ This is generally thought to refer, especially, to the notorious language of ‘multiple divinities’ (θεότητες).²⁵⁵ Yet the idea that Palamas, either later in his career or in the face of synodical judgment, relativizes his earlier statements is difficult to substantiate. If Palamas did, in fact, see problems with his early writings and formulations, he does not actually identify any specific instances. Nor have scholars found evidence of even tacit modifications in Gregory’s language, terminology, or formulations over the course of his career. For this reason, Martin Jugie saw even this supposed “concession” at the Council of 1351 as something “purely formal and fleeting.”²⁵⁶ In fact, the *Confession* presented at the Council of 1351 is itself a relatively early document, written sometime around 1344.²⁵⁷ As a statement of Gregory’s core beliefs, the *Confession* does not, in fact, represent any significant landmark in the development of Gregory’s thought. Rather, it merely collects together the basic theses that Palamas develops throughout his writing.²⁵⁸

Around the time of the *Confession*, Palamas is confident that he was “in harmony with the saints in everything we have written and said.”²⁵⁹ Indeed, even after the Council of 1351, to the end of Gregory’s life, Palamas not only stands by his original teachings but also explicitly professes consistency in his ongoing defense of the essence–energies distinction.²⁶⁰ According to Palamas, his doctrine, “received from the saints,” remained unchanged throughout his career, since it was never his own but merely reflected the timeless teaching of the Church.²⁶¹ In fact, the distinction between words and their meaning, intention, or reference can be found throughout Gregory’s writings, where it is always coupled with the qualification by Palamas that he has not actually said anything that the Fathers themselves have not said.²⁶² In his subsequent reflections, Palamas presents the Council of 1351 not as an opportunity for correction and clarification but as the vindication of his entire theological project and labors on behalf of the

true faith.²⁶³ Whatever one feels about the historical veracity of this last claim, it reflects the fact that Palamas, even after 1351, had no explicit correctives to offer, and certainly no apologies or retractions, for his earlier works. As we have already seen, Palamas continued to refer after 1351 not only to his antirrhetics *Against Akindynos* but also to earlier polemical writings, including his earliest works. By his own estimation, the fog of war does not seem to have actually produced any concrete problems for his theological expressions.

This is not to say, however, that Gregory's writings over a twenty-year period do not demonstrate any development or qualification whatsoever. It is precisely the aim of this study to account for the way in which different works supplement, qualify, and refine what Palamas has said elsewhere in his writings. Practically, this means tracing developments in Gregory's language, argumentation, and use of source material, with particular attention to context, chronology, and polemical contingencies.²⁶⁴ The issue of diachronic changes in Palamas's theology forms a critical element in the history and reception of Palamite theology and is, by itself, an important reason to go beyond the *Triads* and *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*.

Regarding the chronological progression of Gregory's writings, the antirrhetics *Against Gregoras*, as Gregory's final polemic treatise, hold a privileged place in the corpus. It is a privilege they share with the *Debate between Palamas and Gregoras*, written by George Phakrases. The *Debate*, which evinces a remarkable degree of harmony, both rhetorically and terminologically, with the discourses *Against Gregoras* (and is also included among the writings of Palamas), bears the stamp of St Gregory himself, even if, officially, it constitutes a court document of the emperor John V Palaiologos.²⁶⁵ Indeed, the proceedings of the *Debate* serve to counter, from the Palamite perspective, the account of the same meeting by Gregoras. This they have in common with *Against Gregoras* 1–2, thus serving as something of a companion volume to Gregory's final oeuvre.

Chronology, however, cannot be the only factor in examining Palamas's articulation of the essence–energies distinction. As polemical writings, occasioned by distinct circumstances and moments of a developing controversy, nearly every work of Palamas has something to contribute to a synthetic account of his theology. Different works, and different groups of writings, are governed by specific concerns and ends, and their complementarity is not always a product of temporal progression. Important in this regard is the fact that Palamas consistently casts all three of his major opponents as advocates of one and the same heresy whose refutation is spread out over a variety of treatises and letters.²⁶⁶ The writings of Palamas must therefore be taken largely as a whole, and a comprehensive account of the doctrine of essence and energies will make use of every text available. In the next chapter, we turn to Gregory's writings to examine what precisely he means by the terms *essence* and *energies*, allowing the totality of the corpus to fill in the meaning of these potentially obscure terms before looking at the ways that Palamas seeks to distinguish the one from the other in God.

Notes

- 1 On the Palamite profession of faith made by Orthodox bishops, see Jugie, “La controverse Palamite,” 418; id., “Palamite (Controverse),” 1792. Cf. *Patriarchal Register* 243, 246, 265, 310, 314; 502, 520 (ed. Miklosich and Muller 1:501–502, 503–505, 530, 568, 574; 2:267, 295–296); Uspensky, *История Афона* 3:785–797.
- 2 *Synodikon* 572–766 (ed. Gouillard, 81–93); cf. the comments of Gouillard, *Le Synodikon*, 29–32. See, also, Rigo, “Il Synodikon dell’Ortodossia di Lavra (1400 circa),” *Revue des études byzantines* 75 (2017): 255–281; id., “Le Synodikon de l’Orthodoxie et le Palamisme. La forme primitive de P (1351 – avant 1360): les sources et les témoins,” in I. Biliarsky ed., *Laudator temporis acti: Studia in memoriam Ioannis a. Božilov II. Ius, Imperium, Potestas Litterae Ars et Archaeologia*, 227–241; id., “Un nouveau témoin du Synodikon de l’Orthodoxie P: le manuscrit de la Sainte-Trinité de Chalki 34,” *Revue des études byzantines* 76 (2018): 73–98.
- 3 See M. Pilavakis, “Markos Eugenikos’s First Antirrhetic against Manuel Calecas’s on Essence and Energy. Editio princeps with Introduction and Commentary,” (Doctoral Thesis, King’s College, University of London, 1987); V. Lur’e, “L’attitude de S. Marc d’Ephèse aux débats sur la procession du Saint-Esprit à Florence: Ses fondements dans la théologie post-palamite,” *Annuario Historiae Conciliorum* 21 (1989): 317–333; C. Chivu et al., “Un veac de isihasm: de la Grigorie Palama la Marcu Evghenicul,” 7–52. Mark’s *Syllogistic Chapters against the Akindynists* are printed in C. Chivu et al., *Sfantul Marcu Evghenicul: Opere* 2:456–490.
- 4 For an overview, see Ch. Kappes, “The Theology of the Divine Essence and Energies in George-Gennadios Scholarios” (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Athens, 2017).
- 5 See his *Ἐπιστολὴ* (Venice: Leongkinos and Malaxos, 1570).
- 6 See E. Legrand, “Nicéphore Méliissène, évêque de Naxos et de Cotrone,” *Revue de l’Orient chrétien* 8 (1903): 81–90.
- 7 On his work, *On the Illumination that Shone Forth on Mt Thabor*, as well as his *Encheiridion*, see N. Russell, *Gregory Palamas and the Making of Palamism*, 26.
- 8 On his work, *Περὶ διαφορᾶς θείας οὐσίας καὶ θείας ἐνεργείας κατὰ Λατίνων*, see N. Russell, *Gregory Palamas and the Making of Palamism*, 26.
- 9 For his work *Against Joseph Bryennios*, see G. Mercati, *Notizie di Procoro e Demetrio Cidone, Manuele Caleca e Teodoro Meliteniota ed altri appunti per la storia della teologia e della letteratura Bizantina del secolo xiv*, 454–473. His treatise *On Essence and Energy* is printed in PG 152:283–428.
- 10 See M. Candal, “Andreae Rhodiensis, O.P., ad Bessarionem Epistula (De divina essentia et operatione),” *OCF* 4 (1938): 329–371.
- 11 See A. De Halleux, “Bessarion et le palamisme,” *Irénikon* 62 (1989): 307–332 [reprinted in *Patrologie et oecuménisme*, 831–856]; A. Rigo, “La refutazione di Bessarione delle Antepigraphai di Gregorio Palamas,” 283–294.
- 12 D. Pétau, *Opus de theologicis dogmatibus*. I cite here from the more widely available edition of 1700.
- 13 L. Allazi, *De Ecclesiae Occidentalis atque Orientalis perpetua consensione*.
- 14 See Petavius, *De theologicis dogmatibus* 1.1.12:77, 1.1.13:80; Allatius, *De Ecclesiae Occidentalis*, 801–802, 823–824. Both authors present the theology of Palamas as a heresy of the modern Greeks (*recentiorum Graecorum*), lamenting the enduring popularity of Palamism in contemporary Orthodox theology. On the popularity of Palamas and the essence–energies distinction among Greek theologians in the early modern period, see Russell, *Gregory Palamas and the Making of Palamism*, 25–29. Cf., also, Jugie, “Palamite (Controverse),” 1812; G. Podskalsky, *Griechische Theologie in der Zeit der Türkenherrschaft*, 36–46.
- 15 See, especially, *De theologicis dogmatibus* 1.1.12:79.

- 16 *Ibid.*, 1.1.12–13:78, 79, 80. Petavius therefore faults Palamas for believing that the temporal activities of God, such as creating and governing, are eternal attributes. If God’s activity were eternal and uncreated, then the world, he says, would also be eternal, and the Holy Spirit would have always been operative in human beings (*ibid.*, 1.1.13:83–84).
- 17 See *ibid.*, 1.1.12:76, 77. On divine simplicity in Petavius more generally, see especially *ibid.*, 1.2.7:109–114, where Palamas is also treated. Petavius refers to Palamas again in separate sections on the divine ideas (1.4.9:189), on the divine names (1.8.8:338–339), and on the Filioque (2.7.9:405).
- 18 See *ibid.*, 78: *substantia omni superiorem existentiam Dei reali distinctione* (πραγματικῇ διακρίσει) *partiretur in essentiam et operationem, vel potius operationes*; citing *Adversus Palamam*, ed. Arcudius 412 (cf. PG 154:841C). On the authorship of this work (PG 154:837–864), and on Nippon generally, see Mercati, *Notizie*, 62–77. On Demetrios Kydones, and his own Thomistic critique of Palamas, see Russell, “Palamism and the Circle of Demetrios Kydones,” in Ch. Dendrinos et al. (eds.), *Porphrogenita. Essays on the History and Literature of Byzantium and the Latin East in Honour of Julian Chrysostomides*, 153–174; D. Searby, “Demetrios Kydones: Defending Thomas or Defending Himself?” in A. Speer and Ph. Steinkrüger (eds.), *Knotenpunkt Byzanz. Wissensformen und Kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen*, 439–451; M. Plested, *Orthodox Readings of Aquinas*, 63–72.
- 19 *De theologicis dogmatibus* 1.1.12:76.
- 20 See *ibid.*, 1.1.13:80–81, 82, 83. Petavius identifies the distinction by reason (ἐπινοία) as the authentic patristic conception of the divine attributes. He treats this subject in the context of the Eunomian controversy beginning in chapter seven of his first book (*ibid.*, 1.1.7:58).
- 21 *Ibid.*, 1.1.12:76–77. Petavius leaves aside the subtleties of Scotus and does not actually spend much time comparing the essence-energies distinction with the ‘formal distinction.’ On the comparison of Palamas and Scotus by Gennadios Scholarios, see Ch. Kappes, “The Theology of the Divine Essence and Energies in George-Gennadios Scholarios;” G. Kapriev, “Gregory Palamas and George Scholarios: John Duns Scotus’ Differentiation Between Substance and Energy and the Sources of the Palamite Tradition,” *Analogia* 5 (2018): 35–56.
- 22 *De theologicis dogmatibus* 1.1.12:76; 1.1.8:60–62; 1.2.7:109–114. See *ibid.*, 1.1.8:60: *ab essentia (tum a se invicem) reipsa differere proprietates et attributa ... hoc est non sola cogitatione, et ἐπινοία, sed ex rei natura, et citra mentis intelligentiam*. Petavius nevertheless thinks Gilbert was much more subtle than the Palamites (see *ibid.*, 1.2.7:111).
- 23 See *ibid.*, 1.2.7:112.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 1.1.12:76.
- 25 Allatius, *De Ecclesiae Occidentalis*, 838.
- 26 *De theologicis dogmatibus*, 1.1.12:77.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 1.1.13:82; cf. *ibid.*, 1.2.7:113.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 1.1.12:77–78.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 1.1.13:83, 110. Cf. *ibid.*, 1.1.13:82: *Damascenus (ait Tomus) ἐνέργειαν in Deo manifeste ab οὐσία separat*.
- 30 See Allatius, *De Ecclesiae Occidentalis*, 838. Allatius’s basic approval of the Akindynists can be seen in his reprinting of the *Patriarchal Logos* of John Kalekas (1344), which he wishes to preserve for future generations; see *ibid.*, 817. (Allatius is aware that Akindynos does not entirely agree with Barlaam; see *ibid.*, 802.)
- 31 Allatius, *De Ecclesiae Occidentalis*, 838.
- 32 See Petavius, *De theologicis dogmatibus* 1.1.13: 79, 83–84.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 1.1.13:79, citing Kydones (=Nippon), *Adversus Palamam* (ed. Arcudius, 420); cf. PG 154:848BC.

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- 34 Allatius, *De Ecclesiae Occidentalis*, 838.
- 35 Like Allatius, and many anti-Palamites before them, Petavius objects to the Palamite adoption of the phrase ἀπειράκις ἀπείρως to describe the transcendence of essence over energy; see *De theologicis dogmatibus* 1.1.13:84.
- 36 See, for example, the work of Mosheim, which repeats the idea of a ‘real distinction’ wherein the attributes differed from God’s substance “in fact” and not only “in our modes of conceiving them” (*Institutes of Ecclesiastical History*, 518). Cf. Eusebius Amort, writing in the eighteenth century, for whom the divine energy, on account of the ‘real distinction,’ is “something in between God and creatures” (*aliquid medium inter Deum et creaturam* (*Theologia Eclectica, Moralis et Scholastica* [1752] 1:22)
- 37 The most vehement critique of Palamism in the seventeenth century came from François Richard, ten years after Allatius, in his *Τάρχα τῆς πίστεως τῆς Ρωμαϊκῆς Ἐκκλησίας εἰς τὴν διαφένδουσιν τῆς ὀρθοδοξίας* (1658), setting off a new wave of polemics between Catholic and Orthodox writers; see Russell, *Gregory Palamas and the Making of Palamism*, 27–29. See also, M. Le Quien (Stephanus de Altamura), *Panoplia contra Schisma Graecorum* (1718), 381–393.
- 38 See Rigo, “Nicodemo Aghiorita e la sua edizione delle opere di Gregorio Palamas,” 165–182; id., “Nicodemo l’Aghiorita, la Filocalia e Gregorio Palamas,” 151–174; Russell, “From the ‘Shield of Orthodoxy’ to the ‘Tome of Joy:’ The Anti-Western Stance of Dositheos II of Jerusalem (1641–1707),” in G. Demacopoulos and A. Papanikolaou ed., *Orthodox Constructions of the West*, 71–82; 286–294. For a discussion of the wider movement in and around the Enlightenment, which involved the work of important figures like Vikentios Damodos and Evgenios Voulgaris, see Russell, *Gregory Palamas and the Making of Palamism*, 27–32.
- 39 Archimandrite Modest, *Святыи Григорий Палама, митрополит Солунский. Сборник православного учения о Фаворском свете и о действиях Божиих*. See, also, G. Nedetovsky, “Варлаамитская ересь,” *Труды Киевской Духовной Академии* (1872): 316–357; A. Ivashenko, *Святого Григория Паламы, митрополита Солунского, три творения доселе не бывшие изданными* (1895).
- 40 See the discussion of the printed editions that follows and note 181 below. For a good overview of the reception of Palamas up to and including this period, see Pleased, “Gregory Palamas,” in Ken Parry ed., *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Patristics*, 293–305. Cf. E. Makovetsky, “Свт. Грогорий Палама в Русских исследованиях XIX – начала XX веков,” *Verbum* 17 (2015): 212–218; D. Макагов, «Очерки российской историографии паламизма (1860—1998 гг.)», *АДСВ* 30 (1999): 338–353.
- 41 See Porphyry Uspensky, *История Афона*, vol. 3. Cf. the influential study of Fyodr Uspensky on the Synodikon: *Очерки по истории византийской образованности* (1891).
- 42 “Theologie,” in K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Litteratur*, 100–105; see, also, Ehrhard’s later work on Byzantine homilies: *Überlieferung und Bestand der hagiographischen und homiletischen Literatur der griechischen Kirche, von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts* 3:714–717. Cf., also, F. Stein, *Studien über die Hesychasten der vierzehnten Jahrhunderts* (1873).
- 43 G. Paramichael, *Ὁ Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς Αρχιεπίσκοπος Θεσσαλονίκης* (1911); cf. id., «Ὁ Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος Παλαμᾶς καὶ Βάρλααμ ὁ Καλαβρὸς μέχρι τῆς σύνοδου τοῦ 1341,» *Ἐκκλησιαστικὸς φάρος* 2 (1908): 297–339; Chatzistavrou, *Αἱ περὶ τῶν ἡσυχαστικῶν τῆς ἰδ’ ἑκατονταετηρίδος καὶ τῆς διδασκαλίας αὐτῶν ἐρίδες* (1905); J. Bois, “Les débuts de la controverse hésychaste,” *EO* 5.6 (1902) 353–362; id., “Les hésychastes avant le XIVe siècle,” *Échos d’Orient* 5 (1901–1902): 1–11; id., “Le synode hésychaste de 1341,” *EO* 6 (1903): 50–60. See, also, the historical research of Nikos Veis, «Νέαι μαρτυρία περὶ τοῦ ἔτους τῆς τελευτῆς Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ.» *Ἀθηνᾶ* 18 (1905): 39–40; id., «Τὸ ἔτος τῆς τελευτῆς Γρηγορίου Παλαμᾶ.» *Ἀθηνᾶ* 16 (1904): 638.

- 44 The five volumes were published between 1926 and 1935. Jugie’s survey of the controversy is especially remarkable for its broad study of the way that Palamite theology shaped the thought of Greek theologians over the last century of the Byzantine Empire and beyond.
- 45 Jugie famously saw the teachings of Palamas as an *étrange théologie*, a “théologie nouvelle,” introducing new doctrine and even novel formulas, such as the use of ‘divinities’ in the plural (“Palamas,” 1738; cf. 1750, 1758). For Jugie, Palamism is not only philosophically problematic, but it is, from the Catholic perspective, also heresy (“Palamas,” 1764). Still, although Jugie is highly critical of Palamas, he does not take the abuse of Palamas’s opponents at face value and even finds some merit in Palamas’s character and writing; see “Palamas,” 1742.
- 46 Jugie, “Palamas,” 1738.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 1740; cf. 1743.
- 48 *Ibid.*, 1750.
- 49 *Ibid.*, 1755.
- 50 *Ibid.*, 1755, 1762.
- 51 “Car les opérations de Dieu, ses attributs sont multiples et varies, et rien n’empêche d’employer le pluriel” (Jugie, “Palamas,” 1755); “Comme il est possible de distinguer un nombre infini d’opérations et d’attributs, il est permis de parler de plusieurs θεότητες (*ibid.*, 1757).
- 52 *Ibid.*, 1761.
- 53 See *ibid.*, 1764.
- 54 *Ibid.*, 1760.
- 55 *Ibid.*, 1764.
- 56 See *ibid.*, 1764.
- 57 *Ibid.*, 1764. Jugie also compares it to the heresy of Joachim of Fiore, condemned at the fourth Lateran Council (1215) for positing a real distinction between the divine essence and each person of the Trinity. Jugie saw the essence–energies distinction itself, or the distinction between God’s essence and the divine attributes, as being condemned at the Council of Toledo (688), a synod that taught that, in God, it is the same to be God and to will and to know (*ideo hoc est illi esse, quod velle, quod sapere*).
- 58 Jugie’s interpretations hearken back not only to Petavius but also to the work of anti-Palamites such as Niphon, Demetrios Kydones, and Manuel Kalekas, upon whom Jugie relies.
- 59 Cf. the review by Grumel, “Grégoire Palamas, Duns Scot et George Scholarios devant le problème de la simplicité divine,” *EO* 34 (1935): 84–96.
- 60 Mauricius Gordillo, *Theologia Orientalium cum Latinorum comparata. Commentatio historica*, 301; cf. 315.
- 61 *Ibid.*, 316.
- 62 *Ibid.*, 313–314.
- 63 I am indebted for this entire section on Bulgakov to Dmitry Biriukov. See his forthcoming study “Two Russian Thinkers in Dialogue on Palamism: The Sophiological Palamism of Protopriest Sergius Bulgakov and the Neo-Palamism of Priest George Florovsky in the 1920s,” in T. Pino, ed., *The Legacy of St Gregory Palamas: Studies in Late Byzantine Theology and its Reception* (forthcoming). Biriukov cites *Переписка священника Павла Александровича Флоренского со священником Сергеем Николаевичем Булгаковым*, 78.
- 64 *Свет Невечерний*, 111–113, 196, 267–268.
- 65 “Ипостась и ипостасность (Scholia к «Свету Невечернему»),” *Сборник, посвященный Петру Бернгардовичу Струве ко дню 35-летия его научно-публицистической деятельности. 1890 – 30 января – 1925, 353–371*. See the translation of A.F.D. Bateman in A. Gallaher and I. Kukota, “Protopresbyter Sergii Bulgakov: Hypostasis and Hypostaticity: *Scholia to The Unfading Light*,” *SVTQ* 49 (2005): 17–41.

- 66 “Protopresbyter Sergii Bulgakov: Hypostasis and Hypostaticity,” 17.
- 67 Cf. “Протоколы семинаров отца Сергия Булгакова о Софии, Премудрости Божией. Запись В.А. Зандер. 9-й и 10-й семинары, 24 и 31 декабря 1928 г.,” 138–143.
- 68 See D. Biriukov, “Исследование рецепции паламизма в русской мысли начала XX в.,” 37–43.
- 69 For more on the connection between Palamism and Name-worship, see Russell, *Gregory Palamas and the Making of Palamism*, 37–43.
- 70 See the correspondence between Bulgakov and Florovsky in E. Evtikhova, “С.Н. Булгаков. Письма к Г.В. Флоровскому (1923—1938),” 206. Once again, I am indebted to Dmitry Biriukov for the rich bibliography in Russian.
- 71 This was also published in French in the same year: “L’Idée de la création dans la philosophie chrétienne,” *Logos: Revue internationale de la synthèse Orthodoxe* 1 (1928): 3–30.
- 72 See “Grégoire Palamas et la patristique,” 120.
- 73 “Nous pouvons vraiment considérer Grégoire Palamas comme notre guide et notre maître dans notre tâche de théologien en partant du coeur de notre sainte Église” (*ibid.*, 125).
- 74 *Ibid.*, 122.
- 75 *Ibid.*, 122–123; cf. 120–121, 125.
- 76 *Ibid.*, 123–124.
- 77 *Ibid.*, 124.
- 78 *Ibid.*, 124.
- 79 See his pioneering study, *Viața și învățătura sfântului Grigorie Palama* (Seria teologica 10) (Sibiu: Tipografia Arhiepiscopala, 1938).
- 80 For a theological appreciation of Stăniloae’s work as a *ressourcement* figure, see Andrew Louth, “Review Essay: The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology of Dumitru Stăniloae,” *Modern Theology* 13.2 (1997): 253–267; *id.*, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers: From the Philokalia to the Present* (London: SPCK, 2015), 127–142; Adrian Agachi, *The Neo-Palamite Synthesis of Father Dumitru Stăniloae* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013).
- 81 See the Introduction of Kallistos Ware to Stăniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology: The Experience of God*, vol. 1, xi–xii. Meyendorff recommends Stăniloae’s reading of Palamas in his *Introduction*, 12. Mention must also be made here of Justin Popovic, whose *Dogmatics of the Orthodox Church*, 3 vols. (1932–1940), although rooted in the *Dogmengeschichte* of older patristic studies, show a greater openness to the theology of St Gregory Palamas than one usually finds in the theological handbooks of this period. For the reception of Palamas in the writings of Justin Popovic, whose student Amfilohije Radović would publish a monograph on the pneumatology of Palamas, see the forthcoming article by Vladimir Cvetkovic, “The Reception of Palamas and Palamite Tradition in Justin Popovic,” in T. Pino, ed., *The Legacy of St Gregory Palamas: Studies in Late Byzantine Theology and its Reception* (forthcoming).
- 82 For a discussion of Stăniloae’s framing of Palamas as a conscious resistance to Western theological paradigms, see Russell, *Gregory Palamas*, 59–62. For a fine overview in English of Stăniloae’s interpretation of the essence–energies distinction, see Jonas Eklund, “Palamism in the Twentieth Century: An Examination of the Essence/Energies Distinction in Vladimir Lossky, Kallistos Ware and Dumitru Stăniloae” (MA Thesis, Norwegian School of Theology, 2017), 62–78.
- 83 His “Аскетическое и богословское учение Св. Григория Паламы [L’enseignement ascétique et théologique de saint Grégoire Palamas],” *Seminarium Kondakovianum* 8 (1936): 99–154, was translated into English, two years after its appearance, as “The Ascetic and Theological Teaching of Gregory Palamas,” *ECQ* 3 (1938): 26–33, 71–81, 138–156, 193–214.

- 84 “The Ascetic and Theological Teaching of Gregory Palamas,” 27–28, 138.
- 85 *Ibid.*, 138. Because Krivoshein identifies the hidden God who is “unknowable and ineffable as He is in Himself” with the Trinity as such, he encounters a certain ambiguity concerning the relationship between the substance of God and the divine Persons. “Gregory,” he concludes, “does not examine in any detail the problem of the relationship between the substance of God and His hypostases,” although he recognizes that Palamas does distinguish between *ousia* and *hypostasis* (141).
- 86 *Ibid.*, 138; cf. 140, 145.
- 87 *Ibid.*, 139.
- 88 *Ibid.*, 152.
- 89 *Ibid.*, 140; cf. 143–144.
- 90 *Ibid.*, 145.
- 91 *Ibid.*, 146.
- 92 *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 77.
- 93 *Ibid.*, 76. By ‘forces’ Lossky seems to mean powers (δυνάμεις), which he equates with the processions and manifestations of Dionysios, which make God known; see *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 72.
- 94 *Ibid.*, 70; emphasis added.
- 95 *Ibid.*, 79. Here Lossky echoes Bulgakov, who contrasts the notion of Sophia as energy with the notion of an abstract ‘property.’ “The ‘property’ of God,” says Bulgakov, “presupposes the recognition of the Godhead’s activity in the world” (“Priest Sergius Bulgakov: Hypostasis and Hypostaticity,” 24). Dumitru Stăniloae had likewise spoken of the divine energies as the “attributes of God in motion;” see *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* 1:125–126.
- 96 *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 80.
- 97 *Ibid.*, 81.
- 98 *Ibid.*, 73; cf. 86.
- 99 *Ibid.*, 72.
- 100 *Ibid.*, 74.
- 101 *Ibid.*, 82. Lossky is unsure whether Palamas really used the term “lesser divinity” for the divine energy (and ‘greater divinity’ for the essence), but he notes that, if he had, this would simply refer to the “logical posteriority” of the manifestation in relation to the one who manifests himself. Interestingly, he cites for this the *Synopsis Nili* of the Council of 1341; *ibid.*, 81. For Palamas’s alleged use of the term, see Chapter 5, pp. 138–141.
- 102 See *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 73.
- 103 *Ibid.*, 75, 89; cf. 85–87. But see *ibid.*, 86, 89 where the “causal presence” of God in creation is contrasted with the divine indwelling through grace. This points, it seems to me, to an unresolved problem in the conception of Lossky.
- 104 *Ibid.*, 89–90. For the ultimate unity of the divine energy, Lossky cites not Palamas but Maximos: “being deified by that grace out of which all things that exist have come, and which brings into existence everything that before had no existence” (*Ep.* 43, *To John the Cubicularius*; PG 91:640BC). Yet Lossky also states that “the energies manifest the innumerable names of God, . . . Wisdom, Life, Power, Justice, Love, Being, God—and an infinity of other names which are unknown to us,” since the world is incapable of containing the fullness of the divine manifestation revealed in the energies (*ibid.*, 80).
- 105 See Kern, “Les éléments de la théologie de Grégoire Palamas,” *Irénikon* 20 (1947): 6–33. This was a portion (ch. 5) of Kern’s 1950 dissertation, *Антропология свт. Григория Паламы*, translated into French by Clément Lialine; see Russell, *Gregory Palamas*, 68–70.
- 106 See Kern, “Les éléments de la théologie,” 6–29; esp. 26.
- 107 *Ibid.*, 28.

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- 108 *Ibid.*, 29. Kern, too, defends the basic unity of the divine energy. For Kern, the same antinomy that holds between the unity and distinction of essence and energies holds for the diverse energies themselves. The one energy, however, is “multiform in its manifestations” and “indivisibly divided” (*ibid.*, 31).
- 109 Lialine, “Gregory Palamas and the Divine Simplicity,” 272; cf. 278.
- 110 *Ibid.*, 272.
- 111 *Ibid.*, 274.
- 112 *Ibid.*, 275.
- 113 Philips, “La grâce chez les Orientaux,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 48 (1972): 37–50 (emphasis in the original).
- 114 Sinkewicz, “Gregory Palamas,” 161.
- 115 Duncan Reid, *Energies of the Spirit: Trinitarian Models in Eastern Orthodoxy and Western Theology*, 21. Cf. Matti Kotiranta, “The Palamite Idea of Perichoresis of the Persons of the Trinity in the Light of Contemporary Neo-Palamite Analysis,” in René Gothóni and Hannu Kilpeläinen (eds.), *Byzantium and the North*, 59–69; at 63–64: “Ousia refers to the inner structure of the Trinity (“God in Himself”, the so-called immanent Trinity), whereas energeia refers to the outer structure (‘God for us’, the so-called economic Trinity).”
- 116 See his magisterial *Introduction à l’étude de Grégoire Palamas*, complemented by numerous articles on Palamas and his theology.
- 117 See *Introduction*, 306–307; “Une lettre inédite de Grégoire Palamas à Akindynos,” *Θεολογία* 24 (1953): 563–564. See the discussion in Chapter 5, pp. 138–141.
- 118 *Introduction*, 310.
- 119 For a critique of the ways that Meyendorff shaped the interpretation of Palamas’s theology after 1959, along with additional bibliography, see Pino, “Beyond Neo-Palamism: Interpreting the Legacy of St Gregory Palamas,” *Analogia* 3 (2017): 53–73.
- 120 See his *Die Taten des einfachen Gottes. Eine römisch-katholische Stellungnahme zum Palamismus*. Kuhlmann set out to compare Palamas with Thomas Aquinas, as well as with the dogmatic decrees of the Council of Florence and the magisterial *Benedictus Deus* of Benedict XII (1336). Though Kuhlmann saw dramatic differences between the two theologies, he believed, following the principles of Vatican II, that one could apply a hermeneutic of complementarity to the distinctive teachings of Eastern and Western theology. Cf. *id.*, “Thomas von Aquin und Gregor Palamas als Dionysius-Erklärer: Theologiegeschichtlicher Vergleich.”
- 121 “Palamisme et Scolastique,” *Revue théologique de Louvain* 4 (1973): 409–442; “Palamisme et Tradition,” *Irenikon* 4 (1975): 479–494.
- 122 “Palamisme et Scolastique,” 412–413, 432.
- 123 See Martin Strohm, “Die Lehre von der Einfachheit Gottes, Ein dogmatischer Streitpunkt zwischen Griechen und Lateinern,” *Kyrios* 7 (1967): 215–228; *id.*, “Die Lehre von der Energeia Gottes,” *Kyrios* 8 (1968): 63–84. For the criticism of De Halleux on this point, see “Palamisme et Scolastique,” 422 n. 44.
- 124 “*Der Palamismus will apophatisch sein; seine reale Distinktion ist aber durchaus kataphatisch*” (“Die Taten des einfachen Gottes,” 141). “If the essence of God is absolutely unknowable, I can neither have a concept of it, nor, much less, speak of its distinction from the energies. And if the energies are not God’s essence, yet still God—since God is infinite, immeasurable, and therefore incomprehensible to every creature, which is true of the essence of God—then I am again faced with the same problem (Schultze, “Die Taten des einfachen Gottes,” 141–142). For Schulze, like Lossky, the divine energy means, primarily, the grace of God, the light of Thabor, and the light seen by the hesychasts; “Die Bedeutung des Palamismus in der russischen Theologie der Gegenwart,” 391.
- 125 Schultze, “Die Taten des einfachen Gottes,” 136.

- 126 *Ibid.*, 138, 139, 140. *Id.*, “Die Bedeutung des Palamismus in der russischen Theologie der Gegenwart,” 391.
- 127 Podskalsky, “Gottesschau und Inkarnation,” 39; Schulze, “Die Bedeutung des Palamismus in der russischen Theologie der Gegenwart,” 391.
- 128 See Catherine LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*, 186–196; John Milbank, “Christianity and Platonism in East and West,” in C. Athanasopoulos and Ch. Schneider (eds.), *Divine Essence and Divine Energies: Ecumenical Reflections on the Presence of God in Eastern Orthodoxy*, 204. For a critical overview of the reception of the essence-energies distinction in modern systematic theology, see D.G. Butner, “Communion with God: An Energetic Defense of Gregory Palamas,” *Modern Theology* 32 (2016): 20–44.
- 129 Podskalsky, “Gottesschau und Inkarnation,” 42.
- 130 See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic: Volume 2, Truth of God*, 148; Milbank, “Christianity and Platonism in East and West,” 204.
- 131 Since God gives himself “without stint,” as Milbank says, he must therefore give his very essence (“Christianity and Platonism in East and West,” 208).
- 132 In his 1969 article, Podskalsky seeks to find the mean between Beck and Meyendorff on the question of Christocentrism in Palamas (“Gottesschau und Inkarnation,” 6), although he does convict Palamas of Neoplatonism in the end; see *ibid.*, 39: “With this effort for a comprehensible ontological formula, the Neoplatonism latent in Ps.-Dionysios has broken out again.” Cf. *ibid.*, 40, 45.
- 133 “The basic lineaments of the concept of the divine energies,” Bradshaw believes, “came together long before Palamas,” specifically in the Cappadocians (“The Concept of the Divine Energies,” *Philosophy and Theology* 18 (2006): 95). Still, Bradshaw sees Palamas as the synthesis of the entire Eastern Christian tradition, and thus his interpretations of essence and energies more broadly constitute his interpretation of Palamas; cf. *Aristotle East and West*, x–xi.
- 134 Bradshaw, “The Concept of the Divine Energies,” 109.
- 135 See the discussion of ‘real distinction’ in Chapter 5, pp. 156–161.
- 136 Bradshaw, “The Concept of the Divine Energies,” 107. Cf. Bradshaw, “Essence and Energies: What Kind of Distinction?” 35.
- 137 Bradshaw, “Essence and Energies: What Kind of Distinction?” 35. Cf. *Aristotle East and West*, 161–164.
- 138 Bradshaw, “The Concept of the Divine Energies,” 108.
- 139 Cf. Bradshaw, “Essence and Energies: What Kind of Distinction?” 35.
- 140 Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 273.
- 141 Bradshaw, “Essence and Energies: What Kind of Distinction?” 35. Cf. *id.*, *Aristotle East and West*, 272.
- 142 Bradshaw, “The Concept of the Divine Energies,” 112. Note that this is the precise reason given by Petavius that the divine energies could not be eternal and uncreated.
- 143 Bradshaw, “The Concept of the Divine Energies,” 112. This state of affairs is such that “nothing prevents these energies from being affected by creatures;” *ibid.*, 118.
- 144 Lévy, “Lost in *Translatio*? *Diakrisis Kat’epinoian* as a Main Issue in the Discussions between Fourteenth-Century Palamites and Thomists,” *The Thomist* 76 (2012): 454–455.
- 145 *Ibid.*, 441–450.
- 146 *Ibid.*, 468.
- 147 *Ibid.*, 469. “In the East, the emphasis on the objective dimension of the *diakrisis kat’epinoian* is inseparable from a theocentric perspective where God’s eternal being-in-energy is motionlessly ‘curved’ towards the spatiotemporal *continuum* that contains human beings” (*ibid.*, 470).
- 148 Lévy, “An Introduction to Divine Relativity,” 175.
- 149 *Ibid.*, 192.

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- 150 *Ibid.*, 209.
- 151 *Ibid.*, 193; cf. *ibid.* 202. See E. Perl, “St. Gregory Palamas and the Metaphysics of Creation,” *Dionysius* 14 (1990): 105–130.
- 152 Lévy, “An Introduction to Divine Relativity,” 194 n. 24.
- 153 See, for example, Christos Terezis and Lydia Petridou, “Divine Essence, Divine Persons, and Divine Energies in Gregory Palamas: A Methodological Approach,” *Analogia* 6 (2019): 67–82.
- 154 Loudovikos, “Narcissism beyond Pleasure,” 42.
- 155 *Ibid.*, 44.
- 156 *Ibid.*, 43–44.
- 157 Loudovikos, Δι-Ἐννοημάτωσις, 153; Loudovikos, “Narcissism beyond Pleasure,” 49–50.
- 158 Loudovikos, Δι-Ἐννοημάτωσις, 153; *id.*, “Narcissism beyond Pleasure,” 44; cf. *id.*, “Being and Essence Revisited: Reciprocal Logoi and Energies in Maximus the Confessor and Thomas Aquinas, and the Genesis of the Self-referring Subject,” *Revista Portuguesa* 72.1 (2016): 122, 128.
- 159 “Being and Essence Revisited,” 121.
- 160 Loudovikos derives this from *Theophanes* 17 (PS 2:243.14–22), which he paraphrases (very loosely) as saying, “When you hear the fathers calling the divine essence ‘non-participated in,’ think that they mean that essence as it is in itself, without expressing itself to the world. When you hear them calling it participated in, think that they thus mean the procession and the expression of the energy, which pre-exists in God.... But if you think that, through this energy, it is the very divine essence that expresses itself, even not thoroughly, you are not out of the terms of piety.” In the passage in question, however, Palamas is explaining the sense in which the divine *nature* (cf. 2 Pt 1:14) is participated in, without saying that the essence is ‘expressed’ by the energy. See Chapter 2, pp. 67–68, esp. nn. 238 and 239.
- 161 Loudovikos, “Narcissism beyond Pleasure,” 44.
- 162 Torstein Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation in Late Antiquity and Early Christian Thought*, 193.
- 163 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 164 See, for example, Norman Russell, “The Christological Context,” 192.
- 165 “Gregory Palamas and George Scholarios,” 48. Kapriev interprets the distinction between essence and energy as one of indivisible division, in which “they are different aspects of the object viewed by the intellect,” transcending the dichotomy between a real and a conceptual distinction (*ibid.*, 51).
- 166 See, for example, K. Heyden, “Gregorios Akindynos: Der verkannte Vermittler im Streit um die göttliche Energie (nicht nur) im 14. Jahrhundert,” 194–195.
- 167 According to Demetracopoulos, the original intention of St Gregory Palamas in constructing his essence–energies distinction was “a statement valid *a parte rei*,” which subsequent Palamites softened by replacing it with a *conceptual* distinction (κατ’ ἐπίνοιαν or λόγῳ): “just a *postulatum* necessary for the human mind to grasp God” but not “applied to God *per se* (“Palamas Transformed: Palamite Interpretations of the Distinction between God’s ‘Essence’ and ‘Energies’ in Late Byzantium,” in M. Hinterberger and Ch. Schabel [eds.], *Greeks, Latins, and Intellectual History 1205–1500*, 263).
- 168 PS 1–5 (1962–1992).
- 169 Bradshaw is clear about the limited scope of his study in the Preface, x–xi.
- 170 *La théologie de énergies divines des origines à saint Jean Damascène*.
- 171 See *La théologie de énergies divines*, 7–19.
- 172 *L’Esprit répandu. La pneumatologie de Grégoire Palamas* (he discusses the essence–energies distinction esp. at 101–132). Conversely, the valuable research of Vasilios Karayiannis, *Maxime le Confesseur: Essence et énergies de Dieu*, while offering a detailed and sustained analysis of the essence–energies distinction,

- only treats this topic in the context of the theology of St Maximos the Confessor. Cf. K. Savvidis, *Die Lehre von der Vergöttlichung des Menschen bei Maximos dem Bekenner und ihre Rezeption durch Gregor Palamas*.
- 173 *Introduction*, 280. Decades later, in 2001, Sinkewicz noted that “There is still much work to be done in completing ... detailed analyses of the contents of texts” (“Gregory Palamas,” 173).
- 174 PS 3:39–506. For the dating of Palamas’s writings, see R. Sinkewicz, “Gregory Palamas,” 133–154; cf. Rigo, “De l’apologie à la l’évocation de l’expérience mystique: Évagre le Pontique, Isaac le Syrien et Diadoque de Photicé dans les oeuvres de Grégoire Palamas (et dans la controverse palamite),” in A. Speer and Ph. Steinkrüger (eds.), *Knotenpunkt Byzanz. Wissensformen und Kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen*, 96; id. “Le mont Athos entre le patriarche Jean XIV Calécas et Grégoire Palamas (1344–1346),” in ΠΕΡΙΒΟΛΟΣ. *Mélanges offerts à Mirjana Živojinović*,” 262–279; id., “Il Rapporto dei metropolitani ad Anna Paleologa e altri eventi del 1346,” *Byzantion* 85 (2015): 292–295.
- 175 PS 4:231–377.
- 176 PS 2:69–277, 315–547, 579–670; PS 4:85–107, 382–389.
- 177 PS 1:359–695. Although Chrestou’s edition is preferable to that of Meyendorff (see Balfour, “Review of *Gregory Palamas: The Triads*, by Nicholas Gendle,” *GOTR* 29 [1984], 98), we refer in this study to the more widely accessible edition of Meyendorff: *Grégoire Palamas, Défense des saints hésychastes. Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes*).
- 178 PS 5:37–120.
- 179 See n. 177 just above.
- 180 *Gregory Palamas: The Triads*. Cf. the valuable review by David Balfour, “*Gregory Palamas: The Triads* by Nicholas Gendle,” *GOTR* 29 (1984): 95–105. Some portions are also included in *The Philokalia*, vol. 4, trans. G.E.H. Palmer *et al.*, 331–342.
- 181 *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, ed. and trans. Robert Sinkewicz. This has been supplemented, since 2004, by the historically influential *Homilies* (ed. Ch. Veniamin, 2009), as well as the *Dialogue of an Orthodox with a Barlaamite* (trans. Rein Ferwanda, 1999), and now the treatise *On Participation* (trans. K. Anderson, “Gregory Palamas: On Divine and Deifying Participation,” *Analogia* 4 [2019]: 5–25). A number of shorter treatises also appear in *The Philokalia* 4:293–425: *To Xene* (PS 5:193–230), the *Decalogue of the Christian Law* (PS 5:251–260), *On Prayer* (PS 5:157–159), and the *Hagioretic Tome*. See, also, P.J. Hatlie, “The Answer to Paul Asen of Gregory Palamas: A Fourteenth Century Apology for the One, Grand and Angelic Schema,” *SVTQ* 33 (1989): 35–51. Not all of these texts, however, are directly concerned with the essence-energies distinction.
- 182 Reprinted from the edition of Ch. F. von Matthaei, *Lectiones Mosquensis* 2 (1779), 7–37.
- 183 Reprinted from the edition F. Combefis, *Bibliothecae graecorum* 2 (1672), 172–176.
- 184 Printed, as a note, from J. Boivin’s edition of Gregoras, *Historiae Byzantina* 2 (1702), 1282–1283. Some small excerpts from the *Letter to Symeon* are also present in Migne (PG 148:73B–D), but these are of a rhetorical nature; cf. PS 2:396.23 – 410.14.
- 185 See *Theologia Dogmatica* 2:52–160.
- 186 See “Palamas’ Reply to Gregoras’ Account of their Debate in 1335,” *JÖB* 32.4 (1982): 246.
- 187 See *Viața și învățătura sfântului Grigorie Palama*; cf. Meyendorff, “Une lettre inédite de Grégoire Palamas à Akindynos,” 557 n. 1.
- 188 See, for example, his descriptions of then unedited works (*Introduction*, 340–382). Nearly every page of his *Introduction* cites from Gregory’s unedited works, referencing the manuscripts. Cf. “Une lettre inédite,” 557–568.

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- 189 See Kallistos Ware, “God Hidden and Revealed,” 133, 135, 136. Cf. Butner, “Communion with God,” 35 n. 91. Mention should be made here of the work of Leonidas Contos, whose work on *Against Akindynos* preceded the edition of Kontoyiannes and Phanourgakes (PS 3) by seven years; “The Concept of Theosis in Saint Gregory Palamas. With Critical Text of the ‘Contra Akindynum’” (Doctoral dissertation, University of Oxford, 1963).
- 190 Several of these texts were also available in the *Τόμος Αγάπης* of Dositheos of Jerusalem (1698): *Ekth.* (13–17), *Tom. hag.* (34–40), *Conf.* (85–88); and the *История Афона* of Porphyry Uspensky, vol. 3 (1892): *Tom. hag.* (683–688), and excerpts of the *Triads* (688–691), *Ep. Akind.* 1–2 (710–713), *Cap.* (797–806), and *Greg.* (737–741). Both volumes also published the *Tomoi* of 1341 and 1351, with Uspensky adding the *Tomos* of 1347. Yet these sources were not nearly as accessible to Western readers. The same can be said of the *Letters to Barlaam and Akindynos* published by Papamichail in *Ἐκκλησιαστικὸς Φάρος* 12 (1913): 377–381 [= *Ep. Akind.* 2]; 13 (1914): 42–52, 245–55, 464–76 [= *Ep. Barl.* 1]. Gregory’s *Confession of Faith* also appeared, with the *Tomoi* of 1341 and 1351, in I. Karmires, *Δογματικά καὶ συμβολικά μνημεῖα* 1 (1952), 343–346. For a full overview of the early editions of Palamas’s writings, see Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 335–340.
- 191 *Introduction*, 346–381. Cf. Jugie, *Theologia Dogmatica* 1:437–438.
- 192 This can be observed, for example, in the work of Krivoshein; see, especially, “The Ascetical and Theological Teaching of Gregory Palamas,” 138–156. Krivoshein also has recourse to Uspensky, and he makes good use of the *Confession*. He is even able to leverage a title from Montfaucon’s catalog of Gregory’s works, reproduced in PG 150:799–844, so that, indirectly, he also cites from *Against Akindynos*; see 152 n. 73.
- 193 *Introduction*, 337. The “defects” of the edition include the absence, carried over from the *Philokalia* edition, of all references to Barlaam and Akindynos, as well as other textual and punctuation errors; see Sinkewicz, *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, x, 75–76.
- 194 “Une lettre inédite,” 557. Cf. Jugie, “Palamas,” 1750.
- 195 See, for example, the reviews by Polycarp Sherwood, *The Catholic Historical Review* 52 (1966): 115–116; Jean Darrouzès, *Revue des études byzantines* 23 (1965): 264–265; Kallistos Ware, *The Journal of Theological Studies* 18 (1967): 510–512.
- 196 See Barrois, “Palamism Revisited,” *SVTQ* 19.4 (1975): 213: “A critical edition of the texts should make possible for the first time a valid interpretation and evaluation of the theology of Palamas, in relation to the framework of historical events in which it developed.”
- 197 Williams cites from the *Chapters* nineteen times, from the *Theophanes* five times, and from the *Triads* three times; see “The Philosophical Structures of Palamism,” *Eastern Churches Review* 9 (1977), 27–44.
- 198 See “Palamisme et Scolastique,” 409–442.
- 199 “*L’Esprit répandu* by Jacques Lison,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 48 (1997): 309.
- 200 “Platonism from Maximos the Confessor to the Palaiologan Period,” in A. Kaldellis and N. Siniosoglou (eds.), *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium*, 339.
- 201 *L’Esprit répandu. La pneumatologie de Grégoire Palamas.*
- 202 “*L’Esprit répandu* by Jacques Lison,” 309.
- 203 *Theosis Bei Palamas und Luther: Ein Beitrag zum Ökumenischen Gespräch.*
- 204 See, for example, Yangozoglou, *Προλεγόμενα στή Θεολογία τῶν ἀκτιστῶν ἐνεργειῶν. Σπουδὴ στὸν Ἅγιο Γρηγόριο Παλαμᾶ*. Modern Greek readers also have the advantage of a complete set of modern translations of Palamas; *Γρηγορίου*

- τοῦ Παλαμᾶ ἅπαντα τὰ ἔργα, 11 vols., ed. P. Chrestou et al. (Ἕλληνες Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας).
- 205 Even the appearance of Gregory’s complete works in Italian has done little to remedy the situation; see Ettore Perrella, *Gregorio Palamas, Atto e luce divina: scritti filosofici e teologici* (2003); *Gregorio Palamas, Dal sovraessenziale all’essenza: confutazioni, discussioni, scritti confessionali, documenti dalla prigionia fra i turchi* (2005); *Gregorio Palamas, Che cos’è l’ortodossia* (2006).
- 206 See Jugie, “Palamas,” 1738; Cañellas, *La résistance*, 146.
- 207 As noted earlier, the distinction is actually treated as early as the *Letters to Barlaam*. Cf. the remarks of Ioannis Polemis, “Review of Cañellas, *La resistance*,” 247, who also draws attention to Barlaam’s response in his *Letter to Palamas* 704–752 (ed. Fyrigos, 252–254).
- 208 It appears in earnest some twenty-three sections into *Tr.* 3.1 (ed. Meyendorff, 601, 17–29). It bears repeating that, even here, the essence–energies distinction is not merely a means to an end, since, as Palamas declares, Barlaam “proceeds to claim that not only [the deifying light] is a creature, but every power and energy of God, even though the saints clearly state that everything that is natural to, and every power and energy of, an uncreated nature, is uncreated, as those of a created nature are created” (ed. Meyendorff, 603.1–6).
- 209 Cf. the remarks of Sinkewicz, *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, 55; “Gregory Palamas,” 136.
- 210 The estimation of Meyendorff (*A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 62), that Palamas does not build significantly on what he says in the *Triads*, can only be taken in a qualified manner. Although the *Triads* in some sense contain the basic core of Gregory’s essence–energies distinction, there is much that is not said in the *Triads* that will be said in later treatments of the issue, as Sinkewicz himself points out (“Gregory Palamas,” 135).
- 211 The dating to before the Council of 1351 is based on the text’s reference to a single synod and the lack of any reference to Gregoras; see Sinkewicz, *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, 49–54; cf. Chrestou, “Introduction” (PS 5:28–30); Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 373–374. But the *Chapters* are unique for many reasons, and it is possible that they represent a very late development of Gregory’s theology.
- 212 Specifically, *Against Akindynos, On Union and Distinction*, the *Theophanes, On Cyril*, and the *Homilies*. For a complete overview, see Sinkewicz, *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, 36–49.
- 213 See Sinkewicz, “Christian Theology and the Renewal of Philosophical and Scientific Studies in the Early Fourteenth Century: The *Capita 150* of Gregory Palamas,” *Mediaeval Studies* 48 (1986): 334–351. The cosmological themes are, in fact, an expansion of topics already present in *Against Akindynos* 4 and 6, which discuss the nature of the sun, moon, stars, and water; the eternity of the world; and the basic errors of Hellenic polytheism (and Manichean dualism). These themes are directly implicated in the distinction between God’s nature and will, and the question of whether the light of Thabor is a created, sensible light. See *Akind.* 4.13.22 (PS 3:264.28), 6.8.19 (PS 3:396.23 – 397.16), 6.13.44 (PS 3:420.6 – 421.3).
- 214 Sinkewicz, *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, 55. This calm reflection could also have been written after the conclusion of the debates with Gregoras.
- 215 Sinkewicz, *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, 55; id., “Gregory Palamas,” 136.
- 216 Dans ce résumé ... Palamas a condensé toute sa doctrine philosophique et théologique” (Jugie, “Palamas,” 1746). See, also, id., *Theologia dogmatica* 2:76. Cf. *ibid.*, 1:438–439: *in quibus quasi summam totius theologiae Palamae invenies*. More recently, Sinkewicz noted that “Among the polemical writings of Gregory Palamas the *Capita 150* is comparable in importance only to the *Triads* in *Defence of the Holy Hesychasts*.... The *Triads* and the *Capita 150* stand side by

- side as the two works most representative of the theological contribution of Gregory Palamas” (*The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, 55); cf. id. “Gregory Palamas,” 136.
- 217 Cf. Sinkewicz: “His correspondence during this period [1342–1343] is of critical importance to the correct interpretation of his theology” (“Gregory Palamas,” 135). For Sinkewicz, this is connected to an increased caution and nuance in Gregory’s explanations, in order “to better inform his supporters and persuade the undecided.” Cf. Schulze, “Die Grundfragen des theologischen Palamismus,” 114–117.
- 218 See Jugie, “Palamas,” 1755; Kern, “Les éléments de la théologie,” 29; Milbank, “Christianity and Platonism in East and West,” 153; Williams, “The Philosophical Structures,” 30. Lossky, cited in Lialine, “Gregory Palamas and the Divine Simplicity,” 273; Lössl, “Augustine in Byzantium,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 51 (2000): 282.
- 219 This passage is discussed in Chapter 5, pp. 147–149. Sinkewicz does note the dependence of *Cap.* 122–131 on *Akind.* 6, and he links the language of accident with the disputed passage of Gregory Nazianzen (see *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, 46), but he does not list the patristic reference in the apparatus of the text (*The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, 231).
- 220 *Dan.* 7 (PS 2:380.21–23). Cf. *Dam.* 18 (PS 2:474.29–30), 22 (477.24–26); *Athan.* 14 (PS 2:425.27–28), 45 (PS 2:454.3–7); *Akind.* 1.14.65 (PS 3:84.10–12), 6.23.86 (PS 3:452.14–17).
- 221 To cite one example, Gregory’s *Letter to Athanasios* points to the earlier letter *To Gabras* as a place where he has laid out the analogy of the human intellect (νοῦς) and its operation (διάνοια) as an analogy for the unity-in-distinction of God’s essence and energies; *Athan.* 37 (PS 2:447.6–9).
- 222 See *Dan.* 3 (PS 2:377.7–9); 7 (PS 2:380.21–24); *Athan.* 35 (PS 2:444.27–31); *Theo.* 11 (PS 2:235.2); *Akind.* 6.19.73 (PS 3:441.12–14).
- 223 See *Energ.* 46 (PS 2:131.13–16); *Athan.* 11 (PS 2:421.24–26), 12 (PS 2:422.19–22), 8 (PS 2:419.14–18), 38 (PS 2:447.15–21); *Union* 31 (PS 2:91.33–92.2); *Akind.* 5.5.15 (PS 3:297.27–29). Naturally, the *Dialogue of an Orthodox with a Barlaamite* (Fall 1341) is not only referenced in its companion dialogue, the *Theophanes* (PS 2:234.13–14), but it also comes up in *Gabr.* 2 (PS 2:326.22–23; 327.2, 8) and *Athan.* 35 (PS 2:444.27–31).
- 224 See *Athan.* 8 (PS 2:418.27–29), 9 (PS 2:420.8–12), 11 (PS 2:421.24–26), 14 (PS 2:425.27–28), 31 (PS 2:441.23–29), 38 (PS 2:447.15–21), 45 (PS 2:454.3–7). Cf. *Dam.* 1 (PS 2:455.26–29).
- 225 See *Akind.* 4.8.22 (PS 3:257.24–26), 5.14.56 (PS 3:329.4–8), 6.12.42 (PS 3:419.15–18); cf. *Akind.* 3.7.20 (PS 3:178.3–5).
- 226 See *Athan.* 2 (PS 2:412.102), 10 (420.13–15, 25–30), 12 (423.21–24). The loyalties of Athanasios were at some point in doubt, and both sides of the controversy made a concerted effort to win him over; see Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 91–93; cf. Rigo, “Il Rapporto,” 314.
- 227 Cf. Chrestou’s Introduction to the *Letters* (PS 2:293). Although some of the earlier texts from 1341 to 1344 are also grouped, in the manuscripts, under the title of “antirrhetics to Akindynos” (cf. PS 2:96; Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 333), the references in *Athan.* are too clear a match with the relevant loci in *Akind.*
- 228 See *Akind.* 6.2.5 (PS 3:382.34–383.1).
- 229 In addition to the polemical writings on the essence–energies distinction, Gregory’s *Homilies* and his ascetical and spiritual writings were also formed into distinct collections. On the *Homilies*, see B. Pseuftongkas, ed. PS 6:11–35; Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 331–332; Ehrhard, *Überlieferung und Bestand der hagiographischen und homiletischen Literatur der griechischen Kirche*, 695–704. On the spiritual writings, see Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 331–332; Rigo, “I manoscritti,” 326.

- 230 Indeed, only recently have Antonio Rigo and Brigitte Mondrain begun a comprehensive study of the entire manuscript tradition, something that scholars noted as a lacuna in Chrestou's critical edition; see "La collection des oeuvres complètes de Grégoire Palamas," in *Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies, London 21–26 August 2006*, 3:386. Cf. Rigo, "Le mont Athos," 260–263.
- 231 See Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 332–333. Cf. id., *Défense des saints hésychastes*, xlvii.
- 232 See Robert Devreesse, *Catalogue des manuscrits grecs. 2, Le fonds Coislin*, 83–88.
- 233 *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, 57.
- 234 See H. O. Coxe, *Catalogi codicum manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Bodleianae* 1, 573–574; see, also, the apparatus in PS 2:96.
- 235 PS 2:411. Again, Bodl. Laud gr. 87 lists this as τῶν πρὸς Ἀκίνδυνον ἀντιρρητικῶν ἢ πρώτη (Coxe, *Catalogi* 1:573), while it is called λόγος α' in Coisl. gr. 98 (see Devreesse, *Catalogue*, 86).
- 236 Cf. the apparatus in PS 2:69, which records «λόγος β'» as part of the title in Coisl. 98, Paris gr. 1238, and Bodl. Laud gr. 87; see, also Devreesse, *Catalogue*, 85; Coxe, *Catalogi* 1:574.
- 237 *On Union and Distinction* precedes *Akind.* 1 even in *Dionysiou* 200 (*Athous* 3734), even though the manuscript (14th c.) predates the formation of Books 1 through 3. See Lambros, *Catalogue of the Greek Manuscripts on Mount Athos* 1:361.
- 238 In Synod. gr. 291 (Vlad. 237) of Moscow's State Historical Museum (ГИМ) (dated to 1607), which is significantly later than other copies of Book I, *Against Akindynos* follows immediately after the *Letter to Athanasios*. Otherwise, *Akind.* is listed as λόγος γ' of the overall collection of writings against Akindynos; see the apparatus in PS 3:39; Devreesse, *Catalogue*, 85.
- 239 As noted earlier (see n. 192), the chapter titles of *Against Akindynos*, printed and translated by Bernard Montfaucon (*Bibliotheca Coisliniana, olim Segueriana*, 156–167) were reproduced in PG 150:799–844.
- 240 The seven books *Against Akindynos* were long thought to correspond to Akindynos's seven *Antirrhetics*; see Sinkewicz, "Gregory Palamas," 135.
- 241 *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, 47.
- 242 In addition to the explicit cross-references noted earlier, this includes passages reproduced in the *Chapters*. See, for example, *Akind.* 5.23.86–25.101 (PS 3:352–365), which expands considerably on the discussion of the distribution of the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:8) in *Theo.* 18 (PS 2:244.8–20) (= *Cap.* 108). But it also includes topics that are not otherwise well known, such as Akindynos's understanding of the vision experienced by the angels, prophets, and the apostle Paul in *Asan.* 2 (PS 2:364.7–26); cf. *Akind.* 5.2.5–7.29 (PS 3:290–307).
- 243 One can read the *Verses* in PG 150:843–862, reprinted from Allatius, *Graecia Orthodoxa* 1:756–769, an edition of the Vatican manuscript, Barberini gr. 291, ff. 244v–255v.
- 244 The manuscripts of Book Two include (1) Coislin gr. 99; (2) Paris. gr. 1238; (3) Bodl. Laud gr. 87; (4) Ambrosiana I 024 sup. (Martini-Bassi 457); and (5) El Escorial y. II. 15 (Andrés 323).
- 245 The manuscripts of Book Three include (1) Coislin gr. 100; (2) Paris. gr. 1238; (3) Bodl. Laud gr. 87; (4) Synod. gr. 249 (Vlad. 402); (5) Athens, EBE 2092; (6) Sinai gr. 1671; (7) Ivriou 386 (Lambros 4506); (9) Lavra Ω 133 (Lambros 1945), (10) Chalki 138.
- 246 Book Three also includes the *Apodictic Treatises on the Procession of the Holy Spirit* (PS 1:10–154) and *Against Bekkos* (PS 1:160–176). The inclusions are significant, since Books 1 through 3 otherwise omit writings that are not specifically concerned with the essence–energies distinction.
- 247 Given the grouping of the three Books, it is significant that the *Chapters* are found in Book Three. In fact, of the nine extant manuscripts of the *Chapters*, all but two

- transmit the work as part of the ordered collection, after the writings against Gregoras and before the synodal *Tomoi*: Paris. gr. 2381 (a fifteenth-century scientific miscellany) and Lavra 1907 (Ω 95) (an eighteenth-century collection of the works of Palamas possibly belonging to Nikodimos Hagioritis); see Sinkewicz, *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, 57–60, 66, 68.
- 248 This is significant for the dating of the *Chapters*. If Palamas indeed wrote the *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* in 1349 or 1350, this means he would have gone on to defend the essence–energies distinction for five to seven more years after putting together his veritable ‘summa.’ Yet he is never seen to draw any attention to this text at all in his subsequent polemics. This only strengthens the case for seeing the *Chapters* as something written at the very end of his life.
- 249 See, for example, *Greg.* 2.1 (PS 4:265.13–14), 2.70 (313.31–32).
- 250 *Greg.* 2.1 (PS 4:265.14). Cf. *ibid.* 2.38 (PS 4:292.32–33).
- 251 See Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 366; Ware, “The Debate about Palamism,” 59.
- 252 Basil, *Ep.* 210.5 (LCL 243:208).
- 253 *Tomos of 1351*, 7 (ed. Karmires, 1:315).
- 254 See Ware: “He is admitting that there is inconsistency and inexactness in his polemical writings” (“The Debate on Palamism,” 59).
- 255 See, for example, Jugie, “Palamite (Controverse),” 1795: “Lui-même, au concile de 1351, parut, un moment, renoncer à l’emploi du pluriel θεότητες.” Cf. *id.*, “Palamas,” 1757.
- 256 See Jugie, “Palamas,” 1757.
- 257 The *Confession* is appended to the *Letter to Dionysios*, written at the height of the controversy with Akindynos (PS 2:494.14–499.29). See Chrestou’s ‘Introduction’ (PS 2:297–300).
- 258 Papadakis (“Gregory Palamas at the Council of Blachernae, 1351,” 335) states that “according to Palamas’ own testimony it possesses a precision rarely found in his other works,” but the text, which is very succinct, contains nothing that is ultimately unique to the *Confession*.
- 259 *Akind.* 6.2.5 (PS 3:382.31–32).
- 260 This includes, specifically, the language of ‘inferiority’ (i.e., subordination) and the application of the word ‘divinity’ to the divine energy; see Chapter 5, pp. 138–142.
- 261 See *Greg.* 2.3 (PS 4:266.13–14).
- 262 See, for example, *Akind.* 1.14.64 (PS 3:83.14–27), 6.20.34 (PS 3:402.17–18); *Dion.* 12–15 (PS 2:489.23–31 – 493.26); *Gabr.* 5 (PS 2:333.5–6); *Dan.* 12 (PS 2:386.23–30). Cf. *Tr.* 3.1.2 (ed. Meyendorff, 559.24; 561.13); *Greg.* 2.3 (PS 4:266.4–5). The dialectic between words and their meaning often centers on the language of subordination (τὸ ὑφείμενον; see *Sym.* 3–12), although it is not limited thereto. It is, generally, an appeal to Akindynos in particular not to abuse his words or pretend to be scandalized by terminology (cf. pp. 138–142 for the specific controversy over the term *divinity*).
- 263 See *Greg.* 1.6 (PS 4:235.1–19).
- 264 One of the valuable contributions of Demetracopoulos’s *Palamas Transformed* has been to draw attention to the fact that Gregory’s omissions are as important as his assertions. Thus, careful attention both to what Palamas says and does not say is important for a comprehensive presentation of his theology.
- 265 Cf. Balfour, “Palamas’ Reply,” 249. According to Jugie, several manuscripts even attribute the work to Palamas (see Jugie, “Palamas,” 1749–1750), but this is not reflected in the edition of Panagiotes Chrestou (see PS 4:186–187, 191). The *Debate* itself functions as a treatise on the essence–energies distinction (the topic ostensibly chosen by Gregoras), relating a series of magisterial explanations on the part of Palamas, with Gregoras appearing as a *dramatis persona* (even boasting a chorus of supporters) only to be refuted and to instigate further explanation. Gregoras offers his own, even more polemical, version of events in his

History 30–31 (Bonn 3:266–374). Whether Phakrases’ *Debate* is an objective, historical record of the discussion as it actually unfolded is not of direct relevance for this study (cf. Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 165). It suffices here that the *Debate* represents Palamas’s position accurately. For a valuable analysis of the *Debate*, see D. Biriukov and D. Makarov, “Комментарии,” in *Георгий Факрасис. Диспут свт. Григория Паламы с Григорий Философом*; cf. Manuel Candal, “Fuentes Palamíticas: Dialogo de Jorge Facrasi sobre el contradictorio de Palamas con Niceforo Gregoras,” *OCP* 16 (1950): 303–327.

266 On the ‘harmony’ of Barlaam, Akindynos, and Gregoras, see Chapter 6, p. 173.

2 Understanding the Language of Essence and Energies

Introduction

Essence and *energy* are ambiguous terms. As S. Marc Cohen has pointed out, “*Ousia*, at the core of both Aristotelian metaphysics and trinitarian theology, must surely rank as one of the most obscure concepts with which an intellectual historian can be confronted.”¹ Something similar could be said for *energeia*, which bears the added difficulty of being even less familiar than the term *ousia*. It would seem obvious, therefore, that any attempt to understand the essence–energies distinction in Palamas should begin with an analysis of how he uses and understands these key terms.² Fortunately for the student of Palamas, his extensive writings not only explain what he means by *ousia* and *energeia*, but his rich and variegated lexicon for talking about essence and energies also shed significant light on what he understands by these elusive technical terms. In addition to offering a number of glosses for *ousia*, and a wide range of synonyms and corollaries for ‘energy’ (often communicating the content of this category in ways that are more readily understood by modern readers), the writings of Palamas are replete with concrete discussions about *particular* divine energies, lending a great deal of specificity and concreteness to a term that, of itself, can be mystifying and obscure. This chapter explores these discussions, and Gregory’s language more generally, in order to penetrate what Palamas means by the *ousia* and *energeia* that he seeks to differentiate in the being of God.

Ousia

By the time of St Gregory Palamas, the Greek words *ousia* and *energeia* enjoyed a rich and protracted history, predating the advent of Christianity by several centuries.³ In the Byzantine world, these were, above all, the technical terms associated with the central dogmas of the faith, most notably the consubstantiality of the divine Persons and the duality of operations in the divinity and humanity of Christ.⁴ Partly for this reason, the dogmatic contours of the term *ousia*, in particular, are largely taken for granted by Palamas and his opponents. It is the ‘essence’ or ‘substance’ referred to in the Creed, shared by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.⁵ In the context of Gregory’s

polemics, this shared patrimony means that the term *ousia* often goes unexplained, so that what Palamas means by ‘essence’ must sometimes be inferred, if not assumed. Yet Palamas’s writings do offer a number of critical insights into what he means when speaks of God’s *ousia*, or essence; and these insights will often depend on the synonyms that Palamas uses to talk about God’s essence or substance.

Οὐσία and Nature

Among the most important glosses that Palamas offers for the term *ousia* is the word *nature* (φύσις), which Palamas, and many of his sources, will use interchangeably with the word *essence*. Once again, this reflects the common parlance of Trinitarian theology, wherein God is said to be not only ‘one in essence’ but also ‘one in nature.’ The identification between the two words is often made implicitly, or simply taken for granted. Thus, while defending the distinction between God’s essence and energies, Palamas will frequently make use of patristic texts which distinguish God’s energies not from his *ousia* but from his *physis*. This is the case, for example, in a passage from St Cyril of Alexandria, where it is said that, “creating belongs to energy, but generating to nature. Nature and energy, therefore, are not the same thing.”⁶ Utilizing quotations such as this, Palamas speaks equally of a distinction between essence and energies and between *nature* and energies, moving freely between the two formulations.⁷

But Palamas also asserts the equivalence of *ousia* and *physis* explicitly and has occasion, in several places, to discuss the identity of these two terms. This occurs, for example, in *Against Akindynos* 1, where Palamas affirms that “essence and nature are entirely undifferentiated in God”:

Just as no one would say that the nature of God also has essence, since essence and nature are entirely undifferentiated in God, so it is consistent with *their* beliefs that they could not say that the essence of God has an energy, since, according to them, the divine energy in no way differs from the divine essence.⁸

A similar statement occurs again in the *Debate with Gregoras*, where Gregoras had sought to identify the word *essence* with ‘essential’ and the word *nature* with ‘natural.’ “The Philosopher,” Phakrases tell us,

opened his book, and, after flipping through a number of pages, began to read, saying, ‘The Son is natural and essential (φυσικὸς καὶ ἐνουσίος) to the Father, so that in God nature and what is natural, and essence and what is essential (φύσις καὶ φυσικόν, οὐσία τε καὶ οὐσιώδες) are identical and undifferentiated.’

Palamas points out in response to Gregoras that the text cited clearly identifies *ousia* with *physis* and ‘essential’ with ‘natural,’ not *essence* with ‘essential’

and *nature* with ‘natural.’ “Nature and essence,” he explains, “are one and undifferentiated in God, and thus what is natural and what is essential are also identical.”⁹

To be sure, the semantic equivalence of the two words is not absolute, and Palamas is aware that the term *physis*, historically, has generally admitted a wider application than the term *ousia*. Elsewhere, for example, he will have to address the usage of *physis* in 2 Peter 1:14, where human beings are said to become “communicants of the divine nature.”¹⁰ Yet as a technical term of late Byzantine theology, Palamas generally takes it for granted that ‘essence’ and ‘nature’ are the same thing, and he uses the words accordingly.

The Aristotelian Dimensions of Οὐσία

It would be a mistake, however, to believe that the denotation and connotations of *essence* in Palamas were informed only by Christian religious concepts, in dialectic opposition to ‘philosophy.’¹¹ In treating a word like *ousia*, with its rich philosophical pedigree, Palamas himself does not draw any kind of dichotomy between the philosophical category and its technical theological usage, for example, in speaking about the Trinity. This is especially evident in the *Chapters*, where, late in his life, Palamas would draw on the Greek translation of Augustine’s *De Trinitate* to discuss the concept of *ousia* precisely in terms of the Aristotelian category of substance.¹² Although Palamas is careful to note that God is not a substance in the same way as created beings, since he is “an essence beyond essence” (οὐσία ὑπερούσιος), he does not for this reason reject the generically Aristotelian framework.¹³ On the contrary, he embraces the idea that, in the case of God, there is a substance along with things that inhere in that substance¹⁴ so that the language of *ousia* is not radically divorced from its philosophical underpinnings.¹⁵

The broadly Aristotelian resonances of *ousia* are reinforced by Gregory’s definition of *essence* as ‘what God is’ (τί ἐστὶ).¹⁶ This is often qualified with the phrase ‘according to essence,’ although ‘what God is’ is never predicated of anything but the divine *ousia*:

God, whatever he is at the level of essence (ὅ,τι ποτε κατ’ οὐσίαν ἐστὶ), since he transcends and is removed from everything, is utterly beyond every intellect, every reason, and every manner of union and participation. He is without relation, incomprehensible, imparticipable, untemplatable, unknowable, unnameable, and completely ineffable.¹⁷

In Scholastic terms, this makes the divine essence equivalent to God’s *quiddity*, which remains ever beyond human knowledge.¹⁸ Elsewhere, Gregory will further specify that an essence is “this thing or things” (τόδε ἢ τάδε),¹⁹ evoking the discussion in the *Metaphysics* over whether substances are universals or individuals²⁰ and reflecting Gregory’s statements elsewhere that God’s essence is not a genus specified by his energies.²¹

Although *ousia* is sometimes rendered as ‘being’ by modern translators, Palamas has occasion in his *Debate with Gregoras* to distinguish between *ousia* and other kinds of being. Specifically, the conversation with Gregoras allows him to disambiguate between essence (οὐσία) and existence (ὑπαρξις).²² Palamas had argued, throughout his career and in his debate with Gregoras, that since God ‘possesses’ energies, there must be a distinction between the subject that possesses and the object that is possessed.²³ When Gregoras rejects the distinction, asking whether God is different from his own existence, Palamas replies that if the words *God*, *ousia*, and *existence* all had the same force, then expressions such as ‘God has existence’ would be tantamount to saying that ‘existence has existence’ or ‘essence has essence,’ resulting in mere redundancy and nonsense.²⁴ ‘Being,’ in the sense of existence, is not what is meant by *ousia*, but is rather an attribute or operation possessed by the divine essence, evoking the distinction between what God is (*quid est*) and the fact that God is (*quod est*), about which more will be said in due course.²⁵

God beyond Names

As scholars have previously noted, Palamas is not alone in affirming that the divine essence is invisible, unknowable, ineffable, and imparticipable *per se*.²⁶ This perspective was shared, at least some of the time, by Gregory’s opponents, beginning with Barlaam, who insisted that God, as such, cannot be seen or experienced at all.²⁷ For Palamas, the unknowability of God’s essence expresses itself most vividly in the fact that his *ousia*, as such, cannot even be named.

For it has no name in this present age nor is it named in the age to come. Nor is a word formed in the soul or expressed with the tongue. There is no sort of contact, sensible or intelligible, or any imagining whatsoever, unless one should express by negations (ἀποφάσεων) its most complete incomprehensibility (ἀκαταληψίαν), which denies of it, in a supereminent manner (ὑπεροχικῶς ἀφαιρουμένην), everything that is or is said in any way.²⁸

On account of this radical transcendence, the divine *ousia* is completely nameless (ἀνόνημος), being beyond all names (ὑπερώνημος), “since it is also altogether inconceivable.”²⁹ Although God is traditionally called *θεαρχία* and *ἀγαθαρχία*, he is beyond (ὑπερκεῖσθαι) even these appellations at the level of essence.³⁰ Indeed, even the terms *God* (θεός) and *Godhead*, or *Divinity* (θεότης), do not properly name what God is, since these are titles drawn from his activities.³¹

In Palamas, this apophaticism and affirmation of the divine transcendence is taken to its logical conclusion. As Palamas goes on to specify, it means that even the term *essence* is not a proper name for what God is:

It is therefore not lawful, for anyone acquainted with the truth beyond all truth, even to name it ‘essence’ or ‘nature’ when naming it in the proper sense (κυρίως). Since, again, it is the cause of all things, and all things are around it and for it—and since it is itself before all things, having conceived (προείληφεν) them all in itself in a simple and uncircumscribed manner (ἀπεριορίστως)—it is named from all of them catachrestically, but not properly (κυρίως).³²

This fact, that in the end even ‘essence’ is not a proper name for God in his transcendence means that what is usually referred to as *ousia* is, in fact, a “superessentiality” (ὑπερουσιότης), using the language of the Dionysian corpus, since it is beyond what we know as essences.³³ “If God is a nature, everything else is not nature. And if everything else is a nature, then he is not a nature.”³⁴ The divine essence, in other words, surpasses the limits of human language—and not only language but also intellection and reason, which are left without a proper object of understanding. There is therefore a basic distinction between ‘what God is,’ which cannot be known, and our knowledge ‘that God is.’ As Palamas explains, names point to, but do not describe, that superessentiality. “The divine names . . . merely indicate that it exists (ὡς ἔστι μόνον ὑποδέκνυσιν). But the divine essence is not demonstrated (δεικνύται) in any way by the divine names, but is only indicated by the energy.”³⁵ In this way, “the essence is known from the energy,” but only with respect to “the fact that it is, not what it is.”³⁶

Palamas’s precision here is important. “The essence is what is known through the energy *as to the fact of its existence* (γνωριζόμενον ὅτι ἔστι).”³⁷ Absent from Palamas’s writings, therefore, are any expressions that imply that the energies *reveal* the essence as such. In line with the apophaticism encountered earlier, Gregory is clear that, through the energies, the essence is known *to exist* (οὐσα γινώσκειται).³⁸ What is known is *that* God is, not *what* he is.³⁹ Thus, although Palamas speaks of “the revelation of what is hidden of the Godhead” in his third *Triad*, he is clear that this refers to the manifestation of uncreated light *from* the unapproachable essence, not the essence itself.⁴⁰ For, “how,” he asks, “could anyone say that the Divinity situated above in secret places becomes known (γνωστήν) when its natural symbol is known?”⁴¹

Nevertheless, the fact that the divine names do not reveal God at the level of essence does not mean that the divine names are not *applied* to essence, as Palamas has said, catachrestically:

That reality (χρῆμα) of the divine superessentiality—that which is inconceivable and unnameable and incommunicable—the theologians call not only essence, albeit not in a proper sense, as we have said, but also divinity, goodness, wisdom, life, and, simply, whatsoever they call his divinely-fitting processions and energies.⁴²

It is not only *ousia*, in other words, that is used to name the divine essence, but all the energies flowing from that superessentiality.⁴³ Still, Palamas

emphasizes that these names are not proper names, since they are drawn from something distinct from that superessentiality. They do not reveal *what* it is but point to its existence:

The divine essence, then, is altogether nameless, since it is also inconceivable. But it is named from all its inherent energies—none of the names there [i.e., as applied to essence] differing from one another in signification. For from each one of all the things said of God nothing else is denominated but that Hiddenness, which is in no way known as to what it is (ὅ,τι ποτέ ἐστι).⁴⁴

The terms, then, used to name the divine essence are not only catachrestic and borrowed, they are even interchangeable, since they are not, strictly speaking, denotative terms. To the extent that ‘what God is’ is entirely inaccessible to the human mind and human speech, it is only by moving beyond the signification of words that God’s essence is in any way intimated:

Whenever we say that wisdom is from him and in him, we do not hymn the essence, but his natural energy. But when we name from this the essence that is entirely beyond naming, we do not say that the essence is from the energy (away with such absurdity), but by stripping away all intellectual activity we advance to the cause and source of these divine energies: the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.⁴⁵

Apophatic and Cataphatic Theology

The insistence of St Gregory Palamas on the transcendence of the divine essence has rightfully received a significant amount of attention, and his reputation has for a long time been bound up with precisely this sort of apophaticism.⁴⁶ It would be tempting, therefore, in light of what has been said so far, to believe that the essence–energies distinction can be mapped rather neatly onto the distinction between apophatic and cataphatic theology. Indeed, Gregory himself, in book six of *Against Akindynos*, seems to confirm that theological negation or *apophasis* corresponds precisely to the realm of the divine *ousia*:

To the extent that God is seen, albeit ineffably and supernaturally (for he is seen by those who pass over from flesh to the Spirit ‘by a transformation of the senses that the Spirit produced in them’⁴⁷), the divinity is said to be visible and intelligible, indicating what is known of God and establishing what is said positively about him (τοὺς καταφατικούς περι αὐτοῦ λόγους) as true. These include not only that he is radiance, ineffable beauty, and highest light illumining every rational nature (being to intelligible things what the sun is to things sensible), but also that he is wisdom, goodness, and power. But to the extent that the vision is said to be unbearable, even for those who are

worthy of suffering the divine (whether one is or is not receptive to the supernatural sensation of and initiation into what is beyond nature) it is and is said to be beyond intellect and beyond vision, not only that of human beings but even of the angels themselves. ‘For,’ it is said, ‘the glory that was in the visible body was not apparent to those who cannot receive that which is unseen even by angels’ before their eyes were changed, ‘as if, being blind, they had gained sight;’⁴⁸ and ‘they saw by an ecstasy of all sensible and intellectual apprehension.’⁴⁹ But these passages also point to the incomprehensibility of the essence of God and that which is beyond unknowing (ὑπεράγνωστον), which is to say, they indicate the way of supereminence and apophatic theology, as the divine Maximos also says. In this way that radiance, which manifests in itself the glory (ἀρχήματα) of the divine nature that issues it, shows its inseparability therefrom, establishing that the divinity of God is one, known in uncreated essence and in uncreated power, energy, brilliance, grace, and radiance.⁵⁰

Apart from the nuanced understanding of revelation that this passage presents, whereby there remains a level of transcendence even in the vision of God, Palamas clearly aligns here the category of apophatic theology with the incomprehensibility of the divine *ousia*.

It may be surprising to find, therefore, that in Gregory’s writings as a whole, the language of negation and *apophasis* does not in fact apply exclusively to the transcendent essence.⁵¹ Nor does the essence–energies distinction more generally align squarely with the distinction between apophatic and cataphatic theology. As Gregory affirms, the divine essence “is not only beyond all participation and manifestation, but also beyond affirmation and negation (θέσιν καὶ ἀφαίρεσιν).”⁵² That is to say, *ousia* is not simply the realm of negative theology, but goes even beyond the negations. Echoing the famous dictum of Dionysios,⁵³ Gregory affirms that God “is all things and beyond all things, and still beyond this.”⁵⁴

For Palamas, even negative attributes, such as God’s invisibility, incorporeality, and simplicity (being not-composite), are real attributes of God; and as attributes, they inhere in God without being ‘what’ God is. To demonstrate this, Gregory cites St Cyril of Alexandria, noting that

even the things said apophatically of God inhere (πρόσεται) in God naturally and are not nature, according to the divine Cyril. ‘For ingeneracy is not essence. Nor are incorruption, immortality, or invisibility. For if each of these signified essence, God would be composed of as many essences as he has natural attributes (προσόντα).’⁵⁵

Palamas finds the same claim in the oration *On the Annunciation* attributed to St Athanasios of Alexandria.⁵⁶ There the negative attributes of God are identified not with the transcendent essence of God but with ‘the things around the essence.’ According to the passage in question, “Uncreatedness,

timelessness, beginninglessness, and whatsoever is said of God apophatically ... are not called essence, but are around the essence (περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν).⁵⁷

Precisely as negations (ἀφαιρεματικά), attributes such as eternity and immortality, while being real (ὄντα), are nevertheless not *ousia*.⁵⁸ This, again, is due in part to the fact that God's essence is not an abstract universal but a particular:

For how could incorruption and invisibility and, simply, all the negations, or even the things said apophatically (ἀφαιρεματικά ἢ καὶ τὰ ἀποφατικά), either all together or individually, be essence? For there is no essence that is not *this thing* or *things* (τόδε ἢ τάδε).⁵⁹

For Palamas, “all things said of God cataphatically and apophatically” are not essence but attributes inhering in the divine nature (προσόντων ιδιωμάτων τῆς θείας φύσει).⁶⁰

To the extent, then, that negation is not exclusively, or even properly, the language of essence, the identification of Gregory's doctrine of the divine essence as *apophatic* must be carefully qualified. Although the modern sense of ‘apophaticism’ may indeed denote the unknowability associated with *ousia* in Palamas, the transcendence of the divine essence clearly goes beyond negative theology, as such, so that the essence–energies distinction itself should not be reduced to a cipher for the distinction between cataphatic and apophatic theology.

Energieia

The Divine Energy Par Excellence: The Uncreated Light and the Glory of Thabor

There has been much discussion among students of the essence–energies distinction about the term *energies*, what it means, and how it might best be translated into modern languages, whether in St Gregory Palamas or in the patristic sources on which he depends.⁶¹ As already noted, the principal ‘energy’ with which St Gregory Palamas is concerned throughout his polemical career is the light of the Transfiguration—the celebrated ‘uncreated light’ emanating from Christ's body on Mount Thabor. This, as Palamas is at pains to show, was not simply a sensible light, or a chimera that passed in and out of existence, but “the natural ray of the divinity.”⁶² It is the biblical ‘glory of God,’ and nothing less than the essential beauty of the transcendent Divinity, “the very form of divine comeliness (εἶδος αὐτὸ τῆς θεικῆς ὡραιότητος),”⁶³ “the effulgence, glory, and radiance of his nature, proceeding from him by nature (ἐλλαμψις καὶ δόξα καὶ λαμπρότης τῆς φύσεως αὐτοῦ προιοῦσαν φυσικῶς).”⁶⁴

Among the most important features of Palamas's theology is the fact that this “uncreated energy and glory” is not only the content of God's supernatural manifestation but deification (θέωσις) itself.⁶⁵ As Palamas will note, this

refers not to a process that begins in time, but the very radiance of the divine nature itself, communicated to human beings:

Both the acquiring itself and the giving of the gift by grace are called gift and grace and acquisition. But sometimes even the thing that is acquired and that which is itself given by grace and as a gift are called acquisition and gift and grace. So, indeed, it is with deification. Sometimes *being deified* is called deification, and sometimes that whereby the object of deification is deified, by receiving it, is called deification. But this latter is by no means separated from the one who deifies (away with this senselessness of Gregoras), but rather it unites to God those who have been made worthy, as the light of the sun, without being in any way broken off from it, brings into contact with the sun those who see it.⁶⁶

Deification, therefore, is not first and foremost the temporal act by which human beings are transformed but the “deifying energy” itself.⁶⁷ “The deifying gift of the Spirit is this: the light, the very radiance of the divine nature whereby God communes with the worthy.”⁶⁸

The identification of *theosis* with the deifying energy allows Palamas to speak of the “deifying energy and indistinct splendor of the Godhead” as none other than divine grace itself so that the gift by which human beings are saved is none other than the eternal radiance of the Deity.⁶⁹ Although Palamas acknowledges that the term is multivalent, *grace par excellence* is “that which goes forth from God and draws near to the saints, uniting them to God and making them spiritual.”⁷⁰ This is “grace in the proper sense of the term.”⁷¹ Palamas explains that this is the reality that heals diseases and drives out demons;⁷² it is incorruption⁷³ and the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven, itself.⁷⁴ As such, it is “what all who have been born again receive, through water and the Spirit, in the regeneration of the mystical laver.”⁷⁵ It is, for Christians, “the anointing and seal that is within us,”⁷⁶ the grace of baptism, whereby all who come to the Church are clothed with “the proper energy and deifying (or, what amounts to the same, uncreated) brilliance” of God.⁷⁷

The Other Divine Energies

The concept of divine energies has commonly been identified wholesale with the concept of grace, or the uncreated light. Yet the category of *energeia* cannot be reduced merely to God’s sanctifying grace and its modalities. The list of things explicitly labeled ‘energies’ by Palamas is in fact much longer.⁷⁸ Explicitly, it includes, all of the following divine attributes: the power to animate, being, the creative power, divinity, the fear of God, fearfulness, foreknowledge, the divine foreordinations, goodness, the name ‘God,’ holiness, the sustaining energy, the name ‘He Who Is,’ immortality, infinity, joy, justice, just judgment, the faculty of knowing, life, light, love, the divine philanthropy, God’s majesty, perpetual motion (being everywhere and nowhere),

the power of God, providence, the retributive power, the purifying power, self-determination, truth, peace, simplicity, virtue, divine vision, will, and wisdom. These correspond to the following technical terms in Greek:

the power to animate/give life	ἡ ζωτικὴ δύναμις ⁷⁹
being	ἡ ζωποιοῦς δύναμις ⁸⁰ ὄντοτης ⁸¹ τὸ ὄν ⁸²
the creative power	τὸ δημιουργικόν ⁸³ ἡ δημιουργικὴ δύναμις ⁸⁴ ἡ οὐσιοποιοῦς δύναμις ⁸⁵ ἡ τεχνικὴ δύναμις ⁸⁶
divinity	θεότης ⁸⁷
the fear of God	ὁ φόβος ⁸⁸
fearfulness	τὸ φοβερόν ⁸⁹
foreknowledge	ἡ πρόγνωσις ⁹⁰ τὸ προγνωστικόν ⁹¹ ἡ προγνωστικὴ δύναμις ⁹²
the divine foreordinations	οἱ προορισμοί ⁹³
goodness	ἡ ἀγαθότης ⁹⁴ τὸ ἀγαθόν ⁹⁵
the name 'God'	ὁ θεός ⁹⁶
holiness	ἡ ἀγιότης ⁹⁷
the sustaining energy	ἡ συνεκτικὴ ἐνέργεια ⁹⁸
'He Who Is'	ὁ ὢν ⁹⁹
immortality	ἡ ἀθανασία ¹⁰⁰
infinity	ἡ ἀπειρία ¹⁰¹
joy	ἡ χαρά ¹⁰²
justice	τὸ δίκαιον ¹⁰³
the faculty of knowing	ἡ γνωστικὴ δύναμις ¹⁰⁴
life	ἡ ζωή ¹⁰⁵
light	τὸ φῶς ¹⁰⁶
love	ἡ ἀγάπη ¹⁰⁷
the divine philanthropy	ἡ φιλανθρωπία ¹⁰⁸ τὸ φιλάνθρωπον ¹⁰⁹
God's majesty	ἡ μεγαλειότης ¹¹⁰
perpetual motion	τὸ ἀεκίνητον ¹¹¹
(omnipresence)	(τὸ εἶναι πανταχοῦ) ¹¹²
the power of God	ἡ δύναμις ¹¹³
providence	ἡ πρόνοια ¹¹⁴
the retributive power	τὸ ἀνταποδοτικόν ¹¹⁵
the purifying power	ἡ καθαρτικὴ δύναμις ¹¹⁶
self-determination	ἡ αὐτεξουσιότης ¹¹⁷
the truth	ἡ ἀλήθεια ¹¹⁸
peace	ἡ εἰρήνη ¹¹⁹
simplicity	ἡ ἀπλότης ¹²⁰
virtue	ἡ ἀρετή ¹²¹
divine vision	τὸ θεᾶσθαι ¹²² ἡ ἐποπτικὴ δύναμις ¹²³
will	ἡ θεατικὴ δύναμις ¹²⁴ ἡ θελητικὴ δύναμις ¹²⁵
wisdom	ἡ θέλησις ¹²⁶ ἡ σοφία ¹²⁷

Although the term *energy* is perhaps nebulous, the concepts and attributes in this list are eminently recognizable. They constitute concrete examples of what Palamas means by *energeiai* and as such shed significant light on what he means when he seeks to distinguish such things from God's essence.

Most of the divine attributes identified by Palamas as energies enter into the conversation through patristic texts invoked by both sides of the essence–energies controversy. Of the terms mentioned earlier, goodness, holiness, being, life, simplicity, and immortality are the participables (τὰ μεθεκτά) discussed by St Maximos the Confessor in his *Theological Chapters*.¹²⁸ As the “works of God that do not have a beginning,” they are also “the things contemplated essentially around God.”¹²⁹ Another group of attributes—the power of foreknowledge, the power to create, the power of retribution, God's greatness, love for humanity, fearfulness, justice, just judgment, power, wisdom, goodness, and providence—is drawn from Basil's *Ep. 234*, wherein Palamas identifies them with the energies that “descend to us.”¹³⁰ These are also identified as “participations and gifts” (μετοχὰς καὶ δωρεάς).¹³¹ Yet another group—namely, God's judgment, power to create, goodness, incorruption, and invisibility—is drawn from St Cyril's *Thesaurus*.¹³² In some contexts, goodness, being, life, and wisdom are also drawn from the discussion in *Divine Names 5*, where they constitute the divine “processions” (πρόοδοι) of providence.¹³³

This is not to assert here the patristic pedigree of Gregory's essence–energies distinction but simply to note that, whatever his own contributions to the concept of energies, Palamas, in using the term, has in mind a concrete range of divine attributes, faculties, and predicates familiar from patristic literature and traditional Christian discourse. Although Gregory may sometimes be thought to advocate for a new category of divine emanations—a special set of ‘energies’ over and above the usual list of divine attributes and predicates—the foregoing catalog, in fact, represents a very familiar set of philosophical and theological predicates, and it is these concrete things that Palamas has in mind when he speaks of the divine energies.

Beyond the Language of ‘Energies’

Throughout the writings of Palamas, the word *energy* is indeed the most common term for talking about the divine attributes listed above. It occurs more than 2,800 times throughout his corpus.¹³⁴ Theologians are more than justified, therefore, in speaking of the ‘doctrine of divine energies’ in Palamas. But it is also important to recognize the extent to which Palamas's discussion of the divine energies transcends the bounds of this one word. Indeed, Palamas himself acknowledges the limits of the term *energeia*, pointing out that the word is sometimes used to mean the opposite of God's uncreated energies, namely, their created effects.¹³⁵ Although scholarship to date has understandably focused on this key *terminus technicus*, St Gregory's broader lexicon for speaking about the divine energies is, of itself, a substantial aid in

the exegesis of what he means by *energeia*. Not only does Gregory speak with frequency of specific divine energies like the ones listed above, but the term *energy* itself is also glossed with a wide range of synonyms and semantic equivalents. Some of these terms have long been familiar to scholars of the Palamite controversy.¹³⁶ Yet, the implications of these identifications have not been adequately drawn out, and scholarly attention has remained fixed on the various connotations and background of the term *energies*. Nevertheless, while the etymology and deep history of *energeia* are not unimportant for the study of Palamas, scholars have much to gain by attending to Gregory's broad range of synonyms and tropes for speaking about the divine energies. By taking account of this broader lexicon, and the extensive elucidations that Palamas provides for his concept of *energeiai*, one is able to move beyond the confines of a single word whose meaning, even in the original Greek, can be ambiguous.

Generic Equivalences of *Energy*

The Uncreated Powers of God

By far, the most common synonym for *energy* across the many writings of St Gregory Palamas is *dynamis*, or power. Among the most frequently occurring words in Gregory's entire corpus, it is also the most disruptive for a reductive account of energy as activity, act, or operation, concepts that are often set forth as interpretations of *energeia*. As one can see already in the list of energies provided above, many of the things that Palamas identifies as *energeiai* are explicitly described as powers (δυνάμεις). These include the creative power and the powers of vision, animation, purification, judgment, retribution, and knowledge. "Every energy of the Godhead" is a list that also includes the demiurgic power (δύναμις) and the power of foreknowledge.¹³⁷ Likewise, what the saints call "divine energies" also include God's deifying power and the power of will;¹³⁸ and the essence-making *power* of God (ἡ οὐσιοποιὸς δύναμις) is identified with none other than the creative *energy* (ἡ δημιουργικὴ ἐνέργεια).¹³⁹

Although the equivalence of *dynamis* and *energeia*, like that of *ousia* and *physis*, is not absolute,¹⁴⁰ the two terms are, in fact, used interchangeably throughout Gregory's writings.¹⁴¹ Gregory will therefore speak at one time of the creative *power* and at another time of the creative *energy*; or of the providential *power* and the providential *energy*. Indeed, of some sixteen *energeiai* identified by Palamas, eleven are referred to interchangeably as both an energy and a power:

ἡ δημιουργικὴ ἐνέργεια	ἡ δημιουργικὴ δύναμις ¹⁴²
ἡ ἐποπτικὴ ἐνέργεια	ἡ ἐποπτικὴ δύναμις ¹⁴³
ἡ ζωοποιὸς ἐνέργεια	ἡ ζωοποιὸς δύναμις ¹⁴⁴
ἡ θεατικὴ ἐνέργεια	ἡ θεατικὴ δύναμις ¹⁴⁵
ἡ θελητικὴ ἐνέργεια	ἡ θελητικὴ δύναμις ¹⁴⁶

(Continued)

ἡ θεοποιὸς ἐνέργεια	ἡ θεοποιὸς δύναμις ¹⁴⁷
ἡ καθαρτικὴ ἐνέργεια	ἡ καθαρτικὴ δύναμις ¹⁴⁸
ἡ οὐσιοποιὸς ἐνέργεια	ἡ οὐσιοποιὸς δύναμις ¹⁴⁹
ἡ προνοητικὴ ἐνέργεια	ἡ προνοητικὴ δύναμις ¹⁵⁰
ἡ προγνωστικὴ ἐνέργεια	ἡ προγνωστικὴ δύναμις ¹⁵¹
ἡ φωτιστικὴ ἐνέργεια	ἡ φωτιστικὴ δύναμις ¹⁵²

What is more, Palamas will often combine the terms *dynamis* and *energeia* so that the two together form a single description of particular divine attributes. He thus speaks of “the energy and power of perspicuity” (ἡ διορατικὴ ἐνέργεια καὶ δύναμις)¹⁵³ and “the power and energy of perfecting” (ἡ ἀπεργαστικὴ δύναμις τε καὶ ἐνέργεια).¹⁵⁴ This use of two different words for a single reality is addressed directly when Palamas explains that *energeia* and *dynamis* are equivalent, just as *ousia* and *physis* are equivalent: “power and energy are one thing, and essence and nature another.”¹⁵⁵ The effect of such language is that the essence–energies distinction in Palamas is equally an essence–powers distinction or a nature–powers distinction, and Palamas will frequently speak of the distinction in precisely these terms.¹⁵⁶

The identification of the ‘divine energies’ with divine *powers* provides an important glimpse into what *energeiai* are and what they are not. Yet the interchangeability of the two terms has not figured prominently in popular or even scholarly accounts of the essence–energies distinction.¹⁵⁷ Palamas himself will draw attention to this language at several points in his writings. One of the more prominent instances occurs in the *Triads*, where we are told that the holy Fathers themselves were in the habit of calling God’s powers “natural energies.”¹⁵⁸ This is explicated further in the treatise *On the Divine Energies*. There we are presented with a passage from St John of Damaskos that states, “All the powers (those of knowledge, of animation, of nature, of creativity) are called energies.”¹⁵⁹ This is accompanied by another quotation from the same source wherein ‘energy’ is defined as “the power and motion of each essence.”¹⁶⁰ Palamas presents these passages as proof that “the same thing is called both power and energy.”¹⁶¹ The result is an assimilation of energies language to power language in a way that should caution against the reduction of *energeia* to *activity* in the colloquial sense of the term.

In the case of certain divine powers, δύναμις in Palamas is best understood in its literal sense as a *faculty*.¹⁶² Palamas will therefore describe the divine powers as a capacity or a readiness (ἐτοιμότης) for some activity. This important definition appears in the *Letter to Daniel*, where Palamas explains that God’s “powers and energies” cannot render God composite since they are “nothing other than a readiness to act.”¹⁶³ Here he refers specifically to the creative faculty (τὸ δημιουργικόν) and the faculty of providence (τὸ προνοητικόν), which depend on, or work in concert with, the divine will.¹⁶⁴ In this way, God’s creative and providential energies are not the *acts* of creation and providence, *pace* Bradshaw, but God’s ability to create and to provide for creatures when he so chooses.¹⁶⁵ For this reason Palamas will gloss the energy of ‘creating’ (τὸ δημιουργεῖν) as God’s creative *power* (ἡ δημιουργικὴ

δύναμις),¹⁶⁶ Gregory applies this same principle to “all such powers and energies,” such that God’s foreknowledge, illumination, deification, and so on, can be seen as faculties, potencies, or capacities that inhere in God rather than things that God ‘does,’ in the usual sense of that term. This is reinforced in the *Letter to John Gabras*, and in the *Debate with Gregoras*, where Palamas again identifies power (δύναμις) with “being able” to do something (δύνασθαι).¹⁶⁷

Nevertheless, the language of divine power is also applied more broadly in the writings of Palamas, encompassing other attributes of God in a way that exceeds the language of *facultas*. Things such as the kingdom of heaven, divinity, and holiness in Palamas are also called “powers and energies” of God.¹⁶⁸ The same is true of deifying grace¹⁶⁹ and the other participables (goodness, simplicity, life, immortality, immutability, and infinity).¹⁷⁰ Here it is difficult to see how these attributes could be faculties or potencies in the strict sense, and so the idiom is better served by the more basic and familiar language of divine perfections, akin to the Latin *virtutes*.¹⁷¹ Indeed, the use of *dynamis* for things like God’s immutability and simplicity strongly indicates that, if *energeia* is more than act, *dynamis* is also more than potency. Indeed, the elision of *dynamis* and *energeia* more generally alerts us to the need to look beyond an act–potency dichotomy altogether.¹⁷² As Michel Barnes has shown, the language of *dynamis* itself is not reductively Aristotelian but goes back, beyond the paradigm of actualization and change, to such sources as the medical language of the Hippocratic school. In this context, power is not simply the opposite of motion and actuality, but the inherent capacity that marks, and defines, a nature.¹⁷³ This denotation is clearly at work in the theology of St Gregory Palamas, though it is not necessarily opposed to Aristotle.¹⁷⁴ The point, ultimately, is not that Palamas’s language of energies is un-Aristotelian but that the entire background of energies language, and indeed powers language, is much more complex than the caricatured reception of the act–potency dichotomy.¹⁷⁵ In the next chapter, we will have the opportunity to examine how God’s eternal powers and energies relate to his *activities* in the colloquial sense—how, that is, energies like the creative faculty relate to the *act* of creation. But the foregoing observations are an important step in recognizing how the language of *energeia* in St Gregory transcends the connotations of act, activity, and actuality in their usual sense.

‘The Things around the Essence’

Another important description of the divine energies identifies them with ‘the things around God’ (τὰ περὶ θεόν), a phrase and concept associated especially with the Cappadocians but having roots in Philo and other Alexandrian authors.¹⁷⁶ Although some scholars have pointed to an equivalence between this phrase and the term *energies*,¹⁷⁷ the large-scale interchangeability of the two locutions in Palamas has not been strongly emphasized. Nor has it generally been noticed how their identification would affect the reductive interpretation of *energeia* as ‘activity.’ The

discussion of ‘the things around God’ (τὰ περὶ θεόν) occurs very early in Gregory’s historical encounter with Barlaam, predating the hesychast controversy itself and foreshadowing the development of the essence–energies distinction in Gregory’s later polemics. In his *First Letter to Barlaam*, with the debate still centering on the demonstrability of theological truths, Palamas had criticized Barlaam for failing to understand that not everything in God is essence. Barlaam, who wished to avoid the conclusion that there was any accident in God, seemed to Palamas to be forced into accepting that all was therefore substance.¹⁷⁸ For Palamas, the choice between essence and accident was a false dichotomy, and he criticized Barlaam for not seeing the way out of this false problematic. The answer, which he located in “the school of the Fathers” (τὸ παιδαγωγεῖον τῶν πατέρων) was the concept of “the things around God.”¹⁷⁹ This is developed further in the *Second Letter to Barlaam*, where Palamas notes, again, that “the things around God,” as *what is known of God* (Rom. 1:19), cannot be God’s substance any more than they can be accidents.¹⁸⁰ To the extent that they participate in existence—an issue to which Palamas will repeatedly return later on—they do so not as essences but as *energies* of God.¹⁸¹ Interestingly, this line of argumentation would continue to factor into subsequent polemics against Akindynos and Gregoras, wherein Palamas would again argue against the reductive juxtaposition of essence and accident as exhaustive metaphysical categories.¹⁸²

The identification of “the things around God” with the divine energies as a *via tertia* of divine predication allows Gregory to expound several central features of the essence–energies distinction already at this early stage in his correspondence with Barlaam. As examples of what he means by “things around God,” Palamas lists specifically God’s wisdom, goodness, light, and life.

Palamas points out to Barlaam that “the things around God include not only the affirmations, but also the negations (ἀφαιρέσεις).” These, as Palamas explains, indicate “not what he is, but what he is not,” so that it would be absurd to think of them as substances.¹⁸³ The fact that the divine energies also include negative attributes has already been noticed earlier. It is a point that Palamas reiterates against each of his opponents. Against Akindynos, for example, he repeatedly cites an important passage from St John of Damaskos (indebted to St Cyril) to the effect that both apophatic and cataphatic language signify not the nature but what is around it.¹⁸⁴ The same point is made against Gregoras, with Palamas noting that the ‘things around nature’ also include negations (ἀφαιρέματικά), such as the fact that God is unchanging (τὸ ἄτρεπτος), immutable (τὸ ἀναλλοίωτος), incorporeal, and invisible.¹⁸⁵ Indeed, as Gregory will often point out, on the authority of Dionysios, the negations surpass the affirmations and are generally more accurate predicates for God.¹⁸⁶ But there can be no way that the things around God indicate ‘what’ God is.

By the time Gregory writes the *Triads*, the focus of the controversy has shifted decisively to the question of the uncreated light of Thabor and the

grace of deification. In the third *Triad*, Palamas will include this divinizing light “among those things contemplated essentially around God.”¹⁸⁷ Here the issue, once again, is whether there is something other than (παρά) essence in God.¹⁸⁸ As in the letters to Barlaam, Palamas speaks interchangeably throughout all his writings of “the things around God” and “the things around the essence.”¹⁸⁹ Gregory is not unaware that this category traditionally includes the attributes of particular hypostases in addition to the common energies. Indeed, this forms a dominant part of Gregory’s polemic with each of his opponents. As Palamas consistently affirms, excluding anything but *ousia* from the Divinity would therefore do away not only with the distinction of essence and energy but also with the distinction between essence and hypostasis.¹⁹⁰ Nevertheless, whereas things like ingeneracy, being begotten, and procession, are “contemplated around essence hypostatically,”¹⁹¹ there are also other things that we say about God that are not exclusive to individual divine Persons.¹⁹² The latter are common to the three Persons of the Trinity and include such things as the divine infinity, simplicity, justice, providence, will, and immortality.¹⁹³ These are not only around the nature, but around all of the Persons.¹⁹⁴

In the form that it appears in the third *Triad*, the category of “the things contemplated essentially (οὐσιωδῶς) around God” is drawn from St Maximos the Confessor’s *Theological Chapters* 1.48, which forms one of the most important and heavily litigated passages in the Palamite controversy.¹⁹⁵ The list of energies there includes God’s immutability, infinity, simplicity, goodness, wisdom, holiness, being (ὄντοτης), life, and immortality.¹⁹⁶ This is a list to which Palamas will return again and again, in his *Ekthesis*, in his letters to *Gabriel*, to *Paul Asanes*, to *Athanasios*, and to *Damianos*, and in his antirrhetics *Against Akindynos*, making the phrase τὰ περὶ θεόν οὐσιωδῶς θεωρούμενα one of the most common locutions for the divine energies in the period from 1341 to 1347.¹⁹⁷ In other patristic sources, Gregory finds even more examples of “the things around the essence.” These include the divine eternity, infinity, unboundedness (ἀοριστία), goodness, wisdom, and the creative, providential, and juridical power over beings;¹⁹⁸ peace, power, life, justice, light, and truth;¹⁹⁹ majesty, power, wisdom, goodness, providence, and just judgment;²⁰⁰ God’s judgments, *ways*, and the promise of good things to come;²⁰¹ the powers of vision, deification, will, activity, peace, life, and light;²⁰² immortality, life, eternity, immateriality, and being spirit;²⁰³ immutability, foreknowledge, and omnipotence;²⁰⁴ God’s being Most-high, King, Lord, and Almighty,²⁰⁵ and, consistent with Gregory’s doctrine of the uncreated light, the grace, glory, and radiance of God.²⁰⁶

According to Palamas, then, “energy is a more or less common name of the things contemplated naturally around God,”²⁰⁷ an expansive category of divine attributes, both positive and negative. It includes everything in the shared nature of the Trinity, not only powers and a range of divine perfections, but the totality of what exists around the divine essence essentially and from all eternity. Attending to definitions such as this one help shed significant light on a term that has long been held captive by its etymology. It serves

to point the reader beyond mere inferences and attempts to translate the term *energeia* to the actual usage of Palamas and the function of the divine energies in his doctrine of God.

Natural and Essential Properties

“The things contemplated naturally around God,” then, are not ‘activities’ in the usual sense but the attributes that mark the divine being eternally and necessarily. Although it may be imprudent to reduce the multivalent concept of *energeia* in Palamas to a single term like *attribute*, with all its connotations and limitations, Gregory will certainly define the divine energies as “those things that inhere in God by nature (τὰ τῷ θεῷ προσόντα φυσικῶς).”²⁰⁸ Indeed, for Palamas, the term *energies* is used interchangeably with the term *prosonta* (πρόσοντα), understood as natural or inherent attributes.²⁰⁹ Under this heading we find such things as God’s beginninglessness, endlessness (τὸ ἀτελεύτητον), just judgment (δικαιοκρισία), compassion, foreknowledge, the power to create, immutability (ἀτρεψία), love for humanity, eternity, providence,²¹⁰ simplicity, goodness, wisdom, and power. According to Palamas, these are the attributes by virtue of which human beings speak of God as good, Creator, and, indeed, as God.²¹¹

The language of *prosonta* is pervasive in Palamas and is drawn especially from St Cyril of Alexandria. In Cyril’s *Thesaurus* 31, Gregory finds an important argument for distinguishing between the things that inhere naturally in God, on the one hand, and the divine essence, on the other, since otherwise God would be composed of as many substances as he had attributes.²¹² Here, again, what exists naturally in God (πρὸς τῷ θεῷ) is a larger category that includes the hypostatic properties, such as the Father’s being unbegotten.²¹³ Yet the term also includes the properties that are common to the three Persons of the Trinity, that is, the divine energies. The frequently cited passage from the *Thesaurus* mentions among the divine *prosonta* not only the ingeneracy that is unique to the Father but also shared attributes such as goodness, incorruption, and invisibility, to prove against the Eunomians that not everything in God can be identified with *ousia*.²¹⁴

The language of attributes inhering “naturally” in God is complemented by later patristic texts, including those of the monoenergist controversy, which speak of things such as the creative energy inhering in God “essentially” (οὐσιωδῶς προσόντα).²¹⁵ These adverbs emphasize that the divine energies do not belong individually to particular hypostases but to the shared essence and nature of the Trinity.²¹⁶ The Persons are said to possess the divine power and energy “through the divine nature.”²¹⁷ Gregory’s emphasis on the inherence of the divine attributes in God’s nature, specifically, is, in fact, so pronounced that, in some places, it borders on the redundant, as when he speaks of τὰ τῇ φύσει φυσικῶς προσόντα.²¹⁸ Gregory will therefore speak of a “natural energy” (φυσικὴ ἐνέργεια),²¹⁹ “essential energy” (οὐσιώδης ἐνέργεια), and “natural and essential energy” (φυσικὴ καὶ οὐσιώδης ἐνέργεια).²²⁰

For all of these reasons, Gregory identifies the divine energies, generally, with τὰ φυσικά, literally “the things of nature.” With this latter term, Palamas is once again dealing with a larger category that includes the divine Persons.²²¹ Yet his purpose is to stress that the divine energies, like the Persons of the Trinity, belong not to the realm of the creature but to the divine nature, without, however, being identical to *physis* itself. In Gregory’s writings, the term *physika* is especially prominent in a frequently cited passage of St John of Damaskos, who lists energy and will, in the Christological context, among those things that belong to something, whether created or uncreated, by nature (τὰ φυσικά).²²² Alongside these attributes, Palamas includes, again, such things as God’s goodness, holiness, and simplicity,²²³ as well as the ‘energies’ of divine self-determination (αὐτεξουσίτης), wisdom, and goodness, and the powers of creation, deification, and will.²²⁴ All of these are not only natural but also essential, being “the things of nature and of essence” (τὰ φυσικά καὶ οὐσιώδη).²²⁵

One way of talking about these natural and essential attributes is to specify that they “follow” nature. For this Palamas draws, again, on St Cyril of Alexandria. The divine energies are identified as “that which follows upon (τὰ παρέπεται) the divine nature.”²²⁶ The emphasis here is such that it again borders on the redundant, since the divine energies follow nature “naturally” or “by nature” (κατὰ φύσιν).²²⁷ Palamas will also say that the divine energies are “that which is contemplated naturally *in* the divine superessentiality (τὰ φυσικῶς ἐνθεωρούμενα τῇ θεῖα ὑπερουσιότητι).”²²⁸ For this reason the divine energy is not only “essential” but “innate” (ἔμφυτος),²²⁹ being a property (ιδιότης) of the divine nature.²³⁰ Palamas can therefore refer to the divine energies, generally, as God’s natural properties or idioms (ιδιώματα). As he explains very explicitly: “the Fathers also call the divine energies ‘natural properties’ (φυσικά ιδιώματα).”²³¹ These are the *propria* that mark the divine substance uniquely and essentially, something to which we will return especially in Chapter 5.

Energies as Nature Itself

The inherence of the divine energies in the divine nature, and their characterization as attributes or idioms of that nature, serves in Palamas to explain how the term nature itself (φύσις) can sometimes be used as a locution for the divine properties. This is especially important for Gregory’s exegesis of 2 Pt 1:14, which states that human beings become *communicants of the divine nature* even while the *physis* and *ousia* of God is said to remain incommunicable and imparticipable.²³² Although Palamas, as we have seen, generally understands *physis* as a synonym for the transcendent superessentiality of God, he also explains that the same term can be and is used for “that which is natural” in a thing, namely, τὰ φυσικά:

The things of nature are also called nature, as the great Dionysios himself also says, writing that, “To create and to save are nature to the Good,” which is to say that this inheres in him by nature (φυσικῶς τοῦτο πρόσεστιν αὐτῷ).²³³

Palamas notes that the Greek philosophers (οἱ ἔξωθεν σοφοί), for this reason, sometimes identified the natural and essential properties of each nature with *ousia*.²³⁴ Indeed, it is common to identify a substance with its essential features. Thus, in the case of fire, the properties of being born upward and illuminating are said to be the ‘nature’ of fire. Yet a thing’s motion, or its function (τὸ ἐμποιεῖν), is not actually nature. Nature, rather, is the *source* of its motion (ἡ τῆς κινήσεως ἀρχή).²³⁵

In part, the equivocality of the terms stems from the fact that *physis*, like *ousia*, is not itself a proper name for the superessentiality that transcends all human language and thought. The term *nature*, like *essence*, is drawn from the divine energies that characterize it. As Palamas reiterates,

The theologians are wont to call nature and essence not only that nameless superessentiality that is above all names, but the essence-making power; and all that naturally inheres in God they also deem worthy of the name nature and essence. Indeed, these more so, for from the latter the name is transferred (μεταφέρεται) to the former, since it transcends everything signified by words.²³⁶

And as he puts it elsewhere:

Since even ‘nature’ and ‘essence’ are themselves not the proper name of that superessentiality, as the divinely inspired Dionysios says (for it is completely nameless), the Fathers at times also apply that name to the things of nature [i.e., the natural properties].²³⁷

In this way, Palamas says, “we both commune in the nature and we do not commune at all.”²³⁸ To the extent that human beings partake of the natural energy, the divine nature itself is participated in by the worthy.²³⁹ Thus, in keeping with the language of *prosonta* and *idiomata* for the divine energies, the energies of God are indeed the very properties and attributes of his nature even if they are not the *quiddity* of God, or ‘what’ God is at the level of essence.

All That the Father Has

In keeping with this comprehensive definition of the divine energies as the idioms or *propria* that mark the divine nature from all eternity, Palamas will speak of God’s essential energies as the attributes that the Father shares with the Son, in accordance with the evangelical formula, *all things that the Father has are mine* (Lk 15:31; Jn 10:15, 17:10). As the common attributes of the Trinity, the divine energies are properties possessed by both the Father and the Son. They are ‘everything that inheres naturally in God’ and thus constitute the “totality and fullness” (ἄθροισμα καὶ πλήρωμα) of divinity.²⁴⁰

Palamas draws this language primarily from the sermon *On the Annunciation*:

Not for the sake of created things did the Savior say *all things that the Father has are mine*. But whatsoever pertains to the divinity of the Father, the Lord said that the same things were his own (ἴδια), namely, immortality, incorruptibility, uncircumscribability, powerfulness, foreknowledge, goodness, infinity, all-powerfulness, immutability, and *whatsoever the Father has*: these things are proper (ἴδια) to the Son.²⁴¹ Each is not called essence but around the essence, as when two or more come together in one, as in the case of what is distributed, which is also called in Scripture the totality and fullness of divinity, contemplated and theologized equally in each of the three holy hypostases. *For all things that the Father has are mine, and I am glorified in them.*²⁴²

Here again, then, the concept of energies centers not on the etymology and connotations of *energeia* as activity but on the eternal, divine attributes and perfections shared by the Persons of the Trinity.

Products of the Divine Nature

In St Maximos's *Theological Chapters* 1.48, the things contemplated essentially around God are specifically referred to as products or 'works' (ἔργα) of God. Although the term is connected to *energeia* both etymologically and philosophically, the more immediate sense of *erga* as 'works' is significant, since the relevant excerpt from St Maximos depends on the Confessor's exegesis of Genesis 2:3, *For in that day God rested from all his works which he began to do* (ὅν ἤρξατο ποιῆσαι).²⁴³ The reference in that biblical verse, according to St Maximos, is to creatures, which were brought forward in time (χρονικῶς ἠργημένα) and have their existence by participation. But Maximos explains that the things in which creatures themselves participate (τὰ μεθεκτά), namely, being, goodness, life, virtue, immortality, simplicity, immutability, and infinity, are, conversely, "the works of God which God did *not* begin to do (ὅν οὐκ ἤρξατο)." These, "even though they were not brought forward in time (οὐκ ἠργημένα χρονικῶς)," are also *erga*.²⁴⁴

For Palamas, these participables are products, specifically, "of the divine nature" (τὰ τῆς φύσεως ἔργα),²⁴⁵ a broader category that, yet again, encompasses not only the common divine attributes or energies, but everything that belongs to God by nature (τὰ τῷ θεῷ δηλονότι προσόντα φυσικῶς), which includes, of course, the divine Persons themselves.²⁴⁶ Still, the divine energies, to the extent that they have the divine essence as their cause and source, are also products of nature.²⁴⁷

The Divine Predicates

To the extent that the divine energies constitute the eternal properties of God, Palamas will frequently refer to them as divine *predicates*, or "things

said of God” (τὰ ἐπὶ θεοῦ λεγόμενα).²⁴⁸ Such predicates include the familiar attributes of holiness, goodness, life, and light,²⁴⁹ and in St Basil’s *Against Eunomios* Palamas even finds the ‘the things said of God’ (specifically, the divine creativity, providence, and foreknowledge) referred to as “energies.”²⁵⁰ In his *Letter to Damianos*, Palamas will therefore identify “the things said of God” with “the energies contemplated in the divine nature,” namely, God’s eternity, simplicity, goodness, immutability, incorruption, and love for humanity.²⁵¹ And in his interpretation of St Maximos, Palamas will equate God’s transcendence over “all that is said of him” with the transcendence of the divine essence over the divine energies.²⁵²

As a synonym for the divine energies, the category of ‘things said of God’ provides yet another useful insight into what Palamas means by *energeiai*, encompassing as it does the full breadth of terms used to speak about God. This is especially clear from two frequently cited passages in Gregory’s writings, which we have already encountered in part, from St Cyril of Alexandria and St John of Damaskos. In a passage from the treatise *On the Trinity* attributed to Cyril, we are told that, of ‘the things said of God,’ some, namely, the terms of negation, indicate what he is not, while others indicate what follows upon (τὰ παρέπεται) nature. Among the latter, Palamas includes God’s goodness, simplicity, life, and justice. Still others “have the signification of power and energy,” such as the term *divinity*, which derives from God’s beholding all things.²⁵³ This passage is reproduced by John of Damaskos, who notes that ‘the things said of God’ indicate “either what God is not, or some relation, or some one of the things that follow nature.”²⁵⁴ As we have already seen, all of these terms of divine predication—whether they are negations, natural and essential properties, powers, or energies—fall under the general category of what Palamas treats, universally, as *energies*. Thus, even when the term, historically, seems to evince a more restricted use, the term is expanded in Palamas to cover all that is said of God and all that is shared by the three Persons of the Trinity.

The Energies and the Divine Processions

Conspicuously absent from the foregoing observations is any protracted discussion of the divine energies as processions (πρόοδοι) or God’s manifestations *ad extra*. As we have already seen, these terms have sometimes been taken in the secondary literature as a basic equivalent of *energeia*, with ‘energies’ sometimes being treated as little more than a synonym for the divine ‘processions.’²⁵⁵ This interpretation has strengthened the conviction that the divine energies, as such, are God’s self-revelation, his ‘advances’ to creatures, and theophanies in creation.²⁵⁶ Vasileios Phanourgakes, the editor of *Against Akindynos*, even states in a footnote to the text, “The energies of God are the different manifestations (ἐκφάνσεις) of his relations toward the world.”²⁵⁷ In part, these claims seem to stem from readings of the *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, where Palamas explicitly identifies the “energies of the Spirit” as processions and manifestations of the one God.²⁵⁸ Whereas God, “whatever

he is according to essence (ὅ,τι ποτε κατ' οὐσίαν ἐστίν) is beyond all vision, participation, knowledge, and manifestation; at the level of his processions, manifestations, powers, and energies, he is participated in, known, and named.”²⁵⁹ Such processions include familiar energies such as being (τὸ ὄν), the good, life, and wisdom, identified in the *Divine Names* as “good processions” of the one God.²⁶⁰ Yet a close examination of the language of procession throughout the writings of Palamas reveals that, unlike the generic equivalences and definitions of energy discussed so far, neither *proodos* nor *ekphansis* actually functions as a universal synonym for *energeia*. Instead, what we find in the case of ‘procession’ and ‘manifestation’ is the variegated language of causality and divine self-diffusion associated specifically with divine providence (πρόνοια).

Unsurprisingly, the topic of divine providence and the language associated with it arise most frequently in Gregory’s engagement of Dionysios. In his exegesis of *Divine Names* 5.2, Palamas notes that, in referring to the Good, being, life, and wisdom as *processions*, Dionysios is dealing specifically with the manifold providence that is productive of the good, productive of being, and productive of life and wisdom. This is demonstrated when Palamas attempts to set the passage in its original context, drawing attention to the sense in which the aforementioned participables are ultimately one:

He hymns ‘the beneficent (ἀγαθοποιόν), manifest providence—transcendent goodness and cause of all good things,’ as well as ‘being, life, and wisdom, the essence-making, wise-making, and life-giving cause of things that partake of essence, life, and intellect.’ Distinguishing in this way the divine and uncreated energies, namely divine providence and the things that belong to it, from the divine superessentiality ... and having said that the former are the manifested, named, and participated processions of God, ... the great one then adds, ‘The good is not one thing, being another, life another, and wisdom another,’ thereby speaking of the things that are participated in and named and, to put it simply, the manifest providence of God and what belongs to it.²⁶¹

This comprehensive, if dense, definition of divine providence identifies a number of specific divine energies as processions, namely being, life, wisdom, and their productive modalities. Yet it subordinates all of them to the broader category of *pronoia*. The description of the divine procession as productive of essences (οὐσιοποιός) is particularly prominent in the *Theophanes*. Here it is the procession “into beings” of *DN* 5.1, again connected to life and wisdom.²⁶² In *Against Gregoras*, Palamas glosses this as the “creative processions” (δημιουργικαὶ πρόοδοι) from *DN* 5.8.²⁶³ Here again the term is equivalent to divine providence, and Palamas further identifies this with the divine intellections (νοήσεις), foreordinations (προορισμοί), and goodnesses (ἀγαθότητες).²⁶⁴

Palamas’s treatment of *pronoia* across his writings is so extensive that it almost dwarfs his discussion of *theosis* and deification.²⁶⁵ Of all the specific

divine energies, it is by far the most frequently utilized in Gregory's polemics to establish the distinction between energy and essence. This is undoubtedly due to the prominent position of 'the providential processions' in the Dionysian corpus. Indeed, Gregory will dedicate an entire work to the exegesis of this Dionysian theme in order to establish that in God there is both 'one' and 'many.' And because this treatise, *On Union and Distinction* was, in turn, absorbed into the *Chapters*, scholars, making use of this treatise (without substantive exploration of Gregory's other writings) have sometimes come away with the notion that 'energies' as a whole are reducible to God's creative processions, and that the essence–energies distinction in general is reducible to the problem of the one and the many.²⁶⁶ This is especially the case with Eric Perl, who interprets the category of energy *in toto* as the self-diffusion of the one into many in proportion to created realities.²⁶⁷

Yet the indivisible division of providence is not the same as the distinction between the one essence of God and its manifold energies. Indeed, Palamas never speaks of a diffusion of the divine *ousia* into multiplicity. In terms of God's manifold providence, the problem of unity and multiplicity is indeed synonymous with 'procession,' being concerned with the fact of divine self-diffusion:

God is said to be multiplied in his volition (βουλήματι) for the production of each being, being made manifold in his providential processions. But he remains indivisibly one, as the sun, in sending forth many rays, remains in unity.²⁶⁸

Yet while Gregory will make ample use of the providential paradigm to argue that God's energies cannot be identified with his ineffable and non-proceeding essence, he does not equate the category of energy *as a whole* with providence and its participations.²⁶⁹ In the end, providence, like deification, is but one of many divine energies, forming a specific subset of what is known around God from eternity.²⁷⁰

Conclusion

By attending to all this richness of language and the details of what Palamas actually tells his readers, one is able to dispel a number of misunderstandings about the essence–energies distinction and better understand what Palamas means by the terms *essence* and *energies*. Although the terms *ousia* and *energeia*, of themselves, can be ambiguous, and sometimes obscure, the copious explanations provided by Palamas supply ample context and clarification as to how these terms actually function within his theological project. Utilizing a wide variety of definitions, glosses, and synonyms, Palamas is able to convey quite lucidly what he means by 'essence' and 'energies' without relying exclusively on the semantics, connotations, and etymologies of these two words alone. Although his distinction remains an 'essence–energies' distinction, it is also a substance–attributes

distinction, a nature–powers distinction, and a quiddity–properties distinction, among other things. Even if some of his interpreters have attempted to cast Palamas as a mystic opposed to a ‘philosophical’ conception of essence, Gregory himself consciously embraces the Aristotelian dimensions of the term *ousia*, understood as a particular reality in which there inhere a plurality of attributes.

Although the divine essence or nature remains beyond all human conception and language, being known only in the things that surround the essence, the divine energies allow God to be apprehended and hymned as just, wise, loving, and merciful from all eternity. Indeed, the divine essence itself is named from these energies. God’s eternal attributes include not only the uncreated light and glory of God (or the deifying energy) and the divine processions of providence but also the full range of things that can be said and known of God. Palamas speaks concretely about these energies, from God’s peace and love for humanity to his immortality, infinity, and majesty. Such attributes cannot be described as impersonal forces, but are simply the familiar properties of the Christian God. They include the complete list of divine powers, faculties, perfections, and essential features that mark the divine nature necessarily and from eternity.

Such a conception of *energeiai* far surpasses the etymology and connotations of a term such as ‘activities.’ They are not simply God’s actions in time, or in the world, but the totality of characteristics and names that are applied to God.²⁷¹ It can hardly be claimed, therefore, as John Milbank has done, that the essence–energies distinction commits Palamas to an “agnosticism about the divine character.”²⁷² On the contrary, the divine energies, as the fullness of the eternal attributes that characterize the divine essence, are, for Palamas, precisely everything that can be and is known about God.

Yet what, precisely, is the relationship between this expansive conception of ‘energies’ and the ‘activity,’ ‘actualization,’ and ‘operation’ of God? In the next chapter, we delve more deeply into the discussions surrounding *energeia* and actualization in Palamas’s writings to discover why the word for God’s eternal and essential properties and powers in Palamas should be ‘energies’ at all.

Notes

- 1 “Review of *Divine Substance* by Christopher Stead,” *Noûs* 16.2 (1982): 334.
- 2 It is not uncommon for modern studies to treat the essence–energies distinction without any explanation of the terms *essence* and *energies*. John Milbank, for example, offers a gloss on *energies* only ten pages into his critique of the Palamite distinction, and even then, it is not clear what he actually understands by *energies* except that they differ from the divine essence in a Scotistic manner; see “Christianity and Platonism,” 116–119.
- 3 There exist a plethora of studies on *ousia* in ancient philosophy. Among the most important are Charles, *Aristotle on Meaning and Essence*; D. Fonfara, *Die Ousia-Lehren des Aristoteles. Untersuchungen zur Kategorienschrift und zur Metaphysik*; K. Chiba, “Aristotle on Essence and Defining-Phrase in his Dialectic,” in D. Charles ed., *Definition in Greek Philosophy*, 203–251; J. Kung,

- “Aristotle on Essence and Explanation,” *Philosophical Studies* 31 (1977): 361–383; cf. C. Arpe, “Substantia,” *Philologus* 94 (1941): 65–78. Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, provides an important survey of *energeia* from Aristotle through Proclus (1–152); see, also, M. Barnes, *The Power of God: Δύναμις in Gregory of Nyssa’s Trinitarian Theology*, 1–94.
- 4 On essence or substance in the Greek theological tradition, see, for example, Christopher Stead, *Divine Substance*, and Karayiannis, *Maxime le Confesseur*, 31–120. (I concur with Eleanore Stump that Stead’s analysis of ‘substance’ in ancient philosophy and patristic theology is not particularly helpful for understanding the development of *ousia* language in its historical context; see *Philosophical Review* 89 [1980]: 145–148.) On *energeia*, see Larchet, *La théologie de énergies divines*; Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 119–220; Karayiannis, *Maxime le Confesseur*, 137–164; Barnes, *The Power of God*, 173–219; id., “Eunomius of Cyzicus and Gregory of Nyssa: Two Traditions of Transcendent Causality,” *VC* 52 (1998): 59–87; id., “The Background and Use of Eunomius’ Causal Language,” 217–236.
 - 5 Throughout this study, I generally translate *ousia* as ‘essence,’ but I consider it to be interchangeable, on the authority of St Augustine, with the term *substance*: *non aliter in sermone nostro, id est latino, essentia quam substantia solet intellegi; De Trinitate* 7.4.7 (ed. Mountain, 255.5–6). Whatever fine distinctions can be drawn between *essentia* and *substantia* in later Scholastic theology, the English derivatives of both words remain in use by Christian congregations to this day to profess the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son in the Creed.
 - 6 *Akind.* 5.12.43 (PS 3:320.11–12); see Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus* 18 (PG 75:312C). Cf. *Dam.* 22 (PS 2:477.19–20); *Gabr.* 15 (PS 2:341.27–28).
 - 7 For more instances, see *Gabr.* 16 (PS 2:342.18); *Athan.* 38 (PS 2:447.29–30); *Dam.* 7 (PS 2:463.24–25), 8 (463.28–30), 22 (477.19–20); *Akind.* 1.7.20 (PS 3:53.28), 2.12.54 (PS 3:124.20), 2.14.57 (PS 3:126.15), 5.10.38 (PS 3:316.3), 5.12.43 (PS 3:320.11–12).
 - 8 *Akind.* 1.7.14 (PS 3:49.15–50.2).
 - 9 Phakrases, *Debate* 17 (ed. Candal, 346.4–10). The passage read by Gregoras remains unidentified, but Biriukov and Makarov point to similarities in Athanasios, *Conta Arianos* 4.1; cf. Cyril, *Thesaurus* (PG 75:261.12–14).
 - 10 See the discussion above Chapter 2, pp. 67–68.
 - 11 Cf. the comments of Meyendorff (*Introduction*, 289), who believes that in certain places Palamas has used Aristotelian, as opposed to biblical or patristic, concepts because they are “more accessible to his adversaries.” The prejudices inherent in such a view are summarized in Pino, “Beyond Neo-Palamism,” 60.
 - 12 In *Chapters* 125 through 134, Gregory moves the discussion of God’s essence into the context of the Categories, beginning with the topic of relation and proceeding to a discussion of inherent attributes in general: quantity, quality, dispositions, states, positions, times, and activity (ποιεῖν). By *Chapter* 134, the theme is explicit, and all ten categories are listed together. On this topic, and for some of the ways in which Palamas departs from Aristotle, see Ch. Erismann, “St. Gregory Palamas and Aristotle’s Categories,” in C. Athanaspoulos ed., *Triune God. Incomprehensible but Knowable – The Philosophical and Theological Significance of St Gregory Palamas for Contemporary Philosophy and Theology*, 132–141. For the ways in which this discussion of the Categories is indebted to Gregory’s reading of Augustine, see Flogaus, “Der heimliche Blick nach Westen: Zur Rezeption von Augustins *De Trinitate* durch Gregorios Palamas,” *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 46 (1996): 275–297; J. Lössl, “Augustine in Byzantium,” 267–295; M. Trizio, “Un uomo sapiente ed apostolico. Agostino a Bisanzio: Gregorio Palamas lettore del *De Trinitate*,” *Quaestio* 6 (2006): 153–171.

- 13 Palamas's Aristotelian education is a well-established feature of his biographical and autobiographical portrait. See, especially, Philotheos Kokkinos, *Encomium* 7 (ed. D.G. Tsamis, *Φιλοθέου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοῦ Κοκκίνου ἀριολογικὰ ἔργα*, vol. 1, 437–438). This is particularly on display against Gregoras: see, for example, *Greg.* 1.14 (PS 4:242.8–17). See, also, Sinkewicz, “The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God,” 181–242.
- 14 *Cap.* 134.3–5 (ed. Sinkewicz, 238). Unlike creatures, God's inherent properties are limited to two: relation and activity.
- 15 This is yet another reason for using *essence* and *substance* interchangeably when translating Palamas.
- 16 See, for example, *Akind.* 4.6.10 (PS 3:249.13–14). Cf. *Akind.* 3.13.44 (PS 3:196.15–16).
- 17 *Akind.* 1.3.5 (PS 3:41.16–20). Cf. *Akind.* 4.10.23 (PS 3:258.12–13).
- 18 Gennadios Scholarios will later use οὐσία to translate *quidditas* in Scholastic authors; see P. Golitsis, “Ἐσέντζια, ὄντοτης, οὐσία: George Scholarios' Philosophical Understanding of Thomas Aquinas' *De ente et essentia* and his Use of Armandus de Bellovisu's Commentary,” in D. Searby, *Never the Twain*, 181–186.
- 19 *Cyr.* (PS 4:104.16–17); *Cap.* 118.11–13 (ed. Sinkewicz, 218). Sinkewicz's translation of τόδε ἢ τάδε as “real object or objects” (219) is misleading given the polemic with Gregoras over whether the divine attributes, including the negations, are ‘realities’ (ὄντα); see Chapter 5, pp. 157–159. It also masks the obvious Aristotelian connotations, especially since Palamas will go on to discuss the Categories shortly thereafter.
- 20 See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Z13–14, 1038b–1039b.
- 21 See Chapter 5, pp. 149–152.
- 22 Among the many important discussions of this question in Greek philosophy, see Pierre Hadot, “L'Être et l'étant dans le néoplatonisme,” *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie* 23 (1973): 101–115; Cristina D'Ancona, “Platonic and Neoplatonic Terminology for Being in Arabic Translation,” *Studia graeco-arabica* 1 (2011): 23–46; and the studies collected in Charles Kahn, *Essays on Being*.
- 23 This is discussed in Chapter 5, pp. 123–125, 145–147.
- 24 *Debate* 17–18 (ed. Candal, 347.23–348.2).
- 25 Cf. the remarks of Biriukov and Makarov, “Комментарии,” 101. These remarks in the *Debate* present us with a rare instance in which Palamas is explicit about what essence is and is not within the semantic range of the Greek term *ousia*. (Here it should be noted that to posit a distinction between essence and existence in God is not to say that God *is not his own existence*.)
- 26 See Jugie, “Palamas,” 1754; Torrance, “Precedents,” 48; Lévy, “Lost in *Translatio*,” 469. On the unknowability of God in the Greek theological tradition generally, see D. Carabine, *The Unknown God. Negative Theology in the Platonic Tradition: Plato to Eriugena*.
- 27 This shared presupposition lies behind the charge of Messalianism leveled by each of the two sides against the other and was especially relevant in the fourteenth century, when the notorious Bogomils were charged with claiming to see God's essence. On the Bogomils in this period, and the insinuation that Palamas himself was somehow affiliated with the Bogomils, see Rigo, “L'assemblea generale athonita del 1344 su un gruppo di monaci bogomili,” *Cristianesimo nella storia* 5 (1984): 475–506; id., *Monaci esicasti e monaci bogomili. Le accuse di messalianismo e bogomilismo rivolte agli esicasti ed il problema dei rapporti tra esicasmismo e bogomilismo*.
- 28 *Theo.* 17 (PS 2:242.11–19). Cf. *Cap.*, 106.6–18 (ed. Sinkewicz, 202–203). The fact that God, for Palamas, is even beyond ‘essence’ is duly noted by Krivoshein, “The Ascetic and Theological Teaching,” 138–139.

- 29 *Cap.* 144.1–2 (ed. Sinkewicz, 248). See, also, *Greg.* 2.116–117 (PS 4:276.25–277.2)
- 30 *Dion.* 9 (PS 2:486.1–6), cf. Dionysios, *Ep.* 2 (ed. Suchla 2:158).
- 31 See the discussion in Chapter 5, pp. 141–142.
- 32 *Theo.* 17 (PS 2:242.19–22).
- 33 See *Tr.* 1.3.8: Καὶ αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ παντὸς νοεροῦ φωτὸς ἐπέκεινα Θεὸς καὶ πάσης οὐσίας ὑπερουσιῶς ἐκβεβηκῶς (ed. Meyendorff, 125.10–12). The term ‘superessentiality’ occurs 79 times in Gregory’s corpus, beginning with *Ep. Barl.* 2 (PS 1:279.8): “For how could someone say that in God the names are essence, when it is impossible that you could find a word to express that superessentiality?” In the end, however, God transcends even the name ὑπερουσιότης, since this is a positive statement (θέσις) “even if it has the force of a negation of supereminence” (*Gabr.* 7; PS 2:333.27–333.4).
- 34 *Cap.* 78.2–3 (ed. Sinkewicz, 172).
- 35 *Akind.* 3.13.44 (PS 3:196.13–18).
- 36 *Cap.* 141.1–2 (ed. Sinkewicz, 246). Cf. *Cap.* 126.9 (ed. Sinkewicz, 230).
- 37 *Cap.* 141.5–6 (ed. Sinkewicz, 246).
- 38 *Akind.* 5.5.14 (PS 3:297.17–18).
- 39 See Krivoshein, “The Ascetic and Theological Teaching,” 146; Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 74, 80, 83. Cf. Bradshaw, “In Defence of the Essence/Energies Distinction,” 257: “the divine energies are manifestations of the divine essence.” Cf. *ibid.*, 269. Sinkewicz’s translation of *Cap.* 141 is thus particularly misleading, since he translates τὸ γνωριζόμενον as “that which is revealed.”
- 40 *Tr.* 3.1.12 (ed. Meyendorff, 581.8–583.6).
- 41 *Tr.* 3.1.21 (ed. Meyendorff, 597.15–17). Palamas will frequently refer to the essence of God, in the language of the Dionysian corpus, as the divine ‘hiddenness’ (κρυφιότης). See *Ep. Barl.* 2.19 (PS 1:271.8–9); *Tr.* 1.3.4, 1.3.8, 2.3.31, 2.3.31, 2.3.56, 3.1.7, 3.1.23, 3.2.11, 3.2.19, 3.2.19, 3.3.13; *Theo.* 12, 13, 17 (PS 2:235.21, 237.5, 243.2); *Asan.* 5 (PS 2:318.26); *Dial.* 25 (PS 2:187.25); *Energ.* 16 (PS 2:108.20–21); *Akind.* 4.6.10 (PS 3:249.22), 6.9.21 (PS 3:399.26); *Cap.* 144.5, 149.23 (ed. Sinkewicz, 248, 256). The hiddenness of God is often expressed in terms of the essence being situated high above (ὑπεριδρυμένη) in unapproachable or secret places; see, e.g. *Akind.* 1.3.5 (PS 3:41.21); *Ep. Akind.* 3.11 (PS 1:304.3); cf. *DN* 2.7, 645A; 5.1, 816C (ed. Suchla, 131, 181). It should be noted that the uncreated light itself is also described as *hidden*; see, for example, *Akind.* 4.21.54 (PS 3:281.23). It is called γνόφος by negation, since the senses, intellect, and reason are at rest in its perception; *Akind.* 7.5.14 (PS 3:471.19–21).
- 42 *Theo.* 23 (PS 2:249.22–27). Cf. *DN* 5.2, 816C (ed. Suchla 1:181), which directly follows the quoted passage.
- 43 Cf. Kern, “Les éléments de la théologie,” 19.
- 44 *Greg.* 4.48 (PS 4:366.9–15). This passage is reproduced in *Cap.* 144.1–6 (ed. Sinkewicz, 248) with some modifications. A typographical error in the translation of Sinkewicz (“one of the names there”) gives this passage a meaning opposite to the crucial point being made by Palamas.
- 45 *Greg.* 2.56 (PS 4:304.12–18).
- 46 See, for example, Lialine, “Gregory Palamas on Divine Simplicity,” 270–271, 277.
- 47 See Maximos the Confessor, *Ambiguum* 10.28 (ed. Constatas 1:190).
- 48 See John of Damaskos, *On the Transfiguration* 12 (ed. Kotter, 455.15–16, 20).
- 49 See Andrew of Crete, *On the Transfiguration* (PG 97:949C).
- 50 *Akind.* 6.11.37 (PS 3:413.25–414.22).
- 51 *Pace* Kern, “Les éléments de la théologie,” 18–21.
- 52 *Akind.* 4.7.12 (PS 3:250.17–19).
- 53 God “is beyond not only every affirmation, but negation as well;” cf. *On Mystical Theology* 1.2, 1000B (ed. Suchla 2:143), cited at *Akind.* 2.11.44 (PS 3:117.4–5).

- 54 *Akind.* 2.11.44 (PS 3:117.6). Cf. *Energ.* 9 (PS 2:104.15), where Gregory states that even the fact that God is beyond essence (τὸ ὑπερούσιος) is not said according to essence. (Palamas cites an anonymous patristic text here: “Even ‘He That is,’ ‘God,’ ‘superessential,’ ‘infinite’ and all such names that we call him, express certain of those things seen around him. For none of them signifies what he is in essence and nature.” This text is attributed by Euthymios Zygabenos, followed by Philotheos Kokkinos and Joseph Kalothetos, to St Maximos the Confessor, but it has not been found among his works; see Zygabenos, *Panoplia Dogmatica* (PG 130:141); Kokkinos, *Against Gregoras* 8.1660–1664 (ed. Kaimakes, 310); Kalothetos, *Against the Barlaamites* 4.504–508 (ed. Tsames, 177); cf., also, St John of Damaskos, *Exact Exposition* 9 (1.9) (ed. Kotter, 31–32).
- 55 *Akind.* 4.11.25 (PS 3:260.10–16), citing *Thesaurus* 31 (PG 75:448D).
- 56 On the authorship of this sermon, see M. Jugie, “Deux homélie patristiques pseudépigraphes.” *EO* 39 (1940): 283–289.
- 57 *Barl.* 2 (PS 2:263.20–23); cf. *ibid.* 3 (PS 2:264.13–14). This key text is repeated in *Athan.*, where the word *apophatically* (ἀποφατικῶς) is glossed with the phrase ‘by negation’ (κατ’ ἀφάρσιν); see *Athan.* 5 (PS 2:415.17–25), citing *On the Annunciation* 2–3 (PG 28:920C).
- 58 *Greg.* 2.71 (PS 4:314.19).
- 59 *Cap.* 118.11–13 (ed. Sinkewicz, 218); cf. *Cyr.* 3 (PS 4:104.14–18); above Chapter 2, n. 19.
- 60 *Akind.* 6.25.94 (PS 3:457.26–28).
- 61 See, especially, Bradshaw, “The Concept of the Divine Energies,” 100–101, where he attempts to find the best correspondence between the various meanings of ‘energy’ in the *American Heritage Dictionary* and its usage in ancient philosophy and subsequent patristic tradition.
- 62 See *Athan.* 12 (PS 2:423.6–7); *Akind.* 1.7.25 (PS 3:57.10–11).
- 63 *Greg.* 3.25 (PS 4:335.29). Cf. *Akind.* 1.7.25 (PS 3:57.10–11). From the hymnography of Kosmas of Maiuma Palamas draws the language of “essential comeliness” (οὐσιώδης εὐπρέπεια); see *Akind.* 4.5.6 (PS 3:245.28).
- 64 *Greg.* 4.40 (PS 4:361.32–362.1).
- 65 *Log.* 5 (PS 2:91.25–92.5). Cf. *Greg.* 3.19–22 (PS 4:332.7–333.18).
- 66 *Greg.* 3.21 (PS 4:333.15–24).
- 67 See *Theo.* 28 (PS 2:256.18). Cf. *Akind.* 6.11.35 (PS 3:412.25).
- 68 *Athan.* 13 (PS 2:424.19–21).
- 69 *Akind.* 4.19.51 (PS 3:279.10–12). Cf. *Energ.* 46 (PS 2:132.1), 49 (PS 2:134.7–8).
- 70 *Athan.* 33 (PS 2:442.32–443.2). Cf. *Athan.* 32 (442.7–9), 23 (434.18–20); *Akind.* 1.7.26 (PS 3:58.3–4, 22–23), 5.23.91 (PS 3:356.17–18).
- 71 *Athan.* 26 (PS 2:437.13).
- 72 *Athan.* 23 (PS 2:434.17–18).
- 73 *Conf.* 4 (PS 2:496.18–19, 24).
- 74 Cf. *Cap.* 147 (ed. Sinkewicz, 252).
- 75 *Akind.* 3.14.51 (PS 3:200.8–11).
- 76 *Greg.* 4.61 (PS 4:374.11), citing St Athanasios, *Ad Serapionem* 1.24.1 (ed. Savvidis, 510.8).
- 77 *Akind.* 1.7.19 (PS 3:52.28–53.2).
- 78 Cf. G. Maloney, *A Theology of Uncreated Energies*, 112–117. As Dom Bede Winslow puts it, “The Uncreated Divine Light is *one of the Divine Energies*” (“The Ascetic and Theological Teaching of Gregory Palamas,” *ECQ* 3 (1939): 312, emphasis added).
- 79 *Energ.* 24 (PS 2:114.7–8).
- 80 *Akind.* 2.13.57 (PS 3:126.15).
- 81 *Gabr.* 4 (PS 2:329.19).
- 82 *Akind.* 5.12.48 (PS 3:323.16).

78 *Understanding the Language of Essence and Energies*

- 83 *Dam.* 8 (PS 2:464.17), 15 (PS 2:471.9, 12, 20); *Theo.* 9 (PS 2:232.11); *Akind.* 1.4.9 (PS 3:45.10, 11).
- 84 *Dan.* 16 (PS 2:389.1–2); *Dam.* 10 (PS 2:466.7, 23, 29; 467.1); *Akind.* 5.4.13 (PS 3:296.14–16).
- 85 *Akind.* 2.13.57 (PS 3:126.15); *Theo.* 30 (PS 2:258.2–3): ἡ οὐσιοποιὸς δύναμις φυσική ἐστὶ ἐνέργεια θεοῦ.
- 86 *Energ.* 24 (PS 2:114.7–8).
- 87 *Dan.* 22 (PS 2:394.5); *Theo.* 23 (PS 2:250.11–12).
- 88 *Dan.* 11 (PS 2:385.15); *Akind.* 5.16.64 (PS 3:334.22), 5.17.66 (PS 3:335.18).
- 89 *Dam.* 15 (PS 2:471.14).
- 90 *Energ.* 21 (PS 2:112.6)
- 91 *Dam.* 8 (PS 2:464.17), 15 (PS 2:471.9, 12, 20); *Theo.* 9 (PS 2:232.11); *Akind.* 1.4.9 (PS 3:45.10, 11).
- 92 *Akind.* 5.4.13 (PS 3:296.14–16).
- 93 *Sym.* 9 (PS 2:404.28–29): τὰς προαιωνίους ἐνεργείας τοῦ θεοῦ, δηλονότι τοὺς προορισμούς.
- 94 *Gabr.* 4 (PS 2:329.19); *Dan.* 16 (PS 3:289.2); *Dam.* 15 (PS 2:471.9, 12, 20); *Theo.* 9 (PS 2:232.11); *Akind.* 1.4.9 (PS 3:45.10, 11), 2.17.86 (PS 3:146.10), 5.4.12 (PS 3:296.5–12), 5.4.13 (PS 3:296.14–16).
- 95 *Akind.* 5.12.48 (PS 3:323.16).
- 96 *Energ.* 16 (PS 2:108.17–20).
- 97 *Energ.* 18 (PS 2:110.21–22): Ἡ δὲ βασιλεία καὶ θεότης καὶ ἀγιότης ... ἐνὸς θεοῦ εἰσι δυνάμεις καὶ ἐνέργειαι. Cf. *Energ.* 41 (PS 2:126.4–6).
- 98 *Akind.* 1.3.6 (PS 3:42.3), 4.13.32 (PS 3:264.22) (κινητική and συνεκτική); *Cap.* 87.16 (ed. Sinkewicz, 186).
- 99 *Energ.* 16 (PS 2:103.16–20).
- 100 *Gabr.* 4 (PS 2:329.19); *Energ.* 21 (PS 2:112.16).
- 101 *Energ.* 21 (PS 2:112.16).
- 102 *Dan.* 11 (PS 2:385.15).
- 103 *Dam.* 15 (PS 2:471.9, 12, 20).
- 104 *Energ.* 24 (PS 2:114.7–8).
- 105 *Gabr.* 4 (PS 2:329.19); *Energ.* 21 (PS 2:112.16); *Akind.* 2.17.86 (PS 3:146.10), 5.12.48 (PS 3:323.16), 5.13.51 (PS 3:325.1–5).
- 106 *Akind.* 2.17.86 (PS 3:146.10)
- 107 *Dan.* 11 (PS 2:385.15). Cf. *Akind.* 2.10.37 (PS 3:111.25), 3.19.84 (PS 3:221.28), 5.15.59 (PS 3:331.24–25).
- 108 *Dam.* 15 (PS 2:471.9, 12, 20); *Akind.* 4.9.18 (PS 3:255.14), 4.9.20 (PS 3:256.8, 11, 27–28): “all such things that we have been taught are neither essence nor hypostases but energies contemplated around God.”
- 109 *Dam.* 15 (PS 3:471.9, 12).
- 110 *Dam.* 8 (PS 2:464.17); *Akind.* 5.4.12 (PS 3:296.5–12)
- 111 *Theo.* 9 (PS 2:232.2).
- 112 *Cap.* 104.7 (ed. Sinkewicz, 200); *Theo.* 9 (PS 2:232.2).
- 113 *Dam.* 8 (PS 2:464.17), 15 (PS 2:471.9, 12, 20); *Theo.* 9 (PS 2:232.11); *Akind.* 1.4.9 (PS 3:45.10, 11), 5.4.12 (PS 3:296.5–12). See *Energ.* 14 (PS 2:107.17–18): “*dynamis*, which we also call *energy*.”
- 114 *Dam.* 8 (PS 2:464.17), 15 (PS 2:471.9, 12, 20); *Theo.* 9 (PS 2:232.11); *Akind.* 1.4.9 (PS 3:45.10, 11), 5.4.12 (PS 3:296.5–12), 5.4.13 (PS 3:296.14–16), 5.13.49 (PS 3:323.31–324.1), 5.13.51 (PS 3:325.1–5); *Energ.* 21 (PS 2:112.6).
- 115 *Theo.* 9 (PS 2:232.11); *Akind.* 1.4.9 (45.10, 11), 5.4.12 (PS 3:296.5–12).
- 116 *Theo.* 9 (PS 2:232.2); *Akind.* 2.9.31 (PS 3:106.26).
- 117 *Dan.* 16 (PS 2:389.1–2).
- 118 *Energ.* 16 (PS 2:103.16–20): “These, then, [ὁ ὄν, ὁ θεός, τὸ φῶς, ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ζωή] are names of energies.”

- 119 *Dan.* 11 (PS 2:385.15); *Gabr.* 30 (PS 2:358.22–27).
 120 *Energ.* 21 (PS 2:112.16); *Athan.* 38 (PS 3:447.22–23); *Akind.* 5.27.113 (PS 3:373.17–19).
 121 *Energ.* 21 (PS 2:112.6).
 122 *Dan.* 22 (PS 2:394.5).
 123 *Theo.* 9 (PS 2:232.2).
 124 *Theo.* 9 (PS 2:232.2); *Akind.* 6.24.90 (PS 3:455.12–13).
 125 *Dan.* 16 (PS 2:389.3).
 126 *Dam.* 10 (PS 2:466.7, 23, 29; 467.1); *Energ.* 21 (PS 2:112.6).
 127 *Dan.* 16 (PS 2:389.2); *Dam.* 10 (PS 2:466.7, 23, 29; 467.1), 15 (PS 2:471.9, 12, 20); *Akind.* 5.4.12 (PS 3:296.5–12), 5.12.48 (PS 3:323.16), 5.13.51 (PS 3:325.1–5).
 128 *Gabr.* 4 (PS 2:329.25–28). See Maximus the Confessor, *Theological Chapters* 1.48 (PG 90:1100D). Cf. *Tom. hag.* 5 (PS 2:574).
 129 *Athan.* 38 (PS 2:447.11–14).
 130 *Dam.* 15 (PS 2:471.12–21); *Akind.* 1.4.9 (PS 3:45.10–14). See Basil, *Ep.* 234 (LCL 243:372).
 131 *Dam.* 15 (PS 2:470.29–30).
 132 *Akind.* 5.10.38 (PS 3:315.27–316.9).
 133 *Akind.* 5.13.47–53 (PS 3:322.26–327.11).
 134 This is according to the data available on the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*.
 135 See *Energ.* 7 (PS 2:101.18–19); *Gabr.* 10 (PS 2:337.20); *Akind.* 6.22.80 (PS 3:447.8–9). Cf. John of Damaskos, *Exact Exposition* 59 (3.15) (ed. Kotter, 144.10–11).
 136 See, for example, Loudovikos, “Δι-Εννοημάτων,” 152.
 137 *Akind.* 5.26.102 (PS 3:365.23–27).
 138 *Dan.* 16 (PS 2:389.2–4).
 139 *Theo.* 30 (PS 2:258.4–7).
 140 The distinction between ‘power’ and ‘energy’ is taken up in the next chapter. Although *dynamis* and *energeia* are generally interchangeable, Palamas does admit a kind of subdivision of power into manifested and unmanifested, that is, as first and second actuality; see Chapter 3, pp. 94–96.
 141 This is noted by Torrance, “Precedents,” 50 n. 7.
 142 See *Akind.* 5.10.38 (PS 3:316.6) and *Akind.* 2.11.44 (PS 3:117.20). Numerous occurrences of each form of the phrase can be found throughout the corpus. As such, only one representative example is given here for each one.
 143 See *Akind.* 1.5.11 (PS 3:46.38) and *Akind.* 2.12.53 (PS 3:123.21–24).
 144 See *Akind.* 5.27.116 (PS 3:375.20–23) and *Akind.* 2.13.57 (PS 3:126.15).
 145 See *Akind.* 1.5.11 (PS 3:47.3) and *Akind.* 2.5.13 (PS 3:94.17–18).
 146 See *Akind.* 1.3.6 (PS 3:42.1–2) and *Akind.* 2.11.44 (PS 3:117.20).
 147 See *Akind.* 2.9.30 (PS 3:105.31) and *Akind.* 2.5.13 (PS 3:94.21).
 148 See *Akind.* 2.9.30 (PS 3:105.31) and *Akind.* 4.13.33 (PS 3:265.22–25).
 149 See *Akind.* 5.27.116 (PS 3:375.20–23) and *Akind.* 2.5.13 (PS 3:94.21).
 150 See *Ref. int. Kal.* 27 (PS 2:668.24–25) and *Akind.* 2.11.44 (PS 3:117.20).
 151 See *Greg.* 1.25 (PS 4:250.18) and *Akind.* 5.4.13 (PS 3:296.14–16).
 152 See *Akind.* 1.7.18 (PS 3:52.18) and *Akind.* 4.18.48 (PS 3:276.22).
 153 *Sym.* 6 (PS 2:401.20).
 154 *Greg.* 2.43 (PS 4:296.19–20); cf. *Greg.* 4.59 (PS 4:372.22). The full list of attributes termed “powers and energies” includes all the attributes listed individually as either powers or energies, for example, the creative (δημιουργική) power and energy; *Akind.* 2.8.26 (PS 3:104.9–10). Cf. the use of the phrase “power or energy:” *Gabr.* 13 (PS 2:340.12); *Theo.* 9 (PS 2:232.1); *Energ.* 14 (PS 2:107.1); *Akind.* 2.12.54 (PS 3:124.22–23), 4.13.32 (PS 3:264.32–265.1).
 155 *Energ.* 21 (PS 2:112.27–28).
 156 See *Greg.* 4.31 (PS 4:358.5–6); *Dam.* 8 (PS 2:464.3–5); *Akind.* 2.21.103 (PS 3:158.27–159.1).

- 157 Kallistos Ware makes an important point when he notes that, in the biblical idiom of Palamas, “the terms *energeia* and *dynamis* are not to be contrasted ... but should be equated, as indeed they seem to be in several scriptural texts (Ep 3:7; Ph 3:21; Col 1:29)” (“God Hidden and Revealed,” 131). But he does not engage the broader ramifications of equating *energeia* with *dynamis*.
- 158 *Tr.* 3.2.6 (ed. Meyendorff, 653.13–16).
- 159 *Energ.* 24 (PS 2:114.6–8). Cf. John of Damaskos, *Exact Exposition* 37 (2.3) (ed. Kotter, 93.1–2).
- 160 *Energ.* 24 (PS 2:114.11–12). Cf. John of Damaskos, *Exact Exposition* 37 (2.3) (ed. Kotter, 93.2–3).
- 161 *Energ.* 23 (PS 2:113.28).
- 162 *Dynamis*, in this sense (and its overt assimilation to the language of *energies*) takes on a particular importance in the Christological controversies of the seventh century. In the theology of St Maximos the Confessor, the divine and human ‘energies’ of Christ are not classifications of the *actions* that the Savior performs, but faculties, capacities, and natural potencies corresponding to his two distinct natures (see, e.g., the *Disputation with Pyrrhus*, where the divine will as something that inheres essentially in the nature is distinguished from the thing willed, which is outside the nature; PG 91:292B–293B).
- 163 *Dan.* 21 (PS 2:392.27–31).
- 164 On power ‘following’ will, drawn especially from the Christology of St John of Damaskos, see *Akind.* 6.16.59 (PS 3:430.24–431.14), 6.22.81 (PS 3:448.9).
- 165 On God’s activity, or acting as such, see Chapter 3, pp. 89–96.
- 166 *Cap.* 139.3–4 (ed. Sinkewicz, 244).
- 167 *Gabr.* 25 (PS 2:353.21–24). See the *Debate with Gregoras* 14, where the followers of Nikephoros assert that God is all-powerful (παντοδύναμος) from his ability to do all things (τὸ πάντα δύνασθαι) and not because he ‘possesses every power’ (πᾶσαν αὐτὸν δύναμιν ἔχειν). This, they are reported as saying, would make God not ‘all-powerful’ but ‘every-powerful’ (πασοδύναμον). Palamas dismisses the distinction, noting that any number of Attic words contain a tau in place of a sigma, and this hardly changes the meaning of the term. Ultimately, Palamas says, “‘being able’ and ‘having a power’ are scarcely different” (ed. Candal, 342).
- 168 *Energ.* 18 (PS 2:110.21–25).
- 169 *Ref. int. Kal.* 24 (666.12–13).
- 170 *Dam.* 13 (PS 2:469.14–15).
- 171 Cf. Petavius, *De theologicis dogmatibus* 1.13.10:82.
- 172 The assimilation of *energeia* to *dynamis* is visible already in the Neoplatonic appropriation of Aristotle. Stephen Gersh notes that, “in the emanationist view, we find ‘potency’ and ‘activity’ as equally frequent technical terms for the notion of causality in the radiating source” (*From Iamblichus to Eriugena*, 33). Cf. Bradshaw, “The Concept of the Divine Energies,” 102: “We accordingly find *energeia* [in early Christian writers] shifting toward the meaning of ‘a capacity for action or accomplishment.’” Cf., also, Lévy, “An Introduction to Divine Relativity,” 176.
- 173 Barnes, *The Power of God*, 21–53.
- 174 The synonymy of *dynamis* and *energeia* in Palamas is sometimes contrasted with “the Aristotelian usage”; see Ware, “God Hidden and Revealed,” 131; cf. Torrance, “Precedents,” 50 n. 7. For more on this question, see Chapter 3, pp. 94–96.
- 175 Cf. Barnes, *The Power of God*, 18. For an analysis of *actus* in Aristotle, see G.A. Blair, *Energeia and Entelecheia: “Act” in Aristotle*.
- 176 On the importance of this phrase for the historical articulation of an essence-energies distinction in Greek theology more generally, see Kyriakos Savvidis, *Die Lehre von der Vergöttlichung des Menschen bei Maximus dem Bekenner und ihre*

- Rezeption durch Gregor Palamas. For many of the relevant loci in the Cappadocians in particular, see Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 166–167.
- 177 Notably Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 166–167; id., “The Concept of the Divine Energies,” 109; Loudovikos, “Narcissism,” 43; Gleason, *Grace*, 225.
- 178 See Barlaam, *Epistle 1.75–77* (ed. Fyrigos, 248.650–663). Cf. Sinkewicz, “The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God,” 215.
- 179 *Ep. Barl.* 1.32 (PS 1:243.27–244.5).
- 180 *Ep. Barl.* 2.31 (PS 1:278.1–4).
- 181 *Ep. Barl.* 2.32 (PS 1:278.24–26).
- 182 See *Greg.* 2.70 (PS 4:313.19–32). Cf. *Greg.* 2.71 (PS 4:314.1–27).
- 183 *Ep. Barl.* 2.34 (PS 1:279.19–21).
- 184 John of Damaskos, *Exact Exposition* 4 (1.4) (ed. Kotter, 13.33–36), cited at *Akind.* 2.17.85 (PS 3:146.1–5), 2.21.100 (PS 3:157.20–23), 4.12.28 (PS 3:262.3–7). Cf. Cyril [sp.], *De Trinitate* 11 (PG 77:1145BC).
- 185 *Greg.* 2.7 (PS 4:269.17–24).
- 186 *Ep. Barl.* 2.35 (PS 1:280.12–16); cf. *Akind.* 2.11.44 (PS 3:117.2–5); *Athan.* 43 (PS 2:452.5–6); *Greg.* 2.24 (PS 4:283.14–15). See Dionysios, *Mystical Theology* 1.2, 1000B (ed. Suchla 2:143.3–7).
- 187 *Tr.* 3.1.20 (ed. Meyendorff, 595.11–12). Cf. *Tr.* 3.1.19 (ed. Meyendorff, 595.5–7).
- 188 See *Tr.* 3.2.4 (ed. Meyendorff, 649.2–22).
- 189 The language includes, just as frequently, “the things around the divine nature” and other variants; see, for example, *Energ.* 22 (PS 2:113.3); *Theo.* 26 (PS 2:253.23), 29 (PS 2:256.25); *Athan.* 6 (PS 2:415.28); *Akind.* 1.7.27 (PS 3:59.9), 2.18.89 (PS 3:148.1), 4.9.21 (PS 3:256.31–32), 5.26.108 (PS 3:370.10–12); *Greg.* 2.10 (PS 4:272.32; 273.3), 2.22 (PS 4:282.8), 4.25 (PS 4:354.26); *Cap.* 78.6 (ed. Sinkewicz, 172). Cf. *Theo.* 22 (PS 2:248.19): “the things contemplated around the divine imparticipability.”
- 190 See Chapter 6, pp. XX–XX.
- 191 *Asan.* 8 (PS 2:370.5–6). Cf. *Asan.* 9 (PS 2:371.8–9).
- 192 Cf. *Akind.* 3.21.101 (PS 3:233.22–26). See, also, *Part.* 24 (PS 2:158.1–6).
- 193 See *Akind.* 4.11.27 (PS 3:261.24–27); *Athan.* 44 (PS 2:452.26)
- 194 *Akind.* 1.7.27 (PS 3:59.13–14): τὰς περὶ τὰς ὑποστάσεις καὶ περὶ τὴν φύσιν ἐνεργείας; *Akind.* 3.21.101 (PS 3:233.22): τὰ περὶ τὴν θεϊαν φύσιν ἢ τῶν ὑποστάσεων ἐκάστην νοούμενα ἐξ αἰδίου. Cf. *Theo.* 26: τὰ περὶ τὴν ὑπεράγαθον τριάδα πανάγαθα δῶρα ἰδρυμένα (PS 2:254.11–12).
- 195 Cf. *Tr.* 3.2.7 (ed. Meyendorff, 655.27–28). See the later discussion in this chapter, pp. XX–XX. Palamas says that Akindynos composed his treatises *On the Energies* to attack the *Chapters* of St Maximos; see *Dam.* 13 (PS 2:469.11–13).
- 196 Maximos, *Theological Chapters* 1.48 (PG 90:1100D).
- 197 *Ekth.* 17 (PS 2:582.18–21); *Gabr.* 4 (PS 2:329.25–27), 7 (PS 2:334.30); *Asan.* 12 (PS 2:373.25, 27–28); *Athan.* 36 (PS 2:445.21), 37 (PS 2:446.29–30), 39 (PS 2:448.4, 20–21); *Akind.* 2.12.49 (PS 3:121.19), 3.17.70 (PS 3:212.7), 4.9.22 (PS 3:257.21), 5.12.46 (PS 3:322.15), 5.13.47 (PS 3:322.27–28).
- 198 *Theo.* 22 (PS 2:249.18–19); see Maximos the Confessor, *Chapters on Love* 1.100 (ed. Ceresa-Gastaldo, 88.4–6).
- 199 “The things contemplated around the divine nature;” *Akind.* 2.21.101 (PS 3:157.25–28) and *Dam.* 6 (PS 2:461.22–23), citing St Gregory of Nyssa, *On Perfection* (GNO 8.1:188.6–7). See, also, *Akind.* 1.4.7 (PS 3:43.19–21), which adds God’s majesty (μεγαλειότης) and radiance (λαμπρότης), paraphrasing *CE* 1.533 (GNO 1:180.23–27),
- 200 *Athan.* 45 (PS 2:453.22–29), following a citation of Basil, *Ep.* 234 (LCL 243:372).
- 201 Things “known around the Divine itself”; *Akind.* 3.21.96 (PS 3:230.22–27), citing *CE* 3.108 (GNO 2:40.10–15).

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- 202 *Akind.* 2.21.103 (PS 3:158.21–23): τὴν ἀγαθότητα τοῦ θεοῦ, τὴν δικαιοσύνην, τὴν προνοητικὴν, τὴν θεατικὴν, τὴν θεοποιόν, τὴν θελητικὴν καὶ ἐνεργητικὴν δύναμι, τὴν εἰρήνην, τὴν ζωὴν, τὸ φῶς.
- 203 *Akind.* 1.7.40 (PS 3:68.7–9), i.e., ἅπαντα τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ.
- 204 *Athan.* 42 (PS 2:450.26).
- 205 *Greg.* 2.7 (PS 4:269.17–24).
- 206 *Akind.* 1.7.46 (PS 3:71.16–17).
- 207 *Akind.* 3.13.49 (PS 3:199.13–14). It is worth noting that the identification of things around God with ‘energies’ is not peculiar to Palamas. In attempting to denigrate the divine energies (to the extent that these are not the divine essence) to the status of creatures, Gregory’s opponents argued that the things around God (τὰ περὶ θεόν) could not be uncreated or divine in the full sense. See *Theo.* 26 (PS 2:253.21–26); *Dam.* 13 (PS 2:469.10–29). Palamas reports that Akindynos, in his *On Energies*, saw these things around God as separate essences and hypostases created before the angelic world and participated in by the rest of creation; see *Akind.* 2.12.45 (PS 3:118.31–119.8).
- 208 *Akind.* 4.7.13 (PS 3:251.1–7). Cf. *ibid.* 1.7.24 (PS 3:56.12–13).
- 209 *Akind.* 1.7.24 (PS 3:56.12–13): Ταυτὸν δὲ ἐστὶ ἐνεργείας ἔσθ’ ὅτε καὶ ἐνέργειαν ἐπὶ τῶν φυσικῶς προσόντων τῷ θεῷ εἰπεῖν.
- 210 *Ref. Ign.* 29–30 (PS 2:645.13–24).
- 211 *Akind.* 2.18.88 (PS 3:147.19–22), 4.9.21 (PS 3:256.31–257.4) (φύσει πρόσσειν αὐτῷ). Cf. *Akind.* 2.16.79 (PS 3:142.5). See, also, *Theo.* 32 (PS 2:262.9–10, 11): τὰ κατὰ φύσιν προσόντα.
- 212 *Thesaurus* 31 (PG 75:444B, 448), cited in *Akind.* 5.26.108 (PS 3:370.13–14); *Greg.* 1.24 (PS 4:249.17–18); Phakrases, *Debate* 20 (ed. Candal, 348.29–35).
- 213 See *Athan.* 42 (PS 2:451.6), where the quotation from Cyril includes τὸ ἀγέννητον; cf. *Greg.* 2.32 (PS 4:289.4–6).
- 214 *Akind.* 4.11.25 (PS 3:260.13), 5.10.38 (PS 3:315.33–316.1).
- 215 Maximos the Confessor, *Disputation with Pyrrhus* (PG 91:349B), cited in *Akind.* 6.23.85 (PS 3:451.22).
- 216 This is especially relevant for the divine *will*, which must necessarily belong to the common essence of the three Persons of the Trinity. On the will being “natural,” see *Akind.* 1.7.15 (PS 3:50.20–27), 6.25.94 (PS 3:457.25–28). Cf. *Energ.* 10 (PS 2:103.27–104.6).
- 217 *Akind.* 6.17.28 (PS 3:438.2). Indeed, it is the shared (or common) character of all the divine powers that establishes the identity of nature in the Trinity. “Because the *dynamis* is natural and not hypostatic, as was said, such a *dynamis* belongs to nature, and to whoever belongs the nature, to such belongs the *dynamis*,” *Akind.* 6.17.28 (PS 3:438.29–31).
- 218 *Athan.* 38 (PS 2:447.22–23).
- 219 See, for example, *Akind.* 4.9.18 (PS 3:255.3–16), 5.15.60 (PS 3:332.8–10). Cf. *ibid.* 1.4.10 (PS 3:46.12); *Theo.* 30 (PS 2:258.10). For the term *natural energy* in St Maximos, see *Akind.* 1.7.15 (PS 3:50.16), citing the *Relatio Motionis* 8 (PG 90:121C), and *Energ.* 14 (PS 2:107.13), citing *On the Two Wills of Christ* (PG 91:200B).
- 220 See, for example, *Ep. Akind.* 3.4 (PS 1:298.18–26); *Tr.* 3.3.6 (ed. Meyendorff, 707.13–20); *Theo.* 30 (PS 2:258.8–13); *Akind.* 1.2.3 (PS 3:40.29–30), 1.7.15 (PS 3:50.14–27); *Greg.* 1.29 (PS 4:253.3); *Cap.* 92.3, 131.9 (ed. Sinkewicz, 196, 236). Those who recognized that the energies are “essential” include Gleason, *Grace*, 224.
- 221 See *Akind.* 6.25.96 (PS 3:458.25–29).
- 222 See *Energ.* 25 (PS 2:115.5–9) and *Akind.* 2.19.91 (PS 3:149.21–150.2), citing John of Damaskos, *Exact Exposition* 59 (3.15) (ed. Kotter, 149.128–131). Cf. *Athan.* 40 (PS 2:448.33); *Akind.* 2.21.100 (PS 3:157.15–18); *Dan.* 4 (PS 2:378.1–4). Obviously, the ultimate source here is St Maximos; see *Akind.* 6.17.68 (PS 3:438.5), citing *Ad Marimum* (PG 91:197C); and *Akind.* 6.23.85 (PS 3:451.22), citing *To Nikander* (PG 91:96C).

- 223 *Athan.* 38 (PS 2:447.11). On the basic synonymy between τὰ φύσει προσόντα and τὰ φυσικά, see *Akind.* 2.16.79 (PS 3:142.5–7).
- 224 *Dan.* 16 (PS 2:289.7, 11).
- 225 See *Ref. Ign.* 29 (PS 2:644.26); *Athan.* 36 (PS 2:446.11–12); *Theo.* 17 (PS 2:243.26), 32 (PS 2:260.7–8); *Akind.* 6.22.79 (PS 3:446.15–16).
- 226 *Energ.* 26 (PS 2:115.14, 23), citing Cyril [sp.], *De Trinitate* 11 (PG 77:1145).
- 227 *Energ.* 47 (PS 2:133.2–3).
- 228 *Akind.* 2.10.38 (PS 3:113.14–15). See, also, *Greg.* 4.48 (PS 4:366.25). Cf. ἡ ἐνθεωρούμενη ἐνέργεια: *Ekth.* 33 (PS 2:585.7–8); *Akind.* 6.19.73 (PS 3:441.10), 6.19.73 (PS 3:441.15–16).
- 229 *Akind.* 6.21.78 (PS 3:445.24–25).
- 230 See *Akind.* 1.7.15 (PS 3:50.26–27), where this is said specifically of the divine will.
- 231 *Energ.* 10 (PS 2:103.24–25).
- 232 This is tackled especially in *Theo.* 13 (PS 2:236–238).
- 233 *Theo.* 17 (PS 2:243.11–14); cf. *Greg.* 2.62 (PS 4:308.11–12).
- 234 *Theo.* 17 (PS 2:243.24–27).
- 235 *Theo.* 17 (PS 2:243.10–11). Cf. *Greg.* 2.61: “St Basil ... also calls one of these energies, namely sanctification, ‘nature,’ since it is a *natural* energy. But when Gregoras hears the sanctification of the Spirit being called ‘nature,’ he is ignorant of the sense in which it is said, since he does not look into it, and so, in his arrogant carelessness, he makes of it what he wants. But if someone should ask how the natural energy is sometimes called nature and at other times is said to differ from nature, let him attend with discretion and he will understand what he is investigating. For there are two reasons for this. One is that many of the things that inhere in another (τῶν ἐν ἑτέρῳ θεωρουμένων) receive this name, as when we call the fact of being borne upward the ‘nature’ of fire. Yet being borne is not the nature of anything. Rather, nature is the source of motion. But since being borne upwards inheres naturally (φυσικῶς πρόσεστι) in fire, therefore there are times when being borne upwards is called its nature” (PS 4:307.29–308.10).
- 236 *Akind.* 2.14.63 (PS 3:130.1–7).
- 237 *Dan.* 16 (PS 2:389.7–11).
- 238 *Theo.* 13 (PS 17:238.7–10).
- 239 *Ep. Kal.* 26 (PS 2:607.16–18). Nature is thus said to be participable “through the energy,” even if not in itself (καθ’ ἑαυτήν); *Theo.* 17; PS 17:243.20–24.
- 240 See *Dion.* 10–11 (PS 2:488.3–13). Cf. *Theo.* 26 (PS 2:253.3–6).
- 241 *Athan.* 40 (PS 2:449.33–450.6); see *On the Annunciation* 3 (PG 28:920BC). Cf. *Gabr.* 6 (PS 2:333.15–23).
- 242 *Athan.* 5 (PS 2:415.19–25); see *On the Annunciation* 3 (PG 26:920C). The text as cited earlier is continuous in the original but is not presented continuously by Palamas.
- 243 The immediate context is a spiritual interpretation of the Sabbath rest; see *Theological Chapters* 1.36–60 (PG 90:1097A–1105A).
- 244 See *Energ.* 41 (PS 2:126.9–127.14), citing *Theological Chapters* 1.48–50 (PG 90:1100C–1101B). Cf. *Tr.* 3.2.11 (ed. Meyendorff, 663.8–19).
- 245 *Akind.* 3.10.31 (PS 3:186.19–20).
- 246 *Athan.* 38 (PS 2:447.22–23); *Akind.* 3.10.31 (PS 3:186.19–20); *Greg.* 2.32 (PS 4:289.7).
- 247 Cf. *Akind.* 2.12.46 (PS 3:120.8); *Energ.* 44 (PS 2:130.10–11).
- 248 As with other non-essence terms, “the things said of God,” taken more generally, also include hypostatic terms like *ingeneracy* and *begottenness*, in addition to the common divine energies; see *Greg.* 1.41 (PS 2:262.18–26).
- 249 *Akind.* 2.17.80 (PS 3:142.27–143.1).
- 250 *Akind.* 2.19.92 (PS 3:150.6–15); see Basil, *Against Eunomios* 1.8 (SC 299:194.22–25).

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- 251 *Dam.* 17 (PS 2:474.1–7), referring to *CE* 2.470 (GNO 1:363.29–30): τὰς ἐπιθεωρουμένας ὑπολήψεις.
- 252 See *Gabr.* 7 (PS 2:333.24–334.4); *Energ.* 41–44 (PS 2:125.32–130.17).
- 253 *Energ.* 26 (115.12–17); see Cyril [sp.], *On the Trinity* 11 (PG 77:1145BC). Cf. *Akind.* 5.26.103 (PS 3:366.14–19).
- 254 *Exact Exposition* 9 (1.9) (ed. Kotter, 31.7–9), cited in *Greg.* 2.23 (PS 4:282.31–283.1); *Energ.* 8 (PS 2:102.14); cf. *Akind.* 5.26.103 (PS 3:366.14–19).
- 255 See Kern, “Les éléments de la théologie,” 18; Gersh, “Ideas and Energies in Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite,” *Studia Patristica* 15 (1984): 297; R. Williams, “The Philosophical Structures,” 27; Maloney, *A Theology of Uncreated Energies*, 65–69.
- 256 See Kern, “Les éléments de la théologie,” 18, 27. Cf. Tanev, *Energy in Orthodox Theology and Physics*, 117.
- 257 PS 3:42, n. 2.
- 258 *Cap.* 71 (ed. Sinkewicz, 166.7–8).
- 259 *Akind.* 3.19.85 (PS 3:222.14–17).
- 260 *Akind.* 5.13.47 (PS 3:323.8–11); see *DN* 5.2, 816CD (ed. Suchla 1:181.16–18).
- 261 *Akind.* 5.13.48–49 (PS 3:323.24–324.13). Further on, Gregory will clarify that “the things that belong to providence” are this very “life-creating life” and “wisdom-giving wisdom;” *Akind.* 5.13.50 (PS 3:324.25–26).
- 262 *Theo.* 17 (PS 2:250.31–32), 24 (PS 2:250.18–22); see *DN* 5.1, 816B (ed. Suchla 1:180.12–13). Cf. *Theo.* 17 (PS 2:242.24); *Akind.* 1.2.3 (PS 3:40.24).
- 263 *Greg.* 2.13 (PS 4:273.16–17). Cf. *Akind.* 1.3.6 (PS 3:43.2), citing the *Scholia on the Divine Names* 2.5 (PG 4:221B): δημιουργικαὶ πρόνοια τε καὶ ἀγαθότητες.
- 264 *Greg.* 2.13 (PS 4:273.14–27). See, also, *Akind.* 3.21.98 (PS 3:231.25–29), where providence is identified with the divine judgments (κρίματα).
- 265 The word πρόνοια occurs 244 times in Gregory’s corpus, compared with 180 occurrences of the word θέωσις. Both words, however, pale in comparison with φῶς, used 821 times.
- 266 In a recent study, Terezis and Petridou reinforce this reading precisely by focusing on the opusculum *On Union and Distinction* as a source for a theory of the divine energies; see “Divine Essence, Divine Persons, and Divine Energies in Gregory Palamas,” 73–76.
- 267 See Chapter 1, p. 23. Cf. Antoine Lévy: “The multiplicity of God’s creative operations in the world is shown to be relative to the condition of the creature, so that these actions are systematically reduced to the simplicity of an eternal *intention* enclosing all measures of time and space within itself” (“An Introduction to Divine Relativity,” 218; cf. *ibid.*, 193, 202).
- 268 *Akind.* 7.11.38 (PS 3:490.5–8); *Greg.* 2.12 (PS 4:272.27–273.1). See *Scholia on the Divine Names* 2.1 (PG 4:232C; ed. Suchla 4:196.4–7).
- 269 One can see this, for example, in the way that processions are listed alongside other kinds of energies at *Greg.* 2.48 (PS 4:299.21–24).
- 270 A problem facing the casual reader of Palamas is that St Gregory does not always specify whether he is talking about individual energies or the entire category of *energeiai*. Palamas will often use the example of particular energies to prove that essence and energy, generally, are not identical. This is yet another reason that the *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, as a composite text, is not an ideal introduction to Gregory’s theology.
- 271 These points have been duly noted by Butner in his response to modern systematic critiques of Palamas (“Communion with God,” 28, 42–43). Butner is incorrect, however, to suggest that God’s energies are “essence-making” because they are that “by which the essence exists” (see *ibid.*, 29, 36, 40). Although the energies are indeed the natural and essential attributes of God, whereby God is said

to be what he is, Palamas is explicit that they are not *constitutive* of essence; see Chapter 5, pp. 149–152. Nor does Palamas ever use the term *ousiopoios* in this sense.

- 272 “Christianity and Platonism in East and West,” 202. Milbank speaks specifically of “a Maimonides-style agnosticism,” although a comparison with Maimonides, to say nothing of his style, lies beyond the scope of this study.

3 Activities that Begin and End?

Energies as the Actuality and Actualization of God

Introduction

In the last chapter, it was shown that the term *energy* as used by St Gregory Palamas resists the narrow connotations associated with ‘activity’ but stands rather for all the ‘things around God’—the divine attributes, *propria*, and perfections of God. How precisely a technical term like *energeia*, coined by Aristotle to represent activity or actuality in the technical sense, comes to stand, over a thousand years later, for all of the divine names predicated of the Trinity, even including such things as God’s incorporeality, simplicity, and infinity, would take a great deal of space to explain.¹ Yet it is important to recognize, as we do in the present chapter, that Gregory’s own conception of *energeia* is not entirely divorced from its etymology. Indeed, in the controversy with Gregory Akindynos in particular, from 1341 to 1347, the idea of an uncreated *energeia* would come under intense scrutiny precisely because of its etymological associations with activation or actualization. An ἐνέργεια, to the mind of Akindynos, was necessarily ἐνεργουμένη, that is, actualized. Yet if something is actualized (and thus brought into being), it can hardly be uncreated. “If it is uncreated divinity, then it is neither lower nor actualized (ἐνεργουμένη) nor visible to bodily eyes; and if it is ... then it is not ingenerate.”² Rather than distancing himself from these problems and connotations, Palamas embraces the language of *energeia*, offering an explanation of how God’s powers and attributes are indeed ‘actualized,’ both in time and in eternity. His apologia draws the connection between the divine perfections and God’s ‘activity,’ both *ad intra* and *ad extra*, and allows us to better understand why it is precisely that the divine idioms and powers are also ‘energies.’

Actualization *ad extra*: Distinguishing the Power from its Manifestation

The Gifts of the Spirit: Grace and its Effects

In examining the language of divine energies in the previous chapter, we briefly encountered a distinction between God’s eternal properties and the visible, temporal effects of his power. This was seen in Gregory’s caveat that

an energy like *theosis* is not the process of deification undergone by human beings but rather the eternal and uncreated radiance of God himself that is poured out on the saints. Although the deifying grace of God is bestowed in time, it is not synonymous either with the giving itself or with its recipients.³ Generally, the difference between an energy and its effects is expressed in the distinction between an *energeia* and an *energema* (ἐνέργημα). The latter is also referred to as an *apotelesma* (ἀποτέλεσμα). It is a created reality, the product or effect of the divine power and energy.⁴ Generally, this refers to beings and essences, which, unlike the divine energies, are self-subsistent (καθ' ἑαυτὰ ὑφεστήκασιν),⁵ but it can also refer to events and the intervention of God in the world. Such things are brought forward or occur in time, in accordance with the divine will, through the agency of a divine, eternal, and uncreated energy. Thus, they are distinct from *energeia* as the things actualized (ἐνεργηθέντα) by it.⁶

Gregory's polemics expand on this distinction between an energy and its effects in some detail. In the controversy with Akindynos, one extended debate concerned the gifts or charisms (χαρίσματα) of the Spirit—part of the broader debate over whether *theosis*, as deifying grace, is uncreated. Mocking the position of Palamas, Akindynos had pointed out that not all the “gifts of God” are uncreated. If they were, such things as human tears, compunction, repentance, and the fear of death would be uncreated, to say nothing of human knowledge, wisdom, and the new, purified heart that God will bestow upon the faithful.⁷ These are all “gifts of God,” and yet they are not eternal, uncreated realities.

These claims would elicit from Palamas an extended exegesis of 1 Corinthians, wherein Palamas clarifies that, while the grace of the Spirit is “the gift” *par excellence*, not everything spiritual and not every gift is reducible to divine grace (χάρις).⁸ For this reason, Palamas is careful to note that it has never been his contention that all the various charisms and ‘things of the Spirit’ are uncreated. The events of salvation history, for example—the Resurrection, the Virginal Conception, the Nativity, the manna in the wilderness, the miraculous water from the rock, Jonah’s three days in the whale, and even the very body of Christ—are all *spiritual*. Yet none of these realities is uncreated.⁹ Similarly, the gifts of the Spirit manifested in the Church of Corinth—the gift of tongues, interpretation, healing, faith to move mountains, prophecy, and the discernment of spirits—are not themselves to be confused with the grace that brings them about. As audible words and deeds (πράξεις), the charisms received by the church are rather the sensible *revelation* of the divine energy.¹⁰ Gregory calls them “sensible signs,” and, in a passage from St John Chrysostom, “a sensible proof of that energy,” manifesting the presence of the Spirit.¹¹ The created signs themselves remain distinct and “are not that grace and energy that is in them.” Rather, the *spiritual gifts* are called such by virtue of the “the gift that moves them” (τὸ χάρισμα τὸ κινῶν).¹² This latter is indeed eternal and uncreated and should not be confused with its sensible manifestations.

As Gregory's response to Akindynos indicates, then, there is a basic distinction between miracles and the grace and power "through which" those miracles are performed.¹³ Later on, Nikephoros Gregoras will reject this distinction by claiming that there could be nothing whatsoever between the divine essence and creatures. For Gregoras, instead, the 'energies' of God are the sensible realities and phenomena themselves. Thus, referring to the divine 'illuminations' in *Divine Names* 4.8, Gregoras argues that by calling them "powers and energies in the plural," Dionysios must have been referring to "the visible and sensible miracles of Christ" (τὰ φαινόμενα καὶ κατ' αἴσθησιν τοῦ Χριστοῦ θαύματα), as in the verse, *He did not accomplish many mighty works (δυνάμεις) in that country* (Mt 13:58).¹⁴ In response, Palamas notes, referring to Matthew 8:23–27 and 14:22–33, that Christ's miracles on the Sea of Galilee have two components: (1) the works or effects (ἔργα καὶ δημιουργήματα) that reveal Christ's divinity, namely his walking on water and the miraculous calming of the sea and (2) the divine power itself that was revealed through them.¹⁵ Here, again, the basic distinction is between the things that are accomplished (τελεσθέντα)¹⁶ and the power that brings them about, a distinction that corresponds to the more general distinction between an energy and its effect. For Palamas, it is not the miracles or the revelation of God's power that are uncreated but the grace and power itself, which is manifested in outward events.

Activities that Begin and End?

That the miracles of Christ are not themselves the divine energies but sensible events that demonstrate the presence of God's power is consonant with the implications of Gregory's broader language for speaking about the divine energies. If *energeia* is not simply any activity that is performed, but God's essential power, then it makes sense to speak of the divine energies as being uncreated and inhering in God by nature. Yet a certain ambiguity arises in the course of Gregory's writings on the essence–energies distinction. Especially in his early writings, Palamas will make frequent use of a passage attributed to St Basil to show that energy, particularly in the case of foreknowledge, could not be identified with essence since the former, unlike the latter, has an end (τέλος¹⁷ or τελευτή¹⁸). Although the energy is without beginning, it is not the same thing as the essence, which is both unoriginate and endless (ἀτελεύτητος).¹⁹ As stated in *Adversus Eunomium* 4, "The divine foreknowledge about something does not have a beginning, but it has an end, when what is foreknown comes to pass."²⁰ Objects of knowledge, in other words, are foreknown only to the extent that they are in the future. Once an event has occurred, foreknowledge simply becomes knowledge and, thus, has an end. In the Basilian passage, this coming to an end is bound up with the language of cessation, or, literally, rest (τὸ πάυεσθαι).²¹

Yet to speak of an 'end' to divine energy would seem to imply that *energeia* is indeed an 'activity' in the generic sense. As something that *ceases*, it would appear to signify an action that extends, even if from before time, only until

the moment that its object is realized. This would be analogous to the ‘activity’ of creating, which not only ends but has a beginning, when creatures are brought into existence at a certain moment in time.²² Indeed, Palamas himself uses the example of creating to distinguish energy from essence. The two cannot be identical because one begins and ends, or starts and stops, while the other does not.²³ The same applies to the divine mercy. If this is God’s compassionate response to human sin, dependent not only on the temporal existence of the world but also on the fact that human beings have transgressed some moral law, then the ‘energy’ of mercy seems to be not only contingent on the creation of mankind, it is also a purely postlapsarian reality.²⁴ Such ‘energies’ create a real ambiguity for the reader of Palamas, since they seem to represent not the uncreated properties inherent in God’s essence but an activity that God performs in relation to the world.

Nuancing Divine Activity: Energies and their Manifestation

The conception of *energeia* as something that begins and ends, has, as we have seen, led scholars such as David Bradshaw to assert that at least some of what Palamas calls ‘energies’ are indeed contingent and temporal acts. Precisely on the basis of passages such as the ones just mentioned, Bradshaw asserts that “Palamas is insistent that it is the acts themselves—creation, providence, foreknowledge—that come to be or pass away (or both), not merely their effects.”²⁵ It is not surprising, then, that, for Bradshaw, at least some of the divine energies are not even necessary, precisely since they are free acts of a free being.²⁶

Yet, especially in the controversy with Akindynos, Palamas will explain with great precision how he understands the divine energies to ‘begin’ and ‘end.’ This he does by specifying that it is not the existence of the divine energies as such that has a beginning or end, but their appearance or effectivity in time. To express this difference, Palamas relies on the concept of manifestation (φανέρωσις). As he explains to Akindynos,

The essence of the Spirit is completely hidden, while the energy of the divine Spirit, manifested (φανερουμένη) through its effects, begins and ceases at the level of manifestation (κατὰ τὴν φανέρωσιν), without the creatures, as we have said, attaining to eternity. ... But the energy of God does not, for this reason, begin and cease unqualifiedly (πάντως). For God, who is always active, has an unceasing (ἄπαστον) energy, ever seeing all things and providing for all things. *For my Father until now is working, and I am working* (Jn 5:17).²⁷

With this important qualification, Palamas distinguishes, as in the case of Christ’s miracles and the gifts of the Spirit, between the divine energy *per se* and the appearance or manifestation of that energy in and through creatures. At the level of the latter, we are told, energies begin and end. Yet God’s energy, in itself, does not rest, and it is in this sense that it is eternal and uncreated.²⁸

The language of *phanerosis*, or manifestation, appears already, albeit briefly, in the controversy with Barlaam, in *Triads* 3.1.8, in a quotation from the scholia to the *Questions to Thalassios*. There Palamas notes, “The divine Maximos called this divinity ‘deification,’ defining deification as enhypostatic illumination, having no generation (γένεσιν), but an inconceivable *manifestation* in the worthy.”²⁹ Here we see, *in nuce*, the distinction between the pre-existent divine energy and its manifestation in time. But it is only after the controversy with Barlaam that this distinction will become central to the question of essence and energies.³⁰ As Palamas will put it in his *Letter to Damianos*, “What is manifested from the acting (ἐκ τοῦ ἐνεργεῖν) is not the essence of the one acting, but his power and energy, which was in him even before the manifestation.”³¹ Throughout the controversy with Akindynos, this distinction will become increasingly important as Palamas strives to show that the energies of God are not only divine in an equivocal manner but eternal and uncreated.

Gregory’s distinction between God’s power or energy and the activity or action (τὸ ἐνεργεῖν) that manifests it adds an important nuance to the semantic field associated with *energeia*. In the *Letter to Damianos*, ἐνέργεια (identified with δύναμις) is distinguished from acting (τὸ ἐνεργεῖν) in a way that corresponds to the distinction between energy and activity in a frequently cited passage of St John of Damaskos. In his *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, cited in *Akind*. 6, St John implicitly distinguishes the power of acting (ἡ ἐνεργητικὴ δύναμις) from the activity or actions of a particular hypostasis. The power of acting, he says, identified with the energies (αἱ ἐνέργειαι), is that whereby hypostases act (καθ’ ἣν ἐνεργοῦσι ἐνεργοῦντα). Yet this action is distinct from the underlying *dynamis*³² so that while a term like ἐνεργητικὴ δύναμις may seem like an oxymoron, it lucidly captures the difference between the *energeia* as potency and its expression as activity.

The distinction between an energy and its manifestation is consistent with Palamas’s definition of energies as innate powers, faculties, and essential or natural properties. Gregory illustrates this by drawing an analogy with the activity of fire. Although fire, he says, possesses by nature the property of warmth and the ability to heat (τὸ θερμαίνειν), this is only manifested (φανερούμενον) “when the necessary material is brought near.”³³ Although the heating of objects outside itself has a beginning and an end, the fire’s warmth, as such, is both prior to and more enduring than this one act. Indeed, it is an essential property of the fire itself. In the same way, divine ‘activities’ like the creation of the world are neither the energy/*dynamis* itself nor its effects. Rather, the creation of the world is a manifestation, in time, of God’s eternal, creative power. For this reason, Palamas explains, words like *creation* (κτίσις) can be used for both the creative power (τὸ κτίζειν) and the product that results from the divine will (τὸ τελεσθὲν ἔργον θελήσεως): “For when God willed, he manifested his creative power (τὴν δημιουργικὴν δύναμιν) through creatures.”³⁴ But, just as in the case of Christ’s miracles, what is manifested, or “what appears” (τὸ φαινόμενον), namely, the divine energy, is not tantamount to that which comes into being from nothing (τὸ γενόμενον).³⁵

Within the context of these precisions, the deifying energy can also be said to be manifested not only in Christ's Transfiguration on Mount Thabor but also in the very person of the saints, who are deified by the same grace.³⁶ In this way, the concept of manifestation is also associated with the language of divine indwelling and movement:

We take the coming and abiding of the Father and the Son (Jn 14:23) and the descent of these energies in a God-befitting way, not understanding this as a transitus from one place to another, as if we imagined the Divine, in approaching us, to be circumscribed and created, either at the level of the hypostases or at the level of his own powers and energies. But we understand the approach and abiding and descent to be God's manifestation (φανέρωσις) from his activity (ἐκ τοῦ ἐνεργεῖν).³⁷

Gregory's description of God's descent (κάθοδος) here is familiar from his *Apodictic Treatises on the Descent of the Holy Spirit*. There Palamas identifies the 'sending' of the Spirit not with its hypostatic derivation from the Father but with its *manifestation* in the world. Unlike the Spirit's procession from the Father alone, the 'sending' of the Holy Spirit refers not to the causation of the Spirit's hypostasis but to the *manifestation* of its energy in the world through the economy of Christ.³⁸ As Palamas explains in his *Confession of Faith*,

The Spirit was sent (ἐπέμφθη) from the Son to his disciples, that is, it was manifested (πεφανερώται). For how else could it have been sent from him, since it was not separated from him? How else could it 'come' anywhere, since it is present everywhere? Wherefore it is sent not from the Son alone, but from the Father *through* the Son; and he comes, also, from himself, as manifested. For the mission, that is the manifestation, is a common work of the Father, Son, and Spirit. But it is manifested not according to essence—for no one has ever seen or spoken the nature of God—but according to grace and power and energy, which is common to the Father, Son, and Spirit.³⁹

The sending of the Spirit, then, like the working of God's energy more generally, is not a coming-into-existence, but the externalization and impartation of something eternal and uncreated. In a similar way, the 'descent' of the divine energies in the celebrated dictum of St Basil—where the energies are said to 'come down' to us—is identified not with the 'beginning' of these energies, but with their manifestation. "They 'come down' to us, that is, as manifested (φανερούμεναι)."⁴⁰ In other words, what exists before the ages becomes visible and perceptible in and through created things.⁴¹

The Language of Cessation and Rest

For Gregory, then, "ceasing (τὸ πεπαῦσθαι) is said on account of its appearance (διὰ τὴν ἔκφανσιν)" so that the concept of 'manifestation' functions as

an important qualification of ‘beginning’ and ‘end’ language when it comes to the divine energies.⁴² As Gregory explains in his *Letter to Daniel*,

A divine energy, according to the Fathers, is the pre-eternal power of God manifested (φανερουμένη) through creatures. At the level of manifestation (κατὰ τὸ φανεροῦσθαι) it begins. But the power does not begin. Wherefore the great Athanasios separates the divine energies from creatures.⁴³

The distinction is illustrated, once again, with reference to the miracles worked by Christ in his Incarnation:

For giving life (τὸ ζωοποιεῖν) started and stopped when the child came back to life (Mt 9:25), but giving life is not for that reason a created energy of God. And the paralytic, having received remission of sins (Mt 9:2), no longer had need, for that purpose, of that which brought this about (τοῦ ἐνεργοῦντος). For in such things, starting and stopping belongs to manifestation (τῆς φανερώσεως), but not the energy itself, which is a divine power manifested through creatures (without the latter attaining to eternity), for the power is effortless (ἀκάματος).⁴⁴

Palamas distinguishes, in this way, between God’s power or ability to give life, as well as the power or ability to remit sins, which belong to God essentially, from the particular, temporal giving of life and actual remission of sins in time. This, as we have noted, is already implied by the language of *dynamis* and inherence. But, through the language of manifestation, Gregory also draws out the implications for talking about God’s activity *ad extra*, specifically distinguishing God’s actions and deeds in the world from his energies as such.

With reference to the act of creation, in particular, Palamas specifies that God’s activity starts and stops “in accordance with” his energy, since the energy itself belongs to God’s nature and is uncreated.⁴⁵ This same preposition (κατά) marks Gregory’s exegesis of John 5:17: *the Father until now is working and I also am working*. Citing the sermon *On the Annunciation*, Palamas notes that “The Father and the Son do not work (ἐργάζεται) according to different providences, but according to one and the same essential energy of the Godhead.”⁴⁶ Once again here there is a distinction between action, or in this case ‘working’ (ἐργάζεσθαι), and the power or energy whereby it is accomplished. It is not the energy that starts and stops, but God’s acting, that is, his manifestation *ad extra*. Thus, when faced with the language of ‘cessation’ in the Fathers, Gregory notes that the word does nothing to contradict the uncreated character of the energy.⁴⁷ Energy is something that begins and ends only with reference to creatures. Palamas will therefore liken the preexistence of God’s deifying grace to the light of the sun, whose existence in no way depends on being seen:

For the grace and energy of the Spirit is that whereby God is united to the saints, as the ray of the sun is the union of the eyes with the sun. For the ray is that whereby the eyes of those who see are united to the sun. For one who has stepped outside of the ray cannot look upon the sun. The sun, then, *becomes* light for the eyes that have seen it. But it existed even before being seen. When it was seen, it was manifested (πεφανερώται) as light and illumination. Therefore, ‘becoming’ applies not to the light, but to that which is illumined.

Here Palamas explains that what ‘begins’ is not God’s deifying grace, but the process of deification (τὸ θεοῦσθαι) in its object (τὸ θεούμενον).⁴⁸ Whereas those who are called saints, Gods, and kings by grace “begin” to be such,

the kingdom, divinity, and holiness that they possess is uncreated and without beginning. For they partake of the very uncreated kingdom of God, not by its removal, but by their otherworldly union with the eternal and uniquely holy God and king of all.⁴⁹

In the same way, the light of the Transfiguration, even before it was seen by the apostles on Mount Thabor, shone forth eternally from the divine essence. It was therefore not Christ who was transfigured, in the strict sense, but the disciples, who were given the ability to see the glory of God that adorned Christ’s body.⁵⁰

When Palamas argues, therefore, that the creative divine energy cannot be God’s essence since the former has a beginning and an end, he specifies that he is talking not about the energy as such but about its manifestation.

For even if there has been no beginning and end of the creative power, still, there has been a beginning and end of its activity (τῆς κατὰ ταύτην πράξεως), that is, the energy at the level of what has been created (τῆς κατὰ τὰ δεδημιουργημένα ἐνεργείας).⁵¹

The word for God’s creative “activity” (πράξις) is identical here to the word used for the deeds or sensible realities that manifest God’s grace in the working of miracles.⁵² In both cases, what begins and ends is not the power itself, but its manifestation in time. Here Bradshaw rightly points out that “Palamas means not that there is an end of the divine energy in relation to created things, but that there is an end of the divine *activity* of creating.”⁵³ The same logic can be applied also to the power of foreknowledge. Although the foreknowledge of a specific object (περί τινος) is finite, yet the *faculty* of foreknowledge (i.e., that God himself is foreknowing) is eternal.⁵⁴ In this way, there is an end (τελευτή) to energy, although the things around God remain endless (ἀτελεύτητα).⁵⁵

For Palamas, as we have seen, the language of cessation (παύεσθαι) is bound up, through Maximos’s *Theological Chapters*, with the notion of ‘rest’ from Genesis 2:2.⁵⁶ As the works that God did not ‘begin’ to do, energies are

something from which God does not rest. For this reason, although the divine energy starts and stops with reference to its created effects, it is, nevertheless, beginningless (*ἀναρχος*), unceasing (*ἄπαυστος*),⁵⁷ and effortless (*ἀκράματος*),⁵⁸ which is to say that it is uncreated. Although God's energy ceases, it does not do so unqualifiedly (*παυομένην μὴ πάντως παυομένην*).⁵⁹ In themselves, the divine energies and powers remain unchanged, unmoved, and permanent, existing not only prior but also posterior to their effects and appearance in time, since they are the uncreated, eternal, and essential properties of the timeless Godhead.

Dynamis, Energeia, and the Problem of Actualization, Motion, and Change

The distinction between God's eternal uncreated powers and their manifestation in creation bears an obvious resemblance to the classic distinction between potency and act. As we have seen, the writings of Palamas tend to equate power and energy, and so it is not possible, ordinarily, to see Gregory's use of *dynamis* and *energeia* as expressions of this distinction. There do exist, however, a number of places in Gregory's writings where he does oppose, or at least differentiate, the two terms, hearkening to a definition of *dynamis* and *energeia* as potency and actuality. In the *Triads*, for example, Palamas states that "power advances into energy, and from the energy the creature comes to be."⁶⁰ In *Against Akindynos*, too, he speaks of "the divine power and its corresponding energy."⁶¹ Palamas will also make frequent use of patristic quotations that involve a clear distinction between *dynamis* and *energeia*. This is especially apparent in citations from St Gregory of Nyssa, who speaks of *dynamis* as the source of activity (*ἀφ' ἧς ἡ ἐνέργεια*),⁶² and St Basil, who derives the identity of *energeia* in the Father and the Son from the identity of their *dynamis*.⁶³

Although potentially confusing, the double sense of *energeia* that this introduces to Palamas's theology (wherein it is identified, on the one hand, with *dynamis*, and differentiated from it, on the other), is something that Palamas addresses directly. "The same thing," he notes, "is called both power and energy. But the use (*χρησις*) of the innate power (*ἔμφυτος δύναμις*) is, properly, only energy."⁶⁴ *Energeia*, in other words, can refer to both the eternal and essential property of an essence, in which case it is synonymous with *dynamis*, or it can refer specifically to the use (*χρησις*) of a faculty, in which case it is distinguished, as activity, from power. More often than not, as we have seen, Palamas will use *energeia* exclusively in the first sense, since his entire polemic is constructed on the idea that God's energy is eternal, natural, and uncreated. Yet he also makes use of the second sense, which corresponds to his distinction between the inherent power of God and its manifestation in the world. In this second sense, *energeia* is synonymous with the action (*τὸ ἐνεργεῖν*) that manifests God's inherent attributes.

In large part, the language of use (*χρησις*) and manifestation (*φανέρωσις*) in Palamas is taken from the writings of St John of Damaskos. In a frequently cited passage from the *De fide Orthodoxa*, the latter states that "the

creative activity (*energeia*), that is, the use, and manifestation through creatures, of the creative power of God—i.e., ‘to create’ itself—is subject to willing or not willing.”⁶⁵ Whether or not creatures are actually made, in other words, is contingent and subject to the divine freedom. The tethering of creation to the divine will is, of course, a basic way of rejecting emanationism and the eternity of the world. But in the context of Palamas’s theology, it also serves to distinguish between the contingent character of creating (*energeia* in the sense of an activity that God performs) and the creative faculty as such (*energeia* as the equivalent of *dynamis*). At the level of manifestation, the divine powers follow the divine will, since “God uses (χρηται) each of these when, and however much, he wishes to.”⁶⁶ Yet God’s power to create remains a natural and essential attribute of the divine *ousia*. In this way, creation can be a free act of God even while the creative power remains a necessary and eternal feature of the divine essence.

Yet while Akindynos can agree that activity (ἐνεργεῖν) is proper to God, he objects vigorously to the idea that anything eternal and uncreated could be actualized (ἐνεργεῖσθαι).⁶⁷ According to Akindynos, “What is actualized (τὸ ἐνεργούμενον) we understand to be created (κτιζόμενον).”⁶⁸ To the extent that it denotes the movement from potency to actuality, the language of *energeia*, or actualization, could for Akindynos refer to nothing other than the movement from nonbeing into being. For this reason, Palamas identifies as one of the main accusations brought forward by the Akindynist party that God, by having ‘energies,’ “advances from imperfection to perfection.”⁶⁹ In this sense, Akindynos places the language of actualization on the same level as the language of cessation and rest, since they entail the same problems.⁷⁰ Akindynos points, especially, to a famed passage in St Gregory Nazianzen that states that an energy is *actualized* rather than acts and ceases the moment it is actualized.⁷¹ But an energy, again, can hardly be eternal and uncreated if it passed into nonexistence. Thus, just as divinity cannot start and stop, or begin and end, it cannot move from nonbeing into actuality and back into nonbeing.

In response to Akindynos’s accusations, Palamas draws, among other loci, from the Fifth Ecumenical Council. This synod, in refuting the Origenist doctrine that the world must be eternal lest God suffer any kind of change by creating, distinguished between God’s essence and activity in a way that Palamas found congenial to his understanding of *energeia qua* temporal manifestation. He interprets the Council, saying,

For that which those who oppose us are now saying (teaching the very thing that Origen said) the holy synod justly condemned, writing as follows: “Origen said that God, by going from not creating to creating, changed (ἐτέραπη) completely from one thing to another,”⁷² as these new Origenists say, that he went from imperfection to perfection. Hear, then, how the Fathers refute this. For they did not say that energy does not differ from essence. Rather, they say what we say, that, “He did not change (ἐτέραπη) according to essence, but according to energy.” See the clear difference between energy and nature? But keep listening. In fact,

he did not change even according to energy: “For he had the power of making and creating (τὴν δόναμιν τοῦ κτίζειν καὶ δημιουργεῖν) always. But this power was actualized (ἐνηργήθη) when God decided.” Where are they that say ‘actualized’ always signifies ‘created’?

And then there’s what the Theologian says in the first of his Orations *On the Son*: “If ‘Father’ is the name of an energy, then the *homoousion* would be this very thing that was actualized.”⁷³ Let them hear from this, then, how the pre-eternal power of God was actualized, that is, how he that possesses that power used it and acted in accordance with it (κατ’ αὐτήν).⁷⁴

In this conciliar text, Palamas finds proof that the language of actualization (ἐνεργεῖσθαι) is not only acceptable and warranted when speaking of God, it is necessary to preserve the distinction between God’s immutable essence and his effecting of the creation in time. Equating Akindynos with the Origenists, Palamas leverages the synodal text to show that an eternal, uncreated power can be actualized outwardly. Yet how, he asks, can actualization be tantamount to creation when the *dynamis* is preexistent and eternal? Actualization merely represents the use in time of a faculty that is eternal and uncreated, which is God’s activity *ad extra* “in accordance with” the eternal, inherent divine power (κατ’ αὐτήν ἐνεργησεν). God himself, then, does not move from imperfection to perfection, “because he had the power of making and creating always,” and thus the only change or becoming is outside God, namely in his effects.

Actualization *ad intra*: The Eternal *Actus* of God

Actualization as the Inner Motion of Being

In order to defend the idea that God’s powers and energies can indeed be actualized, Palamas marshals a host of Scriptural and patristic witnesses to show the absurdities that would result if the language of activity, and related terminology, all signified creation *ex nihilo*.⁷⁵ Yet Gregory’s defense of the language of actualization is not limited to identifying actualization (ἐνεργεῖσθαι) with manifestation (φανέρωσις). Palamas notes that the language of actualization can also be used to indicate “what inheres in God by nature and proceeds (προϊόντα) from God naturally.”⁷⁶ This, Palamas explains, is “the activity of nature” (τὸ φυσικῶς ἐνεργεῖν)⁷⁷ so that there is an essential activity and actualization of the Godhead, not only externally, in the world, but also *ad intra*.

As we saw in Chapter 2, Palamas defines energy, on the authority of St John of Damaskos, as “the essential motion (κίνησις) of nature.”⁷⁸ Not unpredictably, Akindynos objects to this language for the same reason that he objects to the language of actualization more generally, identifying motion as one of the hallmarks of creaturely existence. “For an uncreated divinity is not moved. For where would it move? Where is it not?”⁷⁹ In his response to

the objections of Akindynos, Palamas notes, once again, that God's motion is not spatial or locomotion. Although God is truly be said to be motionless, or beyond motion, yet, according to the cataphatic mode, "he moves and has motion, both as truly being power and having power; and he is theologized and worshiped by us as one, and as truth itself."⁸⁰ Such affirmations are possible for Palamas when the language of motion, in speaking of the Creator, is stripped of any material connotations. In particular, it is stripped of any associations with change. "For these things are said of a motion befitting God, wherein there occurs no addition (πρόσληψις) or subtraction (ἀφαίρεσις)."⁸¹

Consistent with his claim that the controversy with Akindynos already contained a full refutation of his later opponents, Palamas will direct this same argument against Gregoras.⁸² Gregoras, like Akindynos, is presented as rejecting any attribution of motion whatsoever to God.⁸³ God has no movement but is simply motionless (ἀκίνητος).⁸⁴ For Palamas, on the contrary, such one-sidedness is a distortion of theological language. Just as the emphasis on divine unity, at the expense of all else, after the manner of Sabellius, is wrong, so, too, the emphasis on apophatic theology at the expense of lawful affirmation leads to blasphemy and error.⁸⁵ For Palamas, God is indeed motionless (ἀκίνητος), yet he is also ever-moving (ἀεκίνητος),⁸⁶ since both the apophatic and the cataphatic must be maintained.⁸⁷

In defending the language of *kinesis* against Gregoras, Palamas provides a list of patristic proof-texts to validate the ascription of motion to God.⁸⁸ The passages, drawn exclusively from the Dionysian corpus and its scholia, emphasize, once again, that the language of energy is only qualifiedly *ad extra*. The 'movements' of the motionless God are associated first and foremost with the timeless processions of the divine mind. Constituting the counsel (βούλησις) of God for creatures, these are not yet outside of God and are not numbered among created things. Rather, they surround the divine nature. As the creative and providential foreordinations of beings, the divine 'motions' are eternal, uncreated realities, distinct from the divine essence yet fully divine.⁸⁹ Precisely as a corollary of *proodos*, these *kineseis*, like the divine processions more generally, cannot be confused with, or reduced to, the activity of God outside himself.⁹⁰ Rather, even the overflow of divine Goodness toward creatures is a motion that exists first and foremost within God.⁹¹

Palamas illustrates the reality of an inner motion or actualization of substance by drawing on the traditional distinction between the *logos endiathetos* and the *logos prophorikos*, or the inner and outer 'word.'⁹² As he explains in his treatise *Against Akindynos*:

We say that a certain reality is 'said' (λέγεσθαι) by us, and that that whereby the reality is signified is also 'said' (λέγεσθαι), using the same word but not in the same sense. ... So, in the same way, we say that that which is brought about by activity (τὸ διὰ πράξεως ἀποτελούμενον) is actualized, and energy is actualized, but not in the same sense.⁹³

Here Palamas distinguishes the outward from the inward actualization of an *energeia* by comparing them not only to the difference between words in the mind and in audible speech but also to the difference between the rational faculty as such (i.e., the *logos* of the human soul) and the words (i.e., language) that this produces outwardly, literally the ‘thing said.’ Both are the object of ‘discourse’ but in different senses (τρόπον δὲ οὐ τὸν αὐτόν).⁹⁴ One is the very functioning and internal movement of the intellect, while the other is merely an external vocalization.

Palamas finds other examples of this kind of equivocity, such as when we speak of human deliberation (βουλή). Here the same word is used to indicate the object of deliberation—as when we deliberate about something (βουλευόμεθα περί τινος)⁹⁵—and the operation or movement of the will itself—as when we deliberate (literally, ‘deliberate our deliberation’) (βουλευόμεθα βουλήν). One is an inner faculty or function of the soul (ἡ ἔμφυτος κίνησις), while the other is an external reality “about which one speaks or deliberates.”⁹⁶ Such examples illustrate, for Palamas, the inherent equivocity of words like actualization, which may seem to refer to the *products* of activity (τὸ διὰ πράξεως ἀποτελούμενον) but can, in fact, represent the inherent power and motion of an essence.⁹⁷

Energeia* as First Actuality: Divine Power as *Actus Purus

To conceive of the divine energies as ‘actualized’ in this way, that is, *ad intra*, opens up the possibility of thinking about *energeia* in Palamas as activity (*operatio*) or act (*actus*) in a sense other than that of outward action. As intimated earlier, the very fact that the divine energies are *dynameis* already allows for a conception of *energeia* as the possession, rather than the exercise, of essential powers. Gregory himself, in explaining the kind of beginning and rest that applies to God’s energies, alludes, in this regard, to Aristotle’s paradigmatic example of the eye, discussed in *De anima* 2.1. Without actually using the language of *entelechy*, Palamas distinguishes the intermittent ‘looking’ of an eye, which depends, among other things, on whether a person is awake, from the natural power of the eye to see (φυσικῶς ἔχειν τὸ ὁρᾶν).⁹⁸ Palamas will also draw an analogy with the human faculty of speech (τὸ λαλεῖν), noting that people retain the ability to speak whether or not they are actually talking.⁹⁹ Such, in God, are the powers to create, give life, sanctify, and so on, which are naturally present in God irrespective of their outward productivity.¹⁰⁰

The powers and faculties that characterize an essence, therefore, are not ‘mere potencies.’ They are not, in other words, a species of nonbeing relative to actuality and necessarily correlative with mutability and change, the way a pile of bricks is potentially a house, or a young child potentially a doctor.¹⁰¹ In the case of natural attributes and essential powers, such as the power of vision or the power of speech, potencies are not something that pass into being only when they are utilized. Nor do they undergo any kind of change in their utilization. In *De anima* 2.1, for example, the eye’s ability to see

remains a constant in waking and in sleep, being the ‘first actuality’ of an eye, which makes the eye what it is.¹⁰² It is the *power* of sight, in other words, and not its use, that constitutes vision, and so the potency of an eye is not a ‘mere potential’ but an actuality.¹⁰³ In the same way, although God’s powers and energies are operative *ad extra* only when he so chooses, they are not ‘unrealized’ prior to their outward manifestation. Nor do they undergo change just because they produce created effects or come to be seen in the world. In God, Palamas states, the creative power is not the ability to pass from one state to another, or to admit of any addition (εις την ἑαυτοῦ φύσιν τι πάθειν), but, rather, “to add (προστιθέναι) to creatures at will.”¹⁰⁴ Once again, then, the only mutability and motion from potency to act is on the side of the creature rather than God himself.

The conception of the divine powers as perpetually ‘actual’ in this sense naturally adds an important hermeneutic layer to the language of *energeia*. Not only does it help to explain the identity of *energeia* and *dynamis* within God, but it also evokes the fact that the properties and powers of God, as ‘actualities’ and not mere potencies, are what serve to describe God as eternally active. According to Palamas, God is not merely possessed of every power (being παντοδύναμος), he is also active (ἐνεργῆς) from all eternity.¹⁰⁵ As already noted, it is this fact that allows Palamas to speak of the divine energy as “unresting” (ἄπαστον), since even before the creation of the world, things like God’s providence, for example, are perpetually active; and God himself is perpetually active in this regard, “ever seeing all things and providing for all things. *For my Father until now is working, and I am working* (Jn 5:17).”¹⁰⁶ God is therefore named not from the external manifestation of his power, but from the eternal activity and actuality that characterizes his essence. “God is called maker and creator *according to the energy*,”¹⁰⁷ neither beginning to be so when the world comes into existence nor ceasing to be so after it has already been made.¹⁰⁸ Akindynos is therefore wrong to suggest that the energies of God could have a beginning in time.¹⁰⁹ If this were the case, Palamas says, then God could not be said to be all-powerful essentially and before time.¹¹⁰ Rather, the divine attributes would accrue to God in time as he performed certain activities *ad extra*, whereas Christians believe that God could not be otherwise than he is. “From these uncreated powers,” says Palamas, “we know our God, that he is an all-powerful essence.”¹¹¹

Conclusion

In spite of the equivocity of the word *energeia*, it seems clear that the term is not at all disconnected from its etymology in Palamas. Although Gregory is careful to distinguish the ‘actualization’ of God’s powers from the coming-to-be of creatures and the motion associated with change, his usage of ‘energies’ is in no way divorced from the deeper philosophical resonances of ‘activity,’ ‘operation,’ and ‘actuality.’ As the actualization of divine power *ad extra*, Palamas elaborates a nuanced understanding of *energeia* as the manifestation (φανερώσις) of God’s eternal, uncreated attributes so that it is not the case that “one and

the same *energeia* is to be conceived as simultaneously without beginning and with a beginning, depending on the point of view chosen.”¹¹² Rather, the divine energies themselves are always eternal, uncreated, and unchanging. While they do indeed make an entrance into time and space, the emphasis in Palamas’s oeuvre is consistently on the eternal, uncreated character of the divine power. Thus, some of the energies of God are said to begin and end but only in their external manifestation and effects. It is by virtue of God’s inherent energies that God is said to be just, merciful, and creator, names that describe not only his deeds, but his essential attributes and the things predicated of him by nature. As eternally ‘active’ in these attributes, the God of Palamas, distinct in his essence and energies, might even be described as *actus purus*,¹¹³ ever remaining what he is and ever being actualized in the essential motion and activity of his uncreated energies. In the next chapter, we look at how Palamas distinguishes this eternal motion of God’s essence from the essence itself, examining the many arguments used to demonstrate that God’s uncreated energies cannot be identified with his nature.

Notes

- 1 This, in part, is the aim of Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, albeit without a comprehensive study of what Palamas himself understands by *energeia*.
- 2 *Ep.* 21.16–17 (ed. Hero, 76).
- 3 See Chapter 2, pp. 57–58.
- 4 See *Energ.* 7 (PS 2:101.18–19); *Akind.* 3.13.47 (PS 3:197.20–22).
- 5 See *Akind.* 6.19.72 (PS 3:440.15–27). Cf. *ibid.* 1.4.9–10 (PS 3:44.21–46.19).
- 6 *Akind.* 1.4.9 (PS 3:44.22).
- 7 *Akind.* 5.22.81 (PS 3:349.9–14).
- 8 See *Akind.* 5.23.86 (PS 3:352.7–26). Cf. *Athan.* 17 (PS 2:427.20). This is in addition to the multivalence of the word *grace* itself (see *Athan.* 15; PS 2:425.33–34), famously discussed by Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 230; cf. Lison, *L’Esprit répandu*, 118 n. 88.
- 9 *Akind.* 5.23.87–88 (PS 3:352.31–354, 4). Palamas is heavily dependent here on Chrysostom, specifically *Homily 23 on 1 Corinthians*, 2 (PG 61:191). For a profitable discussion of this important section in *Akind.*, and how it relates to the question of a ‘created supernatural,’ see Lison, *L’Esprit répandu*, 118–121. The claims of Vladimir Lossky, that in the East “supernatural” is tantamount to “uncreated” would seem to be contradicted by this passage; see *Mystical Theology*, 88.
- 10 *Akind.* 5.23.89 (PS 3:354.5–355.2).
- 11 *Akind.* 5.23.89 (PS 3:355.5–11); cf. Chrysostom, *Homily 29 on 1 Corinthians*, 1 (PG 61:239).
- 12 *Akind.* 5.23.90 (PS 3:355.16–17, 27–28).
- 13 See *Athan.* 21 (PS 2:432.5–18); *Akind.* 5.7.18 (PS 3:175.15); cf. Chrysostom, *On the Psalms 44* (PG 55:185–186). See, also, *Akind.* 5.8.32 (PS 3:310.27–28); cf. Chrysostom, *Homilies on John 12.3* (PG 59:84).
- 14 *Greg.* 4.43 (PS 4:363.28–31); cf. *ibid.* 4.44 (PS 4:364.6). See Gregoras, *Historia 24.24–25* (Bonn 3:451.21–452.5); cf. *ibid.* 23.3 (2:1113.17–1114.2); Gregoras, *Antirrhetics 1.2.6* (ed. Beyer, 319.15–17).
- 15 *Greg.* 4.30 (PS 4:357.10–17). Gregoras had sought to denigrate the ‘divinity’ of the light of Thabor by noting that Christ’s miracle on the sea (Mt 8:23–27; Mt

- 14:22–33) was also said to ‘reveal his divinity;’ see *Greg.* 4.24 (PS 4:354.3–5); cf. Chrysostom, *Homilies on John* 42 (PG 59:246); see also, Gregoras, *Historia* 35.12 (Bonn 3:497.1–6).
- 16 See *Greg.* 4.30 (PS 4:357.10).
- 17 See *Tr.* 3.2.8 (ed. Meyendorff, 659.9–22). See *Adversus Eunomium* 4 (PG 29:680B). On the attribution of *Adversus Eunomium* 4 to St Basil, see Franz Xaver Risch, *Pseudo-Basilii: Adversus Eunomium IV-V: Einleitung, Bersetzung Und Kommentar*.
- 18 *Energ.* 8 (PS 2:102.28); *Akind.* 1.7.34 (PS 3:64.16).
- 19 *Akind.* 1.7.34 (PS 3:64.22); cf. *Energ.* 8 (PS 2:102.26–28), 46 (PS 2:132.14–15); *Tr.* 3.2.8 (ed. Meyendorff, 659.16–18).
- 20 See PG 29:680AB; cf. *Akind.* 6.20.75 (PS 3:442.17–19).
- 21 Note the association, again, with Genesis 2:2.
- 22 Time itself has a beginning, and is thus a part of creation, but the conception of creation, *qua* act, as an energy would require that the ‘activity’ of creation also have a beginning in, or with, time. Cf. Lévy, “An Introduction to Divine Relativity,” 190: “If the *energeia* of God, identified with the divine act of creation, proceeds from God’s *Ousia* in a natural or necessary way, how would this act be really free? ... Not all the *energeiai* of God appear as having an external, temporal end, like creation and divinization.”
- 23 *Tr.* 3.2.8 (ed. Meyendorff, 659.9–13).
- 24 *Greg.* 2.60 (PS 4:307.4–7); cf. *CE* 2.152 (GNO 1:269.21–25). This is actually brought up by Gregoras himself to prove that the divine energy cannot be uncreated; see Gregoras, *Historia* 22.4 (Bonn 2:1069.11–19), 30.30 (Bonn 3:291.10–16).
- 25 *Aristotle East and West*, 262.
- 26 See *Aristotle East and West*, 257.
- 27 *Akind.* 6.21.78 (PS 3:445.19–29).
- 28 A certain analogy can be made here with the Incarnation, whereby the preexistent hypostasis of the *Logos* appeared in and through created reality at a certain time, although it did not therefore begin to exist only in the virgin womb. See *Athan.* 26 (PS 2:436.27–30).
- 29 *Tr.* 3.1.8 (ed. Meyendorff, 571.13); cf. Maximos, *Questions to Thalassios* 61, scholion 14 (CCSG 22:111.71–73).
- 30 Incidentally, the language of *phanerosis* is also poorly represented in the *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*.
- 31 *Dam.* 16 (PS 2:472.9–12).
- 32 *Akind.* 6.17.67 (PS 3:11–13); cf. John of Damaskos, *Exact Exposition* 58 (3.14) (ed. Kotter, 138.25–27). The passage in question is concerned with the two wills and energies of Christ. It speaks of the power of will and activity (ἡ θελητικὴ καὶ ἐνεργητικὴ δύναμις), identified with Christ’s wills and energies (τὰ θελήματα καὶ αἱ ἐνέργειαι), according to which the hypostases that possess them will and act (καθ’ ἣν θέλουσι καὶ ἐνεργοῦσι τὰ θέλοντα καὶ ἐνεργοῦντα). Cf. Zygabenos, *Panoplia Dogmatica* 21; PG 130:1149B.)
- 33 *Athan.* 38 (PS 2:44724–25).
- 34 *Gabr.* 32 (PS 2:361.3–6), referencing John of Damaskos, *Exact Exposition* 8 (1.8) (ed. Kotter, 21). This also explains the homonymy of *energeia* itself, which can sometimes be used to refer to the created product of God’s energy (i.e., his ἐνέργημα).
- 35 See *Greg.* 4.16–17 (PS 4:349.19–20, 26–27). Palamas is nevertheless clear that there is a wide range of meanings for γίνεσθαι; cf. *Athan.* 26 (PS 2:436.27–30).
- 36 *Athan.* 30 (PS 2:440.32–441.2).
- 37 *Dam.* 16 (PS 2:472.2–9). Cf. *Part.* 6 (PS 2:142.4–8).
- 38 See *Apod.* 2.17–20 (PS 1:94.16–97.12), which places special emphasis on the ‘sending’ of the Spirit as φανέρωσις. For a discussion, see Lison, *L’Esprit*

- répandu*, 53, 65–69. See, also, *Hom.* 8.9–10 (PS 6:112–113) and *Hom.* 24, *On the Manifestation and Distribution of the Divine Spirit on Pentecost* (PS 6:274).
- 39 *Conf.* 3–4 (PS 2:496.10–20). Cf. *Greg.* 4.17–18 (PS 4:349.24–350.20). The identification of ‘through the Son’ with the manifestation (φανέρωσις) of the Spirit is indebted, in part, to John of Damaskos, *Exact Exposition* 8 (1.8) (ed. Kotter, 30.291).
- 40 *Dam.* 9 (PS 2:465.10).
- 41 This would seem to answer the objection of Torrance that the *energeiai* of Basil’s *Ep.* 234 cannot be coterminous with the uncreated energies of Palamas because the former refer to “movements of the forces of nature,” specifically the obedience of the seas and winds (“Precedents,” 54–55). While Basil is certainly referring here to “created manifestations of power” (*ibid.*, 59), the point for Palamas is precisely that it is the eternal, uncreated divine power (God’s *technē*, etc.) that is manifested *through* created effects.
- 42 *Akind.* 6.23.87 (PS 3:453.9–10).
- 43 *Dan.* 6 (PS 2:379.28–380.1).
- 44 *Akind.* 6.20.75 (PS 3:442.29–443.6). The examples in this passage are drawn from the Sixth Ecumenical Council, which distinguished between the divine energy, manifested in the paralytic’s remission of sins (Mt 9:2) and the resuscitation of the synagogue leader’s daughter (Mt 9:18–19, 23–26), from the human energy manifested in Christ’s physical speech (Mt 9:2) and taking of the child’s hand (Mt 9:25). For a sense of how controversial the exegesis of these passages was, see *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum* 2.2.2:372, 510, 512.
- 45 *Cap.* 130.13–14 (ed. Sinkewicz, 234): τὸ μέντοι δημιουργεῖν τοῦτο, καθ’ ὃ ἀργεῖται ὁ θεὸς καὶ παύεται, φυσικῆ καὶ ἄκτιστός ἐστιν ἐνέργεια θεοῦ. Sinkewicz’s translation of παύσεται in line 3 as “cease to exist” (235) is obviously problematic here.
- 46 *Greg.* 1.29 (PS 4:253.5–6), citing Ps.-Athanasios, *On the Annunciation* 5 (PG 28:924B).
- 47 See, for example, *Cap.* 130.7–10: ὁ Δαμασκηνός ... οὐδὲ τὸ κατέπαυσε τῷ ἀκτίστῳ τῆς ἐνεργείας προσίσταται (ed. Sinkewicz, 234).
- 48 *Athan.* 30 (PS 2:441.4–20). Insofar as the deification of the Lord’s humanity was accomplished by the hypostatic union, Palamas notes that, by relegating to creaturehood even the medium of human deification, Akindynos not only denigrates divine grace, but the very hypostasis of the *Logos*.
- 49 *Energ.* 18 (PS 2:110.15–21).
- 50 See *Akind.* 7.6.14 (PS 3:471.15); cf. *Akind.* 6.11.37 (PS 3:413.26); *Greg.* 1.23 (PS 4:24.5–6). Palamas draws this idea, among other sources, from John of Damaskos, who describes how Christ, in the Transfiguration, did not become what he was not but rather showed what he was to the disciples, whose eyes were opened to supernatural realities; see *Homily on the Transfiguration* 12 (ed. Kotter, 450.17–22).
- 51 *Tr.* 3.2.8 (ed. Meyendorff, 659.9–13).
- 52 See p. 87 and n. 10 earlier in this chapter.
- 53 *Aristotle East and West*, 239. Antoine Lévy is correct to insist, though, that this does not make the divine energy temporal or created (“The Woes of Originality,” 109; “An Introduction to Divine Relativity,” 192). Still, Lévy misses Palamas’s distinction between the eternal energy/*dynamis* and its manifestation. See “An Introduction to Divine Relativity,” 194; cf. *ibid.*, 202–210.
- 54 *Energ.* 46 (PS 3:132.12–15). This is rightly noticed by Lévy though, again, without attention to the distinction between an energy and its manifestation; “An Introduction to Divine Relativity,” 195.
- 55 Cf. *Tr.* 3.1.19 (ed. Meyendorff, 595.5–7).
- 56 Cf. *Tr.* 3.2.10 (ed. Meyendorff, 661.27). See, also, the earlier discussion in this chapter, pp. 88–89.
- 57 See *Tr.* 3.1.40 (ed. Meyendorff, 637.1–2); *Akind.* 6.21.78 (PS 3:445.32–446.2); *Hom.* 17.8 (PS 6:209.135–136).

- 58 See *Akind.* 6.20.75 (PS 3:442.29–443.6).
- 59 *Akind.* 6.21.78 (PS 3:445.5).
- 60 *Tr.* 3.2.19 (ed. Meyendorff, 677.23–24); cf. *Tr.* 3.2.11 (ed. Meyendorff, 663.17–19). This distinction is applied especially in an anthropological context, within the debate over whether deification is a natural *hexis*, which moves from a state of potency to actuality; see *Tr.* 3.1.26, 30 (ed. Meyendorff, 607.26–27; 613.26–27).
- 61 *Akind.* 6.17.68 (PS 3:437.21–22). Cf. *Akind.* 4.13.32 (PS 3:264.32–265.2).
- 62 *Barl.* 9 (PS 2:268.24–25). Cf. *Greg.* 2.26–28 (PS 4:285.15–286.19), where the priority of essence over energy, in the context of *CE* 2.150, is explained in connection with the fact that “*dynamis* is prior (προουφεστηκέναι) to *energeia*” (GNO 1:269.8–9).
- 63 *Akind.* 6.17.65 (PS 3:435.24–28).
- 64 *Energ.* 23 (PS 2:113.28–29). Bradshaw duly draws attention to this relationship of *dynamis* and *energeia* in *Aristotle East and West*, 239.
- 65 *Gabr.* 32 (PS 2:360.28–31), alluding to John of Damaskos, *Exact Exposition* 8 (1.8) (ed. Kotter, 21.64–72). The context is, once again, the distinction between the necessary and the voluntary, or the works of nature and the works of the divine will.
- 66 *Akind.* 6.23.88 (PS 3:453.20–21).
- 67 *Athan.* 21 (PS 2:432.9–21; 433.2–4), cf. *Athan.* 23 (PS 2:434.1–4).
- 68 *Akind.* 6.20.74 (PS 3:442.14–15).
- 69 *Dan.* 6. (PS 2:378.32–379.1).
- 70 See *Akind.* 6.20.75 (PS 3:442.17).
- 71 See *Akind.* 6.18.70 (PS 3:439.24–25); *Cap.* 130.2–3 (ed. Sinkewicz, 234). Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration* 31.6 (SC 250:286). This statement is originally made with regard to the Spirit as energy.
- 72 Following Zygabenos, *Panoplia Dogmatica* 20 (PG 130:1108D).
- 73 *Oration* 29.16 (SC 250:210.20–22).
- 74 *Dan.* 6 (PS 2:379.7–28). Cf. *Akind.* 2.12.53 (PS 3:123.27–124.3), 6.20.74 (PS 3:442.4–16).
- 75 See *Akind.* 5.17.68–73 (PS 3:337–342). The interpretation of ἐνεργεῖν, specifically as it occurs in a passage of St John Chrysostom brought forward by Akindynos (see *Akind.* 5.17.66; PS 3:335.24), would launch Gregory’s discussion of the ‘gifts of the Spirit’ that begins at *Akind.* 5.20.74. These are complemented by patristic quotations showing the relative freedom with which the Fathers signaled the consubstantiality of the Trinity, not shrinking from words such as *poiesis* and *energeia* so long as they demonstrated connaturality. See, especially, *Akind.* 2.12.53 (PS 3:123.15–17) and 5.17.68 (338.23–26, 340.2–6). To this end, Palamas is able to avail himself of the Eunomian controversy, which involved a debate over whether ‘Father’ was the name of an ἐνέργεια; see *Dan.* 6 (PS 2:379.24–26).
- 76 *Akind.* 5.17.68 (PS 3:337.17–23).
- 77 *Akind.* 5.17.66 (PS 3:336.2–4).
- 78 See, for example, *Union* 21 (PS 2:85.11–12); *Akind.* 5.12.43 (PS 3:320.16–17), citing John of Damaskos, *Exact Exposition* 59 (3.15; ed. Kotter, 144.7–10). *Barl.* 18 (PS 2:277.9–10). Cf. *Union* 22 (PS 2:85.23–27); *Athan.* 7 (PS 2:416.23–30); *Akind.* 6.13.48 (PS 3:423.12–19). On the relationship between *energeia* and *kinesis* in Aristotle, see Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 7–12.
- 79 *Dam.* 15 (PS 2:471.22–23). Cf. Akindynos, *Iamboi* (PG 150:853B): Οὐ γὰρ κινητὸν μὴ γενητὴ θεϊότης· ποῦ γὰρ κινηθῆ; Ποῦ γὰρ οὐκ ἔσται;
- 80 *Barl.* 19 (PS 2:277.18–21). Palamas criticizes the exclusive reliance on apophatic statements, invoking the Dionysian tenet that “apophatic theology itself does not contradict cataphatic theology.” *Barl.* 19 (PS 2:277.17–18); cf. *MT* 1.2, 1000B (ed. Suchla 2:143.5–6).

- 81 *Barl.* 18 (PS 2:277.10–12).
- 82 Gregoras touches on the problem of motion (κίνησις) in *Historia* 30.104–107 (Bonn 3:338–340); cf. *Historia* 23.1 (Bonn 2:1093), 34.38 (Bonn 3:459).
- 83 *Greg.* 2.43 (PS 4:297.9–15), 2.68 (PS 4:311.27–29).
- 84 *Greg.* 2.68 (PS 4:311.32–312.3).
- 85 *Ibid.*, 311.32–312.7.
- 86 *Greg.* 2.43 (PS 4:297.11–12).
- 87 *Greg.* 2.68 (PS 4:311.29–31).
- 88 *Greg.* 2.58 (PS 4:305.9–306.1).
- 89 See *Greg.* 2.57–58 (PS 4:304.26–306.1).
- 90 See Chapter 2, pp. 71–72.
- 91 This is especially clear in *Akind.* 1.3.4–6, where the very distinction between essence and energies is framed in the context of God’s superabundance of Goodness.
- 92 On the distinction between the *logos endiathetos* and *logos prophorikos*, commonly seen as a feature of the ‘Alexandrian’ theology of authors like Clement of Alexandria, and going back to Philo, see Adam Kamesar, “The *Logos Endiathetos* and the *Logos Prophorikos* in Allegorical Interpretation: Philo and the D-Scholia to the *Iliad*,” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 44 (2004): 163–181; Claude Panaccio, *Mental Language: From Plato to William of Ockham*, 28–57.
- 93 *Akind.* 5.13.55 (PS 3:125.13–19).
- 94 *Akind.* 2.13.55 (PS 3:125.13–17).
- 95 Cf. *Energ.* 46 (PS 3:132.12–15).
- 96 *Akind.* 2.12.49 (PS 3:121.4–21). Cf. *Akind.* 3.22.104 (PS 3:236.7–16). In both places, Palamas also brings up the example of writing (γραφή), which is both a capacity and something produced by the agent.
- 97 In all these cases, as with actualization (ἐνεργεῖσθαι), the verbs are in the passive voice.
- 98 *Greg.* 1.34 (PS 4:257.18–21). At *Tr.* 3.1.26 (ed. Meyendorff, 607.7–8), Gregory aligns *entelechy* with manifestation, again, in the context of natural human *habitus* (ἕξις).
- 99 *Greg.* 1.34 (PS 4:257.21–22).
- 100 *Greg.* 1.35 (PS 4:257.23–24): φυσικῶς ἔχει τὸ δημιουργεῖν, τὸ ζωοποιεῖν, τὸ ἀγιάζειν καὶ πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα.
- 101 See the examples given by Aristotle in *Physics* 3.1, 201a10–a29. Among the many studies of this and related questions, see Joseph Owens, “Aristotle—Motion as Actuality of the Imperfect,” *Paideia*, special Aristotle issue (1978): 120–132; Rémi Brague, “Aristotle’s Definition of Motion and Its Ontological Implications,” *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 13 (1990): 1–22; Carlo Natali, “Aristotle’s Conception of *Dunamis* and *Techne*,” in S. Stern-Gillette and K. Corrigan (eds.), *Reading Ancient Texts, Volume II: Aristotle and Neoplatonism*, 1–21. On the Neoplatonic transformation of the act–potency dichotomy, see Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*, 27–45.
- 102 *De anima* 2.1, 412b11.
- 103 In the *De anima*, *entelechy* is explicitly identified with essence and form, although this would obviously not apply to Palamas’s conception of God; see Pino, “Plotinus and the Aristotelian Hylomorphic Body,” 45.
- 104 *Cap.* 133.8–12 (ed. Sinkewicz, 238); cf. *Cap.* 134.5–6 (ed. Sinkewicz, 238).
- 105 See *Cap.* 140.4–8 (ed. Sinkewicz, 244).
- 106 *Akind.* 6.21.78 (PS 3:445.19–29). Cf. *Hom.* 17.8–10 (PS 6:208.127–209.155).
- 107 *Akind.* 6.19.73 (PS 3:441.5–6).
- 108 See *Akind.* 1.7.31 (PS 4:62.21).
- 109 See *Akind.* 1.7.28 (PS 3:60.8–10). As is often the case, Palamas is well aware that the *Akindynists* do not overtly (διαρρήδη) attribute change to God, but he insists that it follows logically from their rejection of an uncreated energy.

- 110 *Tr.* 3.2.5 (ed. Meyendorff 651.18–20).
- 111 *Akind.* 5.4.13 (PS 3:296.31–33).
- 112 Lévy, “An Introduction to Divine Relativity,” 192 and 209.
- 113 *Pace* Meyendorff, “Theology in the Thirteenth Century,” 407. Cf. Th. Damian, “A Few Considerations on the Uncreated Energies in St Gregory Palamas’ Theology and His Continuity with the Patristic Tradition,” *Patristic and Byzantine Review* 15 (1996–1997): 108–109. It should nevertheless be obvious that this does not mean God’s energies are eternally actualized *ad extra*; cf. Bradshaw, “The Concept of the Divine Energies,” 96.

4 Distinguishing Essence and Energies

Introduction

In the previous two chapters, we attempted to penetrate what St Gregory Palamas means by the term *energies*, analyzing both the broader lexicon for speaking of God's essential powers, perfections, and attributes, as well as the debate surrounding their definition as actualities, operations, and activities. In the present chapter, we turn to the ways that Palamas seeks to defend the distinction between essence and energies and how he attempts to prove that God's energies cannot be identified with the divine nature or substance.

Although the distinction between God's essence and energies formed but one element of a nexus of contested ideas in the prolonged contest between Gregory and his successive opponents, it was widely seen as the central and most important problem of the controversy. Given the opportunity, in 1355, to choose the starting point of a major public debate with Palamas in the presence of the emperor, Nikephoros Gregoras opted to begin the discussion not with the problem of the Thaboric light or the experience of the hesychasts but with the embattled distinction that has since become synonymous with the name of Palamas. "The Philosopher," the report states, "began with the essence and energy of God, saying that there was no difference between them, since everything that is different from the essence is a creature."¹ Yet how exactly did Palamas counter this position? Voluminous though the secondary literature on St Gregory Palamas has been, a complete overview of the logic and argumentation used by Palamas to establish and defend the distinction between essence and energies has not, to date, been undertaken by scholars. The present chapter therefore seeks to fill this gap by outlining and collating the many arguments, syllogisms, and proofs that Palamas articulates throughout his corpus to show that God's essential attributes and powers cannot be identical to 'what' God is. Although it cannot pretend to offer a complete catalog of Gregory's myriad arguments, it attempts to cover the main lines and themes that govern his discourse throughout his career.

The terminology for the 'distinction' between essence and energies centers, especially, on the language of difference (διαφορά, διαφέρειν, διενηνοχέναι)² as well as the language of otherness so that essence is one thing and energy another (ἕτερον καὶ ἕτερον, ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο). For Palamas, the two are not

identical, or one and the same thing (τὰὐτόν), in the sense of being interchangeable or reducible one to the other. The majority of Gregory's arguments for why this must be are repeated consistently, in one form or another, throughout his career. As a whole, they can be grouped into five categories, representing the primary motivations for distinguishing between God's essential attributes and the essence in which they inhere. The first two categories center on the problem of antinomy, or the coincidence of opposites in God. The term *antinomy* itself is a modern designation and one that is not without controversy. Polycarp Sherwood, in his critique of Neo-Palamite theology notes that the term as it is used today "is current . . . only from the time of Kant."³ Regardless of its genealogy, however, it has become a convenient and now commonplace appellation for the phenomenon, found in both scripture and Christian tradition, wherein statements are made about God that appear, on their face, to be contradictory. God is said to be one and yet somehow not one, participated and imparticipable. God is distributed and received in measure yet indivisible, known and yet unknown, named and yet unnamable. This coincidence of opposites in God is not merely explained by Palamas in terms of the essence–energies distinction, it constitutes, for him, one of the most important reasons that God must be something other than just a transcendent *ousia*.

The relevant antinomies can be subdivided into two categories: those that concern the unity-in-distinction of God, or the fact that God is both one and many, and those that concern the paradox of human engagement with the Divine, in which the transcendent and ever incomprehensible Divinity enters into communion with creatures and is known, seen, and experienced by human beings. This latter subset of antinomies gives us a second, distinct category of arguments for the essence–energies distinction, centering on the 'contradictions' of human experience and epistemology.

A third category of arguments focuses on the distinction between the necessary being of God and the unnecessary or contingent being of the world. For Palamas, the existence of creation cannot be explained solely with reference to the divine essence, whereby God is what he is, but requires something distinct from the category of *ousia*. This line of argumentation relies specifically on the existence of a divine will, whose effects are distinct from the essential products or emanations of the divine nature.

The fourth category of arguments is lexical or grammatical in character and relies on the way that human beings, and especially the writings of the Church Fathers, speak about the divine attributes in relation to God's essence. These arguments rely, above all, on the fact that God's energies are said to be 'of' and 'from' his essence. They appeal not only to the basic relationship between a substance and its attributes but also to the derivation of God's powers from his nature and the transcendence of the essence, as cause, over the energies. If God's energies are not in fact distinct from his essence, Palamas insists, then the way we speak about God becomes theologically problematic and even nonsensical.

Finally, a fifth category of arguments encompasses the various discussions of specific divine energies and the reasons these could not possibly be

identical to God's quiddity, or what God is. Several of these arguments have been encountered already, but further, illustrative examples are indicated here also.

The logic across all five of these categories relies, ultimately, on the absolute transcendence of God's essence, not only over the capacities of human nature but even over eternity itself and the full spectrum of divine energies and properties. God, Palamas will argue, is able not only to create the world in freedom but to accomplish a wide variety of distinct acts, even giving himself fully to rational beings without confusion. This is possible because God remains distinct, in his nature, from the creatures who come to share in his divinity, and because the divine essence itself remains transcendent even over its operations and attributes.

Antinomy, or the Coincidence of Opposites

The discussion of 'antinomy,' or the coincidence of opposites, has featured widely in modern debates on the essence–energies distinction. Its popularity stems especially from the work of Vladimir Lossky, who places the term *antinomy* into the writings of Palamas himself. According to Lossky's translation of a passage in the *Theophanes*,

the divine nature must be said to be at the same time both exclusive of and in some sense open to participation. We attain to participation in the divine nature, and yet at the same time it remains totally inaccessible. We need to affirm both at the same time and to preserve the antinomy as a criterion of right devotion.⁴

For Lossky, familiar with the longstanding criticisms of Roman Catholic scholars, this notion of antinomy, as the simultaneous affirmation of opposites, was especially important as an answer to the conundrum of divine simplicity. Although a God who possessed attributes distinct from his essence was commonly conceived, by critics, to be composed of metaphysical 'parts,' Lossky charged that such an understanding of divine simplicity flowed not from a Christian conception of God, but "from a philosophical concept of essence."⁵ Lossky's view would become a common trope among Orthodox theologians of the twentieth century, who increasingly opposed the essence–energies distinction to the 'rationalism' of its Western detractors. In 1977, Kallistos Ware asserted that modern anti-Palamites,

base themselves upon a rational, philosophical notion of divine simplicity, and fail to allow properly for the fact that in God the opposites coincide; he transcends our man-made conceptions of unity and multiplicity, which cannot be applied to him without qualification.⁶

This juxtaposition of 'antinomy' with a "rational" notion of divine simplicity is itself rooted in the deeper dichotomy that has long perdured between

Western ‘rationalism’ and an Eastern penchant for ‘mystery.’⁷ It is also related to the presumption that Palamas never set out to do philosophy or explicate a metaphysical system, but only to defend the reality of contemplative, mystical experience.⁸ Thus, for some commentators, the theology of St Gregory Palamas in itself signals a transcendence of “human reason or logic.”⁹ In describing the relationship between essence and energies, therefore, Christos Yannaras reflects a dominant trend when he says, “The West rejected the distinction, desiring to protect the idea of simplicity in the divine essence, since rational thought cannot accept the antinomy of a simultaneous existential identity and otherness.”¹⁰

Yet in the actual writings of St Gregory Palamas, the coincidence of opposites in God is not presented as an affront to human reason, disrupting philosophical endeavor with a supernatural contradiction that can only be resolved by an appeal to mystery. Although God is certainly believed to transcend created intelligence, not only in his ineffable essence but even in the very powers and energies that make him known, Palamas does not treat apparent contradictions, as Lialine puts it, by “taking refuge in apophatics.”¹¹ Rather, the fact that scripture and Christian tradition sometimes affirm and sometimes deny one and the same statement about God indicates, for Palamas, that there are important distinctions to be observed in the Godhead precisely because, otherwise, one would fall into blatant contradiction and irrationality. As the fictional Theophanes explains to his disciple in the dialogue that bears his name,

We believe both that the Lord is one and that he is not one. Does not the Creed itself compel us and admonish us always to inquire and render an explanation—especially if someone is railing against these beliefs—how he is one and how he is not one, lest we play the role of nitwits (ἄποικοίτινες), thinking and speaking inconsistencies (ἀνακόλουθα)?¹²

Antinomy, then, if one is to apply this word to the thought of Palamas, is not the mere affirmation of opposites but a kind of *aporia* that presupposes, and indeed demands, nuance and explanation. If we were simply to say contradictory things about God without qualification, “This is not *supernatural*,” says Palamas, “or befitting God (perish the thought). Rather, it is *unnatural* and belongs to what is altogether impossible.”¹³ Palamas, in other words, does not dismiss the law of noncontradiction. Nor does he consider divine transcendence to be in any way enhanced by the violation of ‘rational’ thought. To say that the same reality, without qualification, admits of opposite and contradictory affirmations is not a ‘mystery’ but an absurdity:

For if the same thing, in the same sense (τὸ αὐτὸ κατὰ τὸ αὐτό), is participated and imparticipable, intelligible and beyond intellection, then it is completely incoherent (ἀσύμβατον) and incapable of subsisting (ἀσύστατον), being as far from real existence as possible on account of its extreme contrariety.¹⁴

Like the proverbial square circle, then, paradox as such has no place in Palamas's theology. The *Theophanes* continues:

Whoever says this, affirming and denying the same thing, in the same sense (τὸ αὐτὸ κατὰ τὸ αὐτό), contradicts himself with his own words and denigrates what is supernatural in God to something unnatural, canceling each of the things he says by the other and completely doing away with the existence of God, thus numbering himself with the atheists.¹⁵

As Norman Russell points out, Palamas “vigorously rejected” contradiction in the attribution of opposites to God, along with any obscurantism that might result therefrom.¹⁶ It is precisely for this reason that Palamas believes that the doctrine of God requires an essence–energies distinction. For without such a distinction, there is simply no way of reconciling the opposite statements that are predicated of God. Although God is both one and not one, approachable and unapproachable, he is so, as Lossky clarifies, “under different aspects.”¹⁷ God is participable and imparticipable, visible and invisible, knowable and unknowable in different senses, one according to essence and the other according to energy.¹⁸ By denying this distinction, Palamas implies, it is the anti-Palamites who take refuge in apophatics, refusing to acknowledge how contraries can coexist in God.¹⁹ Palamas's own distinction, on the other hand, is elaborated precisely to make sense of seeming conflicts and to ensure that theological truths are free of irrational incongruities, discrepancies, and basic dissonance.

One and Not One

Although the term *antinomy* does not actually appear in the *Theophanes* passage quoted by Lossky,²⁰ it is nevertheless true that Palamas states, with regard to the coincidence of opposites in God, that “we must preserve and affirm both things (ἀμφοτέρω) as the criterion of orthodoxy.”²¹ Although heretics, Palamas explains, are wont, in dealing with apparent contradictions, to defend one truth at the expense of another, Christians must maintain the royal path “and abide, through both, in the midst of orthodoxy.”²² This balance is a goal we have already encountered with respect to apophatic and cataphatic theology. In God, says Palamas, the negations do not cancel out the affirmations.²³ Evoking the Chalcedonian formula of unity-in-distinction, Palamas explains that the Divinity “is distinguished indivisibly, so to speak, and joined divisibly. Whoever holds these in this way is truly pious, believing both, and through both, abiding in the middle of an orthodox confession.”²⁴

The coincidence of opposites in God includes not only unity and distinction but also unity and plurality. Although the Divinity is one, in another way (τρόπον ἕτερον), it is not one.²⁵ This applies most obviously to the plurality of *hypostases* in God. Although the Divinity is one in essence, it is ‘divided’ (διαίρεται) in three Persons.²⁶ God can also be said to be ‘not one’ by supereminence (καθ’ ὑπεροχὴν), being ‘more’ than the One in the same way

that he is beyond essence and every other name that could be ascribed to him.²⁷ Yet the plurality of God is especially evident in the multiplicity and diversity of the divine energies and powers themselves. Although God is a single uncreated essence, God's natural attributes and faculties are many, and this, for Palamas, constitutes an important argument that there are distinct things—essence and energies—that cannot be identical.

Many Energies

The dialectic between the unity of the divine essence and the plurality of the divine energies can be seen throughout Gregory's corpus.²⁸ As Palamas summarizes the argument to Akindynos, "This is how we know that the energy differs (διενηνοκέναι) from the essence, because we have been taught that there are times when we express the energy in the plural, but the divine essence is always in the singular."²⁹ Indeed, as Palamas points out, Akindynos himself will frequently speak of the divine energies in the plural even as he professes that they are identical with the unitary divine essence.³⁰ Gregoras, too, will assert that "nature (φύσις) and the things of nature (τὰ φυσικά) are one and the same (ἓν καὶ ἀδιάφορον)," prompting Palamas to point out: "The fact that the one is spoken of in the plural (πληθυντικῶς), while nature is always spoken of in the singular (ἑνικῶς), shows that they are different."³¹

To demonstrate the contrast between the singularity of the divine essence and the multiplicity of its energies, Palamas draws attention to the various ways that patristic sources speak of God's powers and idioms in the plural. St Cyril of Alexandria, for example, says that the life that inheres in God by nature (κατὰ φύσιν προσοῦσαν τῷ θεῷ) is "one of the attributes" (ἓν τῶν προσόντων), indicating that there are others.³² In much the same way, St Basil teaches that each of the divine names is drawn from a *particular* energy (ἐνέργειας τινὸς), implying, again, that there are more besides.³³ St Maximos likewise speaks of multiple divine energies in Christ:

According to the divine Fathers, in the one Christ we acknowledge many innumerable energies, those of his divinity and those of his humanity, but only one divine essence, from which the many and properly divine and boundless energies proceed.³⁴

The *Contra gentes* of Athanasios, too, speaks of multiple "powers" of the Father and the Son,³⁵ while St Basil affirms that the Holy Spirit "is simple in essence, but manifold (ποικίλον) in powers."³⁶

Palamas finds this same language, with the same implications, in the scriptures themselves. There St Paul speaks of the 'diversity' or manifold character (τὸ πολυποίκιλον) of God's creative energy and wisdom (Eph 3:10).³⁷ He also recounts the "invisible things" of God—namely, his goodness, wisdom, power, divinity, and majesty—known through the created order (Rom 1:19–20). These cannot be the divine essence, "since the energy is expressed not only in the singular, but also in the plural (μὴ ἑνικῶς αὐτῇ

μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ πληθυντικῶς προάγεται).³⁸ Among Palamas's favorite references, in this regard, is Isaiah 11:1–2, which speaks of 'seven Spirits' resting on the rod of the root of Jesse (ἐπαναπαύσεται ἐπ' αὐτὸν ἑπτὰ πνεύματα).³⁹ According to the authoritative interpretation of St Gregory Nazianzen, these seven Spirits represent different divine energies, since "Isaiah is fond of calling the energies of the Spirit 'Spirits,'" thereby indicating the distinction (διαφοράν) between them and the divine essence.⁴⁰ Likewise, "the finger of God" (Lk 11:20), identified in Matthew 12:28 with "the Spirit of God" through which the Lord casts out demons, is said by St Basil to be "one of the gifts" of the Holy Spirit.⁴¹ In *Adversus Eunomium* 5, these are explicitly called *energeiai*:

The Holy Spirit does not have any of these things by acquisition (ἐπίκτητον). Rather, it has all of them eternally, as the Spirit of God, being revealed from him. It [i.e., the Spirit] is enhypostatic, flowing from God, while they, which flow from it, are its energies.⁴²

Therefore, concludes Palamas, "the energies of the divine Spirit are many," and so they cannot be identified with the singular divine essence or even the individual hypostasis of the Holy Spirit.⁴³

In a special way, the plurality and diversity of the divine energies can be seen in the processions of divine providence, whereby God is said to be multiplied and differentiated in his variegated will for all things.⁴⁴ As Palamas explains in his treatise *On the Divine Energies*,

This one God, worshipped in three hypostases and a single essence, is also divided indivisibly and without division (ἀμερῶς καὶ ἀμερίστως διαιρεῖται) in different energies. "For God is said to be multiplied (πληθύνεσθαι)," according to the divine Maximus, "in his individual counsel for the production of beings, becoming pluriform (πολλαπλασιαζόμενος) in his providential processions."⁴⁵

The processions of providence, as described in Chapter 2, are God's eternal 'motion' toward beings, distinct from their created effects but ultimately productive of those realities that participate in being, sentience, and life.⁴⁶ The multiplicity of these processions allows Palamas to speak of a "differentiation of the divine will"⁴⁷ and a plurality of providences and goodnesses.⁴⁸ Yet how, asks Palamas, could the transcendent essence of God be a procession or processions (πρόοδοι),⁴⁹ or "the movement of God towards beings"?⁵⁰ For Palamas, the processions of God, even as the uncreated motion of God himself, cannot be identified with the divine essence, not only because they are relative to creatures but also because they are plural, whereas "the essence is one and altogether indivisible."⁵¹ The same logic applies to what Dionysios calls 'illuminations'. Although the essence of God is one, the illuminations (ἐλλαμψεις) are many (πλείους).⁵² According to Dionysios, even the angels participate in not one, but multiple illuminations, and "by adducing these

illuminations in the plural (πληθυντικῶς), he distinguishes them from the essence of God. For the essence is one and altogether undivided.”⁵³

For Palamas, the fundamental antinomy of unity and plurality in God confronts the Christian, once again, with a question that must be engaged rationally, even if human intelligence is incapable of ultimately comprehending God. “It is completely impossible and utterly irrational (ἀλόγιστον),” Palamas affirms, “for something to be both one and many in the same sense (κατὰ τὸ αὐτό).”⁵⁴ Thus, given the commitment of Christian tradition to speaking about God’s attributes, powers, energies, and processions in the plural, it cannot be the case that all human language about God refers specifically to the divine essence as such, which is absolutely one and undifferentiated. In order to account without contradiction or logical absurdity for the simultaneous unity and multiplicity of God, Palamas maintains that it is necessary to acknowledge both a divine *ousia* and a plurality of divine *energeiai*.

Difference among the Energies

It is sometimes asserted, contrary to this rhetoric we encounter in Palamas, that the divine ‘energies’ are not, in fact, a plurality but a single *energeia* that takes on different forms and modes of being, or which is divided only in proportion to creatures.⁵⁵ Indeed, as Palamas himself points out, the Sixth Ecumenical Council speaks not of many energies but of one energy per nature,⁵⁶ just as we speak of a single, common *energeia* of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.⁵⁷ Yet Palamas himself is unequivocal that the energy or activity that characterizes the divine nature is not ‘one’ in the sense of being undifferentiated.⁵⁸ Indeed, the juxtaposition of God’s many uncreated energies with the singular divine essence as an argument for their distinction requires that the energies possess a real plurality. As Palamas explains: “That they differ from one another is also proven, for how can there be many if they do not differ one from another?”⁵⁹ The opposing principle, that the divine energies are ultimately identical is, in turn, a crucial feature of the *anti-Palamite* doctrine that essence and energy are one and the same.⁶⁰ For if the various divine powers and attributes are to be reducible to the unitary essence of God, then they obviously cannot differ among themselves.⁶¹ Precisely for this reason, Palamas argues that the divine energies are distinct *inter se*. For if they are different one from another, they cannot possibly be identified with the singular divine substance. How, Palamas asks, can God’s creativity, providence, foreknowledge, and so on all be essence?⁶² Things that differ among themselves, he points out, cannot be mutually identical with a *tertium quid*. If A does not equal B, then A and B cannot both equal C: “For those things that differ one from another cannot refer without differentiation to one thing.”⁶³ It would be the equivalent, in other words, of saying that Peter and John are both Paul even though Peter is distinct from John.

In defending the diversity of the divine energies, Palamas is particularly concerned to forestall any implication that the divine names, which signify the energies, are themselves interchangeable and synonymous. For if the

various divine properties and ‘things around the essence’ are really identical, then the names that represent them would also be convertible with one another and mutually defining. In this way, the answer to the question, ‘What is justice?’ could reasonably be said to be ‘incorporeality,’ or any number of other absurd equivalences.⁶⁴ This, for Palamas, is the heresy of Eunomios, whose reputation in Byzantium was associated precisely with the idea that the divine names were interchangeable one with another.⁶⁵ Palamas summarizes his own position in the *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*:

In the case of the energies, each of the names has a different signification. For who does not know that creating, ruling, judging, providing, and God’s adoption of us by his grace, differ from one another?⁶⁶

Palamas is particularly keen to draw attention, therefore, to the specific realities that his opponents seek to identify with one another when they elide all of them with essence. Lordship, for example, he points out, is not holiness, holiness is not simplicity, and simplicity is not incorruptibility.⁶⁷ Neither is eternity simplicity nor goodness immutability nor incorruption philanthropy.⁶⁸ How, Palamas asks, can there be no difference between justice and wisdom, simplicity and eternity, goodness and immutability?⁶⁹ Indeed, how can attributes like ‘being without a beginning’ and ‘being without an end,’ or just-judgment (δικαιοκρισία) and mercy (συμπαθεία) be identical?⁷⁰ But if God’s attributes are not interchangeable with one another, neither can they be identified collectively with the simple divine essence.

Another reason, for Palamas, that the divine energies cannot be identical with one another is the fact that the operations and manifestations of the various divine powers are themselves clearly differentiated. Although the attributes and powers of the Godhead are eternally active in God, they have diverse actualizations. There is a clear difference, for example, between God’s eternal contemplation of all things and his deification of them. The one is actualized from all eternity, while the other is contingent not only on the existence but even the virtue of creatures. Yet if seeing (τὸ θεάσθαι) and deifying (τὸ θεοποιεῖν) were identical, then everything would be deified, since God sees all things from eternity.⁷¹ It is impossible, therefore, to identify the deifying energy (ἡ θεοποιὸς ἐνέργεια) with the power of vision (ἡ θεατικὴ ἐνέργεια), since they are actualized differently.⁷² Likewise, the divine foreknowledge cannot be identified with the divine will, since God knows and sees all things from eternity yet does not will all things that occur. If these two energies were indeed identical, then either God would be the author of evil, since he knows all things, or he would lack omniscience, since many things occur in the world that are contrary to the divine will. One would therefore have to choose between a scenario in which God is not God (since he is θεός from beholding all things), or one in which God is not good, which would also end in denying his divinity.⁷³ In either case, it is plain for Palamas that the energy whereby God foreknows all things cannot be identified with the energy whereby God wills only what is good. In the same way, and for much the

same reason, God's foreknowledge cannot be identified with his creative power. For whereas God knows and sees all things from eternity, he does not bring them into being from eternity, but at a given moment in time, in accordance with his will.⁷⁴ Yet if God's foreknowledge is identified with his creative power, then either God does not foreknow all things eternally, "since God began to create at a certain time (ποτε)," or created things are necessarily eternal and coextensive with God's knowledge of them.⁷⁵ Thus, the energy whereby God creates the world in time must be different from the energy whereby God foreknows all things, since the world both has a beginning and comes into being by the free decision of God.⁷⁶ And if the energies are not identical to one another, neither can they be identical to the divine essence.

The Experience of God

Known and Yet Unknown

The coincidence of opposites in God is not, of course, restricted to the dialectic of unity and multiplicity. Palamas also argues for the distinction between essence and energies on the basis of human experience or engagement with God. God is not only one and not one; he is also known and unknown, hidden and revealed, participated and unparticipated, seen and unseen. Once again, such antinomies could not stand if the two contrary postulates were expressed univocally and without qualification. Beginning with the problem of the knowledge of God, Palamas points out that God is known *in his energies* or 'according to energy' (κατ' ἐνέργειαν), while his essence remains beyond all creaturely comprehension.⁷⁷ Although his energies are objects of intellection (νοούμενα), the latter is not conceived (νοεῖται) at all.⁷⁸

Among the ways that God is known in his energies is through created artifacts, which manifest the attributes and properties of God himself. Palamas, like so many before him, finds this expressed in Romans 1:20:

The great Paul, the mouth of Christ, the vessel of election, the celebrated vehicle of the divine name, says that, *The things known of God* (νοούμενα) *from the creation of the world, namely his eternal power and divinity, are seen* (καθορᾶται) *in the things he has made.*⁷⁹

The "things known of God," however, for reasons already stated, could not possibly be the divine *ousia*.⁸⁰ To claim otherwise was yet another feature of the heresy of Eunomios, who was widely held to have said that we know the very essence of God from creatures (ἐκ τῶν κτισμάτων).⁸¹ Palamas will make extensive use of the anti-Eunomian writings of St Basil and St Gregory of Nyssa to defend the contrary position that "from the effects (τὰ ἀποτελέσματα), God is seen (ὁρᾶται) at the level of his energies, but not at the level of essence."⁸² Creatures (τὰ ποιήματα), these Fathers tell us, are indicative (ἐνδεικτικά) of God's wisdom, skill, and power.⁸³ From created things we know God's grandeur, goodness, providence, justice, creativity,

foreknowledge, and retribution,⁸⁴ even if only indistinctly (ἀμυδρῶς).⁸⁵ Indeed, the divine names themselves are drawn from creatures, such that we call God ‘Creator’ (τὸ κτίστης) from the fact that the world, as his handiwork, points to his existence.⁸⁶ Yet the knowledge of God that comes from creatures is not a revelation of God’s nature (it is not a φυσικὴ ἔμφρασις). For we know “*that* the divine nature is, not what it is.”⁸⁷

Without the distinction between essence and energies, therefore, it becomes impossible to maintain the simultaneous confession of God’s unknowability and his revelation in and through creatures. If all language about God referred to the *ousia*, then it would be impossible to speak about knowing God without simultaneously affirming knowledge of the divine essence, or ‘what’ God is.⁸⁸ If everything that belongs to nature (πᾶν τὸ φυσικόν), as Gregoras said, were simply identical to the divine nature, then things like the Incarnation, Palamas points out, which reveal the pre-eternal counsel of God, would actually be a revelation of the transcendent and unknowable divine essence.⁸⁹

Alternatively, the identity of essence and energy would mean that there was no means or possibility at all for human beings to know God, since the essence of God is completely ineffable. If the energies, as “what is known of God,” are collapsed into the unknowable *ousia*, then how could God really be known or encountered at all?⁹⁰ The logic of Akindynos therefore results, for Palamas, in the idea that God, “by being simple, is either perfectly inconceivable (τελέως ἐστὶν ἄληπτος) or perfectly conceivable.”⁹¹ He is “either wholly unknown or perfectly known.”⁹² Without an essence–energies distinction, there can simply be no middle ground. In this way, according to Palamas, to abolish the distinction between essence and energies is to abolish all foundation for speaking either of the knowledge of God or of his absolute ineffability. God would remain either completely unknown to us or completely within the reach of created intelligence.

Seen and Unseen

Directly connected to the theme of ‘knowing’ God is the language of ‘seeing’ or beholding God. This theme, too, lies at the center of an important antinomy in Christian tradition that Palamas maps on to the distinction between essence and energies. It includes the affirmations in scripture that God is both seen and not seen and that in different ways. “To see God,” Palamas points out, “is both forbidden and promised.”⁹³ The angels, we are told in the Gospel of Matthew “behold the face of God” (Mt 18:10), while Moses is told that *the face of God will not be shown to you*. Instead, Moses was allowed to see “the things behind” God (Ex 33:23). Indeed, Moses is told, *You will not be able to see my face, for man may not see* (μὴ ἴδῃ) *my face and live* (Ex 33:20), whereas St Paul states that *now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face* (1 Cor 13:12). In the Beatitudes, too, it is said that the pure in heart shall see God (τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται) (Mt 5:8), although in the Gospel of John it is said that *no one has ever seen God* (ἐώρακεν πώποτε) (Jn 1:18).⁹⁴ St Paul also insists

that *no one is able to see God* (ἰδεῖν δύναται) (1 Tim 6:16), although Solomon declares that the Creator is seen (θεωρεῖται) *proportionally from the magnitude and beauty of creatures* (Ws 13:5). In Genesis, Jacob likewise proclaims that he has seen God (εἶδον γὰρ θεόν) *face to face* (Gen 32:31).⁹⁵ Especially in the context of the hesychast controversy, the explanation that God could, in fact, be seen is of central importance for Palamas.

Although some of these biblical texts in question seem to be in tension with one another, if not outright opposition, still, according to Palamas, “these things do not contradict one another.”⁹⁶ Rather, the nuances introduced by the seemingly inconsistent language point to the distinction between God’s incomprehensible essence, on the one hand, and the energies or attributes that are manifested in and through the created order, on the other. The fact that God is not and cannot be seen refers to God’s unapproachability at the level of essence (κατ’ οὐσίαν),⁹⁷ since God is “invisible in his *ousia*.”⁹⁸ Yet it is also the case that God is seen. He is the object of mystical visions, for example, and is beheld in his illuminations (ἐλλάμψεις)⁹⁹ so that he becomes visible “according to energy and grace to those who have become Godlike.”¹⁰⁰ Thus, it is necessary to conceive of God beyond the category of his invisible essence. Without this distinction, it would certainly be a mere contradiction to say that the same thing is both invisible and visible in itself.¹⁰¹ Yet Palamas affirms that God is both seen in his energies and not seen in his essence so that the antinomy of scripture might be maintained and the simultaneous revelation of transcendence of God might be upheld.

Participated and Unparticipated

Another dimension of this antinomy expresses itself in the fact that God is simultaneously participated and imparticipable. As Palamas explains to Gregoras:

God has the following: being named and being beyond names, being known and being beyond knowledge, being participated in (μετέχουσαι) and unparticipated (ἀμέθεκτος), as being beyond participation (ὕπερ μέθεξις), yet without being divided (μεριζόμενος), compounded, or created, as Gregoras, Akindynos, and Barlaam absurdly think.¹⁰²

Alongside the topic of divine simplicity, the philosophical problem of participation has been among the most widely discussed features of the essence–energies distinction.¹⁰³ For Palamas, there are many different kinds of participation in God,¹⁰⁴ although they fall into two basic categories. The first kind of participation is the participation of all created things in God’s providential and creative energy.¹⁰⁵ The second is the participation of the saints in God’s uncreated grace, or deification.

Palamas points out, however, that neither creatures, in general, nor the saints, in particular, are united to God at the level of essence (κατ’ οὐσίαν), since “all the theologians bear witness to this and say that God is imparticipable in

essence.”¹⁰⁶ Although this is a point that Palamas largely takes for granted, he does explain that participation in an essence amounts to an essential identity between the thing that participates and the substance in which it participates. Thus, to participate in God *according to essence* is to be consubstantial with God, resulting in a plurality of Gods and involving those who affirm this in a profession of polytheism.¹⁰⁷ For, “whoever participates according to essence necessarily has the essence in common with what it participates in, and is, to that extent, the same essence.”¹⁰⁸ To profess that participation is in the essence, in other words, is to affirm that the deified become God ‘by nature,’ rather than ‘by grace,’ a doctrine associated in this period with Messalianism. It would also lead to pantheism, since all things, by virtue of their natural participation in God, would simply be God.¹⁰⁹ Essence thus represents for Palamas what human beings, and every other creature, can never become without being confused with God himself. If creatures are to participate in God, they must partake of him in something other than his essence.¹¹⁰ Thus, even ‘being God’ (τὸ θεὸς εἶναι), to the extent that this names a reality shared with human beings, is not nature, since it is participated in.

Along these same lines, Palamas further explains that to ‘participate’ in an essence could only mean that one is a *hypostasis* of that essence. This point, which features in the *Chapters*, the *Theophanes*, and the *Triads*, is among the more well-known arguments for the essence–energies distinction.¹¹¹ Consistent with the identification of *ousia* as quiddity, or ‘what’ a thing is, Palamas asserts that whatever shares an essence is a particular hypostasis or Person of that essence. Thus, if human beings were to share the divine *ousia*, they could only do so as Persons of the Godhead, numbered among the divine hypostases. Indeed, the number of *hypostases* that a given essence has is commensurate with the number of Persons who share that essence. For this reason, human participation in the divine essence would render the Godhead much more than a Trinity, since it would include all of the Persons who partake of the divine essence. “To the extent that essence is participated, that many hypostases does it have. Thus the divine essence would be not tri-hypostatic but a *myriad* of Persons (μυριοϋπόστατον).”¹¹² Participation, therefore, must be in something other than essence if creatures, which participate in God, are to be distinguished from God himself.

A Part of God

The conclusion that participation in God’s essence would amount to becoming God himself cannot be avoided, for Palamas, by appealing to the ‘partial’ character of participation. According to Palamas, there can be no partial sharing in the divine essence, since there is no ‘part’ of essence that is not simply the essence, characterized by the fullness of its essential attributes. Thus, one who participates in the divine essence is necessarily *all* that God is. “A part (τὸ μέρος) of the essence—even the smallest part—possesses *all* of its powers.”¹¹³ Thus, the human being who partakes of God’s essence would have every single one of God’s properties, making that person omnipotent

(παντοδύναμος). Yet no one person could ever be said to possess the fullness of divine being.¹¹⁴ The ‘part’ of God in which creatures share must therefore be something distinct from the divine *ousia* as such.

That ‘participation’ in God is indeed ‘partial,’ and involves a literal (if not material) ‘part’ of God is a point that is stressed repeatedly by Palamas in order to prove that it cannot be the divine essence that is shared with creatures. Palamas points out that the word *participation* itself denotes not the possession of an essence or totality of essential attributes but precisely the possession of a part:

What participates ... has part of what it participates in. If it partook not of a part but of the whole, it would properly be said to have it (ἔχειν), not to partake of it (μετέχειν). If what partakes necessarily partakes of a part, then what is participated in is partial (μεριστόν).¹¹⁵

The ‘part’ of God that most concerns Palamas in his polemics is the grace of the Holy Spirit, meted out to the saints. Palamas draws heavily for this point on the writings of St John Chrysostom, who speaks of the energy poured out on the deified as a ‘drop’ (ράνις)¹¹⁶ or ‘speck’ (σταγόν)¹¹⁷ of God’s grace. Not only is this not the divine essence, or the totality of God’s attributes, but it is also not even the fullness of grace itself:

For this speck and drop of the Spirit has filled the entire world. Through it signs have appeared and sins have been loosed. But, at the same time, the grace that has been given in such degrees is but a part (μέρος τι) and pledge of the gift. For, ‘I have given,’ he says, ‘a pledge of the Spirit in your hearts,’ meaning a part (τὸ μέρος) of the energy. For of course the Paraclete is not divided (μερίζεται).¹¹⁸

Not all the divine energy, then, dwells in the deified, whether angels or human beings, “but some small part and drop, as a driplet compared to that immense ocean.”¹¹⁹ Palamas compares this partial reception of grace to the way a musical instrument (ὄργανον) channels and contains human energy. The musical instrument is not receptive (χωρητικόν) of *all* human power, or of the human essence, but expresses the performer’s skill and potencies in a specified and limited manner. In the same way, human beings become temples and *organa* of God’s grace not by containing the whole of God’s uncreated power or nature but by appropriating the divine energy in a manner appropriate to themselves.¹²⁰ In this way, grace is ‘apportioned’ and distributed according to the capacity and merits of its recipients.¹²¹ “The energy is given,” Palamas says, “in measure (μέτρῳ) according to the worthiness of those who receive it. But the essence is completely imparticipable.”¹²² As Palamas elaborates to Gregoras,

The common divine power and energy of the trihypostatic nature, perfects those things outside itself and, in a God-fitting manner, divides (μερίζεται) the Divine, which is all-powerful, into a myriad. And in this

way, many are united by it to God, participating in him in a variegated and diverse manner, so that the divine energy of God is indivisibly divided, since, according to our Golden-mouthed Father, a part of it (τὸ μέρος) is distributed (μερίζεται).¹²³

Citing Chrysostom again, Palamas explains that the divine energy “is divided into a myriad ... and even the part of the energy is divided again.”¹²⁴

That it is only a part, a speck, and a drop of the Spirit indicates, for Palamas, that it cannot be the substance or hypostasis of the Spirit, which cannot be meted out.¹²⁵ The divine nature in itself is indivisible (ἀμερίστος), while the divine energy is divided, albeit indivisibly (μερίζεται ἀμερίστως), in the sense that it is *imparted*, since it given and distributed to creatures.¹²⁶ Drawing again on Chrysostom, Palamas notes that the apostles on Thabor did not receive God completely (οὐχι τελείως) but only according to their capacity (ὅσον ἐδύναντο). This, for Palamas, shows again that it could not have been the *ousia* of God but only his energy.¹²⁷

If someone tells us that the divine power and the divine energy are imparted (μερίζεσθαι), let him learn from this that the difference between the divine essence and the divine energy. For the divine essence is not imparted (μερίζεται) to us.¹²⁸

Conversely, if the divine energy were to be identified with the divine essence, then, one could only conclude that God did not impart his energy at all. “Since, according to them, the energy does not differ at all from the essence, then according to them the energy, too, will be completely undivided (ἀμερίστος).”¹²⁹ If we do not have communion with God’s uncreated energy, then we cannot have communion with divinity, since communion with the divine essence and hypostases (i.e., at the level of essence or hypostasis) is not possible.¹³⁰

The reception of the Spirit by human beings ‘in measure’ contrasts with the possession of the divine energy by Christ, whose humanity received the divine energy in its fulness by virtue of the hypostatic union. Palamas, still following Chrysostom, roots the difference in John 3:34, which states that Christ was not given the Spirit *in measure* (ἐκ μέτρου).¹³¹ In treating this subject, Palamas will consistently refer also to St Gregory the Theologian’s *Fourth Theological Oration*:

He is Christ by virtue of the divinity. For this is the very anointing (χρίσις) of his humanity, which sanctifies it not by *energeia*, as is the case with the *alteri Christi*, but by the presence, in his fulness, of the one who anoints.¹³²

If essence and energy were identical, however, there would be no way of differentiating the partial grace possessed by ordinary human beings and the grace possessed hypostatically by Christ. There would also be no way of differentiating how different human beings appropriate divine grace. All

persons would simply be sanctified in the same way, by the presence of ‘the whole God’ so that God’s grace, once again, remained completely ‘undivided’ (ἀμέριστος):¹³³

For we, for our part, all receive the energy of the Spirit in measure (μέτρον) (since there [in Jn 3:34] he calls the energy ‘Spirit’), for it is meted out (μεριζόμενη). Yet Christ, for his part, has the whole energy without measure (ἀμέτρητον) and entire (όλόκληρον). If, then, his energy is without measure, how much more his essence?¹³⁴

Human beings, on the contrary, can only receive *from* (ἐκ) his *fulness* (Jn 1:16),¹³⁵

‘We have some small fragment and drop (ράνιδα) of that grace. For from his fulness,’ [Chrysostom] says, ‘we have all received, as, one might say, from a gushing overflow.’¹³⁶

This is confirmed by Joel 3:1, which says, *I will pour out from my Spirit* (ἀπὸ τοῦ πνεύματός μου ἐκχεῶ) *upon all flesh*. Palamas is careful to highlight the fact that the prophet does not say ‘I will pour my Spirit,’ but ‘*from* my Spirit,’ indicating once again that this could not be divine essence, which is not meted out or given in measure.¹³⁷

Such, then, are the main lines of the argument from ‘antinomy’ or the coincidence of opposites in God, which Palamas believes can only be explained with a distinction between God’s essence and energies.

Nature and Will: The Necessary and the Contingent

In addition to the arguments from theological antinomy, Palamas also develops a subset of arguments for the essence–energies distinction that center on the specific distinction between God’s nature and will. This distinction is one that has been encountered already, since it corresponds to the difference between those things that proceed from God essentially and necessarily, namely, the things ‘around’ the divine essence, and those things that proceed from God unnecessarily or non-essentially, as products of the divine will, namely, creatures.¹³⁸ The distinction between nature and will has been one of the more commonly discussed features of Palamite theology.¹³⁹ It is associated especially with the anti-Arian theology of St Athanasios and, for Palamas, St Cyril of Alexandria.¹⁴⁰ For Palamas, it will be remembered, the divine will itself is numbered among God’s uncreated energies so that, if the divine essence is identified with the divine energies generally, this would also make the divine will indistinguishable from God’s essence and nature.¹⁴¹

In the patristic sources upon which Palamas relies, God’s essence and will are said to have different products (ἐκατέρας ἕτερον ἔργον).¹⁴² From the divine essence flow the Persons of the Son and the Spirit so that the Son is an offspring and the Spirit a projection (πρόβλημα) “of the essence.”¹⁴³ Creatures, on the other hand, or what God has made (ποιήματα, κτίσματα), derive not

from God's essence but from his will.¹⁴⁴ This distinction is born of the recognition that creatures are not necessary and need not exist at all. They come to be and exist not by virtue of what God is but by his free choice to bring them into being. "God creates by deciding to (τῷ βούλεσθαι), and not simply because it is his nature to do so (οὐκ ἀπλῶς τῷ πεφυκέναι)."¹⁴⁵ Otherwise, creatures would be necessary emanations of God, proceeding eternally from the divine essence by necessity, or by virtue of what it is to be God.¹⁴⁶ Generation (γέννησις), then, is a product (ἔργον) of the divine nature, while creation (ἡ κτίσις) is a product of the divine will (θελήσεως).¹⁴⁷ But if essence were identical to energy, there could be no difference between creating, on the one hand, and generating the Son or producing the Spirit, on the other.¹⁴⁸ Indeed, if energy is identical with essence, then (to the extent that everything created is a product of God by way of his providence) all created things would be 'from the essence.'¹⁴⁹ In his debate with Gregoras, Palamas lays out the fundamental problem by drawing an analogy with human reproduction and the way it differs from human creativity:

Both God and man, as fathers, possess by nature (φυσικῶς) the ability to beget a child in conformity with themselves. But they also possess by nature the ability to create—man from underlying matter and God from non-existent things. Each begets naturally what is consubstantial with himself, but he *creates* what is not consubstantial. Thus, what is begotten is the same nature (φύσις ἐστὶν ἡ αὐτή) as the begetter and is called natural to the father (φυσικόν τοῦ πατρὸς). But he is called an offspring and son, not simply 'of the nature,' but 'of the father' that begot him. ... Yet the things created are not of the very nature of the creator—God forbid!¹⁵⁰

Without a distinction between nature and will, in other words, creatures would become coeternal members of the Godhead, lacking any distinction with the divine Persons. They would be products (ἔργα) or even offspring (γεννήματα) of nature.¹⁵¹ In this sense, creatures would be consubstantial Sons of God,¹⁵² and creation as a whole would simply be coterminous and connatural with God himself.¹⁵³ Palamas argues, therefore, that in identifying essence and energy, the divine creativity is completely abolished, since all creation would simply be a natural effusion of the divine nature.¹⁵⁴ Where will is indistinct from essence, creatures come into being involuntarily, since they would simply come into being and exist according to the nature of God (κατὰ φύσιν θεοῦ).¹⁵⁵ As articulated by Lossky, "The being and the action of God would then appear to be identical and having the same character of necessity."¹⁵⁶

For Palamas, then, the distinction between nature and will shows that there is something in God other than essence (ἔχει ὁ θεός καὶ ὃ μὴ ἔστιν οὐσία).¹⁵⁷

If God creates by deciding to, and not simply because it is his nature to do so, then deciding and being of a certain nature are two different things (ἄλλο τὸ βούλεσθαι καὶ ἕτερον τὸ πεφυκέναι). And if so, then the divine counsel (βουλὴ) is different (ἕτερον) than the divine nature.¹⁵⁸

Following St Cyril of Alexandria, Palamas therefore explains that while something like begetting belongs to God's nature, creating belongs, rather, to the divine energy (τὸ ποιεῖν ἐνεργείας ἐστὶ)¹⁵⁹ so that God has an activity that is distinct from his essence and from simply being what God is.

An alternative consequence of blurring this distinction between nature and will, or between natural derivation and creation, is that the Son and the Holy Spirit would be reduced to the status of creatures.¹⁶⁰ If everything uncreated is simply the divine *ousia*, then the divine will is itself the divine essence, making the Son, as a product of essence, a product of the will. As John of Damaskos teaches, the product of the will is by definition a creature. Thus, if essence and energy are identified, not only could creation be called an offspring of God, but the Son himself could be ranked among creatures.¹⁶¹ Yet, "Even those [namely, the Arians] who say that the Word of God is a Son of the will," Palamas points out, "do not dare to say that will is the essence."¹⁶²

Alongside the arguments from antinomy, the differentiation of essence and will forms one of the central pillars on which Palamas constructs the essence–energies distinction, and scholars have rightly drawn attention to it from the beginning of the modern debate on Palamas. We now turn to a less celebrated category of arguments, stemming from the language used to talk about essence and energies.

Lexical Arguments: The Energies 'of' the Essence

The fourth category of arguments for the essence–energies distinction centers on lexical, grammatical, and semantic evidence. It stems from a number of features of the way that Christians speak about the divine *ousia* or nature, on the one hand, and God's *energeiai*, attributes, or powers, on the other. This is an area of Palamas's theology that has not received significant attention. And while it does not rise in importance to the level of the arguments from participation, the vision of God, and epistemology, it is of special concern especially for the way it relates to the problem of divine simplicity.¹⁶³ Throughout his polemical career, Palamas contends that the very language that Christians use to speak about the divine energies, and the word choices whereby they are related to the divine essence, show that the two cannot be interchangeable; God's essence must be distinct from his energies.

One particular argument that dominates Gregory's writings, encountered already, is the claim that the energies cannot be the divine *ousia* because the essence of God is said to have (ἔχειν) these energies. For one thing to have or possess another, the two must be distinct, and therefore, the divine essence cannot simply be identical to the divine energies. This line of argumentation is especially prominent in Gregory's polemic with Akindynos. In his *Letter to Dionysios*, Palamas notes that if energy and essence are identical, then saying that 'God has essence and energy' is tantamount to saying 'God has both essence and nature,' which no one says.¹⁶⁴ Likewise, to say that the divine essence *has* an energy, as one hears consistently in the dogmatic tradition of the Church, would be the same as saying that essence has a nature, which is,

at best, a redundancy.¹⁶⁵ These same arguments are recycled at the end of Gregory's career in the polemic with Nikephoros Gregoras, who had argued for the semantic equivalence of nature (φύσις) and what is natural in God (φυσικά).¹⁶⁶ Yet, according to the logic of Gregoras, Palamas argues, when we say that God has existence, power, and energy, we would, in each case, be saying, without any sort of qualification, that 'God has God.'¹⁶⁷

The same line of reasoning, stemming from lexical formulations, can also be seen in a slightly different but related argument, which centers on the fact that the divine energies are said to be energies 'of' the essence. This kind of language is particularly apparent in the description of the uncreated light as "the brilliance of nature" or the "radiance of God's essence."¹⁶⁸ Yet even more generally, the divine energies are said not only to 'characterize' the divine essence; they are also specifically predicated of the divine essence using the genitive case. Thus, the divine energies are literally the energies "of the essence" (τῆς οὐσίας).¹⁶⁹ Once again, Palamas argues that such a formulation would be nonsensical if essence and energies were identical.¹⁷⁰ The two terms would simply be synonymous so that, by affirming that the divine energies are 'of the essence,' one would be saying that the *nature* is of the essence.¹⁷¹ The use of the genitive case must therefore point to the fact that essence and energies are different from one another (ἕτερον ἑτέρου).¹⁷²

Along similar lines, Palamas also draws attention to the fact that the divine energies stand in relation (*anaphora*) to essence and cannot be understood at all on their own. "For if it is devoid of nature, from which and in which it is, it will lack existence altogether."¹⁷³ Just as the Son and Spirit stand in relation to the Father but are not identical to him, so the divine energies are relative to the essence without being identified with it.¹⁷⁴ This relationship is expressed particularly through the language of derivation. The divine energies not only belong to the divine essence, but they are also "from" it (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας). Although the essence is 'being itself' (αὐτὴ ἐστὶ τὸ εἶναι) and does not have its being 'from anything' (οὐδαμῶθεν ἔχει τὸ εἶναι), the energies, on the contrary, are said to be 'from God' (ἐκ θεοῦ) and from the essence. Thus, if energy was *ousia*, this would mean that there were two essences and thus two Gods, one self-existent and one derived.¹⁷⁵ "Who," then, asks Palamas, "of those who think rightly, will not understand that the grace and energy of God differs (διενηνοχῶν) from his essence, since it is *from* it, even if it is not separated (διασπᾶται) from it?"¹⁷⁶ In the same way, the divine energy is often spoken of as being 'from the Spirit' (ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος). But if this energy was simply the essence, then it would be the divine essence that was said to derive 'from' the Spirit, which is an obvious error.¹⁷⁷ Likewise, to the extent that divine grace is "from him who ever is," the identification of God's nature with grace would mean that neither the divine nature nor the Father are uncaused (ἀνάιτος), as Christians profess.¹⁷⁸ For the same reason, one cannot identify the grace that 'goes forth' (ἐξιούσα) "from" Christ with the essence of God, which is entirely unoriginate and underived.¹⁷⁹

All of these ways of speaking reveal for Palamas that essence and energies cannot be identified, since even the attempt to conflate God's nature with its

attributes testifies to the differentiation of the transcendent *ousia* from the properties that it possesses.

The Appeal to Specific Energies

In addition to the foregoing arguments, Palamas will also appeal to specific divine energies which he believes are obviously and demonstrably distinct from ‘what’ God is. Among the most important of these is a point that we have encountered already, namely, that some of the divine energies are not positive attributes but negations. Precisely as negations, which express what God is *not*, they cannot, Palamas observes, be equated with the substance or quiddity of God. If they tell us what God is not, they cannot tell us what God is. Such ‘energies’ include God’s incorruptibility, invisibility,¹⁸⁰ beginninglessness, endlessness, infinity,¹⁸¹ and the fact that God is unchanging, immutable, incorporeal, and invisible. These are the ἀφαιρεμάτικα.¹⁸² Although real, eternal features of the Godhead, such attributes cannot be identified with the subsistent essence of God.¹⁸³

Still other energies and divine names cannot be equated with the transcendent essence of God because they are relative, such as the fact that God is king, Lord, and *Pantokrator*.¹⁸⁴ As the ‘energies’ whereby God exercises kingship, dominion, and absolute rule over creatures, such names could not possibly express God’s substance because they do not tell us what he is in absolute terms but only something about his relationship to creatures. Thus, even though they characterize the divine essence eternally, so that God is king, Lord, and ruler of all by nature (and not by acquisition, addition, or change), they are nevertheless distinct from the substance and quiddity of the transcendent God. Among the most important of the divine energies in this regard is divine providence (πρόνοια).¹⁸⁵ Although human beings truly experience God as providence, still providence is not ‘what’ God is, since the divine essence as such is unnamable and absolutely unconditioned by creatures.¹⁸⁶

Conclusion

Gregory’s many arguments for the distinction between essence and energies over his long polemical career are not static or easy to summarize. Yet they center on a few core themes. These include especially the need to predicate contraries of God, the need to differentiate human experience and knowledge of God from the unconditioned and absolute being of ‘what’ God is, the need to distinguish God’s being from his production of creatures, and the need to make sense of traditional Christian idiom for talking about God’s nature and energies. Through these arguments, Palamas attempts to show that the manifold divine energies could not possibly be a kind of definition of God’s essence. The essence is not ‘from’ anything. It is self-existent (αὐθοπόστατος) and cause (αἰτία), while his energy, on the other hand, is caused (αἰτιατή) and derived ‘from’ or ‘out of’ the essence. The divine energy or power “descends in a God-fitting manner toward creation without being

separated from essence. It is known and named from creatures, as the great Basil says.¹⁸⁷ Thus, God's infinite power to do all things (τὸ δύνασθαι) is not itself essence but surrounds the essence (περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν).¹⁸⁸ Palamas asks how such things as procession (πρόοδος) and being unmoved (ἡ ἀκίνησία), imparticipability (τὸ ἀμέθεκτον) and participation (μέθεξις), hiddenness and manifestation can be the same? "For these differ from one another necessarily."¹⁸⁹ God is both intelligible and inconceivable, seen and invisible, imparticipable yet shared.¹⁹⁰ But if the coincidence of these opposites in God is to be anything other than irrationality, and if they are to avoid violating the law of contradiction, then they cannot be true in the same way and at the same level. For all of these reasons, Palamas maintains, it is necessary to posit a difference between the transcendent essence of God and his communicable energies, powers, and divine names.

In the following chapter, we turn from these arguments for the distinction of essence and energies to the arguments for their *unity* in God. Though the theology of St Gregory Palamas is associated especially with the difference between *ousia* and *energeiai*, Palamas takes great pains to show that God is absolutely one in his essence and energies and that the distinction between essence and energies does nothing to harm the traditional simplicity of the Godhead, which he vehemently seeks to uphold.

Notes

- 1 Phakrases, *Debate* 3 (ed. Candal, 330.14–16).
- 2 To a lesser extent, Palamas will also use the term διάκρισις; see, for example, *Athan.* 6 (PS 2:415.30); *Akind.* 1.14.65 (PS 3:84.15); *Cyr.* 1 (PS 4:102.18). Often, this is in the context of the 'unions and distinctions' of Dionysios (see *Cap.* 85–86; ed. Sinkewicz, 182–184) and the self-multiplication of God in his outpouring and processions (see *Akind.* 3.22.102 [PS 3:235.2–3] *Tr.* 1.3.23, 3.2.4 [ed. Meyendorff, 159.20, 651.11–12]; *Ep. Akind.* 3.14 [PS 1:306.9]; *Athan.* 43 [PS 2:452.10–14]. At times, it also parallels the *diakrisis* of the Trinity, which is said to be 'divided' (μερίζεται, διακρίνεται) in three Persons; see *Akind.* 5.27.113 (PS 3:373.13–374.1).
- 3 "The *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* by Vladimir Lossky," *ECQ* 12 (1958): 308.
- 4 *Mystical Theology*, 69; citing *Theophanes* (PG 150:932D).
- 5 *Mystical Theology*, 77. "Too often," Lossky writes, "it is forgotten that the idea of the divine simplicity—at least in the way in which it is presented in the manuals of theology—originates in human philosophy rather than in the divine revelation" (*ibid.*, 78). Lossky speaks here of the "*simplicite* notion of the divine simplicity," with which he associates the work of Guichardan, "a striking example of this theological insensibility before the fundamental mysteries of the faith," that is to say, the mystery of the Trinity (*ibid.*, n. 2).
- 6 "The Debate about Palamism," 51. Cf. Lévy, "Lost in Translation," 431, who gives a lengthy and representative quote from Joost van Rossum, "Deification in Palamas and Aquinas," 368. The essay by Lévy is largely governed by this basic hermeneutical question as a dividing line between the Western Christian and Neo-Palamite paradigms.
- 7 See Ehrhard, "Theologie," 101; Jugie, *Theologia Dogmatica* 2:57; Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 76–77.
- 8 See the Introduction, pp. 2–4. Cf. De Halleux, "Palamisme et Scolastique," 427.

- 9 Damian, "A Few Considerations on the Uncreated Energies," 112. De Halleux will even eschew any attempt to reconcile the essence–energies distinction with divine simplicity, arguing that, for Palamas, God is beyond such categories; see "Palamisme et Scolastique," 421. Ivánka, following Lossky, therefore accuses Palamas of answering the philosophical objections of his opponents by arguing that dialectic has no place in theology and by excluding "conceptual reflection" from the domain of religion; see *Plato Christianus*, 392.
- 10 Yannaras, "The Distinction between Essence and Energies," 242.
- 11 "Gregory Palamas and the Divine Simplicity," 276; cf. H. Gunnarsson, *Mystical Realism in the Early Theology of Gregory Palamas: Context and Analysis*, 255. In a related way, Lialine observes that Gregory's "theology of light" is not one that "makes use of rational concepts to express abstract realities" ("Gregory Palamas and the Divine Simplicity," 282).
- 12 *Theo.* 4 (PS 2:224.18–19).
- 13 *Theo.* 22 (PS 248.20–23): οὐχ ὑπερφυῆς τοῦτ' ἐστίν, οὐδὲ θεοπρεπές, ἄπαγε· παρὰ φύσιν δὲ μᾶλλον καὶ τῶν ἀδυνάτων πάντη.
- 14 *Theo.* 22 (PS 2:248.27–249.5).
- 15 *Theo.* 22 (PS 2:249.5–10).
- 16 Citing *Phil.* 7 (PS 2:523); see *Gregory Palamas and the Making of Palamism*, 3 n. 9. Georgi Kapriev has also stressed this point; see *Byzantica Minora*, 178. Cf., also, the discussion in Lévy, "Lost in *Translatio*," 436, which focuses on this theme in John Kantakouzenos's reply to the papal legate Paul.
- 17 *Mystical Theology*, 70. Lossky was well aware that 'antinomy' in Palamas did not mean overt paradox or contradiction. For this reason, he grounds the notion of antinomy in the doctrine of the Trinity, which confesses the unity of the Trinity *in essence* and the plurality of the Trinity *in Persons*; see *ibid.*, 69. Although Orthodox scholars of Palamas in the twentieth century knew the relevant texts from the *Theophanes*, there seems to have been a reticence to draw the obvious conclusions from them, perhaps in fear of acquiescing to rationalistic or Scholastic categories; see, for example, Kiprian Kern, who, even while citing the relevant passages about logical contradictions, falls back on "the living experience of the liturgy" as a way of resolving "these conflicts of reason" ("Les éléments de la théologie," 22).
- 18 See *Akind.* 4.18.50 (PS 3:278.29–279.5).
- 19 See *Akind.* 4.13.33 (PS 3:265.13–266.2): Palamas says that Akindynos "flees" the conversation, being unwilling to explain how opposites can be predicated of God without contradiction.
- 20 This was noted already by Sherwood, "*The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*," 308.
- 21 *Theo.* 13 (PS 2:238.11–12).
- 22 *Dan.* 5 (PS 2:378.21–31).
- 23 See Chapter 3, p. 87.
- 24 *Akind.* 2.8.25 (PS 3:102.22–27), paraphrasing *Dan.* 5 (PS 2:378.21–31).
- 25 *Theo.* 8 (PS 2:230.24–25); cf. *Theo.* 9 (231.1–2). Μία καὶ οὐχ ἡ οὐσία μονή (*Theo* 9; PS 2:231.9).
- 26 *Energ.* 3 (PS 2:97.19–27).
- 27 *Energ.* 3 (PS 2:97.18–19). Palamas actually says that God 'defines' unity in the sense of defining or bounding 'the One' (αὐτὸ τὸ ἐν ὀρίζον). Here the point is obviously not that there is a One distinct from God but that the divine essence is the very ground and foundation of unity. Thus, God necessarily transcends the oneness 'around him,' which he is also able to impart, for example, to the deified who are joined to him, even though the unity they receive exists in God and flows eternally from the divine essence.
- 28 See, for example, *Greg.* 1.36 (PS 4:259.6), 2.17 (PS 4:277.14–15); *Dan.* 7 (PS 2:380.25–381.7); *Energ.* 15 (PS 2:108.7–14); *Union* 28 (PS 2:90.1–2), 31 (PS 2:92.5–6); *Akind.* 6.9.22 (PS 3:400.25–27).

- 29 *Akind.* 6.14.51 (PS 3:425.2–4).
- 30 *Akind.* 6.14.51 (PS 3:425.2–4). Palamas contrasts the multiplicity of the divine powers not only with the unity but also with the *simplicity* of the divine essence; see *Energ.* 13 (PS 2:106.21–24).
- 31 Phakrases, *Debate* 4 (ed. Candal, 331.27–30). Cf. *Akind.* 2.8.21 (PS 2:100.8–18).
- 32 *Theo.* 32 (PS 2:262.1–14); see Cyril, *Thesaurus* 14 (PG 75:236C). Cf. *Cap.* 117.4–6 (ed. Sinkewicz, 218).
- 33 *Akind.* 3.13.44 (PS 3:196.25–26); *Greg.* 2.49 (PS 4:300.7–8); see Basil, *Ep.* 234 (LCL 243:372).
- 34 Phakrases, *Debate* 15 (ed. Candal, 344.1–4). The text cited by Palamas, *To John Symonos*, is not found among the extant writings of St Maximos. For discussion, see Biriukov and Makarov, “Комментарии,” 91.
- 35 Phakrases, *Debate* 15 (ed. Candal, 344.5–7), citing Athanasios, *Contra gentes* 46.60–47.2 (ed. Thomson, 130).
- 36 *Theo.* 9 (PS 2:232.10–11); Phakrases, *Debate* 15 (344.8–9). See Basil, *On the Spirit* 9.22 (SC 17:147.1).
- 37 *Energ.* 40 (PS 2:125.7).
- 38 *Cap.* 82.13–24 (ed. Sinkewicz, 180); cf. *Ep. Akind.* 3.2 (PS 1:297.8–13).
- 39 *Akind.* 5.15.58 (PS 3:330.9–11); *Cap.* 70.1–17 (ed. Sinkewicz, 164); *ἐπαναπαύσεται ἐπ’ αὐτὸν ἐπτὰ πνεύματα: πνεῦμα σοφίας, συνέσεως, γνώσεως, εὐσεβείας, βουλῆς, ἰσχύος, φόβου*. Although the phrase ‘seven spirits’ is absent from printed versions of the Septuagint, Isaiah 11:2 is often cited in this form in Greek patristic texts; see, for example, Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration* 41 (SC 358:344.1); Maximos, *Questions to Thalassios* 54 (CCSG 7:461.309); Zygabenos, *Commentary on the Psalter*, Proem (PG 128:68D). Moreover, it is explicitly linked in Palamas to the ‘seven spirits’ of Revelation (Rv 1:4, 3:5, 4:5, 5:6).
- 40 *Cap.* 100.9–13 (ed. Sinkewicz, 164), citing Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration* 41 (SC 358:319.3–4). Cf. *Akind.* 5.15.58 (PS 3:330.29–30).
- 41 *Adversus Eunomium* 5 (PG 29:716D). See *Cap.* 71.12–13 (ed. Sinkewicz, 166). These are identified with the “fruits” of the Spirit in (Gal. 5:22) and are generally equated with the seven Spirits of Isaiah as well as the seven eyes of the Lord that look over the earth (Zec 4:10; cf. Rv 5:6); see *Akind.* 5.15.59 (PS 3:331.6–26).
- 42 *Adversus Eunomium* 5 (PG 29:772C).
- 43 *Akind.* 5.15.59 (PS 3:331.24–26).
- 44 See *Energ.* 3 (PS 97.27–98.1).
- 45 *Energ.* 3 (PS 2:97.25–98.1), citing the *Scholia to the Divine Names* 2.11, 232C (ed. Suchla 4:196.4–6). Shortly after this Palamas cites *DN* 2.5, 641D–644A (ed. Suchla 1:128.16–17), where the same words (*πληθηνούσης* and *πολυπλασιαζούσης*) are found.” ‘Counsel’ (βούλημα) is glossed a few lines later as *θέλημα*; *Energ.* 3 (PS 2:98.19–20).
- 46 Cf. *Greg.* 2.12 (PS 4:272.27–273.1) and, especially, *Union* 28 (PS 2:89.1–90.4). On the division of participated being, see *Cap.* 91.2–5 (ed. Sinkewicz, 190).
- 47 *Cap.* 91.12 (ed. Sinkewicz, 190).
- 48 *Cap.* 91.14–15 (ed. Sinkewicz, 190). Cf. *Chapters* 94 (ed. Sinkewicz, 194–195), where Gregory uses the distinction between the sun’s light and warmth as an analog for the distinction between the creative and deifying energy of God. Although the two activities of the sun’s rays are inseparable, they are not fully enjoyed by all, depending on their capacities. On the distinction between the creative and deifying energies in Palamite theology, see Biriukov, “Neilos Kabasilas’s *Rule of Theology* and the Distinction between the Light and Warmth of Fire in Neilos Kabasilas and Gregory Palamas,” *Scrinium* 14 (2018): 373–391.
- 49 *Akind.* 5.13.49 (PS 3:324.13–17).
- 50 *Union* 17 (PS 2:81.5–7). Cf. *Greg.* 2.58 (PS 4:305.19–306.1).

- 51 *Union* 14 (PS 2:78.29–31). Cf. *Cap.* 129.7–8 (ed. Sinkewicz, 232).
- 52 *Tr.* 3.2.13 (ed. Meyendorff, 667.28–669.3).
- 53 *Cap.* 65.14–17 (ed. Sinkewicz, 160).
- 54 *Cap.* 117.11–13 (ed. Sinkewicz, 218).
- 55 See, for example, Lossy, *Mystical Theology*, 73, 86–90; Kern, “Les éléments de la théologie,” 31; Lialine, “Gregory Palamas and the Divine Simplicity,” 274. Cf. Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation*, 76–81.
- 56 See *Greg.* 2.72 (PS 4:314.29).
- 57 See, for example, *Cap.* 132.10 (ed. Sinkewicz, 236); *Greg.* 23 (PS 4:248.28–30); and the discussion in Chapter 2, pp. XX–XX.
- 58 *Akind.* 3.13.43 (PS 3:196.2–5). Cf. *Akind.* 3.13.50 (PS 3:199.30). Palamas says that God’s energy is “not one as the ... acquired (ἐπίκτητον) energy of an artisan” (*Union* 21; PS 2:84.28–85.2). The divine energy is one in that it works all things (τὰ πάντα ἐνεργεῖ). But it is also spoken of as one in that it encompasses the totality of diverse powers and the full range of faculties and perfections that characterize God (*Akind.* 1.7.24; PS 3:56.12–18). “When we say that there is only one energy in God, we understand the [one] that encompasses (περιέχουσιν) all of them” (*Energ.* 7; PS 2:101.20–21). Palamas draws an analogy for this with the sun, which has multiple energies in that it warms, illumines, enlivens, and gives growth. Yet it has one activity in the sense that when one refers to its *energeia* in the singular, one refers to the activity that encompasses (περιεκτικήν) all, just as when one lists them all, one refers to ‘one activity.’ Thus, in speaking, with reference to the sun, of “that [energy] that encompasses (τὴν περιεκτικὴν ἐκείνην) and actualizes the others (τὰς ἄλλας ἐνεργοῦσιν), you say all of them” (*Energ.* 7; PS 2:101.24–27). Indeed, this is also common parlance when speaking of ‘human activity,’ which encompasses and actualizes the diverse powers and attributes of a human person.
- 59 *Greg.* 1.32 (PS 4:255.8–9).
- 60 See *Akind.* 2.17.80 (PS 3:142.27–143.2).
- 61 Palamas also notes that if Akindynos is correct that there is a *single energy* that is identical to the divine essence, then all the other divine energies, that is, any of the divine attributes that differ among themselves, would be created; *Energ.* 6 (PS 2:101.13–16).
- 62 *Greg.* 4.47 (PS 4:365.29–366.2); see *Adversus Eunomium* 1 (SC 299:194.22–25).
- 63 *Union* 28 (PS 2:90.3–4): οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐστὶ πρὸς ἓν ἀδιαφόρως ἔχειν τὰ διαφέροντα πρὸς ἄλλα. Cf. *Greg.* 2.39 (PS 4:293.16).
- 64 *Akind.* 5.26.107 (PS 3:369.9–10).
- 65 See *Greg.* 2.9 (PS 4:270–271); *Akind.* 5.26.107 (PS 3:369.7–15), 2.17.80 (PS 3:143.2–9).
- 66 *Cap.* 144.7–9 (ed. Sinkewicz, 248).
- 67 *Akind.* 2.17.84 (PS 3:145.11–17).
- 68 *Dam.* 17 (PS 2:474.3–8). Here these are all called ‘energies.’
- 69 *Akind.* 5.26.106 (PS 3:368.21–24).
- 70 *Akind.* 4.7.13 (PS 3:251.4–10).
- 71 *Dan.* 22 (PS 2:394.10–11); *Akind.* 2.5.14 (PS 3:95.1–5). For Grumel, this is one possible interpretation of the ‘formal finitude’ appropriated by Gennadios Scholarios from Scotus. “To say that the operation is *formally* finite could simply be to say that intellection, for example, formally and of itself, is not will, and vice versa; that justice, formally and of itself, is nothing more than justice, and not mercy, and vice versa; that each of the divine perfections is nothing more than that perfection, and not every single perfection” (“Grégoire Palamas,” 92).
- 72 *Ref. int. Kal.* 26 (PS 2:667.26–28).
- 73 *Ep. Ign.* 29 (PS 2:644.26–645.14); *Akind.* 1.7.32 (PS 2:63.10–12); *Cap.* 100.2–5 (ed. Sinkewicz, 198). Palamas notes that, in this way, goodness would be the cause (αἰτίον) of evil, making Akindynos, who espouses this reasoning, worse

than Manes, who, even in attributing evil to God did not deprive God of his omnipotence; *Akind.* 1.7.32 (PS 2:63.10–13). The fact that evil lacks any ontological content is not, of course, at issue here, since the argument of Palamas relies on the fact that God foreknows sinful human events and actions (which he does not will) even before they occur, regardless of the ontological status of evil *per se*.

74 *Cap.* 103.1–5 (ed. Sinkewicz, 200).

75 *Cap.* 101.1–4 (ed. Sinkewicz, 198), 102.1–6 (ed. Sinkewicz, 198–200).

76 *Ep. Ign.* 29 (PS 2:644.26–645.14).

77 There is no distinction, in Palamas, between saying that “we know God *from his energies*” and “we know God’s energies” (cf. Demetracopoulos, “Palamas Transformed,” 268). The consequence for Palamas of believing that the uncreated energies are God himself is that knowing the divine energies is not different from knowing God; see, for example, *Akind.* 5.14.12–13 (PS 3:296.1–33).

78 *Greg.* 2.17 (PS 4:277.14–15).

79 *Cap.* 82.1–4 (ed. Sinkewicz, 178).

80 *Cap.* 82.5 (ed. Sinkewicz, 178).

81 *Asan.* 4 (PS 2:366.4–8); *Ekth.* 15 (PS 2:582.11–14). For the Byzantine belief that Eunomios claimed to know the divine essence, see, for example, Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.7.13 (SC 505:38); St Gregory of Nyssa, *CE* 2.61 (GNO 1:243–244); id., *On the Divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit*, 557D (GNO 10.1:121–122). The idea that the divine essence itself was an object of knowledge or vision was also associated with the Messalian heresy, imputed in the fourteenth century to the Bogomils; see *Greg.* 4.31 (PS 4:358.4). Cf. Chapter 2, p.75, n. 27.

82 *Barl.* 9 (PS 2:269.2–4).

83 *Akind.* 5.3.9 (PS 3:293.24–25), 4.13.31 (PS 3:264.17–18); *Barl.* 9 (PS 2:269.4–7). Cf. *Akind.* 5.3.8 (PS 3:293.14–18). See Loudovikos, “Being and Essence Revisited,” 138; cf. id., “Striving for Participation,” 140–142.

84 *Akind.* 5.4.13 (PS 3:296.29–30).

85 *Dan.* 22 (PS 2:393.28).

86 *Akind.* 5.3.8 (PS 3:293.14–18). As noted early on, God is one and unnamed (ἀνόνημος) according to essence, but he has many names (πολύωνυμος) from his many divine powers (*Energ.* 15; PS 2:108.13–14). Nevertheless, as already noted, the fact that God is named ‘from creatures’ (*Dan.* 22; PS 2:393.28) does not mean that the divine energies themselves are not eternal. “Not because we name them do we also know them as coming into existence after the fact (ὕστερογενῆ)” (*Dan.* 22; PS 2:393.22–394.2).

87 See *Akind.* 4.8.18 (PS 3:254.26–255.6). Cf. *Akind.* 4.8.20 (PS 3:256.25–29). Thus, when Gregory’s opponents point to a passage in *Adversus Eunomium* 5, which states, “In the simple and bodiless nature, the energy admits the same ‘definition’ as the essence (τὸν αὐτὸν τῆς οὐσίας λόγον ἐπιδέχεται ἢ ἐνέργεια),” Palamas is careful to point out that this cannot refer to a definition in the sense of an ὀρισμός, since the divine *ousia* admits no definition whatsoever (*Greg.* 2.74; PS 4:315.24–27). See *Adversus Eunomium* 5 (PG 29:716B). Cf. *Akind.* 3.11.32–3.13.41 (PS 3:187–194); *Greg.* 2.73–75 (PS 4:315.15–25). For the anti-Palamite reliance on this passage, see Akindynos, *Refutatio magna* 1.18, 3.15, 4.19 (CCSG 31:20.49–51, 189.19–20, 345.9–10); id., *Short Refutation* 295–296 (CCSG 31:421); Gregoras, *Historia* 30.58 (Bonn 3:309.10–11); Arsenios, *Against the Palamites* (ed. Polemis, 271.548–549). Cf. Gregoras, *Historia* 30.59 (Bonn 3:309.11–15): Ἐπεὶ δ’ ὁ τῆς οὐσίας ὅρος καὶ λόγος (ταῦτὸν γὰρ ὅρος καὶ λόγος) πρᾶμά ἐστιν αὐθύπαρκτον, μὴ δεόμενον ἐτέρου πρὸς ὑπαρξιν, εἴη ἂν πάντως καὶ ὁ τῆς ἐνεργείας λόγος ὁ αὐτός, κἂν τοῖς ὀνόμασι διαφέρωσι. Cf. *Greg.* 4.73 (PS 4:315.18–22).

88 *Akind.* 4.13.32 (PS 2:265.8–11).

89 Phakrases, *Debate* 5 (ed. Candal, 332.13–22).

- 90 *Union* 9 (PS 2:76.1–6). Cf. *Cap.* 141.1–11 (ed. Sinkewicz, 246).
- 91 *Barl.* 15 (PS 2:274.5–6). Cf. *Ekth.* 13 (PS 2:582.1–3).
- 92 *Akind.* 4.13.32 (PS 2:265.8–11).
- 93 *Akind.* 5.3.7 (PS 3:292.15–16).
- 94 *Theo.* 27 (PS 2:254.17–27).
- 95 *Akind.* 5.3.7 (PS 3:292.15–16).
- 96 *Akind.* 5.3.7 (PS 3:292.26–29).
- 97 *Athan.* 8 (PS 2:419.14–18); *Akind.* 5.5.15 (PS 3:297.27–29).
- 98 *Theo.* 27 (PS 2:255.12); cf. *Tr.* 3.2.4 (ed. Meyendorff, 669.12–16).
- 99 *Tr.* 3.2.4 (ed. Meyendorff, 669.12–16). This is not to say that the divine energy is not also ‘invisible’ in the sense of being immaterial and beyond sensation; cf. Introduction, p. 8, n. 20, and Chapter 1, p. 56.
- 100 *Theo.* 27 (PS 2:255.2–3).
- 101 *Asan.* 4 (PS 2:366.10–12): ὁράτων καθ’ ἑαυτὴν καὶ ὁρατὸν καθ’ ἑαυτήν.
- 102 *Greg.* 2.70 (PS 4:313.15–19).
- 103 The most important study of this question remains that of Ivánka, *Plato Christianus*, especially 391–392. See, also, Loudovikos, “Striving for Participation,” 122–148; Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation*; Russell, “The Christological Context of Palamas’ Approach to Participation in God,” 190–198; Milbank, “Christianity and Platonism in East and West,” 74–114; D. Costache, “Experiencing the Divine Life: Levels of Participation in St Gregory Palamas’ *On the Divine and Deifying Participation*,” *Phronesis* 26.1 (2011): 9–25; S.F. Pentecost, “Quest for the Divine Presence: Metaphysics of Participation and the Relation of Philosophy to Theology in St. Gregory Palamas’s *Triads* and *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*.” The name of Palamas also comes up frequently in discussions of participation generally; see, for example, B. McCormack, “Participation in God, Yes, Deification, No: Two Modern Protestant Responses to an Ancient Question,” in I.U. Dalferth (ed.), *Denkwürdiges Geheimnis: Beiträge zur Gotteslehre*, 373–374; H.U. Von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic: Volume 2, Truth of God*, 204.
- 104 *Theo.* 11 (PS 2:235.1–2).
- 105 See *Theo.* 30 (PS 2:258.4); cf. *Akind.* 5.27.116 (PS 3:375.20–21). The variety of participations correspond not only to the multiplicity of creatures but also to the diversity of God’s energies. “Things that simply exist participate in the essence-making power, things that live in the life-creating power, and the others in the powers that correspond to them;” *Gabr.* 23 (PS 2:349.29–30), *Akind.* 2.13.57 (PS 3:126.16–17); cf. *DN* 11.6, 956A (ed. Suchla, 222).
- 106 *Cap.* 75.4–6 (ed. Sinkewicz, 170).
- 107 *Tr.* 3.2.19 (ed. Meyendorff, 677.24–26).
- 108 *Theo.* 21 (PS 2:247.30–248.2).
- 109 *Akind.* 1.7.19 (PS 3:52.19–28); *Ref. int. Kal.* 27 (PS 2:668.26–28); *Theo.* 1 (PS 2:220.16).
- 110 The uncreated being (ὀντότης/ τὸ εἶναι), for example, in which creatures participate and from which they have their own created being, must be something other than the *ousia* of God; see *Tr.* 3.2.23 (ed. Meyendorff, 683.10–685.17).
- 111 See Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 253–254; Lossky, *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 70; Krivoshein, “The Ascetic and Theological Teaching,” 144; Loudovikos, “Narcissism beyond Pleasure,” 49.
- 112 *Theo.* 19 (PS 2:245.9–16). Cf. *Greg.* 4.57–58 (PS 4:371.22–26).
- 113 *Theo.* 18 (PS 2:243.31–33).
- 114 *Theo.* 18 (PS 2:244.8–20); *Greg.* 4.56 (PS 4:371.1–5). On the various divine energies as features of the ‘fullness’ of divinity, see *Greg.* 4.53–4.64, especially 4.59 and 4.64.
- 115 *Theo.* 21 (PS 2:247.8–12); cf. *Greg.* 4.62 (PS 4:374.27–375.2); *Cap.* 110.1–4 (ed. Sinkewicz, 208).

132 *Distinguishing Essence and Energies*

- 116 *Cap.* 74.5–6 (ed. Sinkewicz, 168); see Chrysostom, *On the Psalms* 44.3 (PG 55:186). The extent to which Chrysostomic material on the subject of divine grace dominates Gregory's writings has been largely overlooked.
- 117 *Greg.* 4.60 (PS 4:373.23–24).
- 118 *Greg.* 4.60 (PS 4:373.23–29). Cf. *Cap.* 74.11–12 (ed. Sinkewicz, 168–170). See Chrysostom, *On the Psalms* 44.3 (PG 55:186).
- 119 *Akind.* 1.7.37 (PS 3:66.10–12); cf. Chrysostom, *On the Psalms* 44.2–3 (PG 55:186).
- 120 *Akind.* 5.27.117 (PS 3:376.10–13).
- 121 *Cap.* 74.2–5 (ed. Sinkewicz, 168). In the same way, the uncreated light seen by the saints in this life is but “a certain portion (ἐξάλλα) of that brilliance” (*Akind.* 4.16.43; PS 3:273.2–3). In this sense, the uncreated light is a ‘symbol,’ ‘mirror,’ and first-fruits (ἀπαρχή) of the light seen in eternity, since it is proportionate to the righteousness of its recipients. In the next age, it will be fuller and more complete (*Akind.* 7.6.15; PS 3:472.9–12).
- 122 *Greg.* 4.60 (PS 4:373.13–15).
- 123 *Greg.* 4.59 (PS 4:372.21–27). The ‘measure’ of grace is therefore a kind of applied *analogia*, since it relates to differences not in God but in the deified; see *Akind.* 3.6.13–16 (PS 3:170–174).
- 124 *Theo.* 20 (PS 2:246.20–23). This applies not only to deifying grace but also to providence, which is differentiated in relation to its recipients.
- 125 *Greg.* 4.60 (PS 4:374.23–27).
- 126 *Cap.* 74.3–15 (ed. Sinkewicz, 168–170); cf. *Greg.* 4.62 (PS 4:375.2).
- 127 *Akind.* 4.15.42 (PS 3:271.17–24).
- 128 *Debate* 16 (ed. Candal, 18–21). Cf. *Theo.* 20 (PS 2:246.12–16): the essence of the Spirit is neither imparted (μερίζεται) nor given out (μεταδίδοται).
- 129 *Greg.* 4.59 (PS 4:372.10–12).
- 130 See *Akind.* 3.6.16 (PS 3:174.4–5).
- 131 *Cap.* 95.6–7 (ed. Sinkewicz, 194). Cf. *Greg.* 4.59 (PS 3:373.2–5); *Gabr.* 28 (PS 2:356.19–28); *Akind.* 3.7.17 (PS 3:174.24–29).
- 132 *Greg.* 4.59 (PS 4:372.14–17); cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration* 30.21 (SC 250:272).
- 133 *Greg.* 4.59 (PS 4:372.10–12).
- 134 *Greg.* 4.59 (PS 4:373.5–9); cf. Chrysostom, *Homilies on John* 30.2 (PG 59:174).
- 135 *Akind.* 3.7.19 (PS 3:176.15–16).
- 136 *Greg.* 4.60 (PS 4:373.16–19); cf. Chrysostom, *On the Psalms* 44.3 (PG 55:186).
- 137 *Cap.* 75.13–14 (ed. Sinkewicz, 170); *Greg.* 4.60 (PS 4:19–21).
- 138 See Chapter 2, pp. XX–XX.
- 139 See Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 85. Florovsky, “Grégoire Palamas et la patristique,” 124; Loudovikos, “Narcissism beyond Pleasure,” 43.
- 140 See *Ep. Ign.* 28 (PS 2:644.7–23). Cf. *Akind.* 2.11.39 (PS 3:113.21–114.9). On the nature-will distinction in Trinitarian theology, see Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 27–28, 53–58, 90, 129, 146–148, 197–198; Anadolios, *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine*, 41–98.
- 141 See Chapter 2, p. 79, nn. 124 and 126.
- 142 *Dion.* 8 (PS 2:485.17–25).
- 143 *Greg.* 2.40 (PS 4:293.32). Palamas explains that the Son is not a product of the divine will because this same will is in him. If the Son were to come from the divine will, then the Godhead would require another Logos in whom the will exists; *Akind.* 6.17.66 (PS 3:436.13–18).
- 144 See *Ep. Ign.* 28 (PS 2:644.7–23).
- 145 *Cap.* 135.16–17 (ed. Sinkewicz, 240).
- 146 This is not to say that the Son and the Spirit, and the energies themselves, derive from God “unwillingly.” When Gregoras implies as much, in order to abolish the distinction between essence and energy, Palamas accuses him of imitating the early Trinitarian heretics, who asked whether the Father begot the Son

- “willingly” or “unwillingly.” See *Greg.* 4.3 (PS 4:342.28; 343.5), 4.7 (PS 4:354.10). According to Palamas, if everything done “willingly” is a creature, then this would make the Spirit a creature, since he is also *sent* in accordance with God’s will; *Greg.* 4.18 (PS 4:350.15–20).
- 147 *Cap.* 143.7–8 (ed. Sinkewicz, 248), citing John of Damaskos, *Exact Exposition* 8 (1.8) (ed. Kotter, 21.67–70).
- 148 *Cap.* 96.1–97.5 (ed. Sinkewicz, 196); *Gabr.* 16 (PS 2:343.10–20).
- 149 *Ref. int. Kal.* 27 (PS 2:668.29–30).
- 150 Phakrases, *Debate* 19 (ed. Candal, 348.15–18).
- 151 *Gabr.* 16 (PS 2:343.10–21).
- 152 *Ep. Ign.* 28 (PS 2:644.7–23).
- 153 *Akind.* 1.7.20 (PS 3:53.28–54.8). Palamas numbers this species of emanationism among the three kinds of Greek atheism; see *Dam.* 2 (PS 2:480.3–10). Akindynos is therefore a ‘Hellene,’ like Julian the Apostate, for believing in the ingeneracy of the world (*Akind.* 1.7.16–17; PS 3:51.3–26; 52.4–8). As Palamas asks in his *Letter to Gabras*, how could God be Creator from his creative faculty (τὸ δημιουργεῖν) if this is nature and not a property of the divine nature (πρόσεστι τῇ θεῖα φύσει)? (*Gabr.* 25; PS 2:353.14–18). Chapter 3. Chapter 4, pp. 98–99.
- 154 *Gabr.* 16 (PS 2:343.21–344.2).
- 155 *Ekth.* 31 (PS 2:584.21–26).
- 156 *Mystical Theology*, 74. Cf. *Tr.* 3.3.7: God would be either constrained (ἀναγκαθεῖς) or changed (μεταβουλευθεῖς) in acting (ed. Meyendorff, 709.3).
- 157 *Cap.* 135.1 (ed. Sinkewicz, 240); cf. *ibid.* 135.24–25.
- 158 *Cap.* 135.17–18 (ed. Sinkewicz, 240). Palamas uses βουλή and θέλησις more or less interchangeably when speaking of the divine will.
- 159 *Dion.* 8 (PS 2:485.20–21); *Akind.* 5.12.43 (PS 3:320.10–12); *Cap.* 73.10–11, 143.5–6 (ed. Sinkewicz, 168, 248); *Greg.* 1.33 (PS 4:256.12).
- 160 *Ep. Ign.* 28 (PS 2:644.7–23). Cf. *Dam.* 5 (PS 2:459.17–22).
- 161 *Greg.* 2.39 (PS 4:260.30–261.16); cf. *Cap.* 98.1–4 (ed. Sinkewicz, 196).
- 162 *Tr.* 3.2.6 (ed. Meyendorff, 655.1–3).
- 163 See the discussion in Chapter 5, pp. 145–149.
- 164 *Dion.* 2 (PS 2:480.17–29).
- 165 *Akind.* 1.3.4 (PS 3:49.15–50.2).
- 166 See, for example, *Greg.* 1.42 (PS 4:263.10–14). *Greg.* 2.65–2.68 is devoted to the use of the verb ἔχω. Cf. Phakrases, *Debate* 17–18 (ed. Candal, 347.23–348.2). Chapter 4.
- 167 *Greg.* 2.52 (PS 4:301.16–20). The language of possession here is meant to mirror Trinitarian theology, where that which possesses (τὸ ἔχον) and that which is possessed (τὸ ἐχόμενον) differ in spite of their unity and identity in essence; *Greg.* 2.67 (PS 4:311.8–23). The Father is said to ‘have’ the Son and the Holy Spirit, and this shows that they are different in spite of their essential unity and consubstantiality; *Greg.* 2.52 (PS 4:300.23).
- 168 *Greg.* 1.42 (PS 243.18–28)
- 169 See *Tr.* 3.1.8, 24 (ed. Meyendorff, 571.26, 603.27).
- 170 The fact that the energies belong to the divine essence is, of course, an argument for their being uncreated. This is duly noted by Damian, “A Few Considerations,” 103.
- 171 *Dion.* 2 (PS 2:480.17–29).
- 172 *Greg.* 2.42 (PS 4:295.27).
- 173 *Akind.* 6.13.47 (PS 3:422.33–34).
- 174 *Greg.* 2.14 (PS 4:274.22–30).
- 175 *Energ.* 38 (PS 2:123.30–124.1). Cf. *Akind.* 5.12.44 (PS 3:320.24–25); *Union* 31 (PS 2:92.5–6).
- 176 *Akind.* 7.4.6 (465.24–27).
- 177 *Ekth.* 35 (PS 2:585.16–18); *Akind.* 1.4.9 (PS 3:45.8–9).

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178 *Akind.* 1.7.36 (PS 3:66.4–8). Cf. *ibid.* (PS 3:65.16–66.8).

179 *Akind.* 3.7.18 (PS 3:175.14–19). This is indicated in Lk 4:22 (ἐκπορευόμενοι) as well as Lk 6:19 (ἐξήρχετο).

180 *Cap.* 118.11–12 (ed. Sinkewicz, 218).

181 Phakrases, *Debate* 23 (ed. Candal, 352.26–27).

182 *Greg.* 2.7 (PS 4:269.20–21).

183 *Greg.* 1.36 (PS 4:259.3–4).

184 *Ibid.*

185 See *Union* 17 (PS 2:81.17–20). Cf. the discussion on p. 112.

186 *Gabr.* 25 (PS 2:351.32–352.4).

187 *Akind.* 2.8.26 (PS 3:103.29–104.3).

188 See Phakrases, *Debate* 14 (ed. Candal, 342.16–17).

189 *Theo.* 12 (PS 2:235.20–22).

190 *Theo.* 10 (PS 2:234.8–11). Here *intelligible* and *inconceivable* render νοητή and ἀπερινόητος.

5 Divine Simplicity and the Unity of Essence and Energies

Introduction

Given the plethora of arguments used by St Gregory Palamas to argue for the distinction between God's essence and energies, it is not surprising that critics have often wondered how a doctrine that emphasizes the difference between God's substance and attributes so adamantly could possibly preserve divine simplicity. Indeed, the topic of divine simplicity has long dominated scholarship on St Gregory Palamas.¹ Especially in light of the ways that divine simplicity was historically defended in the West, it is not unusual for readers of Palamas to ask how, if there is difference and plurality in God, we can avoid imputing composition to God. It is sometimes wondered whether Palamas himself even sought to uphold divine simplicity or, if he did, if his reasoning is adequate or traditional. Scholars since the early modern period have often approached these questions by asking whether Gregory's distinction between essence and energies is a 'real distinction,' a technical term meant to place Palamas firmly and clearly on a spectrum of Scholastic theories about metaphysical composition. Historically, as we have seen, Roman Catholic theologians and researchers have generally concluded that Gregory does, in fact, teach a *distinctio realis*, and, as such, does not adequately or coherently uphold the simplicity of God. Orthodox scholars, and other more ecumenically minded researchers, have pushed back on these conclusions, not only questioning the applicability of the 'real distinction' but even challenging the usefulness of interpreting Palamas's theology in terms of Scholastic categories.² Yet wherever Palamas might be placed in relationship to the wider tradition of Western categories, there remains much to be said about what Palamas himself actually professes concerning divine simplicity and how this topic is explicitly treated in his writings.

The problem of divine simplicity lay at the heart of the Palamite controversy itself, beginning with the charge leveled by Barlaam that Palamas preached two distinct divinities, or two Gods. If the hesychasts were right in claiming "to see God in light, though God is invisible," Barlaam averred, "there would be two Gods and two divinities, one visible and one invisible, one transcendent and one subordinate (ὕψιμῆνος καὶ ὑπερκειμῆνος)."³ "If," Barlaam asked,

there is both an uncreated light that is caused, participated in, and seen on the mountain, and which is in some sense called divinity (θεότης), *as well as* the divine nature, which is beyond all cause, participation, vision, apprehension, name, and manifestation, how can there be one divinity, and not two uncreated divinities, one transcendent and one subordinate (πῶς μία ἔσται, ἀλλ' οὐχὶ δύο ἄκτιστοι θεότητες, ὑπερκείμενη καὶ ὑφειμένη)?⁴

For Barlaam, the one and only divinity (μία θεότης) was the divine essence, and any other reality, especially one that was accessible to the senses, could only be a creature, subordinate to God himself.

In his *Third Letter to Akindynos*, written in 1341, Palamas notes, for his part, that the charge of ditheism was, in fact, a badge of honor and a proof of his own orthodoxy, since the great Church Fathers—Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and Maximos the Confessor—had all been similarly accused of ditheism, and even tritheism and polytheism, for the pious doctrines that they defended in their own day.⁵ At the time of the controversy with Barlaam, Akindynos had expressed some hesitation about Gregory's theology of grace but remained sympathetic to the defense of the hesychasts.⁶ For Akindynos, the question centered, again, on the whether the light of Thabor—the deifying energy and glory of God—should be called divinity (θεότης). Eventually, Akindynos would come to see that he could not agree with Palamas's understanding of divine grace and the ramifications of calling the uncreated light a *theotes* distinct from the divine essence.⁷ From that point forward, Akindynos would similarly focus his rhetoric on the problem of 'two divinities,'⁸ accusing Palamas of preaching "a multitude of unequal and dissimilar divinities."⁹

The problem and the language of multiple divinities would permeate the polemical exchange of Akindynos and Palamas for the whole period from 1341 to the final condemnation of Akindynos in 1347 (and indeed beyond), forming the subtext, if not always the overt theme, of all the polemical writings from this period. Indeed, the controversy with Akindynos is in many ways defined by the language of 'a single divinity' (μία θεότης) and the apologetics surrounding the interpretation of this phrase.¹⁰

Yet the debate between Palamas and his opponents did not center exclusively on the problem of divine unity, or the oneness of God. In the Palamite controversy, the rhetoric of two divinities was also linked directly to the problem of divine *simplicity* and the fact that God could not be composite. In addition to the accusation of polytheism, the opponents of Palamas also insisted that the existence of a plurality of unequal and dissimilar yet equally uncreated realities in God (to the extent that they were not simply the divine essence) would make God composite. Gregory's *Third Letter to Akindynos* is therefore oriented towards the idea that calling the divine energy divinity (θεότης) does not in any way compromise the simplicity (τὸ ἀπλοῦν) of God. In response to Barlaam's accusation that the existence of a caused, participable, visible, and subordinate uncreated light would mean that there are two divinities, Palamas responds by noting that a God without natural power and energy "is not simple (οὐκ ἀπλοῦν), but rather non-existent." On the contrary,

the fact that there is a cause as well as something caused; participability and imparticipability; something that characterizes and something characterized, etc.—the one transcendent and the other subordinate (ὑπερκείμενον καὶ ὑποβεβηκός)—presents no obstacle (οὐδὲν ἐμποδίζει) to God's being one and simple, having a single, equal, and simple divinity.¹¹

The polemics surrounding the divine simplicity are encountered again in the *Triads*, where Palamas notes that if

the things contemplated essentially around God are many and yet do not in any way impinge on (λυμαινομένων) the profession of simplicity, all the more will this 'symbol' having the form of light, which is one of them, do it no harm.¹²

In the controversy with Akindynos, Palamas will therefore refer to his opponent derisively as “the self-appointed spokesman of the simplicity that is beyond every intellect.”¹³ The debate between them would also include the question of whether the divine essence is ‘the whole God,’ since by eliding essence and energy, Akindynos himself had wished to avoid a fragmentation of God into parts, “lest God suffer division” (μὴ μερισμόν, φησι, πάθη θεός).¹⁴ Later on, Nikephoros Gregoras, too, would claim that a distinction between nature and what is innate in nature is among the things that create composition.¹⁵ Palamas, however, continued to preach that “the single, and simple, and only uncreated divinity” is what Athanasios had called “the totality and fullness of the Godhead, contemplated and theologized in each of the three holy Persons.”¹⁶ The ‘one divinity’ of the Trinity was therefore not the essence only but also the will, power, and energy contemplated in each of the divine hypostases of the holy Trinity.¹⁷

Contrary to the suggestions of some modern readers, the response of Palamas to his accusers was never to concede the abrogation of divine simplicity. On the contrary, Gregory consistently maintains that a distinction between essence and energies does nothing to diminish that simplicity whatsoever.¹⁸ As Marcus Plested has pointed out, Palamas rarely argues for a distinction between God's substance and attributes “without simultaneously insisting that this in no way compromises the unity and simplicity of God.”¹⁹ For Palamas, the very arguments for the uncreated character of the divine energies are themselves oriented to divine unity and simplicity, since they seek to defend the inclusion in ‘the one divinity’ of what belongs to God by nature. Without this, Palamas believes, there occurs a true division of God, not into two Gods but into created and uncreated. “God, for us,” he says, “is one, in a single divinity, since both the uncreated essence and the uncreated energy (i.e., the grace of God and its illumination) belong to one God.”²⁰ The present chapter treats Gregory's reasoning for these beliefs. It examines his arguments that divine simplicity requires the unity of essence and energies as well as his logic for professing that a plurality of energies distinct from essence do not compromise the simplicity of God.

A Single Divinity of the One God: Engaging the Charge of Ditheism*The Language of Multiple Divinities*

As we saw in our review of the modern scholarship on Palamas, it is sometimes taken for granted that Gregory Palamas himself used the term *divinities* (θεότητες) in the plural, for which he was reproached by Akindynos and his other opponents. This was the view of Gregory's earliest readers, and it continues to this day. John Demetracopoulos, on the basis of such language, compares the ontology of the essence–energies distinction to that of Proclus, who uses similar language.²¹ Norman Russell, too, speaks in this regard of Gregory's "innovative terminology"²² and "usage" of the term, although he defends Palamas from the charge of Neoplatonism by noting that Proclus only spoke of multiple *theoi*, not *theotetes*.²³ Yet even a cursory glance at Gregory's corpus reveals rather quickly that these claims or presumptions about Palamas's language are problematic. "Palamas Transformed," in perhaps the shortest of its 332 footnotes, cites only one text as evidence for Gregory's use of 'divinities' in the plural: the *Letter to Arsenios*.²⁴ Yet, upon inspection, the passage in question does not show Palamas to be positing this language himself. Rather, he appears, in this place, to merely defend how others "might" use such terminology with an orthodox intent. "Just as the 'many Spirits,'" he says,

do not do away with the unity, simplicity, and non-synthesis of the Spirit, since they are *his* energies, so, in the same way, even if someone should speak, in accordance with the saints, of many divinities, meaning the energies of the one Divinity (μᾶς θεότητος), he does not do away with its unity, simplicity, and lack of synthesis. Beyond this, even if the name 'divinity' should signify many things, still none of the things signified is unsuited to the three Persons, so that even in this way there is a single divinity of the three."²⁵

This explanation, which draws a parallel between the application of the terms *divinity* and *Spirit* to God's multiple powers and operations, is clearly an *apologia* for the use of 'divinities' in the plural.²⁶ Yet, as the sole affirmation of the term *θεότητες* in Gregory's entire corpus, this hardly constitutes a strong basis for attributing to Palamas the innovative terminology of multiple divinities or deities.²⁷ Apart from this one instance in the *Letter to Arsenios*, the language of multiple divinities is entirely absent from Palamas's theological writings. Indeed, it is not clear why scholars should continue to attribute this language to Palamas, since this point had already been made by Meyendorff more than half a century ago.²⁸

The misconception that Palamas does speak of multiple divinities stems, originally, from a disputed reading of Palamas's *Third Letter to Akindynos*. As it is preserved in the extant version of *Ep.* 3, transmitted in the manuscripts of Palamas's writings, this letter contains a passage that reads as follows:

There is, according to the theologians wise in God, a subordinate divinity (θεότης ὑφεμένη), as the great Dionysios says there, namely, deification, the gift of the transcendent essence of God (τῆς ὑπερκειμένης οὐσίας τοῦ θεοῦ).²⁹

This passage is concerned with the *Second Letter to Gaius* of the Dionysian corpus, which asks how God can transcend even the very source of divinity and goodness (καὶ ὑπὲρ θεαρχίαν ἐστι καὶ ὑπὲρ ἀγαθαρχίαν), speaking of the deifying gift as divinity (θεότης) and noting that God transcends (ὑπερέχει) this divinity to the extent that he is not only the source of our deification but also inimitable and beyond all relation and participation.³⁰ Barlaam, as we have seen, had protested that if the hesychasts saw the invisible God, then there would be, in addition to the invisible, transcendent divinity, a visible, ‘inferior’ divinity seen by the saints.³¹ The response of Palamas is to say that if God transcends the deifying gift, as Dionysios confirms, then deification, which Dionysios calls *theotes*, is indeed ὑφεμένη, in the sense that it is transcended.³²

But the same passage is cited somewhat differently by Akindynos. In a treatise written to refute *Ep. Akind.* 3, Akindynos cites his former friend as saying, “There is, according to the theologians wise in God, a subordinate divinity: the gift of the transcendent [divinity] (τῆς ὑπερκειμένης).”³³ Here the term θεότης is predicated twice, of the deifying gift and of that which transcends it. The result is that there are two divinities, one transcendent and one subordinate. The passage, in the form cited by Akindynos, was published by Juan Nadal Cañellas in 1974 in an ‘edition’ of the letter, extracted and compiled from the quotations interspersed throughout the refutation of Akindynos.³⁴ Yet even before the redaction of Cañellas, the idea that Palamas spoke of multiple divinities had long been taken over by Roman Catholic authors from anti-Palamite sources. Petavius thus quotes from the *Dialogue of an Orthodox with a Barlaamite* to show that Palamas believes in ‘multiple divinities.’ Yet he cites not the *Dialogue*, but the *Adversus Palamam* of the anti-Palamite Niphon (under the name of Demetrios Kydones).³⁵ Later on, Martin Jugie would cite the passage from *Ep. Akind.* 3 in the same form that it is given by Cañellas, no doubt borrowing the quotation from anti-Palamite sources.³⁶ Subsequent students of the Palamite controversy, relying on these sources in the absence of published editions, would take this quotation for granted, perpetuating the notion that Palamas had indeed spoken of God’s essence and energies as distinct divinities. Such was the case even with Orthodox scholars, who grappled with what they assumed had been Palamas’s terminology, sometimes conceding that it was perhaps a poor choice of words.³⁷ When the writings of Palamas were finally published, Meyendorff and Chrestou argued that the passage was not only misquoted by Akindynos but that it also formed part of a broader pattern of falsification and misrepresentation by the anti-Palamite author.³⁸ Cañellas, on the other hand, argued that the text quoted by Akindynos represented the original letter, while the

textus receptus of *Ep. Akind. 3* was a falsified version, edited by Palamas to appease those who remained reticent about his theology even after the Council of 1341.³⁹

Whatever one concludes about the original form of *Ep. Akind. 3*, it is clear that Palamas did not wish the language of plural θεότητες to form part of his official theological position. Thus, even if the extant version of the letter is “une version expurgée,” this would only reinforce the fact that the phrase does not feature in the approved writings of Palamas.⁴⁰ Indeed, Palamas will go on throughout his career to contest the polemical branding of Akindynos and resist the characterization of his theology as one of ‘multiple divinities.’ As noted by Meyendorff, “On pourrait multiplier les citations de textes, où Palamas refuse la pérennité de cette doctrine.”⁴¹ In his *Ekthesis*, for example, Palamas denies the idea that the divine energies are self-subsistent, unequal, and dissimilar divinities (θεότητας).⁴² In the official version of *Ep. Akind. 3*, Palamas also argues that plurality and subordination in God “does nothing to hamper God’s being one and simple, having a single, equal, and simple divinity.”⁴³ Although Palamas devotes his efforts in that letter to defending the application of the term *divinity* (θεότης) primarily to the divine energy, he also argues strenuously that this does not result in two divinities. Rather, the one Godhead of the Trinity is both the divine essence and its multiple energies:

For these are the one divinity of the three worshipful Persons: the essence, the will, the energy, and all such things, not as being one and altogether undifferentiated one from another, or being only essence—for this is the madness of Barlaam—but as being contemplated unifiedly and uniquely (ἀπαράλλάκτως) in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.⁴⁴

The same passage in *Ep. Akind. 3* that speaks of a ‘subordinate divinity’ goes on to level the charge that it is actually Barlaam who cuts (κατατέμνων) God into created and uncreated so that his accusation of ditheism can only be seen as hypocritical.⁴⁵ This point would be taken up by the *Tomos of 1341*, which vindicated and approved Palamas’s language.⁴⁶ And while Gregory’s opponents continued to accuse him of preaching ‘two divinities,’ the Council of 1351, at which Palamas is supposed to have apologized for using this language, would clear Palamas on this charge. Although the Council forbade any future reference to ‘divinities’ in the plural, it also asserted that Palamas himself had never written anything that was contrary to the Fathers on this score.⁴⁷

According to Palamas, the Akindynists began to accuse him of preaching two divinities only after 1341, to “try to win over the more simple,” although they were the ones who had introduced this language in the first place and that in an unorthodox sense. When Palamas had resisted the Barlaamite bifurcation of Divinity into transcendent and subordinate, created and uncreated, they changed the terms of the debate, arguing that God was, in fact, nothing more than *ousia*. In this way, Palamas protested, they introduced the rhetoric of two divinities as a distraction, invoking the

problem of a single divinity deceptively (δολίως), to prey on the sensibilities of ordinary Christians.⁴⁸

Calling the Divine Energy ‘Divinity’

The debate over the ‘one divinity’ had begun with the problem of whether the deifying light experienced by the apostles on Mount Thabor, and by the hesychasts in their ecstasies, could appropriately be called *theotes*. Barlaam is reported to have said that the only uncreated divinity (μόνην ἄκτιστον θεότητα) was the divine essence.⁴⁹ Gregory’s basic argument, in response, was to point out that it was the custom of the holy Fathers to use the term *θεότης* not for the divine essence but for the divine energy. Palamas even draws attention to the fact that Barlaam and Akindynos themselves “admit that the power and energy of God are called divinity,”⁵⁰ which is why they are forced to qualify and explain patristic texts that do so.⁵¹ As we saw in Chapter 2, Palamas sees the term *divinity* first and foremost as a name for the divine energy, since in the strict sense (κυριώτερον) no term cannot denote God’s essence.⁵² This is a topic to which Palamas returns throughout his polemics, but the conversation recurs especially in the controversy with Akindynos:

Since the saints say, again, that the term *divinity* (ἡ τῆς θεότητος προσηγορία) refers not to nature but to the power of vision, and since the very substance (χρῆμα) of the deifying gift is named ‘divinity,’⁵³ and since *divinity* is properly (κυρίως) a name of the energy and not of the nature (for the divine nature is properly nameless and beyond names)—since these things, and not the nature, are properly *divinity*, do they therefore say that the nature is created, to avoid falling into polytheism?⁵⁴

Palamas points out that terms such as *divinity* and even *God* (θεός) traditionally name not the unknowable divine *ousia* but a variety of divine activities and powers. Contrary to the claims of Akindynos, Palamas says, “When a person calls the divine nature alone ‘uncreated divinity,’ he does not use the word precisely (ἀσφαλῆ), for the uncreated divinity is not this alone, but also the dignity and authority of God, as the great Basil says.”⁵⁵ Palamas draws these ideas from a number of patristic sources, but especially St Gregory of Nyssa⁵⁶ and St Basil the Great.⁵⁷ The names *divinity* and *God*, he says, are drawn from the power of vision and the deifying gift, as well as, more generally, from God’s seeing (θεᾶσθαι) and deifying (θεοῦν).⁵⁸ God’s activity, seeing (θεᾶσθαι), moving (θεῖν), and burning (αἴθειν), are ‘divinity in the strict sense’ (κυρίως θεότης) and “that whereby God is properly (κυρίως) called God (θεός).”⁵⁹

When we call some divine power or energy of God ‘divinity,’ there are many divine energies that take this appellation. These include the energies of vision, purification, deification, and oversight, God’s being everywhere and nowhere, which is to say his being ever-moved, as well as the

light that shone forth on Thabor around his elect disciples, just as we have heard clearly from the saints a little above.⁶⁰

For Palamas, one cannot worship the one God if one does not believe that he has a natural energy, since it is from this that he is ‘God,’ the essence being beyond names.⁶¹ Indeed, Gregory points out that the fact that *divinity* refers to not two but many things shows that Akindynos’s charge of ‘ditheism’ is completely disingenuous, since Palamas does not preach ‘two divinities’ even in this sense.⁶²

Of course, the fact that the divine energies are called ‘divinity’ does not mean, for Palamas, that there are in fact ‘multiple divinities,’ or that God’s simplicity is compromised. That *theotes* names the visionary power, free will, and brilliance “does not prevent the divinity from being one.”⁶³ Neither God’s providence, nor his omnipresence, nor his radiance (*λαμπρότης*), nor any of his attributes, regardless of how they are named, destroy the very real unity and simplicity of God.⁶⁴

One Godhead in Essence and Energies

The problem of a ‘single divinity’ is not exhausted, of course, by pointing out that *θεότης* refers primarily to the divine energy whereby God is named. Although this rhetoric is intended to show that the term *divinity* cannot be narrowly confined to essence, it does not seek, alternatively, to posit that we should confine it, instead, to the divine energy. Gregory’s broader point is not to limit *theotes* to energy where his opponents limit it to essence, but to show that the term encompasses both God’s essence and energies. The Fathers, Palamas tells us, use the term *divinity* for both.⁶⁵ For example, “there are times,” Palamas explains in his letter to the empress Anna, “when the saints call both the essence of God and the light ‘divinity.’”⁶⁶ *Divinity*, like other theological terms, is polysemic for Palamas and can refer to either the essence or the energy or both together.⁶⁷ “Although, in the strict sense, the energy is called the divinity of God, his divinity is both intelligible (*νοητή*) and unknowable (*ἀπερινόητος*), being a single divinity of the one God.”⁶⁸ The term *divinity* therefore encompasses *both* essence and energy,⁶⁹ even if it does not always and exclusively denote the divine nature as such.⁷⁰

In light of these qualifications, Palamas rejects the idea that the divine energy is ‘a second God’ (*δεύτερος θεός*).⁷¹ Essence and energies are not two divinities. Rather, Palamas prefers to speak of a single divinity “in essence and energy.”⁷² This is the one divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in essence and in power and energy and the things that surround the essence.⁷³ “We worship,” Palamas says, “and revere one God, trihypostatic, active, willing mercy, and all-powerful, not worshipping and revering one and not the other, but glorifying the one perfect divinity in essence, power, will, and energy.”⁷⁴ The one divinity is contemplated (*θεωρουμένη*) in essence and energies, and, indeed, one cannot speak of one divinity without acknowledging the fullness of its being (*τῆ διὰ πάντων τελειότητι*).⁷⁵

For Palamas, it is this unity of essence and energy that serves to differentiate orthodox theology from the errors of Eunomios, even if his opponents accused him of following Eunomios by *differentiating* God's essence from his energies. As Akindynos puts it, "For Eunomios said, 'It is not necessary for those who know the truth to follow the thoughts of others and unite the energy to the essence.'"76 Palamas replies that it is Akindynos who follows Eunomios by making the energy a creature. What Palamas seeks, on the contrary, is precisely to *unite* essence and energies in the category of the Uncreated. "We say that there is one divinity in essence and energies, uniting the energy to the essence," the very thing Eunomios denies.77 To speak of the 'one divinity' is thus to speak of 'all the fullness' (πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα) and totality (τὸ ἄθροισμα) of the Godhead, meaning both God's essence and energies.78 The 'single divinity' is thus the fullness of God: the *ousia* and "the things contemplated and theologized around the essence."79 In this way, the deifying energy is not outside (ἐξω) the fullness of the Godhead.80

For Palamas, then, when Christians say 'God,' they do not only mean the essence, but the essence, the three Persons, and the plenitude of energies all at once.81 When Dionysios, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, "and all the choir of the theologians" call the divine nature 'divinity' and also apply this name to providence, authority (ἐξουσία), and the power of vision, Palamas asks, are they not saying that the Creator is one?82 "For all of these are the one God, in a single, trihypostatic and all-powerful essence."83 Palamas thus speaks of faith "in the one God who is all-powerful and uncreated *all the way through* (κατὰ πάντα ἄκτιστον)."84 "God is uncreated both in essence and energy."85 Importantly, this means that although the essence and the energies are not identical to one another, they are identical to the one God. Thus, even in the antinomy of divine vision, wherein God is both encountered and beyond human experience, the God that is seen is not "other" than the God who is not seen (ἄλλον ἂντ' αὐτοῦ).86 It is the same God who is contemplated and beyond vision: "He who is invisible in essence becomes visible in the energies. He is seen (καθορώμενος) not according to essence but in some of the attributes (ιδιώματα) around him."87

The True Ditheism of the Barlaamites: Rejecting the Unity of the Uncreated

By insisting that the Godhead is one "not only in the one single superessentiality of the three worshipful Persons but also in the one uncreated power (ἐξουσία), one uncreated providence, and all the rest," Palamas sought to subvert the charge that he splits the Godhead into two:

For us, God is one, since there is a single divinity, and thus we confess a single divinity of the Father, Son, and Spirit; not like you who dare to unlawfully rend asunder the pre-eminently unified (ὑπερηνωμένην), all-powerful Monad into uncreated essence and certain created powers, which, according to the theologians, are ever from it and in it.88

For Palamas the fact that both essence and energies are beginningless and uncreated is, in fact, what renders them one, and preserves divine simplicity.⁸⁹ The royal path thus lies in confessing a single divinity of one God in uncreated essence, power, will, and energy while “properly rejecting both confusion and composition.”⁹⁰ The Akindynists, according to Palamas, commit errors on both sides of this equation. Not only do they confuse God’s essence and energies, mixing (συναλείφοντες) them into one,⁹¹ but they also cut the one divinity into two, by excluding the diverse energies of God from the realm of the uncreated.⁹² Palamas thus seeks to turn the rhetoric of his opponents against them, arguing that it is they who divide God into two divinities by denigrating God’s eternal powers and energies and separating the one divinity into created and uncreated.⁹³

“To say that the one God, or single divinity, is many in his energies,” then, has both a correct and an incorrect meaning. It is improperly understood, for Palamas, if it means that any and all plurality is created:⁹⁴

You do not accuse us simply for saying that there are many divinities, but for saying that there is something uncreated that is other than and different in some way than the essence of God. For you also use the name divinity for something besides the essence of God. But all of these you call created divinities.⁹⁵

According to Palamas, if ‘divinity’ is both created and uncreated, then not only does one call God a creature, but one truly ends up with two Gods, and thus real ditheism.⁹⁶ The true polytheists, therefore, are those who call the light of God’s glory created and thus “worship the creation.”⁹⁷ It is the ant-Palamites who preach two divinities, even many divinities, inferior and superior.⁹⁸ Gregoras, Palamas says,

divides the one divinity of Christ into higher and lower (εις ἐλάττω τε καὶ μείζω), arguing that the divinity of Christ that was revealed on Thabor should not be worshipped, since it is inferior. He libels him that was well-pleased to reveal it, as if he had revealed not his divinity but some created light. Thus it is no wonder that he employs his libelous hand and tongue against us, too, writing that we should not worship the divinity of Christ that was manifested to us through works and wonders. For we worship and reverence the divinity of Christ, howsoever it is manifested by the grace of him that reveals it, since it is the one and only divinity of God the Father, also, and of the divine Spirit.⁹⁹

Palamas explains that in spite of the differences and distinctions predicated of God, all the divine energies, and the essence itself, are unified in being the essence and energies of a single God. For Palamas, this allows for an *identity* and unity that transcends the difference of the individual attributes and the difference between the substance and its energies. In *Against Akindynos*, Palamas specifies that the energies are two different things (ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο) insofar as they differ among themselves (ἀλλήλων διαφέροντα) but not insofar

as they belong to one God (ἓνος θεοῦ).¹⁰⁰ The energies are different (ἕτερα) and distinct (ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο) but do not constitute different subjects or two different Gods.

Who is it who says that all the divine energies, and the superessentiality that transcends them, do not belong to one God (μὴ ἐνὸς εἶναι θεοῦ), but, rather, that providence belongs to one (ἄλλου), the life-creating life to another (ἑτέρου), the wise-making wisdom to another (ἄλλου), and that the superessentiality that transcends all those ‘gods’ belongs to yet another (ἄλλου)? Since this is what Akindynos implies when he says that each of them belongs to different subjects, let him cite against *himself* the saying that “goodness is not one thing and being another, and life another, and wisdom another,” being different ‘divinities’ of different gods, but all of them belonging to one God (ἐνὸς θεοῦ).¹⁰¹

Here again there is a difference between saying that the different divine energies are one God or one divinity and saying that they are one thing (ἓν), as Akindynos proposes.¹⁰² The saints “didn’t say these things were one thing in that way (away with the falsehood!), but ‘of one God.’”¹⁰³ Indeed, Palamas will say that each of the divine energies is referred to as ‘divinity’ because they are the energies of a single God.¹⁰⁴ Each of the energies, he says, has a proper (ἰδία) name (reflecting the problematic of the Eunomian controversy), but they share the name ‘divinity’ because they belong to one God (ἐνὸς θεοῦ).¹⁰⁵ The single divine name, in other words, is predicated equally of all the divine energies. “At the level of each good and divine volition concerning us, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit *are* the energy and power that produces essence, life, and wisdom.”¹⁰⁶ In this way, the divine energy is none other than God “in each of the three holy hypostases.”¹⁰⁷

True and False Conceptions of Simplicity

The fact that the enemies of the essence-energies distinction appeal to divine simplicity for their doctrines will allow Palamas to elaborate his own understanding of what it means for God, or for anything else, to be simple. Though Gregory’s thinking on this topic is presented in the same diffuse manner that characterizes his writing generally, one is able to form a rather complete, if composite, picture of his metaphysics regarding simplicity from his numerous treatises. At the heart of Gregory’s doctrine are two basic theses: the first is that a distinction between God’s nature and natural attributes does not produce composition (σύνθεσιν οὐδεμίαν ἐμποιοεῖ),¹⁰⁸ and the second is that “no being is ever said to be composite with its particular energy.”¹⁰⁹

That ‘Being’ Is Not Compounded by ‘Having’

As we saw in the previous chapter, Palamas sees the fact that the *ousia* of God has or possesses energies as an important proof that the divine *energeiai* are not identical with the essence to which they belong. Regarding divine

simplicity, this argument obviously entails the premise that ‘being’ (τὸ εἶναι) is not inherently compounded by ‘having’ or ‘possessing’ (τὸ ἔχειν) something distinct from itself. In Scholastic terms, *esse*, for Palamas, is not necessarily compounded by *habere*.¹¹⁰ Palamas draws for this doctrine directly on the influential writings attributed to St Justin Martyr.¹¹¹ Chapter 20 of Gregory’s second antirrhetic *Against Akindynos* is devoted in full to the idea that “Akindynos is equal in his belief to the Greeks, and to Epicurus himself” for believing that God’s essence and energy, and specifically his will, are identical. In this chapter, Gregory sets out to show “that God is one, simple, and incomposite, in a single divinity,” yet without thereby confusing essence and energy.¹¹² Here Gregory includes a passage from the *Questions and Answers to the Orthodox* in which the author says,

Just as we believe that God is wholly everywhere, and wholly in each, and wholly of himself, so also we believe that he is simple. The Son is the whole, and that which has a Son is the whole; the will (βουλή) is the whole, and that which has will is the whole. For God is not like the created nature, so that his being himself and having (τὸ ἔχειν) are conceived to be in synthesis. But, rather, as he is beyond nature, so also his being himself and his having are beyond synthesis.¹¹³

Here the passage attributed to Justin, like many fourth- and fifth-century pro-Nicene writings, draws a parallel between the Father’s possession of the Son and God’s more general possession of a will. It comes as the culmination of a small florilegium of passages in Palamas on the eternity of the world. In the context of these passages, Justin refutes the pagan identification of creating (δημιουργεῖν) with God’s very being (τὸ εἶναι). Justin characterizes the position “of the Greeks” as identifying absolutely God’s being with God’s willing. He summarizes the pagan position as follows:

It should not be thought that in God, too, as in us, being is one thing and willing another. Rather, the opposite: being and willing are the same thing (τὸ αὐτό) in God. For what he is, he also wills, and what he wills, he also is; and there is no division (διάρεσις) in God, on account of God’s being self-existent (αὐτοπάρακτον). Thus a division between being and willing is excluded in the case of God.¹¹⁴

Yet this, says Palamas, is precisely the position of Akindynos—the pagan position. The doctrine espoused by the author of the *Quaestiones*, on the other hand, is that creating belongs not to God’s being (τῷ εἶναι), but to his willing (τῷ βούλεσθαι):

God has an essence with regard to his existence, but a will with regard to creation. If one excludes the difference between essence and will, which is to say the difference between essence and energy, he also excludes God’s existence and the creation, the existence which is his, and the creation of things that do not exist.¹¹⁵

Naturally, in these texts cited by Palamas, the purpose is to differentiate the eternal, necessary generation of the Son from the creation of the world, which is contingent and unnecessary. “For God, being one and simple and uniform (μονοειδής), is the creator of different essences.”¹¹⁶ Thus, being and having do not create composition in God but not because they are identical. Indeed, they must be different. One is ordered to God’s simple existence, while the other is productive of a multiplicity of beings from nothing. “Though God wills many things, yet he is not many things. Thus, it is not the same thing for God to be and to will.”¹¹⁷

The *Quaestiones ad Graecos* characterizes the distinction between being and will as the difference between a substance and what inheres in a substance.

Willing is either essence (οὐσία) or it inheres in the essence (πρόσεστι τῇ οὐσίᾳ). But if it is essence, then it is not the one who wills [i.e., the agent]. But if it inheres in the essence, then they are necessarily two different things (ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο). For that which exists (τὸ ὄν) is not the same thing as that which exists ‘in’ (τὸ προσόν).¹¹⁸

This, as we have seen, is Gregory’s distinction between essence (οὐσία) and that which is contemplated ‘in’ the essence (τῇ οὐσίᾳ ἐνθεωρεῖται),¹¹⁹ which Gregory used to argue that essence and energy could not possibly be identical. “If existing (τῶ ὑπάρχειν) is one thing and existing ‘in’ (τὸ ἐνυπάρχειν) is another (since the essence of God exists while the will exists ‘in’ the essence), then the essence of God is one thing and his will is another.”¹²⁰ This, in part, is simply another species of the lexical argument. Yet here, in the specific nexus of texts attributed to Justin Martyr, we also see the semantic argument keyed specifically to the question of divine simplicity. That which inheres in a subject cannot be identical to the very being of that subject, even in the case of God, although it does not render the Divine composite.

The False Dichotomy of Substance and Accidents

The fact that the divine energies inhere in God raises the question of whether they are accidents inhering in a substance. In his own day, as we have seen, the opponents of Palamas raised the objection that all things, in fact, fell into one of these two categories.¹²¹ Palamas rejects this dichotomy, repeatedly stressing, to the contrary, that the divine energies are neither substance nor accidents; and precisely because they are not accidents, they do not render God composite.¹²² “It is not essence, nor is it accident, as it produces no composition or alteration at all.”¹²³ Yet Palamas does allow himself to acknowledge that *energeia* can be seen as ‘a kind of accident,’ a fact that has garnered a great deal of attention. The more well-known occurrence of this phrase comes in *Chapters* 127 through 131, where Palamas discusses essence and energies in the context of the Aristotelian Categories. Sinkewicz, in his translation of *Cap.* 127, renders the phrase as “quasi-accident.” More precisely,

Palamas says that the divine energy is accidental ‘in a way’ (συμβεβηκός πῶς).¹²⁴ Perhaps because it offers a rare insight into how the divine energies might fit into a more widely recognizable metaphysical system, readers of Palamas have often gravitated towards this passage in the *Chapters*. Yet the passage in question, and the broader discussion of *energeia* as accident, represents not an original claim of Palamas, but a reference to St Gregory Nazianzen. Palamas alludes to this fact when he says that “it is called a kind of accident *by some theologians*.”¹²⁵ The broader context, however, is missing from the *Chapters*. Instead, one must turn to the source of *Cap. 127*, namely, *Against Akindynos 6*, where this language forms part of an extended exegetical debate between Palamas and Akindynos over a passage from the Theologian’s *Fifth Theological Oration*.¹²⁶

Like many of the patristic texts in play during the Palamite controversy, the passage in question was first brought forward not by Palamas to defend the essence–energies distinction but by Akindynos. In order to prove that the only ‘natural and essential energies’ of God are the Son and the Spirit, while any other ‘energy’ is something ephemeral and passing,¹²⁷ Akindynos proffered the following quotation from St Gregory the Theologian:

The Holy Spirit must either be classed among those things that subsist of themselves or among those things that are contemplated in another. The one is called essence by those who know about these things, and the other is called accident. If the Holy Spirit were an accident, then it would be an energy of God. For what else could it be, or to whom else could it belong? For in this way it also somehow (πῶς) manages to avoid composition. And if it is an energy, then clearly it will be actualized and not itself actualize; and it will cease simultaneously with its actualization.¹²⁸

For Akindynos, this was proof that the divine energy could not be eternal and uncreated, since an energy not only comes to exist but also fades away (as we saw him argue in Chapter 3). In response, Palamas would undertake an extended exegesis of the Theologian’s words.¹²⁹ His purpose, however, was not to adopt the language of accident but to explain the Theologian’s meaning. In addressing the quotation, Palamas points out that Gregory Nazianzen actually identifies *energeia* in that passage with that which is uniquely God’s, and he does so precisely because *energeia* is the only kind of ‘accident’ that could avoid composition.¹³⁰ In this sense, the occurrence of the qualifying particle (πῶς) in the original is a qualification of paramount importance, since accidents of themselves do not otherwise prevent composition.¹³¹

Yet even in the *Chapters*, Gregory’s purpose is not to embrace the language of accident but to prove that energy is *neither* a substance *nor* an accident. If it is sometimes called an accident by the Fathers, Palamas says, this is only to differentiate it from *ousia*. “For it is neither essence nor accident, even if it is also called a kind of accident by the theologians, indicating only this, that it is in God and it is not essence.”¹³² Commentators seem to miss the point, then, when they suggest that Palamas “toys with the possibility of ‘quasi-accident’”

in order to define the category of *energeia*.¹³³ All in all, Palamas definitively rejects the idea that anything could be in God accidentally, since this would introduce composition. For Palamas, the fact that the energies are contemplated in God by nature (φυσικῶς) indicates that they are not in him accidentally (κατὰ συμβεβηκός), since these are two opposite ways of inhering, or ‘being contemplated in another.’¹³⁴ To be properly (κυρίως) an accident is to be external or assumed (ἐπίκτητον) and mutable (μεταβαλλόμενον). “But what inheres naturally (τὸ φυσικῶς προσόν), even if it is sometimes called an accident to contrast it with essence, still is not entirely accident, or anything whatsoever that might deny that it inheres (προσεῖναι) in God.”¹³⁵

Energies versus Essential Differences

Yet if the divine energies are not accidents, what are they? For Palamas, the attributes that belong to God by nature (τὰ φυσικά) not only inhere in the divine essence but belong to God in a completely unique and inalienable way. “For none of these natural things is able to exist in some other essence, since it is innate (ἔμφυτον).”¹³⁶ Unlike other kinds of attributes, they are true properties of the Godhead, belonging exclusively and essentially to God alone. Palamas explains, “Of the things said of God, there is nothing that is not unitary (μοναδικόν),” adducing Luke 18:20, *There is none good except God*, and 1 Timothy 6:15–16, which calls God *the blessed and only potentate, who alone has immortality and dwells as light unapproachable*.¹³⁷ As Palamas explains, “You would never see any of his attributes (προσόντων) innate (ἔμφυτον) in any other.”¹³⁸

The reason that God’s natural properties are absolutely unique to his essence is that God does not have these attributes as natural and essential differences (διαφορὰ φυσικαὶ καὶ οὐσιώδεις), a kind of *differentia* familiar from the Commentary tradition and later Greek philosophy generally.¹³⁹ Natural and essential differences, as described in the *Philosophical Chapters* of St John of Damaskos, are a taxonomical category whereby being, or substance, as the most generic genus, is divided and subdivided to produce a series of species and subspecies, resulting in the most specific species: things like human beings, horses, oxen, and so on. In a human being, essential differences include all of the features that mark humans off from other species: corporeality, having a soul, sentience, life, and rationality. Such attributes are constitutive (συστατικαί) of humanity, and “they are called essential and natural differences because they make one species to differ from another species and one nature and essence to differ from another essence and nature.”¹⁴⁰ As the constitutive elements of a substance, in other words, these essential differences function as the metaphysical building blocks of what a thing is.

Palamas recognizes that essential differences serve to establish a thing’s genus (ἢ πρὸς ἕτερον διαφορὰ πρὸς ἕτερον ὑπάρχει γένος). He therefore notes that they are predicated at the level of essence or quiddity (ἐν τῷ τί ἐστι κατηγορεῖται).¹⁴¹ This is because essential differences are constitutive (συστατικαί) of the things they belong to, successively determining and specifying a thing’s form as one

moves from the most general predication to particular substances.¹⁴² Critical in this regard is the fact that essential differences, as the specifications of being, exist in essences “as in a substrate.”¹⁴³ The result of such conditions is that there is a real divisibility between these metaphysical parts and the beings that they specify.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, natural and essential differences are native or innate (ἐμφυτά) not only to one nature but to multiple natures at the same time.¹⁴⁵ As subdivisions of a genus, “every *differentia* is more universal than the one who has it, so that it is predicated of more than just this one thing.”¹⁴⁶ Essential and natural energies, on the other hand, are neither shared with other members of a species nor constitutive of essence in the sense that they do not *combine* to produce an essence. In his *Debate with Gregoras*, Palamas notes that, unlike essential differences, “It is possible for an essential and natural energy to belong by nature to a single essence.”¹⁴⁷ This seems to be true even for creatures, and it allows Palamas to give concrete examples of properties that are not *differentiae*. In the case of human beings, he notes the ability to speak (τὸ λαλεῖν) and the ability to write (τὸ γράφειν).¹⁴⁸ “For man alone is grammatical.”¹⁴⁹ These, of course, are precisely the attributes that Aristotle describes as the property (ἴδιον) peculiar to human beings in the *Topics*, namely, the ability to learn grammar. Interestingly, for Aristotle, the example of being grammatical is intended to illustrate that a property is precisely “that which does not show what a thing is (τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι), but which exists in that thing alone and is interchangeable with that reality.”¹⁵⁰

Needless to say, the absolute uniqueness of God means that he does not exist as a member of a class or kind. “Natural and essential differences neither exist nor are spoken in the case of God. For these are constitutive (συστατικοί) of the things they belong to, but God himself is the constitution (σύστασις) of all that is around him.”¹⁵¹ Neither is his essence itself a genus, since he does not admit a multiplicity of species but only of hypostases.¹⁵² Furthermore, essential differences, as determining characteristics of a genus, provide real knowledge of what a thing is (τὴν τοῦ τι ἦν εἶναι γινώσκω), which is precisely what can never be known about God. “We know *that* God is (ὅτι μὲν ἔστι), whereas knowledge of *what*, or *what sort of* thing he is (τί δέ ἐστι ἢ ὁποῖόν τι ἐστι) is impossible both for angels and for human beings.”¹⁵³ For this very obvious reason, Palamas wishes to distance the concept of divine energies from essential differences, since God’s properties do not tell us what kind of thing God is.¹⁵⁴

The discussion of natural and essential differences is entirely absent from both the *Triads* and the *Chapters*. Yet it is precisely this discussion that supplies the logic for an important proposition that appears briefly, and without much development, in *Chapter* 128. Commenting on the excerpt from St Gregory Nazianzen encountered earlier, Palamas states that energy avoids composition “since God alone has an impassible energy, only being active (ἐνεργῶν) and not also being affected (πάσχων); neither becoming nor changing.”¹⁵⁵ The reasoning behind this assertion is found not in the *Chapters*, however, but in the treatise *On Divine Participation*. There Palamas explains that composition results, among other things, from the combination of

essence “and contraries (ἐναντιότητα) and essential differences contemplated in the essence as in a substrate.”¹⁵⁶ In saying this, Palamas roots mutability itself in the composition and divisibility of an essence with regard to its essential differences. As he explains:

To speak like the great Athanasios, ‘whatsoever God has, he has by nature and not by acquisition (ἐπίκτητα),’ since he only acts and is not affected by these things. Wherefore he admits of no opposition (ἐναντιότης) whatsoever which introduces change, since he alone, of all things, has no essential differences. Rather, as the discussion above has made clear, he has energies, whereby, like matter, he forms the substrate of all things, even the intelligibles themselves, by his word which sustains and transforms all things, or rather, by his will, which is to say, through his timeless, effortless, and dispassionate energy.¹⁵⁷

Although the topic of essential differences arises in the dispute with Akindynos without direct engagement of patristic sources on the topic, Gregoras, in his debate with Palamas, draws the conversation on this point to the writings of St John of Damaskos. Believing that the divine attributes as described by Palamas are the *differentiae* of essence, Gregoras notes that “the Divine is simple and uncompound; and if we say that uncreatedness, beginninglessness, goodness, and the creative power are essential differences, then he will not be simple, but composite.”¹⁵⁸ Palamas responds with a summary of what he had outlined in his refutation of Akindynos, distinguishing essential differences from essential and natural energies:

Everything that is made up of parts (συγκείμενον) and has essential differences is composite. But God is not among those things that is made up of parts or has essential differences. ... A difference is ‘essential’ when one essence differs from another on its account, which includes each of the differences corresponding to multiple species and essences. They are constitutive of the essences that contain them, since the definition of each essence comes from these essential differences. Thus, since the essence of God is altogether one and contains no parts (ἀμερής), it is also, in itself, altogether unknowable, and no one has ever, or will ever, discover a definition of it. Nor are any of the things said about it, or around it, constitutive thereof (for it is, rather, the constitution of what is around it, since it contains nothing by participation; for, being itself, it is eternity and infinity and immutability and everything that is consequent to these). Thus, since the essence of God is one and contains no parts and is incomprehensible, utterly beyond causation and wholly of itself, it does not have essential differences and is not composite.¹⁵⁹

Palamas therefore rejects the charge that the essence–energies distinction is a division of God’s being into genus and species, “as if there were no other kind of division.”¹⁶⁰ The divine energies are not constitutive parts, and God

has no *differentiae* inhering in a substrate or shared with other substances and specifying his form and marking him off from other essences. God does not share in but simply is the very being of the divine attributes. As such, God could never be composed of his properties the way that a creature is made up of its different metaphysical parts.

Energies, Qualities, and Pathos

With these metaphysical precisions, Palamas rules out the possibility of conceiving the divine energies not only as accidents or essential differences but also as qualities. In his *Letter to Daniel*, Palamas explains that this point was the fourth of the major accusations against him: “If God has an energy that differs from his essence, he will have quality (ποιότητα) and thus be composite.”¹⁶¹ Palamas recognizes that “the Fathers forbade us to say that there is quality in the divine supressentiality. But they do speak of *energies*, and not just one or two or three, but many more, and all of them uncreated.”¹⁶² Energies, since they are not accidents and do not inhere in God as in a substrate, are not a kind of quality but stand in contrast to qualities. Palamas explains the difference with reference to *pathos* and, ultimately, the problem of participation. Qualities, he explains, are rooted in, and ultimately responsible for, change and mutability:

At the level of quality one is acted on (πεποιόωται) and is affected (πέπονθε) rather than enacting its object thereby (μᾶλλον ἢ ποιεῖ τὸ πεποιωμένον κατ’ αὐτήν). But at the level of energy it is not so. For that which is active in a primary sense (πρώτως ἐνεργοῦν) is effortless (ἀκάματον) and dispassionate, as a craft in craftsmen and the intellect that knows it.¹⁶³ But even if what is created and active is somehow affected (πάσχει τι)—since a craft would become greater than itself in being actualized (ἐνεργουμένη), and the intellect by acquiring it—nevertheless, the self-perfect, dispassionate, and immutable nature, manifesting the divine power through *energeia* remains unaffected [dispassionate] even in being actualized.¹⁶⁴ Wherefore energy does not produce composition in the divine nature. For whatever does not introduce any *pathos* whatsoever also does not introduce composition. The divine power is not mixed with a contrary, i.e., impotence. For the Divine is all-powerful, and the divine nature does not have power by participation, which things are responsible for composition in every creature. For God is life itself, goodness itself, and every such thing, not in the sense that he is one thing and not another, but in the sense that he is not each of these by participation, but is wholly (ὅλος) and undividedly in each and indivisibly in all.¹⁶⁵

Here, again, the issue is whether activity actualizes a faculty in a way that constitutes change in God. Palamas is explicit that in acting God does not move from potency to act. But because his faculties or powers, which he does not have by participation, do not admit of contraries, the actualization of

power in God does not involve any kind of increase or *pathos*, which is to say, any movement from nonbeing to being.

As Palamas explains this in the *Chapters*, quoting St Augustine, “God alone acts (ποιεῖ) and is not himself actualized or affected.”¹⁶⁶ Whereas all creatures, in other words, are affected in some way by the process of affecting other things, God alone acts and brings things into being without being altered or affected by the process.¹⁶⁷ In this way, activity, as such (as opposed to actualization coupled with *pathos*), does nothing to render a thing composite (σύνθετον).¹⁶⁸ “It is not acting and energy, but being affected, and passibility, that produce composition.”¹⁶⁹ God therefore admits no composition, “because he alone possesses an energy completely devoid of passion, for he is active only and is not affected by it (πάσχων κατ’ αὐτήν), since he neither comes into being nor changes.”¹⁷⁰

Composition as the Combination of Multiple Substances

Gregory’s treatise *On Participation*, subtitled “On the Divine and Supernatural Simplicity,” goes on to explain another, more basic kind of composition that does not apply to God. In addition to the combination of an essence with essential differences, oppositions, and qualities, which inhere in substances ‘as in a substrate,’ things can also be composed, more basically, of different substances, a form of union that always produces composition.¹⁷¹ This can be seen in the case of human beings, who are a composite made up multiple substances.¹⁷² For this reason, to preserve the simplicity of God means, among other things, to preserve the *unity* of his substance. This, Palamas tells us, is how the Church avoids composition in its profession of the Trinity while simultaneously disavowing the confusion (σύγχυσις) of Sabellius. There is only one God because the distinction of Persons is one of hypostasis and *not of essence*.¹⁷³ Similarly, although God has many powers, “the simplicity of God is not destroyed (παραβλαπτομένης) by this difference, because ‘the energies of God are manifold (ποικίλαι), but the essence is simple.’”¹⁷⁴

In the reception of the anti-Eunomian controversy, this is one of the reasons that the various divine names cannot be equated with God’s *ousia*. Since the divine names indicate different energies, they would, if they signified essence, indicate not a single essence but a variety of different substances, resulting in polytheism. But so as long as the different names are not distinct essences, there need not be composition.¹⁷⁵ Once again, for Palamas, the true polytheism therefore lies on the side of those who reject the essence–energies distinction. If energy is equated with substance, then there is no reason not to say that there are many Gods, since there are, in fact, many distinct powers, and if all of them are essences, then one would truly have a plurality of Gods.¹⁷⁶ Thus the Akindynists, by equating the divine energies with substance, Palamas says, make God composite multiple times over (πολυσύνθετον).¹⁷⁷ Gregoras, “by claiming that there are many essences of God [i.e., by equating the divine attributes with *ousia*], also says, himself, that there are many divinities.”¹⁷⁸ Palamas therefore argues that the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy

Spirit is not destroyed by the diversity and plurality of the energies precisely because (and only if) these are not the essence of God.¹⁷⁹

A major feature of the doctrine of the divine energies, therefore, centers, not unexpectedly, on the fact that the divine energies are not substances or even subsistent entities. Because the energies are not substance, Palamas is even willing to speak of the divine energies as “unsubstantial.” This, indeed, is one of the reasons that God’s grace cannot be a second God, because it is unsubstantial (*ἀνούσιον*), in the sense that it is not essence.¹⁸⁰ The energies, Palamas insists repeatedly, are not self-subsistent (*καθ’ ἑαυτὰ ὑφιστασθέντα*,¹⁸¹ or *αὐθήπαρκα*).¹⁸² As we have already seen, the divine energies inhere ‘in’ God. Unlike angels, souls, or the entire intelligible cosmos (things which subsist of themselves—*καθ’ ἑαυτά*), *energeia* “is among those things contemplated in another.”¹⁸³

The debate over the energies’ subsistence would form a major point of the controversy with Akindynos, who argued that the divine energies were created and therefore subsistent realities. Indeed, according to Akindynos, the created energies of God occupy a middle position between God and the world. This applies especially to the *methekta*, or those realities in which rational creatures participate. Palamas quotes Akindynos as saying,

Not in time, but at some point in eternity (*ἐν αἰῶνι*), before the angels, were the immortality, holiness, virtue, goodness, immutability, simplicity, and with these the being (*ὄντοτητα*) of all beings, created. All of them existed in [their own] essences and hypostases, having been created before the angels. They are contemplated according to their own essence and hypostasis essentially around God and are participated in both by angels and men and by all beings.¹⁸⁴

For Palamas, such otherworldly creatures existing outside of time could be nothing more than the Platonic forms, existing in some middle realm between God and the world. He mocks such intermediary beings as mythical *prodigia* (*τερατείας*), dismissing the preexistence of such creatures as akin to the Origenist conception of preexistent souls.¹⁸⁵ For Palamas, the things of nature (*τὰ φυσικά*) and the things that belong to God’s essence (*τὰ οὐσιώδη*) are not essences but are ‘in’ essence, to the point that he will even call them ‘en-essential’ (*ἐνούσια*).¹⁸⁶

For how could holiness or goodness or simplicity or any other of these things not be contemplated *in* God, or in one of the things brought forward by him out of non-being, either naturally or by grace? How in the world could immutability, immortality, and whatever else is said by negation, be an *ousia*? How in the world could immutability and infinity not be natural and essential to God alone?¹⁸⁷

Gregory’s rhetoric surrounding the inherent attributes of nature points, again, to the fact that many of the divine energies are not even positive terms,

such that they might be taken to indicate a substance of some kind. Already in the *Triads*, Palamas had pointed out that God's energies include his lack of circumscription by place (τὸ μηδαμοῦ εἶναι). As with the other negative attributes, this could hardly be an *ousia* and is intended to show the absurdity of substantivizing the divine energies.¹⁸⁸ God's foreknowledge, will, and all things that follow (τὰ ἐπόμυνα) on the divine nature inhere in it (σύνεστι αὐτῇ) and are not themselves natures, and it is for this reason that they do not create any composition in it.¹⁸⁹

That the divine energies are not self-subsistent (αὐθυπόστατα), also means that *energeia* is not something that exists "in its own hypostasis" (τὸ ἐν ἰδίᾳ ὑποστάσει ὄν).¹⁹⁰ Although Palamas had indeed spoken of the uncreated light, in the *Triads*, as *enhypostatic*, in the sense that it was seen in the hypostasis of the Son and projected "into the hypostasis of another,"¹⁹¹ Gregory's use of the term *enhypostaton* would change after 1341.¹⁹² As already noted, the theses propounded by Akindynos included the idea that God's energies were not only self-subsistent realities created sometime before the material world but that the only natural, essential, and eternal energies of God were the Persons of the Son and the Holy Spirit, the *enhypostatic*, which is to say hypostatic, energies of God. In response to these claims, Palamas would henceforward begin to place a special stress on the fact that the divine energies were not only inherent in the divine essence, precisely as properties 'of the essence,' but that they were *common* to the three Persons of the Trinity. As such, they could be neither creatures nor the Persons of the Son and the Spirit. As Palamas notes in the *Triads*, "What is properly *enhypostaton* is contemplated not on its own or in the essence, but in the hypostasis."¹⁹³ For this reason, the language of *enhypostaton* is only partially useful to Gregory's defense of the energies as realities inherent in the common divine essence of the Trinity.¹⁹⁴ In his later writings, Palamas will restrict his use of the term *enhypostaton* exclusively to mean *authypostaton*, or self-subsistent. As Palamas states in his *Letter to Daniel*, "*Enhypostaton*, according to the traditions of the Fathers, signifies both what subsists of itself and what is contemplated in another."¹⁹⁵

Yet the idea that the energies subsist of themselves is precisely the opposite of what Palamas wants to convey. In accordance with these concerns, Palamas will thus make increasing use in his polemics against Akindynos of a forceful passage attributed to St Basil the Great, wherein the Spirit's gifts of love, joy, peace, and fear are distinguished from the hypostatic or self-subsisting character of the Spirit itself: "All of these things," it says, "the Holy Spirit has eternally, as the Spirit of God revealed by him. But that which flows from God (τὸ ἐκ θεοῦ πηγάζον) is *enhypostatic*, while what flows from the Spirit are its energies."¹⁹⁶ In passages such as this one Palamas finds support for the categorical claim that the energies "are *not* *enhypostatic*," unlike the Person of the Spirit.¹⁹⁷ Not only are the energies not creatures, but they are also not the Son or the Holy Spirit, which are subsistent hypostases. Gregory will even go so far as to say of the divine energy that "of itself it is *anhypostatic*," that is, that it lacks a hypostasis.¹⁹⁸ Such a fact constitutes an important development

in Gregory's language and way of talking about the divine energies that has not often been noticed. For Palamas, the shift serves to reinforce that the divine energies do not create any synthesis in God, since they are not self-subsisting realities or substances that combine to produce composition or impinge on God's absolute simplicity.

The Question of a 'Real Distinction'

Such, then, are some of the qualifications that Palamas places around his understanding of divine simplicity. Essence and energy do not create composition because they are neither two subsistent realities nor the combination of a substance with accidents, qualities, or essential differences. Nevertheless, in spite of all his protestations to the contrary, the distinction that Palamas seeks to draw between the divine essence and its manifold energies has often been thought to betray divine simplicity because it espouses a 'real' as opposed to a 'conceptual' distinction between *energeiai* and *ousia*. The classic formulation of this dichotomy was recently repeated by John Demetracopoulos, who identifies the essence–energies distinction of Palamas as a *distinctio realis major*, that is, "a metaphysical statement objectively applied to God *per se* (or, to put it otherwise, as a statement valid *a parte rei*)."¹⁹⁹ This is contrasted, in turn, with "the Patristic idea that God is simple *ex parte objecti* but multiple *ex parte subjecti* (κατ' ἐπίνοιαν or λόγῳ, i.e., conceptually or by reason)."²⁰⁰ These classifications correspond to the schema outlined almost a century ago by Sébastien Guichardan, who distinguished between the real distinction (whether major, minor, modal, or formal) and the *distinctio rationis*, or distinction of reason. The distinction of reason is itself subdivided into a *distinctio rationis cum fundamento in re*, that is, a distinction of the mind with a basis in the object itself, as well as a 'distinction of pure reason,' existing only in the mind. The former is also called a *distinctio virtualis*, or a *distinctio rationis rationocinatae* (a distinction of reasoned reason), which parses the distinct aspects of a single reality, while the latter is a 'distinction of reasoning reason' (*distinctio rationis ratiocinantis*), which applies to tautologies such as the unmarried bachelor.²⁰¹ For Guichardan, the conceptual distinction of the Greek Fathers, that is, the διάκρισις κατ' ἐπίνοιαν, does not fit neatly into these Scholastic categories but sometimes covers the *distinctio realis minor* as well as the various distinctions of reason.²⁰²

The natural question that presents itself to a modern reader of Palamas is whether these intriguing labels, with their attendant ambiguities and connotations, are really helpful in understanding the fourteenth-century theories of a Late Byzantine theologian. Indeed, as we have seen, scholars have increasingly called on historical theologians to refrain from forcing the essence–energies distinction of late Byzantium into the narrow confines and overdetermined categories of Scholastic thought.²⁰³ Most recently, David Bradshaw has articulated very concretely why the use of these Scholastic classifications is misguided. Although the terms *real* and *conceptual* distinction, he notes, are widely used with the presumption that they denote precise

and objective categories in metaphysics and epistemology, the history of the terms themselves is not nearly as straightforward as is sometimes thought. Tracing the history of the word *epinoia*, which lies at the root of the real/conceptual dichotomy in the study of Greek theology, Bradshaw points out, on the contrary, that, even in their native Scholastic milieu, these words are not as precise as they may seem:

There is an unfortunate tendency to take the scholastic distinctions as if they were simply a known and fixed quantity, the only debatable question being that of how those of the East (the essence-energies distinction and that *kat' epinoian*) relate to them. This is very far from the case. Not only have the scholastic distinctions been the subject of interminable controversy, among Thomists, Scotists, Suarezians, and others; the history we have surveyed reveals several points at which the fundamental line of thought behind them can and should be brought into question.

A similar point is made by Dmitri Biriukov, with the collaboration of Vitaly Ivanov, who has traced some of the difficulties inherent in pinpointing Scholastic doctrines of the distinction between the divine essence and its attributes, a problem first associated with the divine names and becoming a theological topic in its own right only after the death of Thomas Aquinas.²⁰⁴

Yet the fact that we should not treat the real/conceptual dichotomy as the ultimate standard for understanding the essence-energies distinction does not mean that we should dismiss the question of how metaphysics and epistemology are related in the theology of St Gregory Palamas. As Demetracopoulos has rightly pointed out, Palamas does, in fact, avoid the term *epinoia* when speaking of the divine names and the multiplicity of properties surrounding the divine essence. How, then, does Palamas himself understand the unity-in-difference of God's essence and energies? Can this distinction be called 'conceptual' in any sense, or does it evince a staunchly 'realist' approach to the problem of the divine attributes?

Synonymity and the Language of Res

As we saw in the previous chapter, Palamas strongly rejects the idea that the divine energies are synonymous and convertible with another. He sees as Eunomian the idea that each of the divine names does not have a unique signification. "They necessarily differ, not only from the nature, but from one another."²⁰⁵ This last quotation is elicited by the proposition of Nikephoros Gregoras that all the divine names were not only synonymous with one other but also reducible to the simple divine essence.²⁰⁶ Gregoras had spoken of the divine energies, in this sense, as 'mere names' (*ὀνόματα ψιλὰ*).²⁰⁷ As examples of mere names, Palamas refers to words which are really and truly interchangeable. Specifically, he draws attention to the various words for a knife (*ἄορ*, *σπάθη*, and *φάσγανον*). These words, Palamas notes, are truly synonymous and differ from one another only in the bringing forth of sound into

the air. They are real equivalents, since the item indicated by all of them is one and the same thing (ἐν πάντῃ), only using different words.²⁰⁸ Significantly, these items are the same not only extensionally, but even in the mind. Unlike terms used to express distinct orientations or features of a given object, *aor*, *spathe*, and *phasganon* do not seem in this context to denote specific nuances or forms of a bladed instrument. To borrow the language of *epinoia*, these words for Gregory denote not only a single reality but also a single concept, with multiple, arbitrarily distinct names.

To defend the objective content of the divine names, which are not ‘mere words,’ Palamas, much like his Scholastic contemporaries, makes use of the language of *res* calling the divine energies πράγματα (‘things’)²⁰⁹ and ὄντα (‘realities’).²¹⁰ This terminology arises relatively late in Gregory’s career, specifically in the controversy with Gregoras, precisely because the latter is seen as voiding the divine names of any real content.²¹¹ If the Latin concept of a *res* is meant to oppose ‘reality’ to purely mental constructs or fictions, then Gregory’s use of the term *pragmata* and *onta* would seem to bear a certain resemblance to Latin usage. Yet it is significant that the *res*, *pragmata*, and *onta* in question here are specifically *not* substances. Neither are they ‘subsistent’ in the strict sense, since the divine energies have no hypostatic character. Still, as terms for the distinct attributes of the divine essence, they do not signify *unam rem* in the sense that they signify multiple ‘realities,’ even if these are not distinct beings, hypostases, or essences.²¹²

Yet a feature of Palamas’s theology that is often overlooked is the qualified way in which the divine names do admit a certain interchangeability so that even if the various divine energies are distinct ‘things,’ they all refer, ultimately, to the one God, even being used to name the transcendent divine essence, albeit catachrestically. Although each of the divine names has a proper signification, Palamas also says very explicitly, in *Chapter 144*, that when these names are applied to the inconceivable and transcendent essence, “‘there’ none of the names differs from another in signification.”²¹³ The reason for this has already been intimated earlier, namely, that the divine names, while properly signifying distinct attributes of God, are also used, ‘improperly,’ to name the transcendent and unnamable essence.²¹⁴ Thus, while “creating, ruling, judging, providing, and God’s adoption of us by his grace” really do differ from one another so that it is not one and the same thing for God to know creatures and to create them or to bring them into being and to judge them, still, to the extent that the divine names are ‘transferred’ or used to refer to the divine essence, they do not signify distinct realities but the one divine *ousia*. Taking the example of ‘life’ central to a disputed passage from the writings of St Cyril of Alexandria,²¹⁵ Gregory notes that

when we call God ‘life,’ not as *our life*, in that he gives us life, but in an altogether absolute and non-relational manner (ἄφετος παντὶ καὶ ἀπολελυμένως), we name his essence from the energy that inheres in him according to nature, just as we do with wisdom, goodness, and everything else.²¹⁶

This sense of a nonrelational and absolute mode of applying the divine names is a key feature of ‘supereminent negation’ (ὕπερογκή ἀπόφασις). It is in this sense that Christians call God intellection (νόησις), referring in this instance not to God’s providential activity with regard to creatures but to the fact that he is “altogether absolute (ἄφετος), knowing himself and abiding without relation” (ἀνεκφοιτήτως ἔχων ἑαυτοῦ).²¹⁷ For Palamas, this is distinct from his processions and energies “whereby God is seen in some relation.”²¹⁸ But in each case, the names themselves are drawn from the divine energies. As Palamas explains,

The essence of God is altogether unnameable, since it is also completely inconceivable. It is thus named (ὀνομάζεται) from each if its energies. ... For from each and every one of these nothing else is named (καλεῖται) besides that Hiddenness, in no way knowable with respect to what it might be.²¹⁹

In this qualified sense, then, the divine names are applied to God interchangeably, and so Palamas might well be able to say, with Aquinas, that, in the case of the transfer of names to the divine essence, all that is ascribed to God denominates a single thing (*nomina Deo attributa, licet significant unam rem*). Although each of the divine names signifies a distinct reality, they are all together applied without distinction to the transcendent and unknowable essence of God, which is otherwise beyond the signification of names.

A Notional Distinction

Yet if energies are ‘realities’ in God, what is the relationship, for Palamas, between God as he is and God as he is known by us? Modern theologians have sometimes faulted Palamas for confusing the two orders, importing into God a distinction that exists only in the human mind.²²⁰ Yet, in an important passage from the *Chapters*, Palamas seems to reject the very dichotomy between metaphysics and epistemology, correlating the distinction between essence and energies with nothing less than abstraction and the purely conceptual separation of things that are, in actuality, inseparable. To do this, Palamas will even play on the classic Platonic connection between philosophy and geometry, the science of abstraction *par excellence*.²²¹

In a discussion of the nature of theology that begins in *Chapter* 80, Palamas speaks in *Chapter* 81 of theology generally as the conceptualization and discussion “of inseparables as if they had been separated.”²²² After enumerating some ways in which “the intellect separates what is inseparable,”²²³ Gregory moves from the realm of the sensible to the intelligible by noting that the basis of abstraction is the separation of a body from its attributes *in the intellect* (τὸ σῶμα τῶν περὶ αὐτὸ χωρίζειν τῷ νῷ).²²⁴ This, in turn, teaches us to separate nature, as such, from its natural properties (τῶν φυσικῶν), even though “it is not only inseparable from the natural properties, since it exists *in* them, but it is not even able to exist without them.”²²⁵ In this way one

distinguishes *in the intellect and reason alone* (νῶ καὶ λόγῳ μόνῳ) universals from particulars, although the one exists ‘in’ the other.²²⁶ Here Palamas draws our attention to a familiar example, namely, the distinction between the intellect and its various thoughts. Although the distinction of the two would seem to result in the multiplicity and composition of the human intellect, we nevertheless separate them in our minds.²²⁷ And it is this same purely mental separation, Palamas says, that allows one to distinguish the unions and distinctions in God.²²⁸

Interestingly, the idea of a conceptual distinction between God’s essence and energies (and between the energies themselves) would be written into the *Tomos of 1351*, of which Palamas, as the high-ranking Metropolitan of Thessalonica, was a key signatory. In that critical synodal document, which finally vindicated Palamas from the accusations of his contemporaries, the Church of Constantinople officially taught that the saints “distinguished what is united and inseparable *only by reason*, in a manner befitting God” (μόνῳ τῷ λογισμῷ θεοπρέπῳς διακρίνοντες).²²⁹ While rejecting the idea that there is no difference at all between essence and energy, the council affirmed with Palamas that one could separate these (χωρίζειν) only by reason and that the difference could be “seen” (or perhaps “understood”) “only in the mind” (μόνῳ τῷ νῶ θεωρεῖν).²³⁰ Though Demetracopoulos identifies this particular text as an example of how Gregory’s disciples and supporters ‘softened’ his *distinctio realis major*,²³¹ it is clear that, in addition to his being a signatory and promoter of this synodal document, St Gregory Palamas himself expresses very similar sentiments in the eightieth of his *Chapters*. At around the same time that this idea was enshrined in the *Tomos of 1351*,²³² Palamas aligns the essence–energies distinction in the *Chapters* with a form of conceptual, or purely notional, distinction.²³³

It is important to note, however, that Palamas speaks not of a conceptual ‘distinction’ *per se*, but of conceptual separation or separability. The difference, for Palamas, is that distinction (διαίρεσις or διαφορά) is not itself division (κατατομή), “For incorporeal things, and especially the Divine, are not divided as bodies.”²³⁴ Against Akindynos’s fear that God be partitioned, Palamas responds that God is not apportioned like a body.²³⁵ “Incorporeal things are not divided (διαρεῖται) corporeally, still less divine things, like God himself.”²³⁶ In the context of the various kinds of composition outlined by Palamas—essence with essence, essence with essential difference, essence with quality and passive potency—the basis of all change is precisely divisibility,

according to which all creatures admit of changes, in growth and diminution, addition and subtraction, acting and being affected (πάσχοντα), and in this way contribute, somehow, to the disappearance of its former constituent parts, whence they are shown to be completely divisible (διααιρετὰ); and everything divisible is necessarily composite.²³⁷

In *Chapter 127*, therefore, Gregory asserts the principle that it is not distinction, but separation that introduces division and composition.²³⁸

The purely conceptual separation of God's essence from his energies, then, does not make God's essence identical to his energies in Palamas. But it does prevent the divine energies from being thought of as separable entities attaching to the divine essence. As Palamas implies, they are no more substantial or separable (and yet no less real) than universals contemplated in particulars.

Conclusion

Most discussions of simplicity in Palamas have ignored the actual debate between Palamas and his opponents and therefore the answers that Palamas actually gives to the problem of God's unity-in-distinction. As we have seen, the discussion of divine simplicity in Palamas centers on the historical charge of ditheism and the problem of how God in his multiplicity can be a single divinity and a single Uncreated. Related to these questions are the problems of change, *pathos*, and metaphysical composition in God. But contrary to the reading of scholars like Strohm, Palamas does not seek to mitigate divine simplicity, precisely because he does not believe that simplicity is in any way harmed by God's having natural energies.²³⁹ Composition, or synthesis, for Palamas, is not the result of a substance possessing essential energies and properties but is the by-product of combining multiple essences or of an essence possessing mutable accidents, passions, and essential differences inhering in a substrate. For Palamas, the God of Akindynos and other opponents of the divine energies is not simpler for possessing fewer distinctions. Rather, for Palamas, these theologians offer a conception of a God who would be impotent and inert if he could exist at all.

Throughout his official writings, Palamas preaches a single divinity of the Trinity, in essence and uncreated energies. In parsing the distinction between God's essence and energies, Gregory proclaims forcefully that the divine names represent real things (*pragmata* and *onta*) and not just empty syllables. These realities are not reducible to the divine essence, and our conception of them is not a product of human invention. Yet the eternal attributes and properties of God are also indivisibly one with the divine essence and inseparable from it. Indeed, their separation can only be effected in the human mind, which cannot speak of the communications, manifestations, and processions of God apart from the divine essence.

In the following and final chapter, we look more closely at Palamas's emphasis on the unity of essence and energies. Although Palamas is famed, above all, for his *distinction* between essence and energies, it is actually the distinction-in-unity, as he sees it, that sets his doctrine apart from that of his opponents. Not surprisingly, Palamas frames the distinction-in-unity of essence and energies in terms of the distinction-in-unity of the Trinitarian Persons. By examining this framework, then, we will be able to better understand how the doctrine of *ousia* and *energeiai* relates to the more basic doctrine of the Trinity-in-Unity.

Notes

- 1 See, especially, the discussion of Petavius, Allatius, Jugie, and others in Chapter 1, pp. 11–15, as well as the relevant items in the bibliography.
- 2 For the beginnings of this trend, see especially Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 306–308; De Halleux, “Palamisme et Scolastique,” 409–442.
- 3 *Ep. Akind.* 3.2 (PS 1:311.23–25).
- 4 *Ep. Akind.* 3.6 (PS 1:300.24–301.3).
- 5 *Ep. Akind.* 3.1 (PS 1:296.1–20).
- 6 See Akindynos, *Ep.* 12.47–48 (ed. Hero, 58).
- 7 See Arsenios of Tyre: τοὺς περὶ τὸν Παλαμῶν διθεΐας κατηγορῶν (ed. Polemis, 255.34). To the extent that Palamas identifies the uncreated light generally with the uncreated grace of God, Akindynos notes that the charge of ditheism was directed specifically against “the dogma of divine grace;” see Hero, *Letters*, 324.
- 8 See *Ann.* 2 (PS 2:545.26–546.1). Cf. *Akind.* 2.5.13 (PS 3:94.13–14).
- 9 The fact that the uncreated light was subordinate (ὕφευμένη), and hence unequal, to the divine essence, also meant that the charge of ditheism was tied to the problem of subordination in God, a theme that exceeds the bounds of our current study.
- 10 See, for example, *Akind.* 6.3.6 (PS 3:383.12–14).
- 11 *Ep. Akind.* 3.7 (PS 1:301.16–21).
- 12 *Tr.* 3.1.19 (ed. Meyendorff, 595.7–10). Cf. *Tr.* 3.2.27 (ed. Meyendorff, 691–692).
- 13 *Part.* 24 (PS 2:158.7–8).
- 14 *Akind.* 5.25.101 (PS 3:364.31).
- 15 *Greg.* 4.47 (PS 4:365.24).
- 16 *Ep. Akind.* 3.9 (PS 1:302.12–16).
- 17 *Ep. Akind.* 3.8 (PS 1:302.4–9).
- 18 Cf. the remarks of Coffey, “The Palamite Doctrine of God,” 334. The point made by Demetracopoulos, that mere insistence on divine simplicity is not necessarily a sufficient defense thereof, is well taken (see “Palamas Transformed,” 276 n. 33). Here, however, we simply take note of the fact that Palamas did strenuously profess and seek to defend the doctrine of divine simplicity, whatever the merits of his argumentation.
- 19 Pleased, “St. Gregory Palamas on the Divine Simplicity,” *Modern Theology* 35.3 (2019): 509.
- 20 *Cap.* 147.9–12 (ed. Sinkewicz, 252).
- 21 “Palamas Transformed,” 277–278.
- 22 Russell, *Gregory Palamas and the Making of Palamism*, 15.
- 23 Russell, “The Christological Context,” 197.
- 24 “Palamas Transformed,” 277 n. 38.
- 25 *Arsen.* 4 (PS 2:317.25–318.5). By the many referents of ‘divinity’ Palamas has in mind the various sources of the word *Theos/Theotes*: τὸ θεεῖν, τὸ θεᾶσθαι, τὸ αἰθεῖν, ἡ θεατική δύναμις, and so on, citing a number of passages from St Gregory of Nyssa and St Basil. He also notes that ‘divinity,’ in Dionysios, names God’s providential power (PS 2:318.5–319.1).
- 26 One reason for this apologia, apart from any implicit self-justification, is that essence and energies are indeed referred to as ‘divinities’ by other Palamite authors in this period; see, for example, Joseph Kalothetos, *Letter* 4.10 (ed. Tsames, 388), cited in Torrance, “Receiving Palamas,” 125 n. 46. The *Letter to Arsenios*, though, is also linked thematically to *Ep. Akind.* 3.
- 27 The term *θεότητες* otherwise appears more than one hundred times in Gregory’s writings, but only when Palamas is repudiating the idea that there are multiple divinities.
- 28 “Une lettre,” 565. Cf. *Introduction*, 92–93. Even those authors who depend heavily on Meyendorff for their interpretation of Palamas continue to speak to the

- present day of “his distinction between a ‘higher’ (ὕπερκειμένη) and a ‘lower’ divinity;” Maloney, *A Theology of Uncreated Energies*, 64.
- 29 *Ep. Akind.* 3.15 (PS 1:306.18–20); cf. Meyendorff, “Une lettre,” 577.27–33. Meyendorff’s 1988 edition of the letter is based on twelve of the seventeen extant manuscripts (PS 1:200–201).
- 30 Ed. Suchla, 2:158: “How is he who is beyond all things also beyond the principle of divinity and goodness? You must consider divinity and goodness to be identical to the reality (τὸ γρηῃμα) of the beneficent and deifying gift, as well as the inimitable imitation of him who is beyond divinity and goodness, whereby we are deified and made good. For even if this serves as the principle of deifying those who are deified and making good those who are made good, still he who is beyond every principle is also, in this way, beyond the aforementioned divinity and goodness, to the extent that it is principle of divinity and goodness. For as he is inimitable and without relation, he transcends the imitations and relations both of those who imitate and those who participate in him.”
- 31 *Ep. Akind.* 3.6 (PS 1:300.24–301.3). The language of ὑφεμένη is also connected to the fact that Barlaam saw the vision of light of Thabor itself as inferior (χεῖρον καὶ κατώτερον) to the human intellect and of a generally low estate (χαμαιζήλον); see *Tomos of 1341*, 8, 45 (ed. Karmiris, 301, 306).
- 32 Cf. Meyendorff, “Une lettre,” 563. “Une terminologie attribuée à Barlaam peut cependant s’appliquer à une théologie orthodoxe.”
- 33 Nadal [Cañellas], “La redaction première de la Troisième letter de Palamas à Akindynos,” *OCP* 40 (1974): 233. The sole surviving manuscript of this treatise is the autograph, *Monac. gr.* 233.
- 34 “La redaction première,” 233–285.
- 35 *De theologicis dogmatibus* 1.1.13.79; cf. *Adversus Palamam* (ed. Arcudius, 420; PG 154:848BC).
- 36 “Palamas,” 1755; id., *Theologia Dogmatica* 2:74. Cf. “Une lettre,” 564. Meyendorff points, for sources, especially, to the anti-Palamite florilegium found in *Barb. gr.* 291 (see Mercati, *Notizie*, 192–197). See, also, Cañellas, “La redaction première,” 235.
- 37 Kern, in the era before the publication of Palamas’s writings, had spoken in this sense of certain “undeniably problematic” formulations (*Ανθρωπολογία σвт. Григория Паламы*, 313). Lossky expressed caution about the attribution of this phrase to Palamas but offers a tentative interpretation on the basis of Gregory’s thought more generally; see *Mystical Theology*, 81; Krivoshein, “The Ascetic and Theological Teaching,” 145; as cited in Meyendorff, “Une lettre,” 563 n. 1–2.
- 38 “Introduction” to *Ep. Akind.* 3 (PS 1:198–199). Palamas claims that Akindynos had altered his writings, but he does not specify which ones; see Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 91–94.
- 39 Cañellas, “La redaction,” 236, 240. Katharina Heyden has put forward the sensible alternative that neither version is ‘false,’ even if the received text has indeed but altered; see *ead.*, “The Two Epistulae III of Palamas to Akindynos: The Small but Important Difference between Authenticity and Originality,” *Studia Patristica* 94 (2017): 511–519. This, however, does not resolve the question of which writings of Palamas were supposed to have been falsified.
- 40 Cañellas, “La redaction,” 236. Cf. *ibid.* 240: “Il reprint ses écrits et en fin disparaître certaines expressions dangereuses.” This is the claim of Akindynos, *Antirrhetic* 1 (*Monac. gr.* 233, 24r). Ironically, Akindynos had urged Palamas to do precisely this in 1341, namely, to modify his writings and expunge the problematic language; see Akindynos, *Report* 4 (ed. Cañellas, 260.99–100); *Ep.* 12 (ed. Hero, 58).
- 41 “Une lettre,” 562 n. 3.
- 42 *Ekth.* 1 (PS 2:579.8–9).
- 43 *Ep. Akind.* 3.7 (PS 1:301.16–21).

- 44 *Ep. Akind.* 3.8 (PS 1:302.4–9); cf. *Ep. Akind.* 3.7 (PS 1:301.12–16): “There is a single divinity in uncreated essence and natural power and will and brilliance and energy, since the things of nature possess, of themselves, an unbroken unity with the corresponding nature, the two being, at the level of Uncreated, one and equal and simple.”
- 45 *Ep. Akind.* 3.15 (PS 1:306.24). Cf. *Ep. Akind.* 3.2 (PS 1:297.2), 3.9 (PS 1:302.25–29).
- 46 *Tomos of 1341*, 3, 51 (ed. Karmires, 299–300, 310). Palamas refers to this in *Greg.* 3.15 (PS 4:330.15); cf. *Greg.* 3.18 (PS 4:331.31).
- 47 *Tomos of 1351*, 9 (ed. Karmires, 315–316); see Meyendorff, “Une lettre,” 565; Cañellas, “La redaction,” 240.
- 48 *Dion.* 9 (PS 2:486.32–487.9).
- 49 *Ep. Akind.* 3.9 (PS 1:302.16–17).
- 50 *Barl.* 5 (PS 2:266.2–3).
- 51 *Log.* 4 (PS 4:88.15), 5 (PS 4:91.8).
- 52 *Barl.* 6 (PS 2:266.13–14).
- 53 See Dionysios, *Ep. 2: To Gaius* (ed. Suchla 2:158.2–3).
- 54 *Athan.* 20 (PS 2:431.17–24). Cf. *Theo.* 9 (PS 2:232.20–21): κρυτώνμως. Cf. *Akind.* 1.5.11 (PS 3:46.22–23). Cf. *Greg.* 2.43 (PS 4:296.28–297.4).
- 55 *Dion.* 10 (PS 2:487.15–18).
- 56 See, for example, *Akind.* 3.15.58 (PS 3:205.20–23); *Greg.* 2.43 (PS 4:296.29–297.4): “Thus, [St Gregory of Nyssa] established that the divinity is a name not of the nature, but of the seeing power of the Spirit. Wherefore we know that the energy manifestly is and is proclaimed to be uncreated.”
- 57 *Barl.* 6 (PS 2:266.13–18): “The nature of God, but more properly, the energy, is called ‘divinity,’ as the great Basil says. ‘Even if the term ‘divinity’ should signify nature, the communion of essence establishes that this name is also appropriate, in the proper sense, to the Holy Spirit,” citing *Ep.* 189 (LCL 243:66).
- 58 *Gabr.* 12 (PS 2:339.29–340.11). God’s ‘vision’ and *theatic* power are identified, in Palamas, with divine providence; see *Gabr.* 12 (PS 2:339.4).
- 59 *Akind.* 6.16.61 (PS 3:432.19–23).
- 60 *Theo.* 9 (PS 2:231.27–232.3); cf. *Akind.* 2.5.13 (PS 3:94.17–26).
- 61 *Akind.* 6.25.95 (PS 3:458.1–5).
- 62 *Akind.* 2.9.31 (PS 3:107.2–9).
- 63 *Akind.* 3.15.58 (PS 3:205.24–25).
- 64 *Akind.* 2.5.14 (PS 3:95.5–8); cf. *Akind.* 2.5.13 (PS 3:94.14–26).
- 65 *Dion.* 9 (PS 2:486.17–18); *Barl.* 6 (PS 2:266.13–14); *Akind.* 2.19.95 (PS 2:151.29).
- 66 *Ann.* 2 (PS 2:544.20–21).
- 67 *Theo.* 9 (PS 2:231.12–27), 10 (PS 2:233.11–13).
- 68 *Theo.* 9 (PS 2:232.21–23).
- 69 *Barl.* 6 (PS 2:266.19–20). Cf. *ibid.* 11 (PS 2:270.14–15): “Both the divine nature and energy are called ‘divinity.’” See, also, *ibid.* (PS 2:271.4–5).
- 70 See *Theo.* 9 (PS 2:232.20–21).
- 71 *Tr.* 3.1.24 (ed. Meyendorff, 605.6).
- 72 See *Greg.* 7 (PS 4:236.25–26).
- 73 *Barl.* 1 (PS 2:263.11–14).
- 74 *Akind.* 6.24.89 (PS 3:454.24–29).
- 75 *Barl.* 3 (PS 2:264.8–10).
- 76 Based on the idea that Eunomios had used a distinction between God’s *ousia* and *energeia* to separate the Son, as a product of God’s nonessential *activity*, from the *nature* of the Unbegotten. See Eunomios, *Liber apologeticus* 20 (ed. Vaggione, 58.6–9); Vaggione, *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution*, 134, 250–252. Cf. Barnes, “The Background and Use of Eunomius’ Causal Language,” 217–236.

- 77 *Log.* 13 (PS 4:98.7–23); see Akindynos, *Refutatio magna* 4.22 (CCSG 31:353.8–10). Cf. Eunomios, *Liber apologeticus* 23 (ed. Vaggione, 62.5–6).
- 78 *Dion.* 10 (PS 2:487.11–14), once again in connection with the passage attributed to Athanasios; see Chapter 2, pp. 68–69.
- 79 *Theo.* 9 (PS 2:231.22–27).
- 80 *Dion.* 9 (PS 2:486.1–2).
- 81 *Akind.* 5.24.100 (PS 3:363.16–19). Cf. *Greg.* 2.35 (PS 4:291.1–8): “The same one is God; and both the divine essence and the divine energy belong to the same one. Yet it is not the case that the divine energy does not, for this reason, differ from the divine essence. Both the most-high Monad and the most-high Triad are the same God. And the Monad is the whole God, and the Triad is the whole. For God is a Monad according to essence, but a Triad according to hypostases, though these clearly differ from each other and from the divine essence.” See, also, *Greg.* 2.41 (PS 4:294.31–295.12).
- 82 *Gabr.* 26 (PS 2:354.1–6).
- 83 *Akind.* 6.14.53 (PS 3:426.11–12).
- 84 *Akind.* 5.13.52 (PS 3:326.2–3).
- 85 *Athan.* 15 (PS 2:426.16–17).
- 86 *Theo.* 27 (PS 2:255.1–5).
- 87 *Dial.* 14 (PS 2:175.30–32), 16 (PS 2:178.19–20); cf. *Barl.* 9 (PS 2:268.27–269.1); *Akind.* 6.11.35 (PS 3:412.5–8), 4.9.21 (PS 3:257.5–13); citing Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Beatitudes* 4 (GNO 7.2:141.25–27): ὁ γὰρ τῆ φύσει ἀόρατος ὁρατὸς τὰς ἐνεργείαις γίνεται, ἐν τισι τοῖς περι αὐτὸν ιδιώμασι καθορώμενος.
- 88 *Gabr.* 18 (PS 2:345.33–346.8).
- 89 *Akind.* 1.7.31 (PS 3:61.17–27).
- 90 *Akind.* 6.13.48 (PS 3:423.2–5).
- 91 *Theo.* 10 (PS 2:234.7).
- 92 *Akind.* 7.9.23 (PS 3:477.26–27).
- 93 See *Greg.* 7 (PS 4:236.23–24).
- 94 *Akind.* 2.18.90 (PS 3:148.27–29).
- 95 *Gabr.* 10 (PS 2:336.25–337.2).
- 96 *Ekth.* 10 (PS 2:581.10–14).
- 97 *Phil.* 9 (PS 2:526.27–29). Cf. *Greg.* 4.24 (PS 4:353.22–26).
- 98 *Ekth.* 1 (PS 2:579.5).
- 99 *Greg.* 4.25 (PS 4:354.11–22).
- 100 *Akind.* 5.13.53 (PS 3:326.10–11).
- 101 *Akind.* 5.13.51 (PS 3:325.1–10). Akindynos had invoked *DN* 5.2 to assert the identity of essence and energies: Οὐκ ἄλλο δὲ εἶναι τὰγαθὸν φησι καὶ ἄλλο τὸ ὄν καὶ ἄλλο τὴν ζωὴν ἢ τὴν σοφίαν, οὐδὲ πολλὰ τὰ αἴτια καὶ ἄλλων ἄλλας παρακτικὰς θεότητας ὑπερεχούσας καὶ ὑφειμένας, ἀλλ’ ἐνὸς θεοῦ τὰς ὅλας ἀγαθὰς προόδους καὶ τὰς παρ’ ἡμῶν ἐξυμνουμένας θεωνυμίας καὶ τὴν μὲν εἶναι τῆς παντελοῦς τοῦ ἐνὸς θεοῦ προνοίας ἐκφαντικὴν, τὰς δὲ τῶν ὀλιγωτέρων τοῦ αὐτοῦ καὶ μερικωτέρων (ed. Suchla 1:181.16–21); cf. *Akind.* 5.12.46–53 (PS 3:322.19–327.11).
- 102 *Akind.* 5.13.52–53 (PS 3:326.2–11).
- 103 *Akind.* 5.13.53 (PS 3:326.26–27).
- 104 Cf. *Arsen.* 3–4 (PS 2:317.4–26).
- 105 *Ref. int. Kal.* 26 (PS 2:667.31–668.1).
- 106 *Cap.* 91.21–26 (ed. Sinkewicz, 190).
- 107 *Cap.* 114.1–19 (ed. Sinkewicz, 212–214), citing (114.18) *On the Annunciation* 2–3 (PG 28:920BC). Cf. *Athan.* 5 (PS 2:415.13–25).
- 108 *Akind.* 3.13.48 (PS 3:198.30–199.1).
- 109 *Part.* 25 (PS 2:158.9–14).
- 110 Not unexpectedly, this thesis draws severe criticism from Petavius, who holds that, in God, ‘being’ and ‘having’ are supposed to be identical (*De theologicis dogmatibus* 2.2:92–93).

- 111 This includes, especially, the *Quaestiones Christianorum ad Graecos* (PG 6:1401–1464), now numbered among the spurious works of Justin, and the *Quaestiones et responsiones ad orthodoxos* (PG 6:1249–1400), also attributed to Theodoret of Cyrus (CPG 6285).
- 112 *Akind.* 2.20 (PS 3:154.1–4).
- 113 *Akind.* 2.20.99 (PS 3:156.17–24). Cf. *Answers to the Orthodox* 144 (PG 6:1396D).
- 114 *Akind.* 2.20.97 (PS 3:154.10–17). See *Questions to the Greeks* 3.1 (PG 6:1428D–1429C).
- 115 *Akind.* 2.20.97 (PS 3:155.2–7).
- 116 *Akind.* 2.20.97 (PS 3:154.8–10); cf. *Questions to the Greeks* 3.2 (PG 6:1433B).
- 117 *Akind.* 2.20.98 (PS 3:155.21–23); cf. *Questions to the Greeks* 3.2 (PG 6:1433B).
- 118 *Akind.* 2.20.98 (PS 3:155.14–18); cf. *Questions to the Greeks* 3.1 (PG 6:1433B).
- 119 See *Akind.* 2.20.99 (PS 3:156.11–12).
- 120 *Akind.* 2.20.98 (PS 3:155.18–21); cf. *Questions to the Greeks* 3.1 (PG 6:1432A).
- 121 See Chapter 2, pp. 64–65.
- 122 *Dan.* 7 (PS 2:380.21).
- 123 *Cap.* 135.24–25 (ed. Sinkewicz, 240).
- 124 *Cap.* 127.10–11 (ed. Sinkewicz, 230).
- 125 *Cap.* 127.10–12 (ed. Sinkewicz, 230–231).
- 126 One of the few scholars to note a connection with Gregory Nazianzen here is John Demetracopoulos, “Palamas Transformed,” 275–275 n. 30. Note, also, the connection with Cyril of Alexandria; see Nadal [Cañellas], “La critique par Akindynos,” 305, 321–322; cf. Damian, “A Few Considerations on the Uncreated Energies,” 107.
- 127 See *Akind.* 6.18.70 (PS 3:439.15–25).
- 128 *Akind.* 6.18.70 (PS 3:439.19–25); see Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration* 31.6 (SC 250:286.4–10).
- 129 *Akind.* 6.19.71–6.23.88 (PS 3:439–454).
- 130 *Akind.* 6.19.73 (PS 3:441.6–12).
- 131 Cf. *Akind.* 6.19.72 (PS 3:440.30).
- 132 *Cap.* 127.10–12 (ed. Sinkewicz, 230).
- 133 “Christianity and Platonism in East and West,” 153.
- 134 *Akind.* 6.21.76 (PS 3:443.17–18).
- 135 *Akind.* 6.21.76 (PS 3:443.19–24). Cf. *ibid.* 6.21.78 (PS 3:445.12–14).
- 136 *Part.* 25 (PS 2:158.21–22).
- 137 *Energ.* 22 (PS 2:113.15–18).
- 138 *Part.* 26 (PS 2:159.13–17).
- 139 The topic of essential differences is found throughout the works of the Commentators and other post-Aristotelian Greek writers. See, for example, Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Commentary on the Metaphysics* (CAG 1:743, 749); Porphyry, *On Aristotle’s Categories* (CAG 4.1:95); Dexippus, *Commentary on the Categories* (CAG 4.2:48–49, 57); Elias, *On Porphyry’s Isagoge* (CAG 18.1:73, 94); Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Categories* (CAG 8:55, 72, 50, 96, 115, 271, 276).
- 140 John of Damaskos, *Capita philosophica* 10 (ed. Kotter, 80–81).
- 141 *Energ.* 22 (PS 2:113.12).
- 142 Cf. *Energ.* 22 (PS 2:113.4–5).
- 143 *Part.* 25 (PS 2:158.28).
- 144 *Part.* 25 (PS 2:158.28–35).
- 145 *Part.* 25 (PS 2:158.29–30).
- 146 *Energ.* 22 (PS 2:113.13–15).
- 147 *Debate* 11 (ed. Candal, 339.30–340.1).
- 148 *Debate* 11 (ed. Candal, 340.1–2). Both of these powers or activities are associated not only with being rational (an attribute held in common with the angels) but also with being simultaneously rational and corporeal (which is unique to

- human beings). This is an important facet of St Gregory's anthropology, whereby the human being, made in the image of God both at the level of his intellect and body, is even said to be higher than the angels (*Cap.* 39, 62–63; *Hom.* 60). See A. Chouliaras, *The Anthropology of St Gregory Palamas*, 87–114.
- 149 *Energ.* 23 (PS 2:113.28).
- 150 *Topics* 102a18–22 (LCL 391:282): Ἴδιον δ' ἐστὶν ὃ μὴ δηλοῖ μὲν τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι, μόνω δ' ὑπάρχει καὶ ἀντικατηγορεῖται τοῦ πράγματος, οἷον ἴδιον ἀνθρώπου τὸ γραμματικῆς εἶναι δεκτικόν· εἰ γὰρ ἄνθρωπός ἐστι, γραμματικῆς δεκτικός ἐστι, καὶ εἰ γραμματικῆς δεκτικός ἐστίν, ἄνθρωπός ἐστιν.
- 151 *Energ.* 22 (PS 2:113.1–4).
- 152 See *Energ.* 22 (PS 2:113.18–20), 23 (PS 2:113.26–27). Cf. *Part.* 26 (PS 2:159.13–26).
- 153 *Energ.* 22 (PS 2:113.6–10).
- 154 *Energ.* 23 (PS 2:113.25–26).
- 155 *Cap.* 128.16–17 (ed. Sinkewicz, 232).
- 156 *Part.* 25 (PS 2:158.27–28).
- 157 *Part.* 26 (PS 2:159.4–12).
- 158 *Debate* 10 (ed. Candal, 338.6–9), citing *Exact Exposition* 9 (1.9) (ed. Kotter, 31.2–6).
- 159 *Debate* 10–11 (ed. Candal, 338.11–30).
- 160 *Greg.* 2.5 (PS 4:267.31). Cf. *Greg.* 2.5 (PS 4:267. 31–268.1).
- 161 *Dan.* 7 (PS 2:380.6–7).
- 162 *Dan.* 7 (PS 2:380.24–27).
- 163 See the discussion of first actuality in Chapter 3, pp. 98–99.
- 164 Gregory will further qualify the analogy with knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) in his antirrhetics *Against Gregoras*. Recognizing, as he does elsewhere, that the union-in-distinction of a soul with what it knows (τῶν ἐπιστημῶν) serves to illustrate the relationship between essence and energies, Palamas notes that the analogy must nevertheless be stripped of its creaturely dimensions. Just as the relationship between a human father and son involves temporal succession in addition to consubstantiality and generation according to nature, so human knowledge ultimately falls short as an analogy for what is in God, since the energies are not in God in the same way that knowledge inheres in the soul; *Greg.* 2.54–55 (PS 4:303.15–32).
- 165 *Dan.* 8 (PS 2:381.29–382.18).
- 166 *Cap.* 133.3–6 (ed. Sinkewicz, 238).
- 167 *Cap.* 133.4–12 (ed. Sinkewicz, 238).
- 168 In the category of *pathos*, Gregory numbers *genesis* and *change* as things that produce composition; *Cap.* 145.10, 13 (ed. Sinkewicz, 250). It is therefore no coincidence that Palamas discusses this problem in the context of “states, dispositions, time, and place” (*Cap.* 133.1–13; ed. Sinkewicz, 238). Of the ten Categories, God's substance admits only of relation and act, “which introduce no composition or change to his essence” (*Cap.* 134.4–5; ed. Sinkewicz, 238).
- 169 *Cap.* 145.8–9 (ed. Sinkewicz, 250).
- 170 *Cap.* 128.15–18 (ed. Sinkewicz, 232).
- 171 *Cap.* 119.7–9 (ed. Sinkewicz, 220).
- 172 See *Cap.* 119.12–13 (ed. Sinkewicz, 220), citing Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus* 31 (PG 75:444BC).
- 173 *Akind.* 6.13.45 (PS 3:421.9–13). To speak of more than one God is thus to speak of more than one essence; *Energ.* 37 (PS 2:122.15–19).
- 174 *Dam.* 8 (PS 2:464.20–24).
- 175 *Greg.* 4.47 (PS 4:365.20–366.8), once again citing Basil, *Adversus Eunomium* 1: “How is it not completely laughable to say that creativity (τὸ δημιουργικόν) is essence, that providence (τὸ προνοητικόν) is also essence, and foreknowledge (τὸ προγνωστικόν) likewise—simply, that every energy is asserted to be essence?”

- (SC 299:194.22–25); and Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus* 31: “For we see many names attributed to God, but each of them signifies not the essence, but some one of the things around the essence. For if each of them indicates essence, then God is composed of as many essences as he has inherent attributes” (PG 75:452D, 448B).
- 176 *Akind.* 6.23.84 (PS 3:450.28–451.2).
- 177 *Akind.* 1.7.32 (PS 3:63.19–31). Here again, Palamas relies mainly on Cyril and Basil.
- 178 *Greg.* 1.40 (PS 4:262.6–7).
- 179 *Dan.* 22 (PS 2:394.13–17).
- 180 *Akind.* 7.4.7 (PS 3:466.10–13).
- 181 *Greg.* 1.24 (PS 4:249.21–22).
- 182 *Greg.* 1.24 (PS 4:249.30).
- 183 *Akind.* 6.19.72 (PS 3:440.16–19).
- 184 *Akind.* 2.12.45 (PS 3:118.31–119.8).
- 185 *Akind.* 2.12.45 (PS 3:118.28–30). Cf. *Athan.* 36 (PS 2:446.3–8).
- 186 *Part.* 24 (PS 2:157.30–158.1).
- 187 *Athan.* 36 (PS 2:446.8–14).
- 188 *Tr.* 3.2.9 (ed. Meyendorff, 661.1).
- 189 *Energ.* 9 (PS 2:103.5–9).
- 190 *Dan.* 12 (PS 2:36.13–14).
- 191 *Triads* 3.1.9 (ed. Meyendorff, 573.22–24); cf. *Adversus Eunomium* 5 (PG 29:772D). See, also, *Triads* 3.1.6–7 (ed. Meyendorff, 569.6–571.3), 3.1.9 (ed. Meyendorff, 573.24). This language functioned to emphasize that what the disciples saw on the mountain was not, contrary to the claim of Barlaam, something transient and momentary, like thunder and lightning. Rather, by calling the light *enhypostatic*, the Fathers established the light’s permanence and stability (τὸ μόνιμον καὶ καθεστηκός); *Triads* 3.1.18 (ed. Meyendorff, 591.26–593.1).
- 192 On the background of this term, see B. Gleede, *The Development of the Term ἐνυπόστατος from Origen to John of Damascus*.
- 193 *Triads* 3.1.9 (ed. Meyendorff, 573.24–26).
- 194 One of the few scholars after the second half of the twentieth century to note that the divine energies in Palamas are not [en]hypostatic is Loudovikos, “Δι-Ἐννοημάτως,” 154; cf. Krivoshein, “The Ascetic and Theological Teaching,” 142. Other scholars have tended to focus on the personalist implications of connecting energy with hypostasis in *Triads* 3.1; see esp. Meyendorff, *Introduction*, 291–293, 297–298; Yangozoglou, *Προλεγόμενα στή Θεολογία τῶν ἀκτιστῶν ἐνεργειῶν*, 45–65, 98–120; id., “The Person in the Trinitarian Theology of Gregory Palamas: The Palamite Synthesis of a Prosopocentric Ontology,” *Philotheos* 1 (2001): 137–143; cf. E. Hussey, “The Persons-Energy Structure in the Theology of St. Gregory Palamas,” *SVTQ* 18 (1974): 22–43; G. Maloney, *A Theology of Uncreated Energies*, 78.
- 195 *Dan.* 12 (PS 2:386.15–17).
- 196 *Dan.* 11 (PS 2:385.20–23); *Akind.* 3.19.84 (PS 3:221.25–28); *Gabr.* 21 (PS 2:348.11–13), 30 (PS 2:358.25–27); citing *Adversus Eunomium* 5 (PG 29:772C).
- 197 *Dan.* 11 (PS 2:385.24). That is, in the specific sense of self-subsistent (τουτέστιν αὐθυπόστατος); *Akind.* 1.7.44 (PS 3:70.3–4). See, also, *Akind.* 3.13.48: “That all the energies from the Spirit are not *enhypostatic* is shown in *On the Holy Spirit*” (PS 3:198.17–19).
- 198 *Akind.* 1.7.44 (PS 3:70.15–16).
- 199 “Palamas Transformed,” 263.
- 200 “Palamas Transformed,” 264. Demetracopoulos identifies this as the doctrine of Basil, John of Damaskos, and the scholia to Dionysios; see *ibid.*, 265–268. He points in particular to the ‘conceptual’ distinctions of grain (σῖτος) in St Basil, which is both one thing as well as ‘many’ in its qualities as well as its uses and

- forms. This, Demetracopoulos avers, covers the categories of *distinctio realis minor* and *distinctio rationis cum fundamento in re*, though he is unsure whether Basil is ultimately adopting a Stoic model (*a parte rei*) or a Plotinian model (*a parte mentis*); see *ibid.*, 268.
- 201 See Guichardan, “Le problème de la simplicité,” 37–39.
- 202 *Ibid.*, 49.
- 203 See, for example, Bradshaw, “Essence and Energies: What Kind of Distinction?” 33; Plested, “St. Gregory Palamas on the Divine Simplicity,” 509 n. 6, 520–521.
- 204 Biriukov, “Neilos Kabasilas’s *Rule of Theology*,” 378 n. 23. Cf. Garret R. Smith, “The Problem of Divine Attributes from Thomas Aquinas to Duns Scotus” (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 2014).
- 205 *Greg.* 2.23 (PS 4:282.23–24).
- 206 *Greg.* 2.23 (PS 4:282.29).
- 207 See *Greg.* 2.17 (PS 4:277.25–26), 2.21 (PS 4:280.35), 2.25 (PS 4:284, 29–30); cf. *ibid.*, 1.14, 1.21 (PS 4:49.13–15; 54.9). See Nikephoros Gregoras, *Historia* 30.58 (Bonn 3:308–309). Akindynos, too, is said to have called *energeia* a “mere word” or sound (ψυλή φωνή), since it cannot be distinct from *ousia* anymore than ‘nature’ is distinct from ‘essence.’ See *Akind.* 1.7.14 (PS 3:49.13–15), 1.7.21 (PS 3:54.9), 3.13.44 (PS 3:196.20).
- 208 *Greg.* 1.41 (PS 4:262.24–25).
- 209 In support of calling God and his attributes ‘realities,’ or ‘things,’ Palamas invokes the authority of Athanasios, Gregory of Nyssa, and Maximos the Confessor, adducing passages in which the term *πράγματα* is applied to such things as the kingdom of God, ‘all that the Father has,’ and a long list of specific energies (immortality, beginninglessness, etc.); see *Greg.* 1.25 (PS 4:250.3–28).
- 210 *Greg.* 2.71 (PS 4:314.18–19), 2.21 (PS 4:281.3–8). In the case of the divine energies, calling them *onta* denotes their existence and reality, being a corollary of *πράγμα*; see *Greg.* 2.21 (PS 4:281.8): “If they are among things that both are (οὔσι) and said, how are they not realities?” For a defense of *onta* language as applied to God, see *Gabr.* 22 (PS 2:349.15–17). Cf. *Akind.* 4.12.28 (PS 3:262.18–21); *Cap.* 88.13–14 (ed. Sinkewicz, 186): “even if they are called beings [ὄντα], nevertheless they are also beyond beings”.
- 211 Gregoras is said to have put forward the idea “that the divine energies of God are only names” such that they are “devoid of reality” (κενὰ πραγμάτων); *Greg.* 1.25 (PS 2:250, 29–30), 2.28, 29 (PS 4:286.18, 21). Cf. *Greg.* 2.20 (PS 4:280.23): ἔρημα πραγμάτων. The point, again, is that essence and energy, for Gregoras, differ “only in the utterance of the word;” *Greg.* 1.36 (PS 4:259.10–11). Cf. *Greg.* 2.7 (PS 4:270.3–4, 9–10). See Gregoras, *Historia* 20.3 (Bonn 2:972), 30.11 (Bonn 3:274–275).
- 212 Cf. *Summa Theologiae* 1.13.4, resp.: *et ideo nomina Deo attributa, licet significant unam rem, tamen, quia significant eam sub rationibus multis et diversis, non sunt synonyma.*
- 213 *Cap.* 144.3–4 (ed. Sinkewicz, 248). One of the reasons that this point is often overlooked is that the translation of Sinkewicz (249), probably through a typographical error, gives this the exact opposite meaning: “‘there’ one of the names differs from another in its denotation.”
- 214 Cf. *Greg.* 1.36 (PS 4:259.5); *Cap.* 135.1–2 (ed. Sinkewicz, 250).
- 215 See Sinkewicz, *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, 44–45, 259–270. Cf. Cyril, *Thesaurus* 31 (PG 75:444BC).
- 216 *Cap.* 120.7–11 (ed. Sinkewicz, 220–222).
- 217 This occurs within the exegesis of a passage by St Maximos, which uses the language of ἄφετος for the simple *ousia* of God (*Theological Chapters* 2.2–3; PG 90:112CD).
- 218 *Akind.* 1.6.12 (PS 3:48.4–10).
- 219 *Cap.* 144.1–6 (ed. Sinkewicz, 248).

- 220 See, for example, Williams, “Philosophical Structures,” 32.
- 221 *Cap.* 81 is framed by the observation that “People say that the entryways of the School of Plato bore the inscription, ‘Let no one enter who is ignorant of geometry’” (ed. Sinkewicz, 176.1–2).
- 222 Ed. Sinkewicz, 176.3–4.
- 223 *Ibid.*, 176.7–8.
- 224 *Ibid.*, 176.8–9.
- 225 *Ibid.*, 176.10–11. I do not concur with the translation of Sinkewicz here, since it seems clear that Gregory moves from bodies to nature “in itself” (καθ’ ἑαυτήν) (*ibid.*, 176.9).
- 226 *Ibid.*, 176.11–13.
- 227 *Ibid.*, 176.15–19.
- 228 *Ibid.*, 176.19–178.25.
- 229 *Tomos of 1351*, 27 (ed. Karmires, 326.1).
- 230 *Tomos of 1351*, 28 (ed. Karmires, 327.7–8).
- 231 See Demetracopoulos, “Palamas Transformed,” 282–283.
- 232 Cf. Lévy, “Lost in *Translatio*,” 440–441.
- 233 Although Palamas does not use the term *epinoia* in this discussion, both the *Chapters* and the *Tomos* seem to correspond very closely to the separation by the mind (ἐπινοία) of the Trinitarian Persons described by John of Damaskos, *Exact Exposition* 8 (1.8) (ed. Kotter 2:2829). For a discussion, see Bradshaw, “Essence and Energy: What Kind of Distinction?” 17–18. I believe the observations of Norman Russell and David Bradshaw are correct, linking the potentially controversial character of *epinoia* with the problematic history of this term in the twelfth-century controversies over Jn 14:28. See Russell, “The Christological Context,” 192–193; Bradshaw, “Essence and Energies: What Kind of Distinction?” 18–21.
- 234 *Asan.* 10 (PS 2:371.32–372.1).
- 235 *Akind.* 5.25.101 (PS 3:365.1–2): τὰ θεῖα σωματικῶς οὐ μερίζεται.
- 236 *Akind.* 5.25.101 (PS 3:365.6–7).
- 237 *Part.* 25 (PS 2:158.30–35).
- 238 In *Cap.* 136, too, Gregory speaks of an essence without energy as “a purely mental construct” (διανοίας μόνον θεώρημα); *Cap.* 136.2 (ed. Sinkewicz, 242). Cf. Kappes et al., “Palamas among the Scholastics,” 196, 199. Ivánka is not quite correct, then, when he attributes to Neo-Palamism, as opposed to Palamas himself, the idea that “we separate in our thought that which is inseparable;” *Plato Christianus*, 406.
- 239 See Chapter 1, p. 21.

6 Unity and Distinction

The Trinitarian Dimensions of Essence and Energies

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we saw that in the apologetic for divine simplicity, St Gregory Palamas saw himself not only as differentiating God's *energeiai* from his *ousia* but also as uniting what belongs to God by nature with the essence in which they inhere. Although his critics accuse him of preaching *two divinities*, it is they, Palamas says, who tear asunder the Godhead by separating God's essential energies from his nature and relegating his powers to the status of creatures. Indeed, by separating essence and energy into created and uncreated, Akindynos, according to Palamas, perfectly divides the indivisible and destroys the unity of God.¹ This is precisely the title of a treatise written by Palamas in 1342: *That it is really Barlaam and Akindynos who, in wicked and atheistic manner, divide the one Godhead into two unequal divinities.*² In this work, he summarizes the doctrine of his two earliest opponents as follows:

Though the Church, and we who have been nourished by her, confess and worship a single divinity, uncreated in every aspect (κατὰ πάντα) and lacking in nothing, Barlaam, who arrived from Calabria, and Akindynos, from the provincial city of Prilep, appeared among us as most useful instruments of the primordial enemy of the Divinity, spouting the most impious things, and cutting the one Divinity—for shame!—into created and uncreated. They said that the divine nature alone is uncreated, while they denigrated every divine power and energy and, simply, each of the things that exists around the divine nature and inheres naturally in God (φυσικῶς προσόντων), to the status of creatures, since these are not nature but differ from it in some way; and this alone [i.e., essence] is, according to them, uncreated divinity.³

Gregory's own teaching, he maintains, is put forward, on the contrary, to preserve the unity and integrity of God's being by maintaining that God's powers, relations, and properties are truly God, even if they are not his very essence. In this sense, the doctrine of Palamas is oriented against two distinct but interrelated theses: (1) that everything in God is synonymous with *ousia*

and (2) that everything other than essence is created. Gregory outlines this twofold problem in a characteristic description of the Akindynist heresy:

Not only do we *not* say, at all, that there is a created and an uncreated divinity of God, but we do not even say that there are many uncreated divinities. Whereas you, in a manner at once wicked and atheistic, introduce the novelty of an unfamiliar dissection and an unusual circumcision of the one Divinity—the latter when you say that the uncreated energy is undifferentiated from the uncreated essence (so that God would be essence only, deprived of every energy), the former when you say that every power that is not essence is created, not even remembering the power of will, about which the Fathers said and suffered so much.⁴

The issue here centers, again, on the application of the term *divinity* (θεότης). The Akindynists, Palamas claims, ‘circumcise’ the divinity by reducing it to *ousia*, removing from God the natural energy that accompanies essence; and they ‘dissect’ it by cutting it into two, dividing the one Godhead into uncreated and created.

In the context of this polemic, the concern of Palamas is not merely to *differentiate* essence and energy but also to argue that the powers and energies of God, although not identical to the divine nature, are nevertheless fully eternal, uncreated, divine, and essential to the three Persons of the Trinity.

The most important illustration, for Palamas, that not everything in God is reducible to *ousia* is the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. That God is not only a monad, or unity of essence, is, for Palamas, what allows God to be also a triad, or Trinity, of Persons. But if the Divinity were reduced to *ousia*, or substance, then, this would necessarily do away with the distinctive Christian belief in three hypostases. Gregory’s appeal to Trinitarian distinction in this regard, as a kind of analogy between the distinction of Persons and the distinction between essence and energies, has drawn a fair amount of attention from scholars. John Demetracopoulos, for one, has attributed to Palamas the claim that the essence–energies distinction “is at least as real as the distinction between the Persons of the Holy Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit).”⁵ Yet relatively little attention has been paid to the way that Trinitarian theology *as a whole* grounds Palamas’s understanding of multiplicity and the distinction between essence and energies. The present chapter examines this broad topic to better understand how Palamas negotiates the coexistence of unity and distinction in God by looking, in particular, at the way that Trinitarian theology and Gregory’s understanding of Trinitarian categories, governs Palamas’s thinking in this area. It will show that, for Palamas, a God who admits of no categories other than essence is problematic not only because it removes the uncreated energies from the realm of the Divine but because it robs God of the very features that make him Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Whether Everything Distinct from God's *Ousia* Is Created

The Distinction between Essence and Hypostasis

The claim that ‘everything differing in any way from the divine nature (πᾶν τὸ διαφέρον ὁμοιωθῆναι τῆς θείας φύσεως) is created’ is a phrase that Palamas attributes to both Akindynos⁶ and Gregoras.⁷ In the proceedings of the *Debate* with Palamas, as we have already seen, Gregoras is portrayed as saying precisely that whatever is different from God’s essence is a creature (πᾶν τὸ διαφέρον τῆς οὐσίας, κτίσμα).⁸ Palamas traces this idea, originally, to Barlaam, who is credited with saying, “There is one Uncreated, the beginningless and endless essence of God. Everything besides this is of a generate nature.”⁹ For Palamas, this thesis constitutes the basic theological error of Barlaamism, and he sees it as a common theme among all his opponents. Thus, when Akindynos states, “There is no other uncreated divinity and energy besides the nature of God,” Palamas accuses Akindynos of espousing the heresy of Barlaam.¹⁰ Gregoras, too, is said to make “the principle, starting point, and, as it were, root and foundation of his own polemical writing the same as Barlaam and Akindynos.”¹¹ For Palamas, the idea that “God’s nature alone is uncreated” was common to his three major opponents and constituted a point of agreement (συμφωνία) between them.¹² Thus, in spite of any differences that might otherwise obtain between his primary interlocutors, Palamas saw his three main opponents as united in their reduction of everything uncreated to essence.

Whatever the underlying intentions behind the claim that “everything uncreated is essence” (πᾶν ἄκτιστον οὐσία),¹³ Palamas saw as its most obvious consequence the abrogation not only of God’s uncreated energies but also of the distinct hypostases of the Trinity itself, which, unlike essence, are not one but three. Beginning in the *Triads*, Palamas notes that if everything that is not essence has a beginning, the Father, too, would have a beginning.¹⁴ Likewise, in his treatise *On the Divine Energies*, he notes that if everything that is not essence is a creature, then the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit themselves would be creatures.¹⁵ The underlying premise of such statements is, of course, the belief that hypostasis is not *ousia* and that the Person of the Father, and the Persons of the Son and the Holy Spirit, are not convertible with the divine essence or substance as such.

Readers of Palamas have often gravitated to the claim that hypostasis and *ousia* are different, faulting Palamas for distinguishing between the divine Persons and nature. Rowan Williams, for example, takes exception to the distinction between hypostasis and substance and protests that the divine Persons “are not other than the *ousia* ...; quite simply, they *are* the *ousia*.”¹⁶ Indeed, this is a principle that is familiar and widely accepted in Western Christianity. In its popular reception, the identification of the Persons of the Trinity with the divine essence is usually associated with Aquinas, who argues repeatedly throughout his writings that, in God, the Persons do not differ from the essence.¹⁷ It also associated with the twelfth-century controversy surrounding Gilbert de la Porrée, who was putatively censured for distinguishing

between Person and essence in God.¹⁸ In the context of this wider tradition, it is not uncommon, today, for the idea that the *hyposastes* are identical to the essence to be presented as “the traditional doctrine” of the Trinity, even being identified with the doctrine of Nicaea.¹⁹

To an extent, the rejection of any difference between the Persons of the Trinity and the divine essence stems from an obvious desire to preserve the radical unity of the Trinity.²⁰ It is intended, especially, to ward off any conception of an essence beyond or above the Persons, and to avoid the implication that *ousia* is simply an abstraction or a genus realized or subdivided by the individual hypostases.²¹ Yet the absolute identity of hypostasis and *ousia* is not something that Palamas takes for granted. Although the essence is certainly ‘what’ each of the Persons is, Palamas does not accept that hypostasis itself is convertible with *ousia* or that to possess the divine nature is identical to being a particular hypostasis. For one, the Father and the Son are said to have the *same* essence so that they are consubstantial (ὁμοούσιος), and yet the hypostasis of the Father is not the hypostasis of the Son. “For being God from God the Father, as well as Son, he is not other (ἄλλος) in the sense that he is uncreated God. But he is other (ἄλλος) to the extent that he is Son.”²² Hypostasis, in other words, is that whereby the Father and the Son differ, and thus, it cannot simply be the same as *ousia*, whereby they are one and the same. For if the hypostasis of the Father is convertible with the divine essence, then the Son, by virtue of being, or having, the same essence, would also be the Father. Therefore, if the Persons of the Trinity are to be truly distinct from one another, what they are at the level of hypostasis cannot be tantamount to being God or existing as a single *ousia*.

For Palamas, the claims of Akindynos, in particular, implied just such an identification of the divine substance with the distinct Persons, “since these alone, according to him, did not differ in any way from the essence of God” (κατ’ οὐδένα τρόπον διενηνόχασιν τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Θεοῦ).²³ Yet, according to Palamas, the only possible consequence of such a claim is that the category of hypostasis is eliminated altogether. For “that which does not differ from essence at all is simply essence.”²⁴ Here, again, the point is not to deny that each of the Persons is fully and wholly God but to reject the radical elision of the category of hypostasis, or what it means to be a particular Person, with the category of essence. If, according to Palamas, being Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, individually and distinctly, were in no way distinguished from being God by nature, then there could in fact be no peculiar thing as ‘being Father,’ ‘being Son,’ and ‘being Holy Spirit.’ The Persons would simply be identical, and there would be no hypostases to speak of, only a single undifferentiated essence.

For Palamas, then, to say that only the *ousia* is uncreated leads to real theological problems, not only regarding the divine energies but even regarding basic Trinitarian doctrine.²⁵ In this sense, the appeal to the difference between *ousia* and hypostasis serves as a useful *reductio ad absurdum* to establish that not everything in God can be identified with essence or substance. Although the Persons of the Trinity are a single essence, they could not be

distinguished from one another if essence were all there is. And while this does not in itself rise to the level of an argument for the *existence* of eternal uncreated energies distinct from the essence, it clearly provides a foundation or precedent for the possibility of speaking about God in terms other than just *ousia*.

The Hypostatic Attributes

In connection with the distinction between Persons and nature, it is sometimes asserted that Palamas's theology posits three realities in the Godhead: nature, energy, and Person.²⁶ This is connected especially to a passage in the *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* where Gregory explicitly states that "there are three things in God: essence, energy, and a Trinity of divine hypostases."²⁷ Not only does this passage invoke the distinction between essence and Person, but it has often been seen as a proof that Palamas also puts the distinction between essence and energies on the same level as the distinction between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.²⁸ Yet what is usually ignored in referring to this passage is that it reproduces only part of Gregory's more detailed system of classification. Consistent with the sometimes fragmentary character of the *Chapters*, the passage in which this statement appears offers only a glimpse of the broader lexicon that Gregory employs throughout his other writings. In addition to *ousia* hypostasis, and *energeia*, Palamas frequently discusses another category that has received little attention, namely, that of the hypostatic attributes (τὰ ὑποστατικά).²⁹ The category of *hypostatika*, or personal, as opposed to essential, properties represents yet another level of distinction in God, who has not only essence, energies, and hypostasis but also 'the things of hypostasis.'

The things of hypostasis, as features of the distinct Persons, include, specifically, the ingeneracy of the Father (τὸ ἀγέννητον), as well as the fact of being begotten that characterizes the Son (τὸ γεννητόν), and the fact of having proceeded that characterizes the Holy Spirit (τὸ ἐκπορευτόν).³⁰ These are the peculiarities (ιδιότητες) traditionally associated with the three Persons, which mark out their specific mode of existence.³¹ They are joined by other distinctively hypostatic properties. The Father, for example, is uncaused (ἀναίτιος), cause (αἴτιος), begetter (γεννήτωρ), and emitter (προβολεύς),³² which, again, are attributes or properties that are unique to a given Person. "For proper (ἴδιον) to each of them is the hypostasis of each one and whatever pertains to it (ὅσα τείνει πρὸς αὐτήν)."³³ Palamas includes in this category the mutual indwelling and *perichoresis*, or circumincession, of the Persons.³⁴ This is the celebrated interpenetration of the three hypostases, whereby the Father is in the Son, the Son is in the Father, and both are in the Holy Spirit, and so on, without any of the Persons being confused with one another. Yet this ineffable and mysterious indwelling, according to Palamas, as the abiding (μονή) of the three Persons within one another, is also not the divine essence, nor is it the Persons as such. It is a feature, rather, of the distinct Persons, as the interrelationship between them.³⁵

As attributes of the distinct Persons, the *hypostatika* are analogous to the energies so that there is an obvious parallelism between the things of hypostasis (τὰ ὑποστατικά), on the one hand, and the things of essence (τὰ οὐσιώδη) or the things of nature (τὰ φυσικά), on the other. Much like the energies, Gregory also refers to them explicitly as idioms or properties (ιδιώματα), in this case the idioms and properties of the Person.³⁶ Indeed, the hypostatic attributes are the ‘characteristic’ idioms (χαρακτηριστικά ιδιώματα) of each hypostasis.³⁷ In this way, just as the energies characterize the divine nature, the hypostatic attributes characterize the Persons.³⁸

As evidenced by the parallelism between essential and hypostatic idioms, the personal attributes are not themselves included among the divine energies.³⁹ Being the things of nature (τὰ φυσικά), the former are distinct from the things of hypostasis (τὰ ὑποστατικά),⁴⁰ since the energies are common to the Trinity while the hypostatic attributes are unique to each Person. An obvious consequence of this distinction is that things like the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit are not themselves called energies or activities. Although one may be tempted to see generation and procession as ‘acts’ of the Godhead, Palamas does not in fact include them among the divine *energeiai*.⁴¹ Rather, for Palamas the ‘energies,’ as attributes of the shared nature, are what is common to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As Palamas notes in a paraphrase from the scholia to the *Divine Names*, “the energies and every hymnology of theology are not meted out like portions to just one of the Holy Trinity, but, with the exception of the hypostatic idioms, are common to the Trinity.”⁴² Thus, while things like holiness and dominion belong to all three Persons, things like ingeneracy belong to the Father alone.⁴³

But just as the Persons are not identical and reducible to the divine essence, Gregory is explicit that the hypostatic attributes are not reducible to the hypostasis to which they belong.⁴⁴ This means that the ingeneracy of the Father is not itself the hypostasis of the Father, the begottenness of the Son is not itself the hypostasis of the Son, and the attribute of proceeding is not itself the hypostasis of the Holy Spirit. The peculiarities (ιδιότητες), in other words, and any other characteristic of the Persons, are not to be confused with the Persons themselves. Thus, while features like being unoriginate, begetter, and so on are indeed *enhypostatic* in the Father, since they inhere and are seen in the Person of the Father, they are not his hypostasis.⁴⁵ Once again, this mirrors the relationship of the energies with the essence, since the hypostatic properties are said to be ‘in the hypostasis’ the way that the natural and essential properties are said to be *enousia* or ‘in the essence.’⁴⁶ Thus, just as the ‘the things of nature’ are not themselves nature, so the hypostatic attributes are not themselves hypostasis.⁴⁷ Citing St Gregory the Theologian, Palamas points out, “He who wills is one thing, and will is another. He who generates is one thing, and generation (γέννησις) is another. He who speaks is one thing, and Word is another, unless we are out of our wits.”⁴⁸

Once again, it is noteworthy that Palamas’s concerns intersect with a number of debates in Scholastic theology. Part of the controversy surrounding Gilbert de la Porrée was precisely whether the *proprietaes* of each person

were the Persons themselves or merely ‘in the Persons.’⁴⁹ Yet without inserting Palamas directly into that specific controversy, whose parameters, pre-suppositions, and terms do not necessarily match those of the Palamite controversy, it is nevertheless possible to note that Gregory’s own view is that the hypostatic particularities are *not* identical to the distinct Persons in whom they are contemplated.⁵⁰ Later critics of Palamas would demur the multiplication of distinctions within the Godhead. John Kyparissiotes, criticizing Palamite theology in the immediate aftermath of the condemnation of Gregoras, would refer in this sense to “another difference” in God in addition to the usual difference of Persons.⁵¹ Gregory’s purpose, of course, in making these distinctions is to show that it is not only the category of nature or essence that is uncreated.⁵² By claiming that it is, his opponents, it seems to Palamas, have failed to account for the basic elements of Trinitarian theology,⁵³ not because the hypostatic idioms add anything to some underlying reality of three divine Persons but because the category of hypostatic attributes is, of itself, a necessary feature of basic Trinitarian doctrine, which supplies the parameters for speaking not only of a single divine substance but of three distinct Persons with their own particularities as well. Without such concepts, beyond that of *ousia*, it is impossible, for Palamas, that Christians should be able to speak coherently about the trihypostatic God. When everything but the divine essence is created, or collapsed into essence itself, then the doctrine of God lacks the very features whereby he is called Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Error of Eunomios: Hypostatic Attributes and the Ingenerate Essence of God

In the Byzantine theological tradition, anti-Trinitarian error was often associated specifically with the name of Eunomios of Kyzikos, whose radical separation of the Only-begotten Son from the essence of the Unbegotten figured prominently, among the various forms of ‘Arianism’ in Greek patristic literature. Medieval Greek writers encountered the memory of Eunomianism in the writings of their most authoritative Church Fathers: Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory the Theologian, Cyril of Alexandria, and John Chrysostom. Palamas himself even encounters strong echoes of the anti-Eunomian legacy in the *De Trinitate* of St Augustine.⁵⁴

For Palamas, like other theologians in Byzantium, the heresy of Eunomios was associated, especially, with the confusion of God’s hypostatic properties (and specifically the Father’s attribute of being unbegotten) with the divine essence.⁵⁵ Palamas summarizes the Eunomian position as holding that

ingeneracy is not something other than the Father. For he alone is ingenerate. Thus, ingeneracy is the essence of the Father. If someone says that being generate (τὸ γεννητόν) is also uncreated, he clearly believes either that there are two uncreated Gods or that it is one thing composed of the two of them.⁵⁶

The reduction of everything in God to *ousia*, therefore, by Barlaam, Akindynos, and Gregoras, was seen by Palamas to renew the heresy of Eunomios by implying that hypostatic attributes like ingeneracy, insofar as they are uncreated, must be identical to God's nature.

Whoever says that only the essence of God is uncreated, and in this sense that 'the Uncreated is one thing,' and that whatever is not essence but around the essence of God is created—such a one also says that the hypostatic attributes, namely, ingeneracy, being begotten, and having proceeded, since they are uncreated, are the essence of God. And such a one is nothing but a Eunomios.⁵⁷

Among the consequences of identifying hypostatic attributes with substance, for Palamas, is that not only ingeneracy, but all of the personal idioms of the Trinity are identified with *ousia*. Thus, Palamas points out, if "everything uncreated is no different from the divine nature," the generation of the Son, too, would be nature.⁵⁸ But if the generation of the Son is nature, then to the extent that ingeneracy is the opposite of generation (ἀντικειμένως ἐχουσα πρὸς τὴν γέννησιν), the unbegottenness of the Father would also be a nature, "as Eunomios said."⁵⁹ The result, in accordance with the Eunomian heresy, is that the nature of the Father would be different from that of the Son.⁶⁰

An alternative, and equally problematic, consequence of saying that only the divine essence is without beginning, as Barlaam taught, is to say that the Father, as something other than essence, was created.⁶¹ Since the Person of God the Father is not the essence as such, but around the essence, the Father would therefore be reduced to a creature, if indeed "there is only one uncreated and endless: the essence of God."⁶² This problem applies, again, not only to the ingeneracy of the Father but also to all of the hypostatic attributes. The only other alternative to identifying the personal particularities of the Trinity with the essence would be to exclude the hypostatic properties altogether, and thus the Persons themselves, from the uncreated Godhead. For if only the divine essence is uncreated, then either the hypostatic attributes are creatures or they are essence. "But if they say that they are essence, they are Eunomians; and if they say they are creatures, they have surpassed the impiety even of Eunomios," who at least taught that the Father was uncreated.⁶³ To the extent, therefore, that all such things follow from collapsing everything uncreated into the category of essence, the doctrine of Akindynos, for Palamas, presents serious problems not only for essence and energies but also for the whole doctrine of the Trinity.⁶⁴

Relation and Trinitarian Order

In Augustine's *De Trinitate*, Palamas finds further support for the idea that if God is to be truly trihypostatic, he must admit of categories besides *ousia*. This is because God, in addition to being a single essence, also admits the category of relation (τὸ πρὸς τι). Indeed, if God is to be the Trinity that

Christians confess and worship, he must admit the category of relation, not only with regard to creation but even in himself.⁶⁵ This is because God, in addition to all else, is a Father, which denotes relation to a Son, and he is a Son, which denotes relation to a Father.⁶⁶ Significantly, Palamas even includes the procession of the Spirit, as a projection (πρόβλημα) of the Father, among the relations that exist in God.⁶⁷ Not only substance, then, but relation, too, factors into the Christian conception of God. Those who insist otherwise, that God has nothing but *ousia*, do away with these relations, leaving no room for the distinction of Persons and the confession of a Trinity, to say nothing of God's relation to creation, *qua* Creator, or to the baptized as their adoptive Father.⁶⁸

Earlier in his polemic with Akindynos, Palamas had argued along similar lines that the category of *ousia* by itself also fails to explain the ordering and ranking of the Trinity.⁶⁹ Specifically, he notes that orthodox Trinitarian dogma holds that the Son and the Holy Spirit are said to be 'after,' literally 'to come second to' (δευτερεύειν), the Person of the Father.⁷⁰ Traditionally, this expresses the natural order (ἡ φυσικὴ τάξις) of the Trinity, according to which each Person has a specific rank or dignity (ἄξια or ἄξιωμα).⁷¹ Occurring primarily in *Against Akindynos* 1–3, Gregory's discussion of Trinitarian *taxis* depends explicitly on Basil's *Adversus Eunomium* 3, on the divinity of the Holy Spirit. This treatise refutes Eunomios's claim that "[t]he Holy Spirit, being third in dignity and in rank (ἄξιωματι καὶ τάξει), is third also in nature."⁷² For Basil, as for Palamas, the Persons of the Trinity do certainly differ from one another and even admit a certain subordination. But the fact that there is rank and dignity in the Godhead does not mean that this ordering reflects a difference of nature. For Palamas, if the Son is not second to the Father in nature (οὐ τῇ φύσει) but rather in the ranking that follows from the natural order in God, then clearly rank cannot be identical to nature,⁷³ and nature must be something other (ἕτερον) than rank.⁷⁴ The rank of each Person, like the hypostatic idioms, is still 'essential,' since it is not created or accidental to God's being;⁷⁵ it belongs to God's nature (φύσει πρόσουσα) in the same manner that the hypostatic attributes and the divine energies are said to inhere in the divine nature.⁷⁶ But like these other features, it is not nature itself.⁷⁷ Thus, if the claim of Akindynos is true, that "whatever differs in any way from nature" is created, then this would also make the rank (ἡ ἄξια) of the Son and the Spirit something created.⁷⁸ Alternatively, if one were to say, as Akindynos does, that "everything uncreated is essence,"⁷⁹ then the rank of the Son and the Spirit become indistinguishable from the essence, and so the subordination of the Son and the Spirit would be placed at the level of nature. The result is that the Son and the Spirit would be second to the Father *in essence*, which was precisely the heresy of Eunomios that Basil sought to refute.⁸⁰

Approaching a Trinitarian Analogy

In light of the historic errors of Eunomios, then, and other heresies of Trinitarian theology, Palamas sought to repudiate the claim that everything

other than the divine essence is necessarily created. If all in God is *ousia*, then there is no room to speak of Trinitarian Persons, their hypostatic idioms, and the plurality of names around the essence. Gregory's purpose in engaging in this rhetoric is clearly to show that even without acknowledging the existence of God's uncreated energies, his opponents cannot avoid upholding a number of distinctions in God. Yet in the orthodox conception, God is not only an undifferentiated essence but also three unique Persons and a plurality of attributes. These references to the problems of Trinitarian theology, however, do not yet rise to the level of an *argumentum a fortiori* for the possible coexistence of unity and plurality in God.⁸¹ Rather, the invocation of Trinitarian distinction that we have been examining functions merely as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the Barlaamite thesis. It is meant, as we have seen, to undermine the claim that everything but the divine nature is created. Still, even if Gregory's efforts to this effect do not yet rise to the level of a strict argument for how a simple God can possess a multiplicity of divine energies, they do, nevertheless, set the stage for an overt analogy. This is because Trinitarian theology as whole provides the basic polemical and rhetorical context for talking about the essence and energies in the God who is not only simple but also all-powerful and trihypostatic.

Trinitarian Theology as the Broader Context of the Divine Energies

Although the discussion of Trinitarian distinction by Palamas is occasioned, in part, by what is seen as a blanket denial of any and all difference in God, it is also the case that the controversy over God's uncreated energies elicits theological language that is replete with Trinitarian resonances. To begin with, Barlaam had urged that there was only 'one thing without beginning' (ἓν ἀναρχον), in the sense that only the divine essence was uncreated.⁸² Palamas would therefore insist that "there was never a time" when the divine energies did not exist (οὐκ ἦν ὅτε οὐκ ἦν).⁸³ Later on, Akindynos, too, would frequently be compared to Arius for his severing (κατατομή) of the Godhead.⁸⁴ Indeed, all of Palamas's opponents were seen as denigrating the Divinity to the status of creature (εἰς κτίσμα κατασπῶν) by rejecting the uncreated character of God's natural energies. Here again, the language overtly follows the phraseology of fourth-century Trinitarian polemic.⁸⁵ Thus, when Palamas notes that God's essence and energies are distinct from one another (ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο), this is evocative not only of the fact that distinction itself is a necessary condition for Trinitarian theology but also of the way in which the essence–energies distinction is consciously mapped, as we shall see, onto the terms of the earliest debates over the Trinity.⁸⁶

The association of contemporary theological error with ancient heresies long condemned is not, of course, unique to Palamas. Not only do his opponents respond in kind,⁸⁷ but, as a polemical strategy, such rhetoric also has a long history and functions as a commonplace in Byzantine theology and beyond. Nevertheless, the Trinitarian dimensions of Gregory's polemics do

not serve only to establish the gravity of the blasphemy involved in denying the existence of God's uncreated energies, or to sensationalize the errors of his opponents; they also help to ground the essence–energies distinction itself in the basic questions of Christian theology.

Unity and Distinction: A Primordial Struggle

The basic problems of unity and distinction with which both Trinitarian theology and the essence–energies distinction are concerned do not only show the continued relevance of fourth-century theology for the theological debates of Late Byzantium. According to Palamas, these problems form part of a much longer, primordial human struggle against unorthodox conceptions of God. In book six of *Against Akindynos*, Palamas reflects on this bigger picture and seeks to contextualize the issue at hand in terms of humanity's historic journey from theological transgression to orthodoxy. Specifically, this means the journey from polytheism to Trinitarian monotheism, a process that is contextualized precisely in terms of unity and distinction:

For, of old, when the Sophist of deceit separated the human race from God, he announced, by means of the Greek language, that there are many gods, in heaven, on earth, and under the earth (cf. Ex. 20:4; Phil. 2:10); and soon, through their rhetoric, he convinced all men to worship them, as if one God was not able to save man, this variegated creature who is both celestial and earthly. But then this deceit was refuted, when Christ, the only all-powerful and almighty God of all appeared, who sojourned from heaven to earth, descended, again, from earth to Hades, returning once more and ascending into the heavens with the human body. And when he had accomplished, in everything, all that he willed to do, then the leader of deceit turned his attention to another deception. He feigns at driving away the error of polytheism and pretends to bring all men to the one God, using, on each occasion, the words of the cacodox, but really separating them from the one God. For he convinces them, using the sophistries of the heretics, that God is not trihypostatic and all-powerful. For, 'How,' they ask, 'is there a God from God and an uncreated divinity from an uncreated divinity? Then there would be two Gods and two divinities. And if, in these Uncreateds there is one who is greater and transcendent, and one who is second and in some sense subordinate, then either there are two gods or the one that is comprised of transcendent and subordinate is composite. Thus, [they say] if the Son or the Holy Spirit is uncreated, they do not differ from the Father. Rather, the same one is both Father and Son. But if the Son and the Holy Spirit differ from the Father, then there is one uncreated God, the Father, who is God over all, having as his essence his own ingeneracy and every power and energy that corresponds to him. That which is from him, even when this is in any way subordinate, is one of the things created by him.'⁸⁸

The question of unity and multiplicity, in other words, with which Palamas is concerned, is the same question to which polytheism and anti-Trinitarian error offer false solutions and to which monotheism and Trinitarian orthodoxy offer the correct response. Seen in this way, the problems associated with Trinitarian theology are not unique to a specific episode in the history of the Church but constitute the fundamental problem of theology that permeates all human striving for God. For this reason, Palamas explains that every wicked heresy has its beginning “in the dualities of theology” (ἐν ταῖς διπλόαις θεολογίας), privileging either unity or difference at the expense of the other.⁸⁹

The erroneous reconciliation of Trinitarian theology with the unity of God is marked, at one extreme, by the heresy of Sabellianism, which wickedly combines the three Persons, and at the other by that of Arianism, which perversely divides them.⁹⁰ The first, says Palamas, is an unlawful contraction (συστολή) of the divinity, the other an unlawful expansion (διαστολή).⁹¹ Yet both end not in rescuing humanity from an unlawful multiplicity but by destroying the concept of God altogether.

What did [the heretics] wish to accomplish by this? Not polytheism, but atheism. For how can the Father whose Son is not true God be true God? How can he be uncreated who begets something created? How can they be Father or Son if each of them is the same, each being driven by the other into non-being? Thus the champion of deception was refuted in these things too, when the holy Fathers preached one God in three uncreated Persons, differing hypostatically, and thereby wisely disposed of both confusion and composition. For he is one in three hypostases, unconfused and uncomposite, the three thearchic hypostases being united (συνημμένων) not only in the same nature, but also in the same will and power and energy.⁹²

Gregory’s obvious purpose here is to provide as wide a context as possible for the current controversy so that the problems of unity and distinction that characterize Trinitarian theology can be seen to characterize the debate over essence and energies as well. In his way, the blasphemies of Gregory’s own opponents are framed as part of the ongoing attacks of the devil:

But even when he had been refuted in these matters too, that hapless inventor of deception did not know how to keep quiet forever. Nor could he bear to abandon the deception that led those who believed him into atheism. Instead, he craftily eliminated part of that first deception, so as to win over the many. But part of it he took up, ... suggesting once again, to those who fell to his delusion, that they should say that God is truly one and to worship him in three hypostases, not in the sense that there is one common nature, will, power, energy, kingdom, wisdom, goodness, infinity, simplicity, etc., of the three, but in the sense that all of these are a single thing—the essence alone—while everything besides is created. “For,” they say, “if the divine power and energy, called ‘divinity,’ were also

uncreated, and ‘from uncreated divinity,’ i.e., the essence of God, how will there not be two uncreated Gods and divinities? And if one of these Uncreateds is transcendent, as cause, and the other is secondary and subordinate to the one from which it derives, either there will be two divinities or one composed out of the two, a mixture of transcendent and lower divinity. Thus, if the divine will and power and energy are uncreated, then they do not differ from the uncreated essence. In this way, we preserve a single divinity and a single uncreated God. But if they differ from the essence, then the single uncreated divinity is the essence that transcends them as their cause, while those things that derive from the essence and are somehow subordinate and distinct from it are numbered among God’s creations.”⁹³

Framed in this way, the rejection of the essence-energies distinction replicates precisely the logic of anti-Trinitarian theologies of the past and extends its errors to the present day. Palamas will therefore refer to the doctrine of Barlaam and Akindynos as “the recapitulation (*ἀνακεφαλαίωσις*) of every evil heresy.”⁹⁴ Indeed, Palamas says, his opponents not only revive ancient heresy, but they actually surpass it, since they not only deny distinction in God but combine opposite errors together into one monstrous blasphemy as well. Barlaam is thus a new brand of heretic, one who “wickedly compounds and divides (*συνάπτοντα καὶ διαιροῦντα*) the Godhead.”⁹⁵ Akindynos follows him in this, espousing both extremes of the ancient error at once, resulting in a third wickedness. He not only divides or compounds aspects of the Godhead, but he also implies that the divine hypostases are at once created and identical to the divine essence. The logical consequence of these combined postulates is that the essence of God itself is nothing more than a creature. In this way, the heresy of Barlaam and Akindynos is said to be worse than the heresies of old, surpassing classical impieties through the affirmation of an entirely new sacrilege.⁹⁶

To the extent, then, that the underlying problem surrounding the essence-energies distinction is essentially the same as in the early Church, Palamas sees himself as fighting the same battle as the great Fathers of the Church. Fighting against opposite extremes, which both divide and confuse the Godhead, Palamas’s own efforts are cast as a continuation and extension of the labors of Athanasios, Basil, Gregory the Theologian, and Cyril.⁹⁷ Palamas will therefore assert: “We, in imitation of the sacred Fathers, must nobly take a stand and resist; and he will flee from us, as the scripture says (Jas 4:7).”⁹⁸ For this reason, just as Eunomios had labeled Basil a tritheist for calling the three hypostases uncreated, so Palamas explains, the Barlaamites call him a ditheist for believing that essence and energies are uncreated.⁹⁹

It is not a narrow and isolated matter, then, whether God’s energies are created or whether they are reducible to *ousia*. It is a question, instead, of the ultimate relation between unity and distinction in the Godhead, which, for Palamas, has been under attack since the beginning of human history. The Church Fathers repeatedly sought to address this problem throughout the life

of the Church, and they did so particularly in the context of Trinitarian theology. The invocation of Trinitarian distinction in the context of essence and energies, therefore, cannot simply be discounted as a rhetorical commonplace or polemical escalation. It serves a real role in Gregory's theology and provides a basic hermeneutical framework for the whole problem of essence and energies. For Palamas, there is not simply a parallelism between hypostatic and energetic plurality. Rather, the question of unity and distinctions lies at the root of both Trinitarian theology and the distinction between God's essence and energies. If one does not understand the identity and difference in the Trinity, Palamas remarks, neither will one understand the unity and distinction of God's essence and energies.¹⁰⁰

Conclusion

As a doctrine concerned not only with difference but also with unity, the theology of uncreated energies seeks, in the estimation of Palamas, to confess the fullness of God's essential features without collapsing the various distinctions that exist in God into one another or into the divine essence. *Energieiai*, for Palamas, are not only distinct from God's *ousia*, but they are also themselves uncreated, inhering essentially and without confusion in the eternal Divinity. Although Gregory's opponents sought to maintain that only the divine *ousia* was uncreated, Palamas contextualizes his concern for essence and energies within the wider framework of Christian Trinitarian theology. God is not only *ousia*. He subsists in three Persons, each of which is characterized by particular idioms and attributes that distinguish one hypostasis from another. These 'hypostatic properties' include such things as the interpenetration of one Person within the other, and the relations of origin, so that the reduction of everything in God to an undifferentiated substance ends by stripping the Trinity not only of its hypostatic subsistence but also of its very relational character. Indeed, the elimination of things like the personal idioms of the Trinity and the traditional ordering of the Persons simply revives the Arianism of Eunomios and produces a host of problems for basic Christian theology.

The doctrine of the Trinity, for Palamas, puts the lie to the idea that polytheism can be avoided only by identifying everything in God with *ousia*. "Theology," Palamas explains in a quotation from Dionysios, "hands down some things unifiedly (τὰ ἠνωμένως) and some things distinctly (τὰ διακεκριμένως), so that it is unlawful either to divide what is united or confuse what is distinguished."¹⁰¹ Through the dialectic of unity and distinction, therefore, Palamas grounds the essence–energies distinction in the very terms of Trinitarian theology, making the theology of uncreated energies itself a Trinitarian problematic. When Palamas appeals, therefore, to the unity-in-distinction of the Trinity as an argument *a fortiori* for the simplicity of God in the midst of the essence–energies distinction, he does so within this wider context of the Trinitarian dimensions of the essence–energies distinction as a whole.

Notes

- 1 *Asan*. 10 (PS 2:372.15–16).
- 2 PS 2:263–277. Palamas was accused of teaching that God’s essence and energies, and the various energies themselves, were not only a plurality but also unequal (ἄνισα and ἀνόμοια). This charge was leveled by John Kalekas and Ignatius of Antioch as well as Akindynos. See *Ep. Ign.* 32 (PS 2:646.19–23); *Akind.* 6.24.89 (PS 3:454.10–12); *Ektih.* 1 (PS 2:579.89); cf. *Ep. Ign.* 28 (PS 2:644.8).
- 3 *Barl.* 4 (PS 2:265.4–15). Cf. *Energ.* 33 (PS 2:119.31–120.2).
- 4 *Gabr.* 19 (PS 2:346.23–31).
- 5 Demetracopoulos, “Palamas Transformed,” 273.
- 6 See, for example, *Akind.* 3.10.30 (PS 3:186.14–15), 4.9.19 (PS 3:255.25–26); *Barl.* 5 (PS 2:265.27–28), 9 (PS 2:269.13–14), 12 (PS 2:272.21–22); *Athan.* (PS 2:414.22); *Dion.* 4 (PS 2:482.4–5).
- 7 See *Greg.* 1.33 (PS 4:256.25–26), 1.39 (PS 4:260.29–30). In his *Antirrhetics against Gregoras*, Palamas quotes the philosopher as saying, “The only uncreated light and uncreated glory is the nature of God. Everything differing in any way (παρηλλαγμένον ὀπωσοῦν) from the divine nature is not uncreated” (*Greg.* 1.26; PS 4:251.2–5).
- 8 See Chapter 4, p. 126, n. 1.
- 9 *Greg.* 1.24 (PS 4:249.9–12). This is meant, of course, to denigrate the light of the Transfiguration. Cf. *Ep. Akind.* 3.4 (PS 1:298.13–17): “There is one thing beginningless and endless, the divine nature; and this is the only uncreated light and uncreated glory of God.”
- 10 *Akind.* 1.5.11 (PS 3:47.1–9).
- 11 *Greg.* 1.24 (PS 4:249.7–9). Cf. *Greg.* 1.26 “This great Gregoras says, ‘One only is the Uncreated: the divine and tri-hypostatic nature. Everything else, and everything after this, is created’ (PS 4:251.5–7). Cf. Gregoras, *Historia* 30.10 (Bonn 3:274.19–20).
- 12 See *Greg.* 1.27 (PS 4:251.8–25; esp. 20–23). Palamas consistently accuses his opponents of being ‘successors of Barlaam’ (οἱ τοῦ Βαρλαάμ διάδοχοι) in spite of their protestations to the contrary; see *Energ.* 47 (PS 2:132.16). Naturally, this is intended to implicate Akindynos and Gregoras in the condemnation of Barlaam, accepted almost universally even by Palamas’s opponents. Gregory characterizes their protestations to the contrary as part of their duplicity; see *Asan.* 14 (PS 2:374.17–24); *Athan.* 2–4 (PS 2:412.5–414.13); *Phil.* 10 (PS 2:527.1–8). For one of the ways in which Palamas does see Gregoras as saying something other than Barlaam and Akindynos, namely, by positing an ‘eternal created,’ see *Greg.* 1.28 (PS 4:251.26–252.5).
- 13 *Akind.* 1.7.26 (PS 3:58.17–18); cf. Akindynos, *Ep.* 50.60–61 (ed. Hero, 212): οὐκ ἔχει χωρὰν ἕτερον παρὰ τὴν τοῦτου φύσιν.
- 14 *Tr.* 3.2.4 (ed. Meyendorff, 649.21).
- 15 *Energ.* 27 (PS 2:115.31–116).
- 16 Williams, “Philosophical Structures,” 32–33. Cf. Trethowan, “Irrationality in Theology and the Palamite Distinction,” 24: “the three Persons are the divine ‘nature.’”
- 17 See, for example, *Summa Theologiae* 1, q. 28–29; 39, a. 1; *Commentary on the Sentences* I, d. 33, q. 1, a. 1; d. 34, q. 1, a. 1.
- 18 According to Gabriel Vasquez, Gilbert’s arguments for a distinction between essence and person hinge on the logic of the Incarnation and the eternal generation of the Son: if nature and person are the same, then when the Person of the Word is united to human nature, the divine nature is likewise united, and so suffers and dies, and since the Persons generate and are generated, the divine nature, too, would generate and be generated. *Cum ergo haec non concedenda, sequitur, essentiam non esse personam et contra (Commentariorum ac disputationum in*

primam partem Sancti Thomae [Lyons, 1631], cited in Grajewski, *The Formal Distinction of Duns Scotus*, 18).

- 19 See, for example, D. Stephen Long, *The Perfectly Simple Triune God: Aquinas and His Legacy*, xix–xxii.
- 20 Note that the *divina essentia* in Scholastic theology is often just a locution for ‘God himself.’ Cf. Peter Lombard, *Sentences* 1.33: *Utrum proprietates personarum sint ipsae personae et deus, id est diuina essentia* (ed. Brady 1:240). In this sense, the identification of the Persons (and anything else) with the divine essence is often motivated by the desire to confess that each of the hypostases is God—the whole God—and is therefore not a point of contention between East and West.
- 21 See Williams, “Philosophical Structures,” 33. Aquinas believes some have distinguished the subsistent relations in God from the essence because they understand relations to be added (*assistentes*) to the essence (*ST* I, q. 39, a. 1). Similarly, the position of Gilbert hinges on the concept of essence as that “through which” God is God, prompting Eugene III, and the Roman Church generally, to assert that the divine essence is not an abstraction distinct from God, but God himself; see Emery, “Trinité et Unité de Dieu dans la scolastique, XII^e–XIV^e siècles,” 201–204.
- 22 *Akind.* 3.19.84 (PS 3:221.9–11).
- 23 *Akind.* 6.23.86 (PS 3:452.9–11). Palamas is, of course, aware that Akindynos and Gregoras do not overtly deny the distinction of Persons. Akindynos is quoted as saying, “There is no difference whatsoever, in any way, in the one, whole, absolute, and trihypostatic divinity apart from the differences according to the three divine and superessential Persons;” *Akind.* 5.26.106 (PS 3:368.18–21). Cf. *Akind.* 1.7.16: οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ὄλως διαφορὰ τις ἐν τῷ θεῷ κατὰ μηδένα τρόπον, πλὴν τῶν κατὰ τὰ τρία πρόσωπα διαφορῶν (PS 3:5.11). The teaching of Gregoras, too, is said to specify that the ‘one uncreated’ is the *trihypostatic* essence; see *Greg.* 1.28 (PS 4:252.4).
- 24 *Akind.* 6.23.86 (PS 3:452.12–13). Palamas also pointed out that if essence and energy are identical, then Akindynos, by holding that the Son and the Spirit are the only uncreated energies of God, would end by conflating the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as a single, undifferentiated essence, thereby espousing the error of Sabellianism; see *Akind.* 1.7.44 (PS 3:70.1–16).
- 25 A full-scale dialogue between Scholastic and Palamite doctrines of the Trinity is not possible here. It is interesting to note, however, as Antoine Lévy has pointed out, that there is a certain correspondance, in the West, between the identity of essence and attributes and the identity of essence and Persons. Further study into the relationship between these two problems may prove crucial in resolving the impasse between the dogmatic presuppositions of Orthodox and Roman Catholic theology in this matter; see Lévy, “Lost in *Translatio*, 469–470.
- 26 See Meyendorff, “Trinitarian Theology East and West,” 26, 30; Torrance, “Precedents,” 49; Anastos, “Essence, Energies and Hypostasis: An Epistemological Analysis of the Eastern Orthodox Model of God;” id., “Gregory Palamas’ Radicalization of the Essence, Energies, and Hypostasis Model of God,” *GOTR* 38.1–4 (1993): 335–349. For Meyendorff, the triad of essence, hypostasis, and energy is an improvement on the ‘Aristotelian’ connection between nature and energy because it accounts for the “personal” character of act (“Trinitarian Theology East and West,” 37).
- 27 *Cap.* 75.1–2 (ed. Sinkewicz, 170): τριῶν ὄντων τοῦ θεοῦ, οὐσίας, ἐνεργείας, τριάδος ὑποστάσεων θείων. Cf. Damian, “A Few Considerations on the Uncreated Energies,” 107.
- 28 Cf. Demetracopoulos, “Palamas Transformed,” 273. It should be noted, however, that this particular passage does not touch on the analogy between the distinction of Persons and the distinction of essence and energy. Rather, it

- distinguishes between the various kinds of union that are possible with God: union according to essence, union according to energy, and hypostatic union; see *Cap.* 75.2–11 (ed. Sinkewicz, 170).
- 29 See *Dan.* 10 (PS 2:383.22–24); *Akind.* 6.16.61 (PS 3:432.15–18).
- 30 *Energ.* 27 (PS 2:115.26–30).
- 31 See *Akind.* 6.16.62 (PS 3:433.4); cf. *Akind.* 5.26.109 (PS 3:371.5–9). Gregory uses the phrase τρόπος υπάρξεως for the hypostatic attributes relatively infrequently outside of his writings on the Filioque, but the larger association can be taken for granted; see *Greg.* 1.29 (PS 4:252.13); *Ep. Barl.* 8 (PS 2:264.14–15). On the language of ιδιότης, see, Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration* 20.5 (SC 270:66.20), 31.9 (SC 250:292.18).
- 32 *Part.* 24 (PS 2:157.21–26).
- 33 *Conf.* 4 (PS 2:496.20–21).
- 34 *Greg.* 2.11 (PS 4:272.21), 2.13 (PS 4:274.7).
- 35 *Greg.* 2.11 (PS 4:272.20–24); *Union* 23 (PS 2:86.5–22).
- 36 *Akind.* 6.16.61 (PS 3:432.18–21): ὑποστατικά ιδιώματα; *Theo.* 9 (PS 2:231.17–19): προσωπικά ιδιώματα.
- 37 *Akind.* 3.13.48 (PS 3:199.8).
- 38 *Athan.* 40 (PS 2:448.31–32). They are χαρακτηριστικά ὑποστάσεως.
- 39 See *Theo.* 9 (PS 2:231.17–19); *Akind.* 6.17.67 (PS 3:437.6), 5.26.109 (PS 3:371.5–9).
- 40 See *Akind.* 3.13.48 (PS 3:199.5–12); cf. *Scholia to the Divine Names* 2.1 (PG 4:212B).
- 41 There is, in other words, nothing in the writings of Palamas like a γεννητική ἐνέργεια, such as one finds in Basil of Ancyra; see Pino, “Like Us in All Things but Sin: Basil of Ancyra and the Homoiousion,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 27 (2019): 96.
- 42 *Akind.* 5.26.109 (PS 3:371.5–9); see *Scholia to the Divine Names* 2.1 (PG 4:212B; ed. Suchla 4:161.7–162.4).
- 43 See *Akind.* 2.17.85 (PS 3:145.26–28).
- 44 See *Energ.* 27 (PS 2:116.4–7). This is yet another point with anti-Eunomian overtones.
- 45 *Part.* 24 (PS 2:157.29–30).
- 46 *Part.* 24 (PS 2:157.29–158.1): ἐνπόστατα γὰρ ταῦτα λέγουσιν, ἀλλ’ οὐχ ὑπόστασιν, ὥσπερ ἐκεῖνα οὐκ οὐσίαν, ἀλλ’ ἐνούσια κυρίως.
- 47 *Dan.* 16 (PS 2:389.6–7); *Akind.* 6.16.57 (PS 3:429.11–12). Cf. *Akind.* 2.20.100 (PS 3:157.14–16); *Dan.* 4 (PS 2:377.29–378.1).
- 48 *Akind.* 5.12.43 (PS 3:319.28–29).
- 49 Cf. Peter Lombard, *Sentences* 1.33: *Utrum proprietates personarum sint ipsae personae et deus, id est diuina essentia* (ed. Brady 1:240).
- 50 One obvious way that Gilbert’s concerns differ from Palamas is in his assertion that *paternitas* is that “whereby” the Father is Father. The issue here, as Emery has pointed out, is the problem of universals, or abstract forms, and how they are instantiated by concrete individuals or subjects (see Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of St Thomas Aquinas*, 142–143).
- 51 See Candal, “Juan Ciparisiota y el problema trinitario palamítico,” *OCP* 25 (1959): 128. Cf. I. Polemis, *theological inedita*, xxxiii n. 59. Polemis sees this element of the debate as a feature of the later Palamite controversy, appearing among the followers of Palamas after his death. Yet the distinction between hypostasis and hypostatic attribute is one that figures prominently in the theology of St Gregory himself and factors into the apologetic writings of Gregoras as well.
- 52 Cf. *Dan.* 10 (PS 2:384.15–17).
- 53 See *Akind.* 2.16.79 (PS 3:142.8–10).
- 54 See Trizio, “Un uomo sapiente ed apostolico,” 154–167.

- 55 See David Dishypatos, *To Nicholas Kavalas* (ed. Tsames, 44.30); Philotheos Kokkinos, *Against Gregoras* 8.1145–1201, 1410–1424, 1973–1975 (ed. Kaimakes, 293–295, 301–302, 319); John Kyparissiotis, *Against the Palamite Tome* 8.5, 8 (ed. Liakouras, 402, 409); Nikephoros Gregoras, *Historia* 30.27 (Bonn 3:289.2–3), *Antirrhetics* 1.3.2 (ed. Beyer 377.24); Isaac Argyros, *On the Trinity* 13 (ed. Candal, 126); Manuel Kalekas, *De principiis* (PG 152:437AB). Cf. *Akind.* 1.7.27 (PS 3:59.10–11), 1.7.45 (PS 3:71.1–4).
- 56 *Akind.* 2.17.85 (PS 3:145.21–25).
- 57 *Energ.* 27 (PS 2:115.26–30). Palamas notes that it is “the pinnacle of the cacodox dogmas of Eunomios” to say that the ingeneracy of the Father is *ousia*.
- 58 *Greg.* 1.39 (PS 4:261.5–8).
- 59 See *Greg.* 1.39 (PS 4:261.10–12). Cf. *Tr.* 3.2.4 (ed. Meyendorff, 649.22–26).
- 60 *Greg.* 1.41 (PS 4:262.14–18). For Palamas, this is the basic claim of Arianism more generally; see *Greg.* 1.41 (PS 4:262.11–13); cf. *Akind.* 2.10.38 (PS 3:113.7–8).
- 61 See *Energ.* 27 (PS 2:115.31–116.4).
- 62 Or, again, the Father’s ingeneracy (τὸ ἀγέννητον) would be identical to the divine essence, which is Eunomianism; *Tr.* 3.2.4 (ed. Meyendorff, 649.13–26).
- 63 *Akind.* 1.7.27 (PS 3:59.8–12).
- 64 Cf. *Energ.* 27 (PS 2:115.31–32); *Union* 4 (PS 2:71.13–14).
- 65 *Cap.* 134.17–22 (ed. Sinkewicz, 238–240). Palamas avers that, of the categories that we would label as Aristotelian, only three apply to God: substance, relation, and activity, that is, creation (τὸ ποιεῖν). For the precise borrowings from the *De Trinitate*, see Flogaus, “Der heimliche Blick,” 275–297.
- 66 *Cap.* 134.9–10 (ed. Sinkewicz, 238). Relation, in this context, is not simply a ‘relationship,’ but the category of relativity (πρὸς τι); see Aristotle, *Categories* 7, 6a36–8b24). Cf. *Greg.* 2.18 (PS 4:278.14–17): “It is greater for God the Father to be Father than to be God. For as God he relates (τὴν σχέσιν ἔχει) to what serves him, but as Father to his own co-honored Son.” Cf. *Greg.* 2.18 (PS 4:278.17–21), citing *Thesaurus* 5 (PG 75:68C–69A) and *Greg.* 1.29 (PS 4:252. 26–253.1).
- 67 *Cap.* 134.11 (ed. Sinkewicz, 238). The classification of the Spirit, *qua* procession (πρόβλημα), as a relation (πρὸς τι) develops from the middle Byzantine debates over the *Filioque*; see Neilos Kavalas, *De processione* 101–102 (ed. Candal, 268.16–27); Joseph Bryennios, *Oration* 21 (ed. Voulgaris, 1:338); Hierotheos Hieromonachos, *Demonstrations* (ed. Ioannides, 267).
- 68 *Cap.* 134.6–9, 15–22 (ed. Sinkewicz, 238–240).
- 69 This particular element of Gregory’s polemic seems restricted to the controversy with Akindynos. It is summarized in the thirtieth proposition of Gregory’s *Ekthesis* but is treated most fully, albeit briefly, in *Against Akindynos* 1 and 2.
- 70 *Akind.* 2.10.38 (PS 3:112.29–113.13); *Asan.* 11 (PS 2:372.25–27). It is perhaps worth noting that Gregory does not speak of the Son and the Spirit as the “second” and “third” Persons of the Trinity.
- 71 Gregory speaks of the natural order and “the ranking in accordance with it” (ἡ κατ’ αὐτὴν ἀξία; *Akind.* 2.10.38; PS 3:112.31); (τὸ κατ’ αὐτὴν ἀξίωμα; *Akind.* 1.7.26; PS 3:58.8–11).
- 72 Basil, *Adversus Eunomium* 3 (SC 305:144.9–10).
- 73 *Akind.* 1.7.26 (PS 3:58.7–9). Nor, obviously, is it something created.
- 74 *Akind.* 2.10.38 (PS 3:112.29–113.3).
- 75 For a discussion of the way ‘natural order’ differs from the economic order in Palamas, see M. Knežević, “The Order (τάξις) of Persons of the Holy Trinity in Apodictic Treatises of Gregory Palamas,” *Philotheos* 12 (2012): 84–102.
- 76 *Akind.* 2.10.38 (PS 3:113.9).
- 77 See *Ekth.* 30 (PS 2:584.15–20).
- 78 *Akind.* 2.10.38 (PS 3:113.2–5). Cf. *Akind.* 1.7.26 (PS 3:58.6–11).
- 79 *Akind.* 1.7.26 (PS 3:58.17–18).

- 80 *Akind.* 2.10.38 (PS 3:113.8–13). Cf. *Akind.* 1.7.26 (PS 3:58.17–20). For Palamas, this also proves that there is subordination in God—even in the Trinity—although Akindynos insists that “everything in anyway subordinate (ὕποβεβηκός) in God is created;” *Akind.* 2.10.36 (PS 3:110.19–20). According to Palamas, if transcendence (ὕπερκεῖσθαι) renders things unequal, then the Son and the Spirit are also disparate and unlike the Father, since the Father, as cause, is greater than them (μειζὼν ὑπάρχει τῷ ἀτίῳ); *Asan.* 11 (PS 2:372.33–373.4).
- 81 The identification of the Trinitarian analogy as an argument *a fortiori* for the essence–energies distinction is made by Norman Russell, “The Christological Context,” 193.
- 82 See *Ep. Akind.* 3.4 (PS 1:298.15); *Tr.* 3.2.4 (ed. Meyendorff, 649.13–15).
- 83 *Gabr.* 5 (PS 2:331.14). Speaking specifically about the providential powers of the all-powerful God, Palamas states that “there was not a time when such things did not exist” (οὐκ ἦν ὅτε μὴ τοιαῦτα ἦσαν); *Gabr.* 23 (PS 2:350.7–8). Cf. *Energ.* 26 (PS 2:115.19–23): ἦν οὐκ ὅτε ἐπόμενα οὐκ ἦν. For background on this phrase, see E. P. Meijering, “HN ΠΟΤΕ ΟΤΕ ΟΥΚ ΗΝ Ο ΥΙΟΣ: A Discussion on Time and Eternity,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 28 (1974): 161–168.
- 84 *Akind.* 3.19.85 (PS 3:222.3).
- 85 *Dion.* 3 (PS 3:481.21–22) See, for example, Athanasios, *Ad Serapionem* 1.30.2 (ed. Savvidis, 523.10): ὁ διαρῶν τὸν υἱὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς ἢ τὸ πνεῦμα κατάγων εἰς τὰ κτίσματα (which is reproduced in Zygabenos, *Panoplia Dogmatica* 12; PG 130:720B).
- 86 See *Greg.* 2.51 (PS 4:300.33–301.5).
- 87 For the anti-Eunomian rhetoric of Gregory’s opponents at the Council of 1341, see Hero, *Letters*, xix–xx; cf. Akindynos, *Refutatio Magna* 1.63, 1.65, 2.21, 2.51, and others (CCSG 31:79.9–12, 81.4–8, 115.38–42, 155.16–18); id., *Short Refutation* 373 (CCSG 31:424). Akindynos accuses Palamas of Arianism, Macedonianism, Sabellianism, and Messalianism; see *Akind.* 5.12.41. Gregoras likewise accuses Palamas of Eunomianism; see, for example, *Antirrhetics* 1.1.10–1.2.1 (ed. Beyer, 207–241).
- 88 *Akind.* 6.13.44 (PS 3:420.6–421.3).
- 89 *Theo.* 4 (PS 2:224.25–31).
- 90 See *Akind.* 2.7.16 (PS 3:97.12).
- 91 *Union* 4 (PS 2:71.21–22). In the case of Sabellios, the denigration of difference in God is presented as being motivated, in particular, by the difficulties presented by the Incarnation; see *Greg.* 2.51 (PS 4:301.5), 2.53 (PS 4:302.15), 2.54 (PS 4:302.23–31).
- 92 *Akind.* 6.13.45–46 (PS 3:421.4–422.16).
- 93 *Akind.* 6.13.46 (PS 3:421.26–422.17). Cf. *Akind.* 1.13.62 (PS 3:82.15–23).
- 94 *Akind.* 1.12.61 (PS 3:82.10–11).
- 95 *Akind.* 2.9.27 (PS 3:104.14–16).
- 96 *Akind.* 2.7.18 (PS 3:98.1–4).
- 97 See *Akind.* 2.7.17 (PS 3:97.21–32), 2.8.23 (PS 3:101.14–102.5).
- 98 *Akind.* 1.13.62 (PS 3:82.27–29). This analogy between the essence–energies distinction in the fourteenth century and the development of Trinitarian doctrine in the fourth century anticipates the characterization of Palamas’s theology by later Palamites; cf. the remarks of Akindynos, *Antirrhetics* 1 (*Monac. gr.* 223 f.23v), cited by Cañellas, *La résistance* 2:99. On the framing of the essence–energies distinction as a development or *anaptyxis* akin to the unfolding of Trinitarian dogma, see Pino, “Beyond Neopalamicism,” 67–68.
- 99 *Phil.* 6 (PS 2:552.6–9).
- 100 *Greg.* 2.64 (PS 4:309.31–310.7).
- 101 *Energ.* 2 (PS 2:96.16–97.5), citing *DN* 2.2, 640A (ed. Suchla 1:125.5–7).

General Conclusion

Even before his final debate with Nikephoros Gregoras in 1355, St Gregory Palamas and his distinction between God's essence and energies had already been definitively vindicated by the landmark Council of 1351. As Metropolitan of Thessalonica Palamas had largely dedicated the remaining years of his life largely to his pastoral work and preaching on a significantly expanded number of theological themes. Although Palamas would continue to defend and explain the essence–energies distinction, the final decade of his life is marked especially by his monumental collection of homilies, for which he was often remembered by ordinary Christians through the ages.¹

Shortly after his death, Palamas's fame and achievements would be celebrated and commemorated annually in the *Synodikon of Orthodoxy*, solemnly proclaimed on the first Sunday of every Lent.² In this context, the contemporaries and successors of Palamas would remember his theology very much in the terms set down by the saint himself:

To Gregory, the most holy Metropolitan of Thessalonica, who tore down, in Councils of the Great Church, those inventors and contrivers of new heresies, Barlaam and Akindynos, along with their wicked faction, who dared to say that the natural and inseparable energy and power of God, and, simply, all the natural attributes of the Holy Trinity, are creatures, but also that the unapproachable light of the Divinity that shone from Christ on the mountain is a created divinity, attempting to introduce into the Church, once more, in wicked manner, those Platonic Ideas and Greek myths—to Gregory, who battled wisely and nobly, in writings and discourses and debates on behalf of the common Church of Christ and the true and firm dogmas concerning divinity, ever proclaiming one Divinity and one God in three Persons, active, possessed of a will, all-powerful, and uncreated, in accordance with the divine Scriptures and the theologians who interpreted them: Athanasios, Basil, Gregory, John Chrysostom, Cyril, and, in addition to these, Maximos the wise, the divinely-inspired Damascene, along with the other Fathers and Doctors of the Church of Christ, proving himself in both words and deeds to be a communicant, fellow chorister, emulator, and brother in arms with all of them—may his memory be eternal!³

As the foregoing study has attempted to show, then, the divine energies as conceived by Palamas are not simply “God’s mode of existing in relationship to His created world, especially to man.”⁴ The divine energies, rather, constitute everything that can be and is known about God; everything that can be and is predicated of God, both positively and negatively; and everything that can be and is shared with creatures at every level. As the comprehensive list of divine names, attributes, and powers, these include not only God’s manifestations *ad extra* but even the things that are commonly said to describe God *as he in himself*: the fact that God is holy, eternal, simple, incorporeal, and so on. Such attributes or energies not only ‘surround’ the essence, they are also the very ‘things of nature’ and essential properties of God, belonging to God *in se*. In this way, although the divine energies include the divine processions of providence, the *logoi* of the divine will, and the deifying Light of Tabor, the divine *energeiai* cannot be limited to these uncreated realities. Nor was the polemic with Barlaam, Akindynos, and Gregoras ever limited to this or any other strictly practical concern but had as its focus the plenitude of the divine powers and energies contemplated essentially around God as well.

As attributes of the divine essence, the energies of God, Palamas insists, are not only divine but uncreated, eternal, and timeless, being not the activities of God in time but the internal entelechy, operation, and first actuality of the immutable God. Even energies such as the divine creativity, foreknowledge, and providence are not acts performed at a certain moment, but eternal attributes by which God is known to be active and all-powerful from all eternity. They constitute for Palamas the inner motion and *actus* of God, who does not pass from potency to reality but is eternally and essentially active. When such energies, in accordance with God’s eternal will, are productive of creatures and other effects in time and space, they are also seen to be ‘actualized’ *ad extra*, as manifestations of God’s eternal and immutable power. This can be seen, especially, in the revelation of God’s uncreated glory through Christ’s human flesh and the bodies of the saints, and in the miracles performed by Christ as well as by his followers. But it can also be seen, in a more basic way, in all the created effects of God’s eternal power, which come into existence as products of the divine will. The manifestation of God’s energies in and through creatures has a beginning and an end, although the divine powers and attributes that they reveal do not in any way pass in and out of being. Still, even though the divine energies are said by Palamas to *characterize* the divine essence and to mark God’s nature from all eternity, they do not constitute ‘what’ God is, which ever remains beyond all created conception, participation, and articulation.

As we have seen, the distinction between God’s essence and energies is very much meant to preserve the principle that God is his own existence, wisdom, and so on, and that God is not what he is by participation. As Palamas conceives it, essence and energy are not two divinities or two parts of God. Both indicate how God *is*, one at the level of quiddity or substance, beyond all names and knowledge, the other at the level of his essential energies, properties, and attributes. Although human beings can say many things that are true

of God, even naming the features that ‘define’ God, to the extent that they are the *proper* idioms of God and of God alone, still these properties do not circumscribe God, who is more than the sum of his natural attributes. The essence–energies distinction is therefore something more than simply the limits of self-disclosure. It is also meant to function as a metaphysical insight into the ultimate difference between God and created being. Unlike the created strata of the Porphyrian tree, which are increasingly specified by their juxtaposition with other created beings, there is nothing against which the being of God can be measured. To say that essence is unknowable is thus to say that God is in a category all his own, or rather, not in a category at all. Yet to say that he has energies is to say that human beings can, nevertheless, talk about him, and know him, even in spite of this radical transcendence.

It is manifestly untrue, then, that the categories of philosophy or Scholasticism, contrasted with a logic of ‘experience,’ cannot be applied to Palamas.⁵ As we saw in Chapter 4, the rejection of distinction in God, for St Gregory Palamas, has grave consequences for the most basic principles of Christian belief. For Palamas, Orthodox theology holds that “the Divine is both one and not one.” Thus, when someone like Nikephoros Gregoras claims that only the divine nature is uncreated, he not only abolishes the divine energies, “he also destroys all the hypostatic properties.”⁶ Yet the appeal to Trinitarian theology functions as much more than a *reductio ad absurdum* for the denial of difference in God. Trinitarian theology, for Palamas, provides the key to understanding not only divine distinction but also divine simplicity. As Vladimir Lossky has put it,

For St. Gregory Palamas ... the pre-eminent simplicity of the Trinity is the basis of his theological thought: a simplicity unimpaired by the distinction between the nature and the Persons on the one hand, and that between the Persons themselves on the other. ... Simplicity does not mean uniformity or absence of distinction—otherwise Christianity would not be the religion of the Holy Trinity.⁷

For Palamas, the existence of multiple distinct Persons in simplicity thus functions as an important precedent for affirming simplicity in the face of distinction. One cannot affirm a simple dichotomy between essence and accidents, narrowly ascribing all being to one of these two categories. As Palamas points out, the divine hypostases are neither essence nor accident, and yet they exist.⁸ “In the same way, the divine energy of God is also neither essence nor accident, yet it is not among non-existent things.”⁹

Future Directions

Nearly a century ago, in his magisterial survey of the thought of St Gregory Palamas, Martin Jugie noted that he “knew of no study where the system of Palamas on the essence and energy of God, with all its consequences that it entails for grace, glory, and the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation,

were explicated and criticized.”¹⁰ The present book has not attempted so ambitious an analysis. But in light of the critical editions of Gregory’s works that have appeared since the time of Jugie, it has seemed proper to carry out a more thorough study of the essence–energies distinction across the entirety of Palamas’s writings. Only in the light of such studies can subsequent assessments be made of all the ramifications that the essence–energies distinction holds for Palamas’s broader theological vision and for the contributions of late Byzantine theology as a whole.

Regarding the contentious question of how, and if, the essence–energies distinction, with its attendant presuppositions and concomitant claims, can be reconciled with the accepted theological positions of the Christian West, it can only be reiterated that any deep comparison of St Gregory Palamas with the theologies of the Scholastic period and modern systematics must begin with a thorough knowledge of Palamas himself. It is hoped that the present study might provide a further step toward attaining that knowledge, though its work is by no means complete. There are many other aspects of the theology of St Gregory Palamas, including many dimensions of the essence–energies distinction, that have remained beyond the scope of this study, which has focused, specifically, on the distinction, or difference, itself between *ousia* and *energeia*.

One of the things that this book could not attempt was a complete literary and historical analysis of the Palamite controversy as a whole, doing full justice to the details of the debate between Palamas and his various opponents. Such a project very much needs to be completed, not by one author but through the broad cooperation of scholars who devote themselves to the records, writings, and personalities of the middle and late Palaiologan periods. Although the work of such early scholars as Candal and Jugie has been extended into the twenty-first century by the likes of Panagiotēs Chrestou, Juan Nadal Cañellas, Antonis Fyrigos, Antonio Rigo, John Demetracopoulos, Ioannis Polemis, and others, many texts of the Palamite controversy remain unedited,¹¹ and many questions remain not only unanswered but unasked.¹²

One dimension of the broader history of the Palamite controversy that requires further study is the extent and nature of the pro-Palamite movement as a whole and the network of supporters that rallied around Palamas and advocated for the triumph of his theology. Contemporaries like Akindynos spoke of the ‘disciples’ of Palamas (τῶν αὐτοῦ σπουδαστῶν),¹³ which Gregoras derided as a ‘faction’ and even a ‘drinking-club.’¹⁴ Such rhetoric serves to underscore that the writings of Palamas, and his efforts as a theologian, cannot ultimately be studied in isolation. Palamas himself advanced the essence–energies distinction in a collaborative environment, together with a wide circle of monastics, bishops, and even emperors. The broader Palamite movement encompassed the writings of many theologians, finally receiving approbation, and codification, in councils and official documents of the wider Church.¹⁵ Yet we still lack any comprehensive, synthetic account of this corporate, historical outworking of Palamite theology.

In a similar way, very little attention has been paid to the broader legacy of Palamite theology in the Byzantine Empire after the death of Palamas. Because the theology of St Gregory Palamas was enshrined as official orthodoxy by councils in 1341, 1347, 1351, and 1368, and subsequently written into the *Synodikon of Orthodoxy*, the theology of the period leading up to the fall of Constantinople would be dominated by the question of the essence–energies distinction and by a series of ecclesiastical figures and thinkers who continued to honor and defend St Gregory Palamas in theological treatises and encomia. This includes such illustrious figures as Joseph Bryennios, Makarios Makres, Symeon of Thessalonica, and Mark Eugenikos, who would even leave the imprint of the essence–energies distinction on the debates held at the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438–39).¹⁶

The study of the essence–energies distinction, both in the lifetime of St Gregory Palamas and beyond, suggests many avenues for future research. The present work, it is hoped, contributes to this wider field of study by providing a first step into the comprehensive analysis of the essence–energies distinction as it is articulated in the complete writings of Palamas. Although the work of understanding the essence–energies distinction is by no means complete, it is hoped that one is now slightly better positioned to understand this far-reaching and extensive topic, not only taking account of a part of what Palamas has to say, but looking to the writings of St Gregory Palamas in their totality.

Notes

- 1 This is especially true in the Slavonic world, where the controversy over the essence–energies distinction did not come to impact theological literature in the same way that it did in the Greek world. For a sense of the reception of St Gregory Palamas in the broader ‘Byzantine Commonwealth,’ see the rich bibliography in G. Podskalsky, *Theologische Literatur des Mittelalters in Bulgarien und Serbien, 865–1459*, 109 n. 439. Cf. M. Scarpa, “La recensione nella Russia del XVI secolo dei testi antilatinici di Gregorio Palamas e Nilo Cabasilas,” 215–223; Schulze, “Die Bedeutung des Pålalismus in der russischen Theologie der Gegenwart,” *Scholastik* 36 (1951): 390–412; Rigo and Scarpa, “Le opere antilatiniche di Gregorio Palamas a Bisanzio e tra gli Slavi (XIV–XV secolo),” 151–161; Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, 96–118; and the studies in N. Kautschischwili et al., ed. *Nil Sorsky e l’esciasmo*. At the 1991 ICBS, Georgios Kakrides also delivered an important paper on “The Reception of Gregorios Palamas’ Confession in Ukraine;” see Andrii Iasynovskiy, “The Eighteenth International Congress of Byzantine Studies,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 18 (1994): 419.
- 2 See Chapter 1, p. 34, n. 2. According to Jugie (“La controverse Palamite,” 418), the Palamite elements were added to the *Synodikon* by Patriarch Kallistos in a July 1352 session of the Holy Synod. These additions are attributed, in turn, to Philotheos Kokkinos in Monac. gr. 505 f.2v; see Uspensky, *История Афона* 3:780–781.
- 3 *Synodikon* 692–709 (ed. Gouillard, 89).
- 4 Maloney, *A Theology of Uncreated Energies*, 60.
- 5 For a general critique of this idea, see Schulze, “Die Taten des einfachen Gottes,” 141, who imputes it to Meyendorff.

- 6 *Greg.* 2.13 (PS 4:274.2–5).
- 7 *Mystical Theology*, 78. This seems to be what Lossky means by a conception of God as “simple essence”: a divinity in which the very fact of hypostases is secondary.
- 8 *Cap.* 135.11–15 (ed. Sinkewicz, 240).
- 9 *Cap.* 135.14–15 (ed. Sinkewicz, 240).
- 10 Jugie, “Palamas,” 1776.
- 11 This is especially true of anti-Palamite authors (see K. Morozova, “Неизвестные антипаламитские трактаты,” *Verbum* 3 [2000]: 254–257), although it applies even to pro-Palamite figures, especially those writing after the death of Palamas. Fortunately, many anti-Palamite writings have begun to appear with more frequency in the last thirty years. See, especially, the collection of works edited by Ioannis Polemis, *Theologica varia inedita saeculi XIV* (CCSG 23); id., “Arsenius of Tyrus and his Tome against the Palamites,” *JÖB* 43 (1993): 252–276; id., ed. *Theodori Dexii Opera Omnia* (CCSG 55); Fyrigos, *Dalla controversia palamitica alla polemica esicasta*; Cañellas, *La résistance d’Akindynos à Grégoire Palamas. Enquête historique, avec traduction et commentaire de quatre traités édités récemment*, vol. 1
- 12 A recent example of the kind of ongoing research that remains to be carried out in the history of the Palamite controversy is the article by A. Dunaev, “Commentarius ad unum caput Gregorii Palamae ex anthologia antipalamitica,” *Вестник Свято-Филаретовского института* 34 (2020): 149–168. This article again examines the correspondence between the ‘genuine’ writings of Palamas and the manner in which they are quoted in anti-Palamite texts, asking after the original form of Gregory’s formulations and their modification and editing over the course of the controversy.
- 13 Akindynos, *Ep.* 44.27 (ed. Hero, 190).
- 14 See, for example, Gregoras, *Historia* 15.9 (Bonn 2:783).
- 15 A full history of the Palamite controversy would thus take account of the works of David Dishypatos, Joseph Kalothetos, Isidore Boucheiras, Mark Kyrtos, Hieromonk Matthew, Philotheos Kokkinos, Kallistos I, Philotheos of Selyvria, John VI Kantakouzenos, and others. See the works of these authors, and later pro-Palamite authors, listed in the bibliography.
- 16 See, for example, V. Lur’e, “L’attitude de S. Marc d’Ephèse aux débats sur la procession du Saint-Esprit à Florence: Ses fondements dans la théologie post-palamite,” *Annuaire Historiae Conciliorum* 21 (1989): 317–333; Ch. Kappes, *The Epiclesis Debate at the Council of Florence*.

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