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The Logic of Palamism

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Abstract:
The teaching of St. Gregory Palamas (1296–1359) is usually considered as a paradigmatic case of Eastern Christian mystical theology. It is held that it goes beyond rational thinking and is based on antinomic premises. Contrary to this widespread view, I try to give a consistent account of two crucial ideas of Palamism: the distinction between essence and energies, and the concept of deification. In doing this, I discuss and develop some formal analyses by Pavel Florensky (1882–1937). It proves that Palamas' teaching is no less rational than any other metaphysical theory. This result casts a new light on the alleged irrational character of Eastern Christian theology, which aspect is sometimes thought to be an obstacle in the dialog between the West and the East.

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1. Introduction

The teaching of St. Gregory Palamas (1296–1359) is widely considered both as the peak of traditional patristic and Byzantine theology and also as the main source of contemporary Orthodox theology. The status of Palamas in the Christian East may be comparable only with the position of St. Thomas Aquinas in the West. The teaching of these two masters is often contrasted. Palamas is usually presented as a perfect example of the dominant eastern trend of mystical theology based on experience, whereas Aquinas is thought to be a paradigmatic case of a typical western rational and conceptual theology. If one takes into account that Palamas was involved into a long-lasting struggle with Barlaam of Calabria, who was supposed to be a Thomist, the contrast between these two great figures reflects difficult relationships between the Eastern and Western Christendom.

One of the most popular opinions on Eastern Christian theology is that it goes beyond rational thinking: at least much further than the Western one. Indeed, many commentators suggest that the teaching of St. Gregory Palamas cannot be squeezed into a tight schema of western rationality. Particularly, his crucial distinction between the essence and energies of God is often seen as antinomical, both by his critics and his followers. Orthodox archbishop Basil Krivoshein, one of the main advocates of Palamism in the 20th century, remarked: 'Here we are faced with a theological antinomy which, in view of the whole tendency of Gregory's teaching, must be taken to have ontological […], objective character' (*Krivoshein* 1938, p. 140). The same opinion was formulated by Vladimir Lossky, a theologian who considerably popularized Palamas in the West: 'We are taken in the presence of an antinomic theology which proceeds by oppositions of contrary but equally true propositions' (*Lossky* 1974, p. 51). Finally, archbishop Yannis Spiteris, a

contemporary Catholic scholar, warns his western readers that 'Palamas uses concepts, which are contradictory, though consistent in God' and therefore,

> approaching the problem of Palamism using intellectual categories—the attitude, which is sometimes present in discussing famous Palamitic distinction between essence and energy—is not the best method (*Spiteris* 1996, p. 96).

I would like to challenge this popular view. Generally, I believe that theology of the Eastern Church is no less rational than western thinking. Particularly, I shall discuss here the notorious Palamistic essence/energies distinction and the concept of deification in order to extract deep logic underlying Palamas' theology. It will be shown that there is nothing especially inconsistent in Palamism. This paper continues my attempts to provide a logical analysis of some crucial ideas of the Orthodox theology (*Roek* 2010; *Rojek* 2010a).

I am not a pioneer in a logical analysis of Palamism. It was father Pavel Florensky (1882–1937) who, exactly a century ago, in 1913, first attempted to analyze in a formal way the Palamas' distinction between essence and energy (*Florenskij* 2000, pp. 268–274), and discuss the logical definition of identity in the context of Orthodox teaching on deification (*Florensky* 2004, pp. 53–79, 365–374). As far as I know, after Florensky's death in a Soviet Labor Camp in 1937, nobody continued his project.[1] Therefore, I shall take his analysis as my starting point.

First, (§2) I will briefly present the historical background of the discussion, dogmatization, falling into oblivion, and finally rediscovering Palamas' teaching. Then, I will outline the essence/energies distinction and the concept of deification of man (§3). The two elements of Palamism derive directly from the religious experience in which God reveals himself and unites with man. Next, I will undertake to analyze these two topics, starting with Florensky's formal remarks (§4–5). I will propose a plain formalization of essence/energies distinction, and discuss some issues concerning identity and indiscerniblity that are crucial for the analysis of deification. In Conclusion, (§6) I shall highlight the specific character of Palamas' philosophy, which falls into the category of 'theological philosophy' (*Rojek* 2009), that is a philosophy which draws its basic concepts and axioms from theology[2].

2. Historical Remarks

The theory of essence and energies, however philosophically or even physically it may sound, originally is of no philosophical nature. The essence/energies distinction was formulated in the 14thcentury to solve some strictly theological problems connected with religious practice and experience of the pious Byzantine monks called *hesychasts*. Strikingly enough, the teaching of Palamas was rediscovered in the 19th century when dealing with another controversy, namely the practice of the Orthodox monks called *onomathodoxists*.

2.1. Hesychasm

Hesychasts developed a technique of prayer, consisting of concentrating mind and body in silence. Monks practising hesychasm maintained that during long praying some of them experienced a vision of 'divine light' (*Krivoshein* 1938; *Meyendorff* 1998; *Mantzaridis* 1984; *Spiteris* 1996). This practice raises controversies in two points: first, concerning the role of body in the spiritual life, and second, the very possibility of experiencing God. Palamas' anthropology and metaphysics provided a theoretical explanation of the possibility of hesychastic religious experience.

Palamas formulated his doctrine during fierce and long-lasting polemics with his three opponents: Barlaam of Calabria, Gregory Akindynos and Nicefor Gregoras. The discussion started with Barlaam's severe criticism of hesychasts' practice. He objected to the involvement of body in praying, and argued that since God remains essentially unknowable and inexperienceable, the reported light could not be divine. Palamas, a seasoned monk from Mount Athos, retorted in his

most famous work *The Triads* (1983, 2003), where he argued for the integral character of a human being on one hand, and for the distinction between unknowable essence and knowable energies in God on the other. The other two opponents argued not against hesychasm in general, but rather against Palamas' own theory, thus giving him a stimulus to clarify his doctrine in *Treatises* (2007) and the final systematic work *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* (1988). As usual in Byzantium, this theological dispute was instantly linked with political, national, dynastic, ecclesiastical and class struggles, and consequently, Palamas, as well as his followers, got embroiled in a civil war.

Eventually, Gregory Palamas celebrated a great triumph as in 1341, 1347 and 1351, local councils in Constantinople officially confirmed his teaching and, in turn, condemned Barlaam's, Akindynos' and Nicefor Gregoras'. In 1352, the decree on Palamism was included in *Synodikon*, a concise summary of Orthodox faith read out in all churches on the second Sunday of Lent called 'The Triumph of Orthodoxy'. As a result, 'hesychasm and its Palamite interpretation became the official theology of the Orthodox world' (*Bradshaw* 2004, p. 235). Palamas died as the archbishop of Thessalonica, and swiftly was canonized. The Orthodox Church venerates him on a very prestigious day in the liturgical calendar, namely on the third Sunday of Lent.

There are many interpretations of the controversy over hesychasm. The Orthodox tradition likes to perceive it as a struggle between the West and the East, Philosophy and Theology, Rationalism and Mysticism, Paganism and Christianity. A great Russian Orthodox philosopher, Aleksej Losev, wrote in the 1920s:

> In the persons of Barlaam and Akindynos Orthodox Church has condemned the whole Renaissance, which has just begun, and in which all western nations engaged, perhaps to the end of their existence, since the western man without Renaissance would not be western anymore. Barlaamic dualism along with the grow of rationalism becomes Cartesianism and Occasionalism; with the grow of subjectivism […] it becomes Kantianism, and with the fall of the sense of the transcendent becomes Positivism, etc. (*Losev* 1993a, pp. 872–873).

Other commentators were usually less radical, though, in general, they saw Barlaam and Palamas as two distinct figures representing the West and the East, as well as Reason and Faith. The debate between them was interpreted, for example, as a clash between western thomistic and eastern patristic theologies (*Lossky* 1957, pp. 76–77, 220), western kataphatic and eastern apophatic traditions (*Krivoshein* 1938), western rational and eastern experimental theology (*Meyendorff* 1983, p. 13; 1983, p. 139), and so on.

In view of new historical research, some of these opinions must be revised. There can be no doubt that Barlaam was not an 'eastern thomist'; he knew scholasticism only poorly, and if he had been influenced by some western thinkers, it would rather have been St. Augustine than St. Thomas (*Bradshaw* 2004, p. 230). Some western authors even hold that Thomism virtually agrees with Palamism (*Mascall* 1971; *Siemianowski* 1993). At any rate, western influences on Barlaam should not be exaggerated. The polemic between Barlaam and Palamas, as even Lossky (1964, p. 126) finally admitted, was an internal discussion between the two eastern traditions, not simply between the West and the East.[3]

Nevertheless, scholars usually agree that the most important issue in the debate was the role of rational thinking in theology, and most of them would agree with Vladimir Lossky:

> It was a conflict between mystical theology and a religious philosophy, or, rather, a theology of concepts which refused to admit what seemed to it to be an absurdity, foolishness. The God of revelation and of religious experience was confronted with the God of the philosophers, on the battlefield of mysticism, and, once again, the foolishness of God put to naught the wisdom of man (*Lossky* 1957, p. 221).

In my opinion also this popular view should be revised. First of all, contrary to the opinion of his opponents, Palamas was a very well educated and capable philosopher. Before he became a monk, he studied in Constantinople and was famous for his deep understanding of philosophy. His biographer noted that once, on the occasion of a public discussion on Aristotle's logic, Palamas'

teacher exclaimed in the presence of the emperor: 'If Aristotle himself had been here in flesh and blood, he would have praised him' (*Meyendorff* 1998, p. 29). Even when Palamas argued against 'secular wisdom', he did it with a sound knowledge of it. The controversy with Barlaam and others was, therefore, a struggle between two different philosophies, and not simply between theology and philosophy. Moreover, it was Barlaam who really denied human cognitive power, not Palamas, since Barlaam respected secular sciences while holding that hat they could not give true knowledge of God. On the contrary, Palamas did not valued human wisdom, but was much more optimistic as regards the capacities of human cognition. After all, a close examination of Palamas teaching shows that there is nothing especially irrational in it, and in the following parts of the study, I will try to prove it.

2.2. Onomathodoxy

The works of Gregory Palamas were practically forgotten for hundreds of years. He was known solely for his popular ascetical writings; systematical treatises were rarely read and copied. Only at the beginning of 20th century, Orthodox philosophers and theologians rediscovered them. Palamism quickly became an intellectual foundation of the modern Orthodox theology, and provided it with the feeling of distinction from the western tradition. Palamas was first rediscovered in Russia in 1910s. The main reason was a theological controversy concerning the status of the names of God, which broke out in some Russian monasteries at Mount Athos (see *Leskin* 2004; *Alfeev* 2007).

Religious practice of pious monks of Athos again became a trigger for a theological debate. Onomathodoxists (*imâslavcy*) claimed that since the names of Gods were divine energies, therefore they were God himself. This belief, which was only a newer version of Palamism, was discussed and condemned by some Orthodox authorities. Father Pavel Florensky wrote a foreword to a book by a monk Anthony, one of the onomathodoxists' leaders, in which he noticed a similarity between onomathodoxy and the teaching of Gregory Palamas (*Florenskij* 2000, p. 287–294). This issue was discussed by some Moscow philosophers, who subsequently prepared extensive works on this topic (*Florenskij* 2000, p. 104–363; *Losev* 1993a, pp. 865–900; 1993b, pp. 613–880; *Bulgakov* 1999; *cf. Leskin* 2008; *Obolevitch* 2011). This philosophical activity initiated the '*vogue* for Palamism' among Russian lay intellectuals. Fr. Basil Lourié, an Orthodox theologian and a severe critic of Florensky, admitted: 'With no doubt traces of that *vogue* lead to Florensky as a source' (*Lur'e* 1997, p. 340).

This philosophical interest in Palamism evoked a reaction of professional theologians. Basil Krivosheine, a Russian learned monk of Mount Athos, published in 1930s an influential essay on the thought of Palamas (*Krivoshein* 1938). Vladimir Lossky, during World War II, gave the famous lectures on mystical theology, in which he praised Palamas' teaching.[4] However, the real turning point was a great work of John Meyendorff, who prepared the first modern edition of *The Triads* and an extensive introduction to the doctrine of Palamas (*Meyendorff* 1998). From this moment on, St. Gregory Palamas acquired in the Orthodox theology a position comparable to that of St. Thomas Aquinas in Catholicism. This parallel is not so surprising if one takes into account that Lossky and Meyendorff were students of Etienne Gilson, one of the leaders of the 20th century Neothomism.

3. The Teaching of Palamas

The aim of Gregory Palamas was an explanation of the following two related facts: revelation and deification. Both have religious character and are specific to Christianity. Palamas was not interested in general natural theology but rather tried to construct special metaphysics for Christian experience and hope. His question was: 'What should the world be like since revelation and deification are possible?' Since the concept of personal God, in general, and the concepts of revelation and deification, in particular, do not fit in a classical philosophical conceptual scheme,

Palamas decided to introduce some metaphysical innovations, such as the essence/energies distinction.

3.1. Two Religious Facts

Christian understanding of personal God assumes that although God is essentially unknowable for human beings, he may decide to reveal himself in the world. Therefore, Christianity goes beyond negative theology, and asserts that God may decide to manifest Himself. This specific concept of revelation is expressed, for instance, by St. John:

> 'No one has ever seen God; the only Son […] he has made him known' (*John* 1:18).

Similar statements might be found elsewhere in the Scriptures. Even in the Old Testament, though God says that 'man shall not see me and live' (*Ex* 33:20), God 'used to speak to Moses face to face' (*Ex* 33:11). Ultimately, the destination of man is a full revelation of God. 'We know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is' (1 *John* 3:2).

This last statement leads to the question of deification. Personal God may not only be manifest, but also may unite himself with human beings. Christian salvation is thought exactly as a kind of union with God. St. Peter used once quite a philosophical expression:

> he [Jesus our Lord] has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that […]
> you may […] become partakes of the divine nature (2 *Pet* 1:4).

This union of man and God was described in Scripture in many ways, for instance as being 'the temple of God' (2 *Cor* 6:16), 'children of God' (*John* 1:12; *Gal* 4:7), 'heirs of God' (*Rom* 8:17; *Gal* 4:7), and finally simply 'gods' (*John* 10: 34). The patristic tradition introduced a special word for this union: deification (*theosis*) (*Mantzaridis* 1984). God, though remains essentially inaccessible, may somehow share Himself with the creatures.

Christian revelation and deification were not only theoretical premises for Palamas, they were realities experienced by monks of Mount Athos. Hesychasts believed that during their prayers God truly revealed Himself and really deified them. The teaching and experience of the Church was, therefore, the starting point of Palamas' theology.

In order to explain the possibility of revelation and deification, Palamas introduced the distinction between essence and energies. God not only consists of one essence and three hypostases, but also of one essence and many energies, perhaps infinite number of them. Energies are distinct, yet not separable from essence. Being such, they are really God himself, though are not God's essence. God therefore has the unknowable and inaccessible essence, and knowable and accessible energies.

Hence, energies play a double role in Palamas' ontology. On one hand, revelation consists of energies' manifestation, and on the other, deification means sharing the energies. Now, I would like to analyze these two aspects in details.

3.2. The Essence/Energies Distinction

The distinction between essence and energy was not really invented by Palamas. The concept of energy had been more or less explicitly used by the Greek Church Fathers before, not to mention Aristotle (*Bradshaw* 2004). Palamas himself willingly admitted his debt to Saint Dionysius, St. Basil and St. Maximus the Confessor. Moreover, local Constantinopolitan synod, in 1351, officially linked the essence/energies distinction with the teaching of the Sixth Council on two energies in Christ (*Losev* 1993a, p. 895). 'It would be no exaggeration to say that patristic tradition had already formulated such a teaching in a general form, and that Palamas merely took it to its furthest conclusions' (*Mantzaridis* 1984, p. 105). Nevertheless, during the heated discussions with opponents, Palamas developed such a detailed account of essence/energy distinction as no one has ever before.

The distinction between essence and energies seems, in fact, quite intuitive. Things manifest themselves. It is plausible to suppose that manifestations (energies) of a thing are not exhaustive. There probably is always something hidden in a thing (essence), the rest which has not been actually manifested. One thing can have many different manifestations depending on specific circumstances in which they are produced. As Pavel Florensky formulated it:

> Being has its *inner* side, in which it turns to itself without involving anything else, and an *outer* side, in which it turns to other beings. These are two sides, but they are not joined to each other since they are primary unity; they are one and the same being, though turned to different directions. […] In patristic terminology these two sides of being are called essence or substance, *ousia*, and act or energy, *energeia* (*Florenskij* 2000, p. 255).

Energies 'manifest' (*Triads* III, 2, 7), 'present' (II, 12), 'express' (II, 14) the essence. They 'characterize or present [the essence], though do not present *what* it is, that is what it is as regard to essence' (II, 23). Essence, though is 'present' in each of the energies (*Triads* III, 2, 7; *Treatises* III, 3), nevertheless 'transcendents' (*Triads* III, 2, 7) and 'surpassess' (*Treatises* II, 19) all its energies.

What are energies after all? Palamas understood them very broadly, apparently uniting a few traditional ontological categories under one label. David Bradshaw (2004, p. 273) indicated that it encompassed at least three categories: 'realities', 'attributes' and 'operations'. For instance, in the case of God, energies include realities such as uncreated light or the gifts of the Spirit, attributes such as infinity, immortality, life, and, finally, some operations like the act of creating, providence and foreknowledge. Realities seem to be separate things, while attributes are plainly inseparable and dependent, whereas operations presumably presuppose causality. Is there a common mark of all these categories?

> One way to look at Palamas is as inviting us to reconceive what have traditionally been regarded as distinct categories […] as species within a broader genus, that of acts of self-manifestation (*Bradshaw* 2004, p. 273).

Indeed, Palamas introduces quite a new general category, and as yet there is no reason to object to it.

It is worth comparing Palamitic notion of energy with the traditional concept of accident. Palamas himself did it in a few passages, pointing out both similarities and dissimilarities. As John Meyendorff remarked,

> Nothing shows Palamas's main preoccupation better than these hesitations; that preoccupation was to free theology from Aristotle's philosophic categories which were clearly inadequate worthily to express the Mystery (*Meyendorff* 1998, p. 225).

This also shows best, in my opinion, his strenuous attempts to formulate a new, more adequate category.

There are three crucial features of accidents (*symbebekos*): dependency, contingency and non-coextensivity (*Brunschwig* 1991). Contrary to substances (*ousia*), accidents are dependent constituents of a thing; contrary to properties (*idion*), they need not to belong to the substance and are not specific for just one species. What about energies? John Meyendorff (1998, p. 225) referred to the following passages from Palamas:

> [energy] is neither essence, nor accident, and if some theologians have used the word "accident" that was only to show that everything in God is not essence (*Capita*, 127);
>
> accident does not always exist; energy is similar to accident in this respect since it does not always act, as well as does not always not act. Therefore energies resemble accidents in that respect, that might create or not create, but differ from accidents in this, that they cannot not exist (*Against Akindynos* VI, 21);
>
> God […] is able to grant the Wisdom and actually grants it […] and He possesses it not as a property, but only as energy (*Against Gregoras* II).

It seems that these statements correspond, in turn, with the three abovementioned features of accidents. First, exactly like accidents, energies exist in a thing. Second, they differ from accidents

in respect of contingency. In some sense, energies are contingent, in the other, they are necessary. Palamas distinguished an *energeia* from the corresponding *dynamis*. *Energeia* is the use of *dynamis* (*Bradshaw* 2004, p. 239). Palamas wrote: 'there is a beginning and end, if not of the creative power itself, then at least of its action' (*Triads* III, 2, 8). Both *energeia* in this narrower sense and *dynamis* are energies in a general sense. Energies may begin and end only as a temporal realization of necessarily existing *dynamis*. In short, *energeia* resembles in this aspect accident, while *dynamis* is more like property. Third, it seems that energies are not specific for one species only, and can characterize other beings. Divine wisdom, for instance, may be transferred to human beings, so it is not a property in a strict Aristotelian sense. The similarities and differences might be summarized in Table 1.

Table 1.Energies and Aristotle's categories.

	Accident (*symbebekos*)	Property (*idion*)	Energy (*energeia*)
Dependent	+	+	+
Contingent	+	—	— (as *dynamis*) + (as *energeia*)
Coextensive	—	+	—

This brief comparison reveals, I believe, that Palamas wanted to adjust traditional philosophical concepts to his purposes. Energies, in some sense, are more dynamic than properties and more static than accidents. One of the most important advantages of the category of energy is that it embraces natural as well as voluntary manifestations, and therefore fits in the concept of personal God.

> The attributes-energies, to St. Gregory Palamas, by no means are abstract concepts applicable to the divine essence, but living and personal forces, […] manifestations of personal God (*Lossky* 1974, p. 57).

Apparently, though Palamas went beyond the inherited philosophical tradition, he tried to adapt it to a new content, and not simply to abandon it.

I have presented the essence/energies distinction as a perfectly general ontological account. I think that there is strong evidence for this interpretation. Palamas taught: 'The natural energy is the power which manifests every essence, and only nonbeing is deprived of this power' (*Triads* III, 2, 7); 'no nature can exist […], unless it possesses an essential energy' (*Triads* III, 3, 6; see also e.g. *Treatises* II, 14, 24). According to Palamas, all beings have its essence and energies; God is only one of the applications of this general distinction. We nevertheless owe theology the proper formulation of this distinction.

Some commentators suggested, however, that either the essence/energies distinction is applicable to God only or this distinction, in the case of God, somehow differs from the other case. On one hand, Basil Krivoshein insisted:

> The distinction between substance [i.e. essence] and energy is quite different from ordinary, logically definable and classifiable distinctions which exist between created objects. More than ever, here, we must remember the antinomism of our conception of God, which does not fit into the ordinary framework of logic (*Krivoshein* 1938, p. 143).

On the other, Yannis Spiteris held:

> We should not apply concepts of essence and energy to God in a general meaning delivered by human reason. We might apply these concepts to God only in a metaphorical way (*Spiteris* 1996, p. 55).

Both these limitations seem to me unnecessary. Palamas adopted a downward methodology. He formulated the concept of energy for the particular case of God, and then used it for other cases. Therefore, we should not hesitate to apply it to creatures as well as God. This point was clearly formulated by Pavel Florensky:

> all intellectual efforts of Palamas and his followers were historically focused on a restricted domain, but in fact the principles stated by Palamists concern an immensely broader field than it might seem at first glance; indeed, it is difficult to determine where they have no application (*Florenskij* 2000, p. 272).

Palamas frequently repeated that energies are 'not identical' with essence, (*Triads* I, 3, 23) nor 'distinct' (*Treatises* II, 12), though 'inseparable' (*Triads* III, 2, 13; II, 3, 15; III, 1, 34; III, 2, 20; II, 3, 37; III, 1, 24; *Treatises* II, 28, 32) from it. 'It is impossible to separate from acting nature […] its corresponding powers and energies, even though they differ from it in other ways' (*Treatises* I, 10).

Being distinct, and yet inseparable, is a mark of non-substantial entities. In fact, as Palamas often said, energies are not 'hypostatic' but 'enhypostatic', that is they need to be connected with a hypostasis (*Triads* II, 3, 6; III, 1, 9; III, 1, 18; III, 2, 23; *Treatises* II, 10). In other words, energies are ontologically dependent on their essence. That is why they are so tightly connected with essence; dependency is the best known 'ontological glue' (*Mertz* 1996). Dependent entities are exactly distinct, yet not separable entities.

Palamas, in many passages, pointed at the ontological dependency of the energies.

> Energy descends from essence, not essence from energy. The former is a cause, the latter is an effect; the former exists on its own, the latter does not exists on its own (*Treatises* II, 10).
>
> He [God] gives them [energies] existence, but He does not receive its existence from them (*Triads* III, 2, 25).

Finally, essence and energies are analogous to Sun and sunbeams. 'There is not even a trace left after sunlight when the Sun is set' (*Treatises* I, 30).

The relation between essence and its energies should not be conflated with causality. Cause and effect need not coexist, whereas energies actually depend on essence. Palamas on many occasions wrote that essence 'produces' (*Triads* III, 1, 23), 'creates' (*Treatises* II, 44) energies, or that energies 'follow' (*Treatises* II, 26) from essence. However, sometimes he also maintained that essence 'causes' energies (*Triads* III, 2, 7; *Treatises* II, 19). Commentators rightly pointed out that he did not understand this kind of causality in a usual way.

> The energies are not effects of the divine cause, as creatures are; they are not created, formed ex nihilo, but flow eternally from the one essence of the Trinity (*Lossky* 1957, p. 73; see also *Krivoshein* 1938, p. 143).

Palamas has also stressed the difference between the creation of things and producing energies. He devoted to this topic the whole treatise *On the divine energies*. 'Created beings are not processions [*i.e.* energies], […] but effects of God's processions' (*Treatises* I, 7); 'a creature is an effect of divine energies not the energies themselves' (*Treatises* III, 19).

Palamas insisted that since essence and energies are not separable, they do not, strictly speaking, make a whole. Things are not mereologically compounded of essence and energies. 'That what appears, or can be thought of, or can be given [*i.e.* energies] is not a part of God' (*Treatises* III, 6). Nor 'elements' are of God's nature (*Treatises* II, 23), since 'no being is composed of its own acts' (*Treatises* III, 25). He asked rhetorically: 'What kind of whole can be built by a mover and moving, that is by acting principle and its energy?' (*Treatises* I, 22).

It is interesting to notice that Palamas' distinction strikingly resembles the classical scholastic notion of formal distinction (*Tweedale* 1991). According to some medieval western

philosophers, beings may be conceptually different, yet really inseparable. Conceptual difference means that things have different definitions, belong to diverse categories. Exactly the same definition may be found in Palamas: 'We do not treat the unity of essence and energies as if they had the same meaning, but as something inseparable' (*Treatises* II, 8). This coincidence calls into question the thesis on specificity of the essence/energy distinction. However it does not deny originality neither to Palamas, nor Scotus. There could hardly be any intellectual exchange between the learned monks in the East and the West.

Some Orthodox commentators tried to moderate somehow this coincidence. Basil Krivosheine (1938, p. 152), for instance, eventually admitted that essence/energy distinction corresponds to scholastic *distinctio realia minor*, but 'very relatively' and 'very inexactly'. At the same time, he understood Palamitic distinction as a *pragmatike diakrisis*, that is a real (not mental—*kat'epinoein*) distinction (not separation—*diairesis*). This is precisely meant by scholastic formal distinction. It seems there really is no gap between the eastern and the western distinction.

The distinction between essence and energies was introduced by Gregory Palamas to explain the possibility of experiencing God in hesychastic praying. Indeed, hesychasts could contemplate God himself, though not in His inaccessible, divine essence, but in knowable, uncreated energies. It is so because divine energies are no less divine than divine essence. Energies 'are not out of God' (*Treatises* I, 32), they are 'God Himself, though not in the respect of the essence' (*Treatises* I, 15, 32). 'God is entirely present in each of the divine energies' (*Triads* III, 2, 7). Therefore, both the essence and the energies might be 'named with the same words' (*Treatises* II, 4).

> The energies or divine acts belong to the existence of God himself; they represent his existence *for us*. It is therefore not only justified but necessary to apply thereto the attributes proper to the divine Being; they are God (*theos*) and Deity (*theotes*) (*Meyendorff* 1998, p. 217–218).

3.3. The Metaphysics of Deification

The essence/energies distinction was formulated not only for the explanation of the possibility of revelation; the most fundamental truth for Palamas, as well as to the whole the Eastern Christian tradition in general, was the reality of deification (*Meyendorff* 1983, p. 2). The whole Palamas' theory was, in fact, an attempt to provide ontological explanation of the mystical union with God.

> By his doctrine on […] divine energies Gregory Palamas gives an indestructible theological foundation to the traditional mystical teaching of the Orthodox Church, since only on the basis of this doctrine is it possible to consistently assert the reality of the communion between God and man […] without falling into the pantheistic confusion of creature with Creator (*Krivoshein* 1938, p. 207).

According to Palamas, the union with God is at the same time the highest cognition of God (*Mantzaridis* 1984, p. 114–115). Strictly speaking, this way of knowing has no intellectual character. Palamas understood deification as a real transformation of human being in which man ontologically unites with God. Becoming an object of knowing is, however, definitely the best way to know.

What is the ontological mechanism of deification? It appears that Palamas formulated a considerably innovating and illuminating solution. He noticed once:

> dwelling of the light of grace in a soul is not a simple connection […] but amazing internal communion, in some sense inexpressible and unparalleled (*First Letter to Barlaam* 43, *Spiteris* 1996, p. 84).

Before Palamas, patristic theology developed two distinct concepts of union—namely essential union of divine Persons in the Trinity and the hypostatic union of two essences in Christ. Palamas proposed a third solution. God and man unite neither by essence, nor by hypostasis, but by energies.

> God in His completeness deifies those who are worthy of this, by uniting Himself with them, not hypostatically—that belonged to Christ alone—nor essentially, but through […] energies (*Against Akindynos* V, 26, *Meyendorff* 1983, p. 164; cf. *Lossky* 1957, p. 87).

It is worth noticing that such analysis of eternal life seems to differ significantly from the theory of mere beatific vision developed in the western theology (*Bradshaw* 2004).

According to Dionysius the Areopagite (*CH* I, 3; cf. *Treatises* III, 7), deification (*theosis*) consists of both assimilation (*aphomoiosis*) and unification (*enosis*). Palamas carefully distinguished these two concepts. He perceived assimilation as a result of man's own effort to imitate God. It consists of ascetics and virtuous life. All Christian moral teaching concerns the way in which man can imitate their divine example. Nevertheless, Palamas insisted, that assimilation is only a necessary, but not sufficient, condition of deification (*Treatises* III, 7; see also *Krivoshein* 1938, p. 72; *Mantzaridis* 1984, p. 88). The main reason for this was the fact that imitation is a human action, whereas deification is a gift of divine grace. As St. Paul said, '[God] saved us […] not in virtue of works but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace' (2 *Tim* 1:9). Hence, Palamas taught:

> Every virtue and imitation of God on our part, indeed, *prepares* those who practise them for divine union, but the mysterious union itself is *effected* by grace (*Triads* III, 1, 27; italics mine).

The crucial component of deification is unification. Palamas understood the union of man and God as sharing by man divine energies.

> God, while remaining entirely in Himself, dwells entirely in us by His superessential power; and communicates to us not His nature, but His proper glory and splendor (*Triads* I, 3, 23).

'Power', 'glory' and 'splendor' are obviously names of divine energies. Deified man is endowed with divine energies, which become his own energies. Human being retains their created human essence and obtains uncreated divine energies.

> The divine life […] belongs to the divine nature even when man benefit from it (by grace, not by nature); hence it constitutes the means of a communion both personal and real with God, a communion which does not involve the impossible confusion of the natures (*Meyendorff* 1998, p. 217).

Thus, in some specific sense, man partially becomes a God. As Palamas put it:

> He who achieves deification is fittingly defined by both: he is on the one hand unoriginate, eternal and heavenly […] on account of the uncreated grace that eternally derives from eternal God; he is on the other a new creation and a new man […] on account of himself and his own nature (*Reply to Akindynos* III, 6, 15, *Mantzaridis* 1984, p. 112).

Palamas quoted with approval St. Maximus' phrase:

> The one, who is considered worthy of it, by grace would be everything that God is by nature, save only the identity of nature (*Treatises* II, 34; cf. *Lossky* 1957, p. 87).

Therefore, it may be said that 'them, who participate in energies and act in accordance with them, through God's grace are made gods with no beginning and no end' (*Third Letter against Akindynos*, *Spiteris* 1996, p. 78).

The possibility of human deification is given through Christ in the Church (*Mantzaridis* 1984, pp. 41–60; *Meyendorff* 1983, pp. 163–164). The human nature assumed by Christ was deified first due to the hypostatic union. Now, thanks to Sacraments, people are able to participate in that nature and to be endowed by divine energies.

> To Palamas, the communion of the sacraments signifies the union with the human nature of Logos of God, which, united hypostatically with the second person of the Trinity, was deified and became the source of deification to man (*Mantzaridis* 1984, p. 54).

In the result of a sacramental life, 'Christ's uncreated life and energy become the property of the man who is united with Him, and in whose person Christ himself lives and operates' (*Mantzaridis* 1984, p. 128).

4. Ontological Dependency, Relational Order and Energies

In this part, I would like to present some formal analyses of Palamas' teaching. As I noticed in §1, Father Pavel Florensky attempted this a century ago. It should be highlighted that his analyses were in fact one of the first applications of contemporary logic to the traditional metaphysics. Now, I would like to discuss and develop some of his ideas. The first one concerns the formal analysis of essence/energy distinction as a kind of ontological dependency.

4.1. Florensky's Analysis

In 1913, archbishop Nikon published a critical assessment of onomathodoxy. Pavel Florensky prepared an extensive commentary on Nikon's paper, aimed at defending the monks of Athos. In one place of this commentary, Florensky sketched in a margin note a logical analysis of onomathodoxy (*Florenskij* 2000, p. 316). Though the commentary has not been published yet, then the logical analysis sketch was developed further in §10 of the fundamental paper 'Onomathodoxy as a Philosophical Principle' in 1922 (ibidem, pp. 272–274). Florensky tried to give a concise formalization of the basic idea of Palamism. In order to do it, he formulated all possible positions in the debate on essence and energies. 'There are four abstract possible analyses of essence and energy relation, which may be formalized by four double logical inclusions' (ibidem, 273). Let 'A' represent the energy, 'B' represent the essence. Florensky formalized possible types of interconnections between them in the following way (I intentionally leave Florensky's old-fashioned notation without any changes):

(F1) $A \supset B : B \supset A$,
(F2) $A \supset -B : B \supset A$,
(F3) $A \supset -B : B \supset -A$,
(F4) $A \supset B : B \supset -A$.

Florensky characterized (F1) as 'immanentism,' (F2) as 'extreme positivism,' (F3) as 'Kantianism,' and, finally, (F4) as 'Platonism.' Immanentism conflates energy and essence, extreme positivism denies the possibility of revelation of essence, and Kantianism entirely breaks the connection between these two realities. Platonism, which is, according to Florensky, identical in this respect with Palamism, holds that energy 'presents the reality itself,' 'really exposes the essence,' though 'does not exhaust completely the reality, which appears,' since essence is 'not reducible to phenomena' due to its being 'an independent reality' (*Florenskij* 2000, p. 274). Florensky believed that (F4) is the proper formulation of these intuitions.

> The logical core of theological disputes in the 14th and 19th centuries boils down to only this epistemological formula. […] This is the general sense of onomathodoxy as a philosophical principle (ibidem, p. 274).

Unfortunately, the formula (F4) raises at least three serious doubts. First, it is not clear what the letters 'A' and 'B' really stand for. Do they represent propositions, concepts or rather objects? Florensky wrote ambiguously that the 'terms of thinking' may be equally propositions and concepts (*Florenskij* 2000, p. 272; cf. *Florensky* 2004, pp. 425–426). Second, how should the symbol '$\supset$' be understood? Florensky characterized the relation between A and B both as 'implication' and 'inclusion' (*Florenskij* 2000, p. 273), but perhaps he really meant some other relation? Finally, it is unclear whether the sign of negation stands in the right place.

I shall start with the last problem. It seems obvious that, regardless the particular interpretation of the symbols, the negation should stand in *de dicto*, not in *de re* position. For now, the formula proposed by Florensky is simply defective. The modern version of (F4) would be

(P1) $(A \supset B) \wedge (B \supset \neg A)$.

It seems that this formula plainly fails to capture the meaning of Palamism in Florensky's informal interpretation. It means that if *A*, then *B*, and if *B*, then not-*A*. Therefore, it denies the very existence of energy. This result may be obtained in a formal way. By the law of transitivity of implication it follows from (P1) that

(1) $A \supset \neg A$.

The formula (1) may be true if and only if *A* is false. Hence, Palamism would be true if and only if there were no energies at all. It evidently contradicts Florensky's intention. Formulas (F2) and (F3) face the same problem. The formal interpretation proposed by Florensky is somehow too strong since it implies that there is no energy or essence at all. Therefore, I propose to change the position of negation to *de dicto*. Formula (P1) should be formulated in the following way:

(P2) $(A \supset B) \wedge \neg(B \supset A)$.

If *A*, then *B*, and it is not the case that if *B* then *A*. Florensky had a well known passion for the use of logical and mathematical formulas. Unfortunately, they are quite often inaccurate or simply mistaken. In the Polish edition of his works, it was necessary to make numerous corrections of obvious mistakes in the text (*Florenski* 2009, pp. 35, 37, 38, 181, 183, 184). It is hard to say whether these mistakes were made by Florensky or by his editors. At any rate, I think that (F2)–(F4) is a case which should be corrected in this way.

My proposal of this correction (*Rojek* 2010b, p. 54) evoked a criticism of Bogdan Strachowski (*Strachowski* 2010, p. 194; cf. *Rojek* 2010c). He pointed out that changing the place of negation in the case of (F3) leads to contradiction. The modified *de dicto* Kantianism runs as follows:

(2) $\neg(A \supset B) \wedge \neg(B \supset A)$

This formula is inconsistent since the thesis of logic is that $(A \supset B) \vee (B \supset A)$. Therefore, according to Strachowski, one should seek a different way to make Florenski consistent. Indeed, a mere change of the negation's place is not sufficient for a uniform and consistent interpretation of Florensky's formalizations. I think that what is really needed here is a modal logic which would secure the consistency of *de dicto* interpretation of (F3). I shall come back to this problem in §4.2.

Now I would like to roughly sketch two different interpretations of Florensky's analysis. The first one takes '*A*' and '*B*' as names of propositions and '$\supset$' as an implication. The second interprets '*A*' and '*B*' as names of objects and '$\supset$' as a specific relation between energy and essence. Both interpretations assume that the negation should stand in *de dicto* position.

4.2. Dependency Interpretation

Florensky suggested that the formula '$A \supset B$' means 'if there is energy, there is essence' (*Florenskij* 2000, p. 272). Thus, '*A*' and '*B*' should be read as existential propositions: 'there is energy' and 'there is essence'. On the ground of this interpretation, (P2) would be an assertion of one-sided ontological dependency between energy and essence. The existence of energy presupposes the existence of essence, whereas the existence of energy does not presuppose the existence of energy.

The formula (P2) may be further improved to go along Florensky's intention more precisely. It seems plausible to insert modal concepts into the formula:

(P3) $\Box(A \supset B) \wedge \neg\Box(B \supset A)$.

Necessarily, if there is energy, then there is also essence, and not necessarily, if there is essence, there is energy. This formula expresses exactly the ontological dependency in proper modal terms. Florensky could not use the modal concept as modal formal logic was not invented at that time yet.

The advantage of the modal reformulation of Florensky's formalization is that it gives a uniform and consistent interpretation of Kantianism (*Rojek* 2010b, p. 211). Now, the corrected and modalized version of (F3) is the following:

(3) $\neg\Box(A \supset B) \wedge \neg\Box(B \supset A)$,

that is, after some obvious transformations,

(4) $\Diamond(A \wedge \neg B) \wedge \Diamond(B \wedge \neg A)$.

These formulas do not lead to contradiction since, though $\Diamond(A \wedge B) \supset \Diamond A \wedge \Diamond B$ is a thesis of standard modal logic, the reversed implication $\Diamond A \wedge \Diamond B \supset \Diamond(A \wedge B)$ is not. Kantianism holds that energies and essences might exist independently. Energies do not necessarily reveal, and essences do not necessarily manifest themselves. There may be energies without corresponding essences and essences without energies. I think that this modal description closely fits in Florensky's intuitions.

The sense of Palamism may be even more accurately captured in modal quantifier calculus. The principle of Palamism can be reformulated as follows:

(P4) $\Box(\exists x\, \mathrm{En}(x) \supset \exists y\, \mathrm{Es}(y) \wedge x<y) \wedge \neg\Box(\exists x\, \mathrm{Es}(x) \supset \exists y\, \mathrm{En}(y) \wedge x<y)$,

where '$\mathrm{En}(x)$' stands for '*x* is energy', '$\mathrm{Es}(x)$'—'*x* is essence', and '$x<y$'—'*x* is energy of *y*'. Perhaps, instead of essence, one should speak about hypostases, which are ultimate substrates of both energies, and essence, but I will not develop this topic here (see *Triads* III, 2, 12; *Meyendorff* 1998, pp. 213, 214–215).

Now, are these refined Florensky's formulas appropriate? Do they express the Palamitic distinction between essence and energies well? I shall focus, in turn, on the two terms of Florensky's formula, namely on the one asserting the dependency of energy on essence, and the second asserting the independency of essence on energy.

First, with no doubt, as I indicated above in § 3.2, Palamas held that energies ontologically depend on essence. The existence of energy presupposes the existence of correspondent essence. Nevertheless, it seems that standard ontological dependency captured in Florensky's formalization is not sufficient for a proper analysis of Palamas' distinction. On the ground of this interpretation, there would be no difference between energies and effects of essence. For example, the divine grace, as well as the world, equally would not exist without the existence of God's essence; the difference is that energies, contrary to effects, are inseparable from essence. Thus, the proper formalization of essence/energies distinction should adopt a more sophisticated concept of ontological dependency.

It seems that such a concept was formulated by a Polish phenomenologist, Roman Ingarden (1964), who distinguished 'non-self-sufficiency' ('*Unselbständigkeit*') on one hand, and 'dependence' ('*Abhängigkeit*') on the other.[5] Non-self-sufficient beings need some other beings for their existence; dependent beings are not-self-sufficient but, moreover, must also belong to the other being. Effects may be thought as simply non-self-sufficient, whereas energies seem to be dependent in the Ingardenian sense.

Second, as I argued above, essence is not entirely independent of energy, otherwise energies would simply be accidents. Energy as *dynamis* is essential for essence. The essence cannot exist without having its natural *dynamis*, though *dynamis* is not essence. On the contrary, energy as a realization of potency is accidental in relation to essence. Therefore, Florensky's analysis holds only for acts, not for the potencies.

4.3. Relational Interpretation

I would like to show that at least one more interpretation of Florensky's formalization is possible. Bogdan Strachowski (2010, p. 197) suggested to treat '*A*' and '*B*' as names of objects, not propositions, and '$\supset$' as a sign of a specific ontological, not just logical implication. Now, I would like to follow his suggestion and sketch a relational interpretation of Palamism.

The natural basis of this interpretation is the primitive relation ‘is energy of’. The plausible reformulation of the principle of Palamism would be as follows:

(P5) $\forall x \forall y\ (x<y) \supset \neg(y<x)$.

This formula states that if *x* is energy of *y*, then *y* is not energy of *x*. It is a clear indication that the relation of being energy is not symmetrical. What are the other formal properties of this relation? From (P5) it follows that it is also irreflexive:

(5) $\forall x \neg(x<x)$.

It seems clear also that < is transitive:

(6) $\forall x \forall y\ (x<y) \wedge (y<z) \supset (x<z)$.

Therefore, < would be a relation of sharp order. Essences and energies may be defined as simple and co-simple elements of an ordered set $\langle U, <\rangle$:

(7) $\mathrm{Ess}(x) \equiv \neg\exists y(x<y)$,

(8) $\mathrm{En}(x) \equiv \neg\exists y(y<x)$.

The existence of the root of the $\langle U, <\rangle$ would mean that everything is energy of one object, presumably God. Palamas insisted, however, that there is a difference between being energy and effect, and that the creations are not divine energies. Therefore, in Palamitic universes there would be no root of the relation <.

Perhaps the other set of formal properties would be more adequate for Palamism. The basic relation can be understood more broadly as ‘being energy or being identical.’ That would be a relation of unsharp order ≤. The modified principle of Palamism would assert that:

(P6) $\forall x \forall y\ (x\leq y) \supset \neg(y\leq x) \vee x=y$,

therefore, ≤ would be of anti-symmetrical character:

(9) $\forall x \forall y\ (x\leq y) \wedge (x\leq y) \supset x=x$.

The relation ≤ would also be reflexive and transitive:

(10) $\forall x(x\leq x)$,

(11) $\forall x \forall y\ (x\leq y) \wedge (y\leq z) \supset (x\leq z)$.

The definitions of essence and energies would be as follows:

(12) $\mathrm{Ess}(x) \equiv \neg\exists y\ (y\neq x \wedge x\leq y)$,

(13) $\mathrm{En}(x) \equiv \neg\exists y\ (y\neq x \wedge y\leq x)$.

The analysis of the essence/energies distinction in terms of unsharp order makes it possible to express this distinction within the well known logical calculus. The same formal properties have, for instance, ‘ε‘ in Stanisław Leśniewski’s ‘ontology’ (*Słupecki* 1955), ‘ontological connection’ in Jerzy Perzanowski’s (1996) ‘ontologics’, or ‘Moda’ in Vyacheslav Moiseev’s ‘projectively modal ontology’ (*Moiseev* 2002; 2010, pp. 243–308).

5. Identity, Indiscernibility and Deification

As I indicated, the essence/energies distinction was introduced by Palamas mainly for the explanation of the nature of deification. Florensky suggested that deification might be understood as identity of properties; this leads him to the rejection of the Principle of Identity of Indiscernibles. I shall follow his idea and point out two problems of the deification theory.

5.1. Florensky on Identity

According to Basil Lourié (*Lur’e* 1997, p. 339), Pavel Florensky discovered the teaching of Gregory Palamas only after the Athos dispute. The search for arguments in support of the revolted monks lead him to Palamas’ writings. There is almost no evidence of Florensky’s acquaintance with Palamas’s writings in the earlier works. In *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth* (2004), the most important of Florensky’s books, Palamas is mentioned only in a few footnotes. Nevertheless, in that work Florensky outlined an interpretation of the patristic notion of deification. True, Florensky did

not relate his analysis directly to Palamas and neglected the essence/energy distinction, but his interpretation seems to be very close to the core of Palamas' teaching.

In Chapter V of *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth* (2004, p. 53–59), Florensky analyzed the concept of love. To him, love—primarily love between God and man—is not a mere psychological attitude, but an genuine ontological process. Love is a real unification of lovers. Florensky insisted that through love two distinct persons may become a really one being. He even used as the book's motto the Latin sententia *Finis amoris ut duo unum fiant*—'Love is completed when two become one'. He analyzed Biblical and patristic evidences of the reality of unification between man and God. He was, therefore, concerned with the very same problem as Palamas.

When developing the ontology of love, Florensky made some surprising remarks on the logical concept of identity. The two supplements, added to the main text, were devoted directly to the analysis of the concept of identity in classical philosophy and in contemporary formal logic (*Florensky* 2004, p. 365–374). First, he criticized the modern western philosophers for neglecting identity in favor of resemblance. Florensky said: 'when there is talk of identity, what one means—more or less decisively—is fullness of similarity, not more' (*Florensky* 2004, p. 60). Christian metaphysics, in contrast, allows properties to be numerically identical, not mere similar.[6] With no doubt, the issue here was the problem of universals, which concerns precisely the possibility of existence of numerically identical properties in many distinct things (see e.g. *Armstrong* 1978). Florensky made an appeal to the classical trinitarian terminology and called the modern nominalistic philosophy *homoiousian*, in contrast to Christian *homoousian* realism (*Florensky* 2004, p. 59; cf. *Slesinski* 1984, pp. 136–138). Second, Florensky protested against the bundle theory of thing. Namely, he accused positivistic logicians of a desire to 'destroy the autonomous nature of the individual and reduce it to a sum of traits' (*Florensky* 2004, p. 371). A thing is not merely a combination of traits since it contains an irreducible 'carrier of traits' (ibidem, p. 368). Finally, he rejected the following logical Principle of Identity (I use its contemporary formulation):

(14) $x=y \equiv \forall P\ (P(x) \equiv P(y))$.

According to Florensky, this classical definition 'replaces the question of real numerical identity with the question of the formal similarity of traits' (2004, p. 372), whereas these two questions differ fundamentally. Florensky held that it is possible for distinct things to have numerically one nature. The three consubstantial divine Persons are the most eminent example, which also serves as a paradigm of the unity of lovers. Hence, the Principle of Identity excludes the possibility of the Trinity and deification (though deification, as Florensky should have added but did not, does not mean sharing the nature, but energies).

Florensky's reasoning, though not completely clear, is perfectly sound. Realism in the question of universals combined with the criticism of the bundle theory leads by necessity to the rejection of the Principle of Identity. More precisely, it leads to the rejection of the Principle of Identity of Indiscernibles:

(15) $\forall P\ (P(x) \equiv P(y)) \supset x= y$,

which is one of the components of the (14); the reverse Principle of Indiscernibility of Identicals is usually accepted as trivial. This reasoning, implicitly present in Florensky's remarks, plays a crucial role in analytic metaphysics as an argument either against the bundle theory or against realism (*Armstrong* 1978, p. 81; *Loux* 1978, pp. 131–137, 155–156; *Moreland* 2001, p. 141).

At this point, it seems that, to Florensky, the real union of lovers consisted of sharing all the relevant properties. Indiscernibility is meant here in a realistic manner, namely as sharing numerically identical properties. Actually, Florensky spoke about natures, but his analysis applies perfectly to energies as well. Indeed, such a unity is real and internal, contrary to merely external similarity.

Thus, Florensky virtually distinguished two kinds of idiscernibility: *homoousian*, with universal properties on one hand, and *homoiousian*, with particular, yet exactly similar properties, on the other. The Principle of Identity of Indiscernibles is not valid in both cases. The realistic

indiscernibility, which Florensky sometimes misleadingly called ‘numerical identity of things’, may be defined as follows:

(D1) $x=_{o}y \equiv \forall P \forall Q\ ((P(x) \equiv Q(y)) \equiv P=Q)$.

The right side of the (D1) is intended to be equivalent to the right side of (14). I inserted the indication of identity of properties ‘P=Q’ just for a clear comparison with the nominalistic idiscernibility:

(D2) $x\approx_{o}y \equiv \forall P \forall Q\ ((P(x) \equiv Q(y)) \equiv P\approx Q)$.

‘P≈Q’ means that properties P and Q resemble each other. In this case, all properties of things can be similar, yet not identical. Since identity follows resemblance:

(16) $P=Q \supset P\approx Q$,

the realistic indiscernibility follows the nominalistic:

(17) $x=_{o}y \supset x\approx_{o}y$.

The concept of *homoousian* indiscernibility is, therefore, stronger that *homoiousian* one.

Unfortunately, the analyzed text of Florensky is rather obscure. It is not clear, for instance, whether he distinguished merely two competitive theories, or rather two distinct domains in which these theories hold, or perhaps even two stages of ontological development of one thing. First, he suggested that the theory of resemblance is characteristic of ‘the Western, Catholic view of life’ (*Florensky* 2004, p. 367). In the same spirit Robert Slesinski (1984, p. 137) argued that David Hume’s views perfectly fits in the description of *homoiousian* philosophy. Second, Florensky contrasted the domain of *things*, which is governed by the theory of resemblance, and the domain of *persons*, in which the theory of identity is valid (*Florensky* 2004, p. 58–59). Things have similar properties, whereas persons can share their actions.[7] Third, he suggested that particular entities can move from the world of mere resemblances to the world of identity. For a human being this can be achieved in the process of ascesis and moral life aimed at deification.

I am not going to analyze Florensky’s view further. For now, I would just like to point out that the presented interpretation seems to overcome the crucial problem of Florensky’s theory identified by Robert Slesinski.

> His understanding of numerical identity, if not properly understood, could appear to be the Achille’s heel of his whole suggested system, and, in truth, could subject it to the charge of pantheism. Specifically, how can Florensky reconcile the consubstantiality of the divine Hypostases with the consubstantiality of created species in terms of numerical identity? (*Slesinski* 1984, p. 136).

The answer for this question is straightforward if we complement Florensky’s theory with the essence/energies distinction. By ‘numerical identity’ of things Florensky meant numerical identity of their properties in general. Numerical identity of natures yields ‘consubstantiality’, which characterizes the Persons of Holy Trinity; numerical identity of energies yields ‘synergy’, which characterizes (not only) Holy Trinity, but also human beings living in God. Indeed, without the Palamitic distinction it is uneasy to avoid the charge of pantheism.

5.2. The Problem of Synergy

What is the use of Florensky’s analysis for interpretation of Palamism? I think that he rightly indicated the ontological dimension of deification. Deification consists of a real change of properties. He was mistaken, nevertheless, in suggesting that man can be consubstantial with God. This is such a bold theological mistake that one might wonder whether Florensky in *Pillar* used the word ‘nature’ in a strict sense. In any case, everything that Florensky said on natures holds for energies in Palamism.

Florensky distinguished two interpretations of union with God, namely in terms of identity (D1) and resemblance (D2). They may be now formulated on the ground of the essence/energy distinction:

(D3) $x =_e y \equiv \forall z \forall z' ((x<z \equiv y<z) \equiv z=z')$,

(D4) $x \approx_e y \equiv \forall z \forall z' ((x<z \equiv y<z) \equiv z \approx z')$.

Things are energically indiscernible in the realistic sense if and only if they share all their energies, and in the nominalistic sense if and only if they have all energies exactly similar. The former case might be called realistic synergy, the latter—nominalistic one. As I indicated in §3.3, to Palamas *theosis* consists of both assimilation and unification. (D4) may be considered as a formal expression of full assimilation, whereas (D3) captures the meaning of unification. One should note that by virtue of (16), unification implies assimilation:

(18) $x=_e y \supset x \approx_e y$.

Therefore, assimilation really is only a necessary but not sufficient condition of deification.

I suggest that deification consist of strict identity of energies, and not mere resemblance. It must be observed, however, that there is no agreement among commentators on this crucial point. Some authors suggest an analogy between the relation between the two energies in Christ and the energies of man and God in deification. But this, as I argue, unfortunately leads to the resemblance, not identity theory.

Patristic theology before Palamas used the notion of energy in two cases: Christ and the Holy Trinity. On one hand, Christ is the only person with two natures, and, hence, has two numerically distinct, yet reconciled, human and divine energies. The Third Constantinopolitan Council clearly stated that in Christ there were 'two natural principles of action [*i.e.* energies] in the same Jesus Christ our lord and true God, which undergo no division, no change, no partition, no confusion' (*Tanner* 1990). This statement was aimed against monoenergism, which accepts only one 'principle of action' in Christ. One the other hand, the Trinity consists of three divine Persons, one nature and one divine energy shared by all the Persons (*Treatises* I, 21; *Meyendorff* 1998, p. 215; *Spiteris* 1996, p. 105). 'The energy of the Three Divine Hypostases the is one not by analogy [*i.e.* not mere similar] (as with us) but truly also one in number' (*Capita* 138, *Krivoshein* 1938, p. 141). Therefore, we are also told that, in the case of human beings, we are dealing with many distinct energies, which, nevertheless, may be similar to one another and assimilated to divine energies. 'Human acts are similar, but not identical'—Palamas stated firmly (*Treatises* I, 21; cf. *Meyendorff* 1998, p. 215). These distinctions may be summarized in Table 2.

Table 2.The variety of patristic 'identities'.

	hypostases	essences	energies
numerical identity	=	=	=
excluded	=	=	≠
Monoenergists Christ	=	≠	=
Orthodox Christ	=	≠	≠
The Holy Trinity	≠	=	=
human beings	≠	=	≠
deification according to (D3)	≠	≠	=
deification according to (D4)	≠	≠	≠

What is it like in the case of human and divine energies? Is it analogous to the case of Christ or to the case of Holy Trinity? Most commentators use here the term 'synergy;' energies of man and God are supposed to be somehow 'united.' However, the specific meaning of this term may vary. Particularly, it is often not quite clear whether synergy presupposes numerical identity or mere resemblance.

John Meyendorff, for instance, suggested that the relation between human and divine energies mirrors the analogous relation in Christ.

> It is not through his own activity or "energy" that man can be deified—this would be Pelagianism—but by divine "energy", to which his human activity is "obedient"; between *the two* there is a "synergy", of which the relation of the two energies in Christ is the ontological basis (*Meyendorff* 1983, p. 164; italics mine).

Therefore, divine and human energies would have the same characteristic formulated by the Sixth Council: 'no division, no change, no partition, no confusion' (see also *Strachowski* 2010, p. 203). In this interpretation, however, they still are two numerically distinct, yet exactly similar and reconciled, energies.

It seems that Pavel Florensky held opposite view. He also spoke about 'synergy' (*Florenskij* 2000, p. 256), but evidently, he understood that term in a stronger sense. He maintained that energies may 'join' (ibidem, p. 358), 'knit' (ibidem, pp. 257, 263, 359) and 'fuse'(ibidem, p. 257) one another.

> Beings, staying neither mixed in their essences, not reduced to one another, nor dissolved in one another, can at the same time really unite through energies. This union must be understood neither as adding one act to another, nor as mechanical pushing one being by another, but as mutual braiding of the energies, co-operation, *synergeia*, in which there is neither one, nor the other taken separately, but something new emerges (*Florenskij* 2000, p. 256).

I think that what Florensky had in mind was simply the identity of energies. One and the same energy is both divine and human, and at the same time is something new in the sense that it is no more solely human or solely divine. Some authors are even more radical. Basil Lourié suggested that 'there is no more synergy in the deification; in this sense it should be said that deified man has no human energies, only divine' (*Lur'e* 2006, p. 390).

It appears that Palamas held the identity view. As I pointed out in §3.3, he insisted on the real union of man and God. Resemblance, even exact one, does not suffice for this purpose. On the ground of the two energies approach, deification would be merely external imitation of God. This approach was directly criticized by Palamas. It would be only a *homoiousian* imitation, not *homoousian* union.

Palamas did not endorse the thesis that deification is analogous to hypostatic union. It is, as Palamas admitted, an 'unparalleled' connection which differs both from relations in Christ and in the Holy Trinity. The reason for different models for Christ and deification is that, in the case of Christ, divine and human energies do not need to be united in a strong way since the two natures of Christ were already united by one hypostasis. In the case of deification, there is no such common hypostasis, and the Christological model leads to unduly weakening of the relation between divine and human energies.

There is one analogy which may serve as an additional support for the identity interpretation. Palamas repeated that God unites with a man as soul with body: 'He is conjoined to them as a soul is to its body' (*Triads* III, 1, 27; III, 1, 29; I, 3, 23). How did Palamas understand the soul-body relation? The most important point, for now, is that he believed there are energies common to both soul and body (*Mantzaridis* 1984, p. 84). 'There are, indeed, […] common activities of body and soul, which […] serve to draw the flesh to dignity close to that of the spirit' (*Triads* II, 2, 12). The grace of the Spirit, transmitted to body through the soul, 'grants to the body also the experience of things divine, and allows it the same blessed experiences which the soul undergoes' (ibidem). Therefore, by virtue of analogy, divine energy would be common to God and man, not just similar.

5.3. One-sided and Two-sided Deification

At the end, I would like to address one more question. The proposed formal interpretation of deification (D3) involves equivalence: all energies of God are energies of deified man, and all

energies of man are energies of God. This interpretation has, *prima facie*, strong evidence in the texts. Palamas wrote for example:

> The *entire* Divinity comes to dwell *in fullness* in those deemed worthy, and all the saints in their *entire* being dwell in God, receiving God in His *wholeness* (*Triads* III, 1, 27; italics mine);
>
> He [God] unites Himself to them to the extent of dwelling *completely* in them, so that they too dwell *entirely* in Him (III, 1, 29; italics mine; cf. *Krivoshein* 1938, p. 203).

It seems that every divine energy becomes human and reverse; all human energies become God's own energies.

But at the same time, some passages suggest a different interpretation. In *Against Akindynos* (V, 26) Palamas said: 'God in its fullness deifies them who deserve it […] through *a small part* of the uncreated energies and the uncreated divinity' (*Meyendorff* 1983, p. 164; italics mine). It might be thought as if all human energies were divine, but not all divine energies were human. This may be formalized in the following way:

(D5) $x =_{e*} y \equiv \forall z \forall z' ((x<z \supset y<z) \equiv z=z')$,

The equivalence present in (D3) is replaced here by implication. In this case, deification is, as if, one-sided. Man entirely partakes in divine energies but not in all of them.

Which interpretation is correct? For sure, from the existential point of view, it seems that one-sided deification is perfectly enough to fulfill human aspirations. It appears that, contrary to the first impression, the evidence in favor of the first interpretation may be reconciled with the second. The point is that to Palamas 'God is entirely present in each of divine energies' (*Triads* III, 2, 7). It is thus because energies are 'not parts of God', and therefore 'the whole' God appears in each of them (*Treatises* III, 6). So 'a small part of uncreated energies' is enough to have 'entire Divinity'; not all divine energies are required to it. Moreover, the analogy to soul and body seems to support the second reading. Though all bodily acts might be at the same time acts of the soul, there are, nevertheless, some acts of soul which are not bodily. Thus, even though all human energies may be identical with divine, God can have some energies which are not shared by man.

6. Conclusion

The distinction between essence and energies is usually considered as antinomic and, therefore, mysterious, and perhaps mystical. For instance, according to Vladimir Lossky (1974, p. 53), it is 'a theological antinomy', which points at 'mysterious distinction in God's very being'. Similar opinion might be found in many others commentators (see e.g. *Losev* 1993a, p. 866; *Spiteris* 1996, p. 97; *Leskin* 2008, p. 118). Since the essence/energies distinction constitutes the core of Palamas' teaching, which is considered the peak and source of the Orthodox theology, the opinion on its antinomic character spread into the whole Eastern tradition.

I tried to show that Palamas' teaching on energies and deification is no less rational than any other ontological positions. No true antinomy was found. Moreover, his teaching may be analyzed with the help of some logical tools. Even the most mystical elements of Palamism, such as the divinization of human nature, can be expressed in a formal way consistently. Furthermore, the use of formal logic may help in noticing some problems usually neglected by commentators.

I believe that the opinion on the allegedly antinomic character of Palamism arose from its specific methodological character. Usually, theology accepts some concepts and axioms from philosophy. Palamas clearly saw the inadequacy of existing philosophical notions in explaining revelation and deification. However, he did not forsake the project of philosophical explanation of religious truth, but adapted the reversed methodology. To him, philosophy should accept concepts and axioms from theology. Elsewhere I labeled such theories a 'theological philosophy' (*Rojek* 2009). Palamas, therefore,

> neither sacrificed revelation to philosophy nor contented himself with a dry repetition of patristic opinions, but tried to base his teaching about God on the Church's faith

> and experience. Thus, man has knowledge of God's existence through His energies which are sent into the world (*Mantzaridis* 1984, p. 106).

The consequence of this methodology was modification of the existing ontological conceptual scheme. For instance, he modified the Greek philosophical categories of accident and property to reach the appropriate ontological concept of energy (see above §3.2). That is why some of his theses may seem 'antynomic' and 'mysterious' from the previous point of view. The question 'what is mysterious?' is, nevertheless, reversible in philosophy. If one accepts essence/energies distinction as an axiom, this distinction would be no more *explanandum* but rather *explanans*.

As I tried to show, Palamas' teaching was not restricted to philosophy of God merely. The essence/energy distinction, though formulated in the context of God, applies to all beings. Therefore, Palamism has a downward structure: creatures are governed by principles holding for Creator. Palamas' ontology might be called a 'theology of being'. Since Palamas' philosophy was designed to explain some specific Christian facts, it has a specific Christian character.

The answer for the question about the character of Palamism has grave consequences for the ecumenical dialog. Some authors accepting the antinomic nature of essence/energies distinction hold that this nature even facilitates the agreement between the East and the West. If Palamism was not a rational philosophy but rather some mystical poetry, there would be no moot point for a dispute with supposedly more rational western thinking. From this point of view, any rational interpretation of Palamism would even be an obstacle for the ecumenical efforts.

> We believe that the ecumenical dialog requires, among other things, the reinterpretation of Palamism through depriving it of all conceptual content, through its purification from philosophical jargon and […] through its clarification as a type of mystical theology (*Spiteris* 1996, pp. 120–121).

I adopt here the opposite view. The logical reconstruction of Palamas' teaching reveals its deep foundations, which are not so alien to western philosophy. Therefore, philosophical, and even logical, interpretation of Palamism may become a foundation of such an ecumenical dialog which would avoid rough stereotypes of 'the intellectual West' and 'the mystical East'.

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Notes

1. Aleksej Losev, a student and a friend of Florensky, tried to express the principles of onomatodoxy in the terms of set theory (*Losev* 1997; *Troickij* 1997). However, I will not discuss his views, since they need an interpretation themselves and cannot be considered as a true logical analysis.
2. The quotations of *Triads* are taken from the (incomplete) English translation (1983). The passages from *Triads* which have not been included in the English edition are in my own translation based on the Russian complete edition (2003). Due to the lack of the English edition, all the quotations of *Treatises* are in my own translation based on the Russian (2007) and Polish editions (*Zogas-Osadnik* 2012, pp. 257–344). I adopt the following abbreviations: *Treatise* I for *On union and division*, *Treatise* II for *On the divine energies* and *Treatise* III for *On deifying participation*.
3. It is interesting that Lossky removed phrases on ‘eastern Thomists’ in English translation of his 1944 book. Cf. *Lossky* 1944 and *Lossky* 1957, pp. 76–77, 220.
4. Agnieszka Świtkiewicz (1997, p. 156) noticed a ‘great convergence, and at some points even identity’ between texts by Krivoshein and Lossky. Indeed, Lossky relied on Krivoshein’s interpretation and often simply repeated passages from his work.
5. I modify the English translation of Ingarden’s terminology (*Ingarden* 1964), which is very misleading.
6. Florensky often spoke about the numerical identity of things but he evidently had in mind the numerical identity of properties (natures or energies) of numerically distinct things. His standard examples of ‘numerically identical things’ were the Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity; they are plainly numerically distinct, though have numerically one nature. The question is, however, not so clear, since in some places

Florensky claimed that the terms ‘hypostasis’ and ‘nature’ are synonymous, and therefore the Holy Trinity is antinomic (*Florensky* 2004, p. 39–52).

7. This means that Florensky could accept the bundle theory for things since things are individuated by individual properties (cf. *Florensky* 2004, p. 368). Persons may share universal properties, so they must have a substratum, or—as Florensky would say—hypostasis.