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“Crucifixion” of the Logic. Palamite Theology of the Uncreated Divine Energies as Fundament of an Ontological Epistemology

Abstract

During the Transfiguration, the apostles on Tabor, “indeed saw the same grace of the Spirit which would later dwell in them”.¹ The light of grace “illuminates from outside (ἔξωθεν) on those who worthily approached it and sent the illumination to the soul through the sensitive eyes; but today, because it is confounded with us (ἀνακραθὲν ἡμῖν) and exists in us, it illuminates the soul



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¹ Gregory Palamas, *The Triads* (edited with an introduction by John Meyendorff, translation by Nicholas Gendle, preface by Jaroslav Pelikan, Paulist Press: New Jersey, 1983); cf. Tr., III.iii.9, p. 106.

from inward (ἐνδωθεν).² The opposition between knowledge, which comes from outside (ἐξωθεν) - a human and purely symbolic knowledge - and “intellectual” knowledge, which comes from within (ἐνδωθεν), Meyendorff says³ what it already exists at Pseudo-Dionysius: “For it is not from without that God stirs them toward the divine. Rather he does so via the intellect and from within and he willingly enlightens them with a ray that is pure and immaterial”.⁴ The assertions of the Calabrian philosopher about an “unique knowledge”, common both to the Christians and the Hellenes and pursuing the same goal, the hesychast theologian opposes the reality of the two knowledge, having two distinct purposes and based on two different instruments of perception: “Palamas admitted the authenticity of natural knowledge, however the latter is opposed to the revealed wisdom, that is why it does not provide, by itself, salvation”.⁵ Therefore, in the purified human intellect begins to shine of the Trinity light. Purity also depends on the return of the intellect (its proper energy) to itself.⁶ In this way, we see

² Grégoire Palamas, *Défense des saints hésychastes* (introduction and notes by John Meyendorff, 2 volumes, Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 30, Louvain: Peeters 1959, Tome I) cf. Tr. I, 3, 38, p. 124 and in Gendle ed., p. 193.

³ John Meyendorff, *Introduction à l'Étude de Grégoire Palamas* (Patristica Sobornensia, 3, Paris: Les Éditions du Seuil, 1959) pp. 216-217. See, also: Panayiotis Christou, “Double Knowledge According to Gregory Palamas”, *Studia Patristica*, vol. 9 (Leuven: Peeters, 1966), pp. 20-29.

⁴ *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* I, 4, in Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Complete Works* (translation by Colm Luibheid, foreword, notes, and translation by Paul Rorem, preface by Rene Roques, introductions by Jaroslav Pelikan, Jean Leclercq and Karlfried Froehlich) New York: Paulist Press, 1987), p. 198.

⁵ John Meyendorff, *Introduction*, p. 186.

⁶ Grégoire Palamas, *Défense* (ed. Meyendorff, t. I), p. 88; idem, *Triads* I.ii.8: “Thus, the man who seeks to make his mind return to itself needs to propel it not only in a straight line but also in the circular motion that is infallible. How should such a one not gain great profit if, instead of letting his eye roam hither and thither, he should fix it on his breast or on his navel, as a point of concentration? For in this way, he will not only gather himself

how the true knowledge of God is an internal meeting or “inner retrieval”⁷ of the whole being of man. As well as in the Syrian mystic, on several occasions we have to make the distinction between the contemplative ways of knowledge: intellection illuminated by grace and spiritual vision without any conceptual or symbolic meaning. For example, Robert Beulay

together externally, conforming as far as possible to the inner movement he seeks for his mind; he will also, by disposing his body in such a position, recall into the interior of the heart a power which is ever flowing outwards through the faculty of sight. And if the power of the intelligible animal is situated at the centre of the belly, since there the law of sin exercises its rule and gives it sustenance, why should we not place there ‘the law of the mind which combats’ (Rom. 6.23) this power, duly armed with prayer, so that the evil spirit who has been driven away thanks to the ‘bath of regeneration’ (Tit 3.5) may not return to install himself there with seven other spirits even more evil, so that ‘the latter state becomes worse than the first’ (Lk. 11.26)?”, (Gendle ed., 1983), p. 46-47 and Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names (DN)* 4,9, in: *The Complete Works* (Colm Luibheid, ed.), p. 78: *“The soul too has movement. First it moves in a circle, that is, it turns within itself and away from what is outside and there is an inner concentration of its intellectual powers. A sort of fixed revolution causes it to return from the multiplicity of externals, to gather in upon itself and then, in this undispersed condition, to join those who are themselves in a powerful union. From there the revolution brings the soul to the Beautiful and the Good, which is beyond all things, is one and the same, and has neither beginning nor end. But whenever the soul receives, in accordance with its capacities, the enlightenment of divine knowledge and does so not by way of the mind nor in some mode arising out of its identity, but rather through discursive reasoning, in mixed and changeable activities, then it moves in a spiral fashion. And its movement is in a straight line when, instead of circling in upon its own intelligent unity (for this is the circular), it proceeds to the things around it, and is uplifted from external things, as from certain variegated and pluralized symbols, to the simple and united contemplations”*.

⁷ Amphiloque Radovic, *Le Mystère de la Sainte Trinité selon saint Grégoire de Palamas* (Paris: Cerf, 2012), pp. 83.87 (“rassemblement intérieur”).

shows that, “The term of ‘intellection’ first of all, is employed by John of Dalyatha to be applied to operations caused by grace”.⁸

Keywords

Gregory Palamas, essence-energies distinction, ontological epistemology, theological methodology, Aristotelian logic, deification

1 Anchoring of the Ontology in the Mystery of Christ

During late Antiquity, an interesting doctrinal shift can be observed: Aristotelian logic and its Neoplatonic complements, in particular the teachings of Aristotle’s *Categories* and Porphyry’s *Isagoge*, was progressively accepted as a tool in Christian theology. Various authors - Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril of Alexandria, John Philoponus, Leontius of Byzantium, Maximus the Confessor, Theodore of Raithu, John of Damascus and Boethius can be mentioned on different accounts - used concepts which originated in logic in order to support their theological thinking. But, also, the influence of Aristotle is being especially felt in the philosophical underpinnings of the post-Chalcedonian Christology and in the widespread adoption of Aristotelian modes of argumentation (Theodore the Studite, Photios of Constantinople, Michael Psellos, Eustratios of Nicaea, Michael of Ephesus and Nikephoros Blemmydes).⁹

⁸ Robert Beulay, *L’enseignement spirituel de Jean de Dalyatha, mystique syro-oriental du VIII^e siècle*, (coll. Théologie historique no 83, Paris: Beauchesne 1990), p. 240.

⁹ Marcus Plested, *Orthodox Readings of Aquinas* (Oxford: University Press, 2012), p. 51-52. Stressing the importance of Aristotle in Byzantium, Plested says: “*In speaking of the dominance of Aristotle in the Byzantine*

Unlike scholastic theology, Greek Fathers created a new „*meta-ontology*“. Distinguishing between existence-energy (the fact that God exists), being-nature (what is God) and hypostasis-person (*who* and *how* God is) Cappadocian Fathers and St. Gregory Palamas have done ontology (these categories are ontological).¹⁰ Some still consider an open issue the energies.¹¹ Therefore, „truth and objectivity [aletheia te kai bebaiotes]“ could be identified as „the basis of faith“.¹²

There was, in the perspective of Cappadocian thought, no contradiction or disjunction at all between such a seemingly

theological tradition some caveats are necessary. Firstly, no one seriously opposed Plato and Aristotle until the very last days of the Empire: they were viewed as complementary and not as antagonistic. Further-more, when I speak of ‘Aristotle’ or ‘Plato’ this is shorthand for a more or less Platonized Aristotelianism or Aristotelianized Platonism. Aristotle was still chiefly encountered through the neo-Platonic prism of Porphyry’s Eisagoge while neo-Platonism itself was decisively shaped by Peripatetic principle. Eclecticism was the norm.” (p. 53).

¹⁰ Christopher Stead, *Divine substance* (Oxford: University Press, 1977), pp. 209-210, pp. 214-215.218, discusses the idea of the substance of God in theological tradition having as central point the Nicene *homoousios*. So he says, from Origen’s *Commentary on Hebrews*, the word *homoousios* is associated with phrases describing the Son’s derivation „from the substance“ of the Father. Neo-Platonist writers roughly contemporary with Origen also used the term *homoousios* but only to suggests that the soul is akin to and consubstantial with divine things (*Ennead*. iv. 7.10). Porphyry also appears to have used the term *homoousios* to state the affinity of the human intellect with divine Mind (the second hypostasis of his trinity). However, Origen also used the term *homoousios* to indicate the Son’s relationship to the Father; and he was the first greek writer to do so. It is therefore in Origen that we find the first suggestion of the trinitarian use of *homoousios* (being of the same nature with the Father).

¹¹ Bernard Pottier, *Dieu et le Christ selon Grégoire de Nysse*, Namur 1994, p. 140f: „An open question: energies“.

¹² Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on the Song of Songs* (translated with an introduction and notes by Richard A. Norris Jr., Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012, Number 13), p. 422-455, cf. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism* (Yale: University Press, 1993), pp. 117-119.

intellectualistic formula as that and the seemingly more personalistic thesis, „God remains the object of faith”.¹³ For in spite of his radically *apophatic* emphasis, especially in the polemics against Eunomius¹⁴, on the unattainability of any positive knowledge about the divine *ousia*, Gregory of Nyssa also insisted, specifically in opposition to Eunomius, that the two formulas, „What God is” and „What God is also believed to be,” had to be identical. That was what was meant by Nazianzen’s axiomatic definition of faith as „the fulfillment of our reasoning”.¹⁵

For Paul L. Gavrilyuk the “direct human contact with God possible is both epistemologically and metaphysically problematic”. As a mental act, intellectual vision is less overtly tied to the body. The non-Christian Platonists as a rule treated embodiment as hindering, if not altogether blocking, the vision of the divine. “*Christian theologians ‘baptized’ the ‘Platonic’ version of intellectual vision with different results, tending to*

¹³ Gregory of Nyssa, *Adversus Macedonianus, De spiritu sancto* (translation Volker Henning Drecoll in *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarism*. Proceedings of the 11th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa, edited by Volker Henning Drecoll and Margitta Berghaus, Leiden: Brill, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 106, 2008), pp. 45-70, apud Pelikan, *Christianity*, p. 220; see also: Giulio Maspero, “The Fire, the Kingdom and the Glory: the Creator Spirit and the Intra-Trinitarian Processions in The ‘Adversus Macedonianos’ of Gregory of Nyssa” *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises*, pp. 229-250.

¹⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* II, 89 (edited by Lenka Karfíková et al., Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 79-80.

¹⁵ Gregory of Nazianzus, *On God and Christ. The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius* (translated into English by Frederick Williams and Lionel Wickham, New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2002), *Oration* 29, 21, apud Pelikan, *Christianity*, p. 229. In their celebration of the uniqueness of faith, therefore, the Cappadocians could emphasize that no amount of philological learning was sufficient for the correct understanding of Scripture, which was accessible only “through spiritual contemplation [*dia tes pneumatikes theorias*]” and true faith. Yet that did not keep them from exploiting a natural knowledge of philology to the fullest;

maintain an ambivalent attitude towards the role of the body in the contemplation of God. This ambivalence is already evident in Origen, who in some cases views embodiment as an impediment, and in other cases construes it as instrumental to the contemplation of God".¹⁶ This is manifestly a metaphysics of mystery, in every sense of the term: antinomy, mystical union, and sacrament.

For Eric Pearl „any philosophy which does not include mysticism will be false as *philosophy*, that is, as an account of reality. If reason impels us to mysticism, then our metaphysics must be mystical in order to be rational". In Maximus' doctrine, then, Christ comes not to destroy but to fulfill the metaphysics of mystery elaborated by the philosophers. For him there can be no separation between philosophy and theology, or between natural and revealed theology. Thereby, Christology and liturgical mysticism are not additional to a neoplatonic, aristotelian, and other metaphysics: *"What is unique to Maximus is the anchoring of this ontology in the mystery of Christ. ...he sees all ontology summed up in that mystery, which is itself the first principle of metaphysics. And it is precisely this Christocentric doctrine that allows Maximus, not to reject, but to retain and perfect the Neoplatonic metaphysics"*.¹⁷

For Gregory Palamas this essence/energies distinction is rooted in God's very being, as *„transcendent and immanent revealed in the Incarnation itself"*. This distinction may seem *„incoherent in light of formal logic, but coheres perfectly with the logic of deification"*.¹⁸ Paweł Rojek tried to show that *„Palamas'*

¹⁶ Paul L. Gavrilyuk and Sarah Coakley, *The Spiritual Senses. Perceiving God in Western Christianity* (Cambridge: University Press, 2011), pp. 7-8.

¹⁷ Eric David Perl, *Methexis: Creation, incarnation, deification in Saint Maximus Confessor* (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale: University Press, 1991), p. 314-315.

¹⁸ Aristotle Papanikolaou, *Being with God. Trinity, Apophaticism, and Divine-Human Communion* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), pp. 13.30. Dionysius and Gregory Palamas are the two great synthesizers of theological apophaticism and the essence/energies

teaching on energies and deification is no less rational than any other ontological positions".¹⁹ 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”.²⁰

Deification, however, is the event of a *real* divine-human communion and leads necessarily to antinomy, insofar as it attempts to express this distinction grounded in the very being of God, and Theology, insofar as „it attempts to express this being, which is beyond being (essence) and radically immanent (energies), must be antinomic” but „it is validated doxologically, in that the soteriological principle of deification is a praise of the love of God toward creation”.²¹ Palamas is only a witness of this Tradition of union with the transcendent and immanent God in which theosis sums up the divine economy.

Within a „mystical realism”²² based on participation in God as light, St. Gregory Palamas identified three fundamental themes of Eastern Christian spirituality: theology as apophaticism, revelation as light and salvation as deification (*Triad* I.3.17).²³

distinction. To Palamas this distinction at the heart of Christian ontology become the dogmatic basis for *union with God* in terms of a *real* communion between the created and the uncreated (p. 11 and 25).

¹⁹ Paweł Rojek, „The Logic of Palamism”, in Andrew Schumann (ed.), *Logic in Orthodox Christian Thinking* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), pp. 74-75.

²⁰ Georgios I. Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man: St. Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), p. 106.

²¹ Papanikolaou, *Being with God*, pp. 25-27.

²² Håkan Gunnarsson, *Mystical Realism in the Early Theology of Gregory Palamas* (Göteborg: Göteborgs Universitet, 2002).

²³ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, Volume 2: The Spirit of Eastern Christendom 600–1700* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 264.

2 The *ant(i)logical* movement within the palamite distinction. Aristotelian logic versus antinomy as paradoxical or dialectical truth

The debate among Byzantine philosophers and theologians about the proper attitude towards ancient logic is just one episode in the turbulent history of the reception of ancient philosophy in Byzantine thought, but it certainly raises one of the most complicated and intriguing issues in the *study of the intellectual life in Byzantium*.

There is no doubt that ancient logic, and more specifically Aristotle’s syllogistic, was taught extensively throughout the Byzantine era as a preliminary to more theoretical studies.

This is amply attested not only by biographical information concerning the logical education of eminent Byzantine figures, but also by the substantial number of surviving Byzantine manuscripts of Aristotle’s logical writings, in particular Aristotle’s *Prior Analytics*, and of the related Byzantine scholia, paraphrases, and logical treatises.

Katerina Ierodiakonou shows how “*in fact, the predominance in Byzantium of Aristotle’s logic is so undisputed that, even when Byzantine scholars suggest changes in Aristotelian syllogistic, or attempt to incorporate into it other ancient logical traditions, they consider these alterations only as minor improvements on the Aristotelian system*”.²⁴

²⁴ Katerina Ierodiakonou, „The Anti-Logical Movement in the Fourteenth Century”, in Idem, *Byzantine Philosophy and its Ancient Sources* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), p. 219. Nevertheless, Byzantine authors are not all unanimous as to the importance of the study of Aristotle’s logic, and more generally, as to the importance of any kind of logical training: „*There is plenty of evidence that, in diferent periods of Byzantine history, some Byzantine philosophers and theologians stress that, when it comes to theology, we should not rely on logical arguments, whereas others insist that we should avail ourselves of logic either in the exposition of Christian dogmas or even in the attempt to prove their truth*” (*Ibid*, p. 220). See also: Basil Tatakis, *Byzantine Philosophy* (translation by Nicholas J.

H. Schäder says that “*Christianization of Aristotelian logic in Byzantine theology*” was made by modifying the terms which are related: a fundamental Platonic idea of fundamental phenomenal *participation (methexis)* to the “idea” of eternal Good together with central Aristotelian notion of energy, the divine-earthly actualization (*energeia*), which Aristotle brought it in opposition to the platonic scheme. However, the *Christian exceeding of the Aristotelian-Platonic opposition between absolute divine energy and divine-earthly participation* should have appeared to the Greeks as a paradox.

For Aristotle, divine being (*ousia*) is, in the fullest sense of the word, an absolute energy in divinity, arelational, the two words, *ousia* and *energeia*, being identical. Schäder underlines that this identification between being and divine energy was taken from Arabic and scholastic Western philosophy, but not from Byzantine theology. During the Christological disputes from 4th-8th centuries, *the personalization of the ancient concept of*

Moutafakis, Cambridge/Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003); Idem, „La Philosophie grecque patristique et byzantine”, in Brice Parain (ed.), *Histoire de la Philosophie, tome I: Orient - Antiquité - Moyen Âge* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), pp. 936-1005; Gerhardt Podskalsky, *Theologie und Philosophie in Byzanz: Der Streit um die theologische Methodik in der spatbyzantinischen Geistesgeschichte (14.,15. Jh.)* (München: Beck, 1977); Herbert Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner* (München:C. H. Beck, 1978), pp. 3-62; Klaus Oehler, *Antike Philosophie und byzantinisches Mittelalter* (München: C. H. Beck, 1969), and in his article “Die byzantinische Philosophie”, in Guttorm Fløistad (Ed.), *Contemporary Philosophy: A New Survey*, vol. 6. *Philosophy and Science in the Middle Ages* (Dordrecht: Springer, 1990), pp. 639-649. And another, like: Günter Weiss, *Byzanz.Kritischer Forschungs und Literaturbericht 1968-1985 (Historische Zeitschrift 14, München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1986)*; Alain de Libera, *La philosophie médiévale* (Paris: PUF, 1995, 2e édition); L. Brisson, “L’Aristotelisme dans le monde byzantine” in Lambros Couloubaritsis, *Histoire de la philosophie ancienne et médiévale* (Paris: Grasset, 1998).

energy was completed by correlating it with the concept of the divine will (*thelisis*).²⁵

The historical-systematic significance of Christianization, mentioned above, of Aristotelian categories in Byzantine theology lies in the fact that *ontological-personal relation*, which is found in Greek philosophy, was accomplished in a Christian sense: a) *the personal principle was not subordinated to the ontological one and reduced to it* (the risk of Roman Catholic theology) and b) *personal ontological relation was not shortened in favor of a single valid personal thinking* (the risk of neoprotestantism and existentialism).

The revealed trinitarian theology of the Byzantines dynamited the Aristotelian schemes to use them in a *modification which is Christological conditioned*.²⁶ In patristic Greek, the romanian

²⁵ Hildegard Schäder, Die Christianisierung der aristotelik Logik in der byzantinischen Theologie repräsentiert durch Johannes Damaskus und Gregor Palamas", *Theologia* 33 (1962), pp. 1-21. In Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Platonic-Aristotelian concept of movement is energetically explained: all categories can be viewed under the aspect of "becoming", namely the transition ("motion") from potency to actuality, from *dynamis* to *energeia*. Aristotle says that Divinity itself is an actual pure *energeia* with no potentiality and no relation: pure self-activating, moving unmoving/still, pure thought of itself or thinking of thinking (*noeseos noesis*).

²⁶ Ibidem. It also takes place the Christianization of another notional couple from classical antiquity: the polarity *physis* - *Thesis / nomos* (nature - establishing / law). According to him, Jesus Christ is called the Son of God by nature (*physei*), but people are getting God's sons through establishment (*thesei*) or more precisely through adoption (*hyo-thesis*), and thus they become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Ptr I, 4). St. John of Damascus uses, based on Cappadocians, the notion of "proper" element (*idion, idioma*) of Divinity; for Porphyry, in his famous *Isagog*, at the *Categories* of Aristotle the *proper is what it is, particular from the variable accidents, it is inseparably united from being / substance that of thing*. For St. John Damascene, "properties" divinity - from staying in first divine will and energy - are "irradiation", "exits/outputs" of God in creation and revelation, without that through this the impenetrable being of God can be reached or that He appears as something compound. Energy

theologian John I. Ică jr. shows that it was introduced “a process of transformation of concepts of classical ontology to appropriate them to new realities revealed by the personal mysteries (the Trinity and Incarnation)”.²⁷

Podskalsky insist that the Palamite controversy was not a struggle against either Latin scholasticism (Romanides²⁸) or Byzantine humanism (Meyendorff²⁹), but rather a retreat into monastic anti-intellectualism motivated by experiency with a rejection of the knowledge of God by syllogistic reasoning method. It is a tension to be seen, according to Podskalsky, in Gregory Palamas himself, who, after an early humanistic education, goes on “to develop into a rigorous champion of monastic anti-intellectualism”.³⁰

For him the 14th-century *Methodenstreit* have two phases: validity of the theological use of syllogistic argumentation and the vision of the uncreated light with the distinction between essence and energies in God. Podskalsky goes on to suggest that Palamas introduces a “radically new theological doctrine of knowledge”³¹ because he has placed the knowledge of God beyond the domain of public verification, independent of syllogistic reasoning. The effect of this line of thinking was to sharpen the prevailing tension between theology and

and other properties of God “accompany the nature, but does not reveals” (*Dogmatic I*, 9, 837b).

²⁷ Ioan I. Ică jr., “‘Dialectic’ of St. John of Damascus - logical-philosophical prolegomena of ‘Dogmatic’,” *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai, Orthodox Theology* 40:1-2 (1995), pp. 85-140, p. 116.

²⁸ J. S. Romanides, “Notes on the Palamite Controversy”, *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 6 (1960-1961), pp. 186-205 and 9 (1963-1964), pp. 225-270.

²⁹ Jean Meyendorff, *Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas*, (Patristica Sorbonensia 3, Paris: Les Éditions du Seuil, 1959); G. Schiro, J. Meyendorff, “Humanismus und Palamismus”, in *Actes du XII^e Congrès international des études byzantines* (3 volumes, Belgrade, 1963, tome 1), pp. 323-327, 329-330.

³⁰ G. Podskalsky, *Theologie und Philosophie in Byzanz*, p. 47.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 155, pp. 170-172.

philosophy into a radical division. But, according to Duncan Reid *"It would be more reasonable to hypothesize that Palamas was making use of an older way of doing theology, based on doxology rather than logic, and on personal experience rather than syllogistic deduction. For this reason I am not convinced that Palamas' position was a simple retreat into anti-intellectualism"*.³² La solution du problème en question, la relation entre Palamas et la philosophie antique, qui occupa de nombreux chercheurs, nous est donnée par Palamas lui-même: *"Les uns, en effet, ont, selon Paul, l'intelligence du Christ, et les autres expérimentent au mieux un raisonnement humain"*³³.

We can regard Palamas as a conservative in his theological method, he was defending a doxological method of thinking theologically, which is similar to patristic theology. Our knowledge of God has its place not within a metaphysical system, but in mystical experience.³⁴

Therefore, St. Gregory Palamas is *"drawing a distinction between our descriptive speech about God on the level of the economy and our ascriptive or doxological speech to God, pointing to the beyondness of God, to that of God which lies beyond our logical names and concepts"*.³⁵

Paweł Rojek, also, 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*

³² Duncan Reid, "Hesychasm and Theological Method in Fourteenth Century Byzantium" *Ostkirchliche Studien* 46 (1997), pp. 15-24, here p. 19.

³³ Grégoire Palamas, *Défense*, I, 1, 1 (Meyendorff ed. 1959), p. 34.

³⁴ Pierre Miquel, "Grégoire Palamas, Docteur de l'Expérience", *Irénikon* 37 (1964), p. 227-237; Arthur Macdonald Allchin, "The Appeal to Experience in the Triads of St. Gregory Palamas", *Studia Patristica* 93 (1966), pp. 323-328.

³⁵ Duncan Reid, "Hesychasm and Theological Method", p. 23.

consistently".³⁶ 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. That is why some of his theses may seem 'antinomic'. Palamas' ontology might be called a 'theology of being'. 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*".³⁷

B. Schultze considers that the distinction between essence and energy abolishes the apophysis of palamite theology³⁸, while scholastic realizes a rational synthesis between anthropomorphism and rationalism, synthesis which is absent in the palamisme, who had not managed to overcome the contradictions.³⁹ We can answer to the above mentioned that the Palamas mystical thought is neither illogical nor antilogical but surlogical. *The irrationalism consists in transporting the antinomic thought from the domain of the divine in the metaphysics of created.*

In any case, the palamisme refuses to distinguish into a cataphatical way the essence and divine energies, like two different "things", which would introduce a composition in God. Also, *the mediating realities as principles of communion could not be an intermediary ontological sphere between the uncreated*

³⁶ Paweł Rojek, „The Logic of Palamism”, in: Andrew Schumann (ed.), in: Andrew Schumann (ed.), *Logic in Orthodox Christian Thinking* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), pp. 74-75.

³⁷ Georgios I. Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man: St. Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), p. 106.

³⁸ P. B. Schultze, “Die Taten des einfachen Gottes”, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica (OCP)* 36 (1970), pp. 135-142.

³⁹ Idem, “Die Bedeutung des Palamismus in der russischen Theologie der Gegenwart”, *Scholastik* 26 (1951) pp. 390-412, here p. 411.

and the created, but had to be located either in God himself (palamitic approach, through the doctrine of uncreated energies), or in the creature itself (scholastic approach, through the doctrine of created grace). Here again the human logic is antinomically transcended in God: „because the Palamites only wanted to defend the authenticity of their mystical experiences and not to find an ontological formula to understand the emergence of creation and the finite being outside God”.⁴⁰

B. Schultze simply sees the antinomy as self-contradiction, and he asks himself how antinomic thinking can possibly be related to logical reason. For him the idea of antinomy as paradoxical or dialectical truth it can not be received, because the rules of Aristotelian logic seem to be the final criteria of truth.

Kallistos Ware's answer to this position is to try to explain the notion of antinomy not simply in negative terms as contradiction, but positively by reference to dialectic: „By ‚antinomy' in theology I mean the affirmation of two contrasting or opposed truths, which cannot be reconciled on the level of the discursive reason although a reconciliation is possible on the higher level of contemplative experience. Because God lies ‚beyond'.., the human reason or...language...the christian tradition speks in ‚anti-nomic' fashion... ‚saying and unsaying to a positive effect'. If we rest satisfied with a strictly ‚logical' and ‚rational' theology – meaning by this the logic and reason of fallen man – then we risk making idols out of our finite, human concepts. Antinomy helps us to shatter these idols and to point, beyond logic and discursive reason, to the living reality of the infinite and uncreated God”.⁴¹

For Rowan Williams the essence-energies distinction, although possessing some validity to the epistemological level, should

⁴⁰ Endre von Ivanka, *Plato Christianus. La réception critique du platonisme chez les Pères de Eglise* (Paris:PUF, 1990), p. 373.

⁴¹ Kallistos Ware, “The Debate about Palamism”, *Eastern Churches Review* 9/ 1-2 (1977), p. 45-63, here pp. 46-47.

not be projected into that of metaphysics.⁴² “*But we should reply that the Orthodox tradition looks, in fact, the distinction in objective terms and not only in subjective one. The distinction is real, a πραγματική διάκρισις, not just a concept, a distinction κατ’ἐπίνοιαν. The 1351 council openly says that the stasis or distinction between essence and energy exists ‘not only from our point of view’ but ‘even in the natural order’ that is to say, in God’s being. There is also an axiom of Orthodox theology which says that we have no direct knowledge of the inner being or ousia of God; everything that is vaguely grasp are His activities and His revelation in the world, and when we speak of divine things we can never really overcome the epistemological level and reach to that of pure metaphysics; we always talk about God as He manifests Himself to us and not of God as He is in Himself*”.⁴³ Therefore, Rowan Williams sees Palamas as a Neoplatonist who, like all Neoplatonists, is guilty of reifying what are properly merely logical distinctions.

In Neoplatonism “attributes are conceived as having a kind of substantiality,” and thus they are both capable of participation and of distinction from their participants. This fundamental error leads to the triadic scheme of Proclus, in which each reality exists as unparticipated (ἀμέθεκτον), participated (μετεχόμενον), and participatory (μετέχον).⁴⁴

According to Williams, when this scheme is being transferred by Dionysius into Christian thought, the One *qua* unparticipated becomes the divine *ousia*, whereas the henads become the *divine proodoi* or *dynameis*. Palamas takes a further step to the rechristenization of the divine *proodoi* as *energeiai* and to

⁴² Rowan Douglas Williams, *The theology of Vladimir Nikolaievich Lossky: an exposition and critique* (DPhil. University of Oxford), 1975.

⁴³ Kalistos Ware, “Dieu cache et révélé”, pp. 55-56.

⁴⁴ Rowan Douglas Williams, “The Philosophical Structures of Palamism,” *Eastern Churches Review* 9 (1977), pp. 27-44, here p. 35. The unparticipated is in general the level of *ousia*, whereas the participated is that of procession (πρόδος). In the case of the One the processions are the divine henads.

emphasize the fact that these energies are a real plurality, thus making clear that they are really distinct from the *ousia*.⁴⁵ Williams has two objections to what he sees as the attempt by Palamas (and Dionysius) to impose a Neoplatonic ontology upon Christianity. The first objection is that of conceiving the divine *ousia* along the lines of the One qua unparticipated, as “the perfectly simple, indivisible, imparticipable interiority of God,” Palamas effectively privileges the *ousia* above the persons of the Trinity.

As a proof, Williams quotes Palamas’ assertion, the one that the divine *energeia* is distinct from the *ousia* “in the same way as the hypostasis is doing.”⁴⁶ He also says that, since the energies are intrinsically relational, and, at the same time, they are truly God, they implicate Palamas in pantheism. He replies: “The unity of God is far more gravely imperilled by this than any Palamite or neo-Palamite seems to have grasped; it is the purest Neoplatonism, an affirmation of two *wholly* distinct orders of reality in God”.⁴⁷

Rowan Williams characterises the palamite distinction as a piece of „dubious scholasticism”⁴⁸, based on a confusion of Aristotelian and neo-Platonic philosophical terms. This criticism is supplemented by a positive appreciation of the personalist and existentialist elements in Orthodox theology, elements which in the end render the Palamite distinction unnecessary.

Kallistos Ware attempts to defend the palamite position by reducing the gap between ontology and epistemology. Se, where Williams argues that the essence-energies distinction is merely a rational distinction, a reflection on the human thought that is,

⁴⁵ Ibidem, pp. 36-37.

⁴⁶ Grégoire Palamas, *Theophanes* 12; cited by R. Williams, “Philosophical Structures,” p. 5.

⁴⁷ Rowan Douglas Williams, “The Philosophical Structures of Palamism”, p. 38.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 44.

a matter of epistemology, rather than an ontological distinction, Ware offers this reply: „If we say, as the Cappadocians for example are concerned to do, that God is unknowable in a unique sense, we are not merely making a statement about the limitations of our human understanding, but a statement about God himself”.⁴⁹

Antinomic thinking does not mean incomprehensible or irrational thinking, but the antinomic method recognizes the ineffability of God. Ware distinguishes between discursive reason (διάνοια, *ratio*) and spiritual understanding (νοῦς, *intellectus*)⁵⁰ and as such this distinction is not irrational. For him irrationality occurs only when this spiritual understanding is misused.

According to David Bradshaw the conclusion that Williams draws is that Palamas leaves us with “two eternal realities, God *in se* and God as participated by creatures,” and no way to unify them. So, the errors of Williams fall into two groups, those related to Dionysius and to Palamas. “*The notion that the henads of Proclus are the immediate source of the proodoi of Dionysius can only be made good by ignoring the Cappadocian elements in Dionysius’ thought*”⁵¹.

And, likewise, “*Williams overlooks that the henads are not simply reified divine attributes, but quasi-personal agents possessing intellects, souls, and bodies*” and “*henads come about not by procession but by ‘derivation’ (ὑπόβασις)*”.⁵² Bradshaw does not

⁴⁹ Kallistos Ware, “The Debate about Palamism”, *Eastern Churches Review* 9 (1977), p. 60. Cf. David Coffey, „The Palamite Doctrine of God: a New Perspective,” *StVladTHQ* 32 (1988), pp. 329-358, p. 329: „Palamas nowhere goes so far as to characterize his distinction as ‚real’”.

⁵⁰ See Nichifor Tănase, “Nous (energeia) and kardia (dynamis) in the Holistic Anthropology of St. Gregory Palamas”, in: Eric Austin Lee and Samuel Kimbriel (eds.), *The Resounding Soul: Reflections on the Metaphysics and Vivacity of the Human Person* (Eugene, Oregon, Wipf & Stock, 2015), pp. 149-174.

⁵¹ David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West. Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge: University Press, 2004), pp. 179-186 and p. 270.

⁵² Idem, *Aristotle East and West*, p. 270.

agree with placing the Palamite distinction being-energies within the context of philosophical distinction between unparticipated-participated, stating vigorously that the latter is not the source of the former: *“Turning to Palamas, the notion that the essence-energies distinction derives from the unparticipated-participated distinction might seem to present firmer ground, and has been affirmed by other critics. But although it is certainly true that Palamas makes use of the unparticipated-participated distinction to explicate that of essence and energies, that is far from proving that it is his source.”*⁵³

Instead, the Norwegian theologian, T. Tollefsen, builds his last work about the uncreated energies exclusively on the concept of participation in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought. The aim of Torstein Tollefsen about *activity* (he prefers this term instead of the *energy*) and *participation* is to interpret the Palamite doctrine of the experience of light according to the principles of the ontology. He says that here are three ontological aspects to be considered concerning the divine being, namely the essence, the activity, and the triad of divine hypostases. Palamas only tries to secure a unified dynamic of the Trinity, according to which the three hypostases eternally move out from and into one another in a perfect communion of goodness and love: *„the divine nature or essence eternally manifests within its eternal Triadic dynamics, and that is independent of any divine relatedness to something other than God. God is dynamically Himself eternally, and only relates to otherness when He wills otherness to exist”*.⁵⁴

God is the Form in forms as the primal Form, and this has to do with participation. Palamas says that all things participate in God, and they are constituted by this participation in His

⁵³ Ibidem.

⁵⁴ Torstein Theodor Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought* (Oxford: University Press, 2012), p. 189.

activity, but says Tollefsen „still we have to find out how Palamas thinks that such a transcendent activity is accommodated to created otherness”.⁵⁵

For Palamas activity or energie is the essential movement of nature (ἡ οὐσιώδης τῆς φύσεως κίνησις) [*Capita* 150.143]. A couple of other texts, analyzed by the norwegian theologian, bear witness to the same dynamic character of the activity. Therefore, according to the Triads (3.2.11), Palamas says – quoting Dionysius – that the activities are certain powers (δυνάμεις) which are deifying, essence-making, life-making, and giving wisdom (ἐκθεωτικὰς ἢ οὐσιοποιούς ἢ ζωογόνους ἢ σοφοδῶρους).

Here, Tollefsen points out that „the activities, as we can see, are not at all beings in the sense of ‘things’ that mysteriously emanate from God’s essence, rather they are God-in-activity”.⁵⁶

Further, in his third letter to Akindynus, Palamas used a phrase that disturbed his addressee, speaking of the „activity as a ‘lower divinity’ (θεότης ὑφεμένη⁵⁷)”. Palamas himself, in a second version of the letter, appealing to the authority of Dionysius, specified the term to indicate, says Tollefsen, „the gift of deification received as such from God’s transcendent essence”.⁵⁸

One of Palamas’ most vigorous defenders is Eric Perl who argues that the divine energeiai are nothing other than God’s single, eternal creative act: “activity is pre-contained in the one eternal act of creation by which God, in his eternal present, creates the entire expanse of time and all things in it”.⁵⁹ But, Palamas says specifically that God’s creative act has both a

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 190.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 193.

⁵⁷ Gregory Akindynos, *Letters of Gregory Akindynos* (ed. and trans. Angela Hero, *Corpus Historiae Byzantinae*, 21, Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research, 1983), pp. xv-xvi, note 44.

⁵⁸ Torstein Theodor Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation*, p. 194.

⁵⁹ Eric Perl, “St. Gregory Palamas and the Metaphysics of Creation,” *Dionysius* 14 (1990), p. 105-130, here p. 122.

beginning and an end.⁶⁰ Regarding this assertion of Perl, Bradshaw to emphasize that “The exegetical foundations of this interpretation are rather slim. None of the texts cited by Perl actually says that the *energeiai* are differentiated solely by their relation to creatures, much less that they are identical with God’s creative act.

Palamas does identify the divine *logoi* with God’s creative *energeia*, but that is a different and much more limited statement. After all, the *energeiai* also include the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the uncreated light, and the “things around God.” Perl ignores these other categories, apparently simply assuming that the *energeiai* are equivalent to the *logoi*.”⁶¹

Is the palamite distinction between essence (or superessentiality) and energies a real or merely a rational distinction? In other words, is it a question of ontology or epistemology?⁶² Western theology, if it concedes a distinction at all between inner and economic Trinity, allows this only as a rational distinction (*distinctio rationalis*), that is, as a distinction that has its basis in the limitations of human thought. But, according to Duncan Reid, „*a logical problem arises here. The ineffability of God’s inner being must be ineffable*

⁶⁰ *Triads* iii.2.8 (Gendle ed. 1983), p. 96: “*There are, however, energies of God which have a beginning and an end*”; also in *Chap.* 130: “*For in creating, God initiates and ceases, as Moses says, ‘God ceased from all the works which he had begun to create’. However, this act of creation, wherein God makes a beginning and an end, is a natural and uncreated energy of God [ὡς καὶ ὁ Μωϋσῆς φησιν, ὅτι κατέπαυσεν ὁ θεός ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἔργων ὧν ἤρξατο ποιῆσαι. τὸ μέντοι δημιουργεῖν τοῦτο, καθ’ ὃ ἄρχεται ὁ θεός καὶ παύεται, φυσικὴ καὶ ἄκτιστος ἐστὶν ἐνέργεια θεοῦ]*”, in Saint Gregory Palamas, *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* (edition and translation by Robert E. Sinkewicz, C.S.B., Studies and Texts, 83, Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988), pp. 234-235.

⁶¹ Duncan Reid, *Energies of the Spirit. Trinitarian Models in Eastern Orthodox and Western Theology* (Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 87; see also, Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, pp. 270-271.

⁶² Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 186-197.

to ‚someone‘, someone who is not God... It seems illogical to regard the distinction as anything more than a purely rational distinction”.⁶³ Therefore, if this is an illogical distinction it’s „a question of the Eastern doctrine of God” says Duncan Reid, while „the subject of the discussion is not humanity, but God; that the distinction is theological, not anthropological – as it would be if it claimed to say something about *human* intellectual capacity, that is to say, what *we* can or cannot know about God”.⁶⁴

For Palamas himself, however, the central questions were not primarily philosophical or speculative ones but questions arising out of ascetic praxis and experience.⁶⁵ It is not an purely intellectual exercise but he is seeking to explain this living mystical tradition. The starting point of speculation is ontology, but „Theology finds it imposible to regard being as the supreme concept”.⁶⁶

Therefore, Jewish philosopher Abraham Heschel says that the God of the prophets is constantly active (*semper agens*). This means that *in our experience* there is no distinction between God’s being and God’s activity. D. Reid concludes: „Being and act are identified with one another in the biblical understanding of God, but not in the way in which western theology has traditionally identified them with one another, that is, not as *actus purus*. Heschel argues that the biblical God is beyond any notion of being”.⁶⁷

⁶³ Duncan Reid, *Energies of the Spirit*, p. 88.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 90.

⁶⁵ In relation to this methodological question, see Gerhard Podskalsky SJ, „Zur Bedeutung des Methodenproblems für die byzantinische Theologie”, in *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 98 (1976), p. 385-399; Idem, „Die griechisch-byzantinische Theologie und ihre Methode. Aspekte und Perspektiven eines ökumenischen Problems”, in: *Theologie und Philosophie* 58 (1983), pp. 71-87.

⁶⁶ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The prophets* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975, vol. 2), p. 42-44; cf. Duncan Reid, *Energies of the Spirit*, pp. 97-98.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*.

It is evident, says Aristotle Papanikolaou, from Lossky’s discussion of the nature of mystical union with God, that a „*non-negotiable axiom of theological discourse for Lossky is the realism of divine-human communion*”.⁶⁸

On the other hand, it is a union with the transcendent God, Who is ontologically „other”. Therefore, cataphatic and apophatic theologies are grounded in and have as their goal this union with the transcendent and immanent God.

That’s why, according to Papanikolaou, „The challenge for theology is how to conceptualize this divine-human communion with the God who is simultaneously transcendent and immanent”.⁶⁹ Such an attempt we can find to Dionysius with his distinction between *enoseis* and *proodoi*. A case in point is also Palamas with his distinction between *ousia* and *energeia*. He is only a witness of this Tradition, to defend the very essence of this tradition. Lossky is saying that it was „*a dogmatic basis for union with God which impelled the Eastern Church to formulate her teaching on the distinction between God’s essence and His energies*”.⁷⁰

According to Palamas, if God’s energies are not uncreated, we will speaking not of deification, but absorption. therefore we agree with Papanikolaou that „*Distinction between uncreated and created essence, a distinction at the heart of Christian ontology*”.⁷¹ Philosophical concept of essence is validated doxologically, through the soteriological principle of deification. Therefore, we get the understanding the divine simplicity by the *logic of deification*. But, says Aristotle „*The question still exists, however, how created existence is, in fact, «created» when it is a product of divine energies that are uncreated*”.⁷² Palamite

⁶⁸ Aristotle Papanikolaou, *Being With God*, pp. 24-25.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 25.

⁷⁰ Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1976), p. 71.

⁷¹ Aristotle Papanikolaou, *Being With God*, p. 26.

⁷² *Ibidem*.

distinction is „*antinomic*”, because deification leads necessarily to antinomy. The realism of divine-human communion, should not be limited by formal rules of logic. The logic inconsistency, thus, it can't be invoked because, as Papanikolaou stresses, „*It would be incorrect to characterize the essence/energies distinction as illogical, for the paradoxical nature of the distinction is grounded in the paradoxical event of divine-human communion*”.⁷³

For Ch. Journet the fundamental „difficulty” of Palamas is rooted in the concept of deification as an ontological participation (entitative) and his refusal of the created grace.⁷⁴ For G. Florovsky the first element of St. Gregory's theology was the history of salvation, and not an abstract or speculative thought. Then, he characterized St. Gregory's theology as a „theology of facts”, biblical and patristic at the same time.⁷⁵

On the same subject, E. von Ivanka also says that there is a resemblance between the palamite pattern and the neoplatonists systems.⁷⁶

H. Schäder maintains the thesis that, on the one hand, St. Gregory rejects the Aristotelian conception of the simplicity of God and, on the other, he “christianized” the platonic-aristotelian notion of the divine energies.⁷⁷ For J. Kuhlman there is a “complementarity” between Thomism and palamisme,⁷⁸ while D. Wendebourg unilaterally criticizes what

⁷³ Ibidem, p. 27.

⁷⁴ Charles Journet, “Palamisme et thomisme. À propos d'un livre récent”, *Revue Thomiste* 60 (1960), pp. 430-452.

⁷⁵ Georges Florovsky, “Grégoire Palamas et la patristique”, *Istina* 8/1 (1961-1962), p. 125.

⁷⁶ Endre von Ivánka, *Plato Christianus. Übernahme und Umgestaltung des Platonismus durch die Väter* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1964), p. 393.

⁷⁷ H. Schäder, “Die Christianisierung der Aristotelischen Logik”, pp. 1-21.

⁷⁸ Jürgen Kuhlmann, *Die Taten des einfachen Gottes. Eine römisch-katholische Stellungnahme zum Palamismus*, (Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1968), pp. 108-125.

it is presented at Palamas, according to her, as an insufficiently personaliste and economic trinitarian theology.⁷⁹

Thus, the basic contradiction faced and resolved by Palamas in an orthodox manner is that of a God both totally unknowable and fully participable. God does exist as imparticipable within His participation, and absolutely incomprehensible in His total presence. Palamas’ doctrine does not differ from that of earlier Fathers, but he tried to explain this distinction received from the Fathers by making it more clearly: *„His attempt hadn’t had as a purpose the invention of an ontological definition and a logic understanding of the ineffable relationship between God and the world, but the defense of the Church experience and of truthfulness of Revelation”*.⁸⁰

On the other hand, Amphiloque Radovic demonstrates the weakness of rational logic regarding mystical phenomenology: *“Human logic always runs the danger either to confuse or to divide: when it tries clearly to describe and to define the mystery in fact, through concepts and descriptions, it divides what it is in itself indivisible by nature. When human logic deals with the mystique description, it confuses it with what it exists by nature without confusion. Nevertheless, man can not deny neither one nor the other method. Gregory also combines the two methods, however, giving priority to mystical contemplation”*.⁸¹

For Palamas, Radovic emphasizes, the Christological antinomy is a crucified logic: *“Palamas did not need to take refuge in the patterns of secular philosophy, but he begins from the «crucified» Trinitarian logic. This logic is truly antinomical [...]The internal*

⁷⁹ Dorothea Wendebourg, *Geist oder Energie. Zur Frage der innergöttlichen Verankerung des christlichen Lebens in der byzantinischen Theologie* (Münchener Monographien zur historischen und systematischen Theologie 4, Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1980).

⁸⁰ Radovic, *Le Mystère de la Sainte Trinité*, p. 244.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p. 250.

rhythm of the Palamas's thought is actually antinomical because it is Trinitarian and, at the same time, Christological".⁸²

Biblical revelation and its internalization is the criteria of true theology. The logic is not removed, yet crucified, for the purposes of resurrections of hermeneutics. So, says Radovic, "*these antinomical formulations, having as a unique base the biblical faith and the revelation as 'folly' of the Cross and 'crucifixion' of the logic, find that the Trinitarian theology of Palamas is rather the holy and mystical inner vision of a faithful heart illuminated by the Holy Spirit, than a theology in the usual sense of the word*".⁸³

In the recent works the authors intend to show that in his framework, Thomas reaches to an intuition of divination if not identical to that of Palamas, at least very close to it.⁸⁴ But, the question of uncreated grace remains, more than ever, "an issue between the East and the West." So that, for Antoine Levy, "*the controversy between Gregory and Barlaam does not refer only to a dogmatic point, but also the status of the theologian and the very legitimacy of his research were at stake. Who, in fact, had the authority to tell the truth about God? The one whose intelligence had been impregnated by attendance to the philosophy and secular sciences (Barlaam) – or the one whose spiritual experience had been grown into a life of asceticism and prayer (Gregory Palamas)*?"⁸⁵

For Antoine Levy, "*the issue regards the delimitation of the respective spheres of created and uncreated, their mode of*

⁸² Ibid, pp. 292-293.

⁸³ Ibid, pp. 285-286.

⁸⁴ Jacques Lison, *L'esprit répandu. La pneumatologie de Grégoire Palamas* (Paris: Cerf, 1994); Anna Ngair Williams, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (Oxford: University Press, 1999); Constantinos Athanasopoulos, Christoph Schneider (ed.), *Divine Essence and Divine Energies: Ecumenical Reflections on the Presence of God in Eastern Orthodoxy* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2013).

⁸⁵ Antoine Lévy, *Le créé et l'incréé: Maxime le confesseur et Thomas d'Aquin: aux sources de la querelle palamienne* (Paris: Vrin, 2006), p. 16.

*mutual communication is envisaged here and there with all different accents and so to speak opposites*⁸⁶ and therefore, in conclusion, Levy said there is no doctrinal question, but rather a linguistical one: *“As we have seen, it is rather about the astonishing discovery of a lack of common language due to previously unnoticed cultural gaps”*.⁸⁷

But André de Halleux warns us that the theologian must renounce herein to the logic of the created. Because for the patristic tradition, conceptual and dialectical thinking became incompetent in the field of experience and, indeed, the One God of palamisme is neither of Aristotle, nor even of Plotinus, but of Christian tradition: *“The Palamas paradoxical thought allows him to go beyond the rational design of the divine simplicity by a ‘supernatural simplicity’, overcoming to any contradiction. It is not a logical balance, dosing and compensating the affirmations, one another, but it is a transcendental synthesis, fully maintaining their opposition in the unity where they join together. God transcends our category of uniqueness as well as that of plurality, which is why both of them do not apply to Him in the same level of inadequacy”*.⁸⁸

The Augustinian tradition placed the supreme end of man in beatifying knowledge of God, wherein God will be in His kingdom contemplated *totum, etsi non totaliter*. On the contrary, the Orthodox mystical theology of *face-to-face vision* does not contemplate the essence, but the divine face turned to the world, because, *“if palamisme insisted so much on the eternal and uncreated nature of energy, it was in order to conciliate the biblical axiom of the unknowable essence with the affirmation of the immediate vision of God in person”*.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 10

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 15.

⁸⁸ André de Halleux, “Palamisme et Scolastique. Exclusivisme dogmatique ou pluriformité théologique?”, *Revue théologique de Louvain* 4 (1973), pp. 409-442, here p. 421.

⁸⁹ André de Halleux, “Palamisme et Scolastique”, p. 414.

Distinction between essence and energies should no longer threaten the divine simplicity⁹⁰ as the reciprocal distinction of hypostases does, because „the idea of the absolute and final simplicity of the One is it itself essentially neo-Platonic. Christian mysticism does not seek the Alone, the absolutely simple One, but the Triune God”.⁹¹

On the other hand, the neo-palamite movement does not consider the palamite distinction as a christian ontological axiom, but rather as a datum of „mystical theology” transmitted through the tradition of the Eastern Church. The doctrine of the essence and energies, says Halleux, has been located „*within a biblical and personalistic, christological and sacramental synthesis, thus avoiding locking up his theology in the categories of philosophical systematization, which gave it even a higher rationality*”.⁹²

Undoubtedly the mystery of the communion of the creature unto God will always remain inaccessible to a satisfactory rational synthesis. But the patristic doctrine of deification implies the palamite dogma of the essence and energies real distinction in God. The Palamite doctrine of divine energies constitutes the divine pole of the deification and does not constitute an eternal emanation and which should establish an intermediate scale between the participants and the Participated, because the humanity of Christ is the principle of deification: “*For the Greek Fathers, however, says Halleux, it’s less about explaining the presence of Christ starting from a human image, than to reveal to man his proper iconic dignity from the incarnation of the Son of God. Therefore, for them, anthropology is only a deficient analogy not an explanatory principle of the*

⁹⁰ Sébastien Guichardan, *Le problème de la simplicité divine en Orient et en Occident aux XIV et XV siècle: Grégoire Palamas, Duns Scot, Georges Scholarios* (Lyon: Anciens établissements Legendre éd., 1933).

⁹¹ Duncan Reid, *Energies of the Spirit*, p. 89.

⁹² André de Halleux, “Palamisme et Tradition”, *Irenikon* 48 (1975), pp. 479-493, here p. 481.

*divine mysteries. This is why the Eastern tradition carefully avoids confusing the synergy of grace between God and man with Trinitarian perichoresis of the hypostases into the one divine nature or with that of christological natures in the unique Person of the Incarnate Word".*⁹³

We can easily understand how difficult is for a theologian to handle a logical discourse, if he isn't resonate in himself with the patristic author, inside of the same experience that it is offered to him for his own research. If he finds himself in this patristic testimonies, the divine Logos' hidden meanings will be revealed to him, beyond his reasoning.

Therefore, I agree with Behr-Sigel's assertion that "the true theology is an experiential knowledge of God".⁹⁴ Thus the human logic should follow (ἀνάβασις, anábasis) the same path of divine revelation (κατάβασις, katábasis). In this synergistic movement the human logic also must be enrolled, because, says Behr-Sigel, "logical knowledge, i.e. in conformity with the divine reason, the Logos who created everything, is the knowledge according to the Logos. It culminates in the contemplation of the Divine Trinity Kingdom".⁹⁵

3 Higher Ousia and the problem of the ontological gulf. Distinction between the essence and the energies as the starting-point of all knowledge about God

For Yannaras, the distinction between the essence and the energies is the starting-point of all knowledge about God. Knowledge implies participation, but if he is nothing more than

⁹³ André de Halleux, "Palamisme et Tradition", p. 489.

⁹⁴ Élisabeth Behr-Sigel, *Le lieu du Coeur. Initiation à la spiritualité de l'Église orthodoxe* (Paris: Cerf, 1989), p. 66.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 64-65.

essence, „*theosis*, the participation of human beings in the divine life, is ultimately impossible”.⁹⁶

Thus, the divine energies call to an experience of *participation* with the *imparticipable* Godhead, and this conceptual contradiction constitutes a „real (unique) possibility of knowledge with the reference to the accessibility of the reality of God”.⁹⁷ God is both absolutely transcendent and immanent with his creation, so that revelation and redemption are possible through God’s energies.

Divine energies are God Himself as He has manifested Himself to us. These energies were originally identified as the „uncreated light” encountered through theophanic experiences. For example, all the anthropomorphisms in Scripture refer not to God in his essence, but to how he acts according to and through his energies.⁹⁸

Father Staniloae argues that „*We know God through cataphatic knowledge only as the creating and sustaining cause of the world, while through apophatic knowledge we gain a kind of direct experience of His mystical presence*”.⁹⁹

Dionysios and Maximus seemed to resolve the problem of the ontological *gulf* by highlighting the fullest possibilities of *being* in Christ: „*Communion is not being in itself, but allows the ground of being to be fulfilled. This ontological context to communion does not mean that communion has substance in itself but that it is generated by the uncreated activity established*

⁹⁶ Christos Yannaras, *Person and Eros* (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2008), p. 65.

⁹⁷ Idem, *On the Absence and Unknowability of God: Heidegger and the Areopagite* (New York/London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2007), p. 87.

⁹⁸ Jordan Cooper, *Christification. A Lutheran Approach to Theosis* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf&Stock), 2014, p. 5.

⁹⁹ Dumitru Staniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology: The Experience of God, Vol. 1: Revelation and Knowledge of the Triune God* (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), p. 95.

from the enhypostatic source of the tri-hypostalic Godhead".¹⁰⁰ This notion of union through participation was echoed by Dionysius and Maximus who considered that the Divine revelatory *deification* experience had significant ontological implications to human *being-ness* and existence.

Patristic theology did have an essentialist context visible in St Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, St Maximus the Confessor, and later expressed through the energetic theology of Gregory Palamas of Thessaloniki. In this energetic model "Higher-Essence" in God becomes inaccessible and provides the need to assert a participation in uncreated acts: "*Gregory Palamas' need to focus on the Divine uncreated energies, for the superior 'Higher Essence' remains ontologically far beyond the realm of human experience while the operational hypostases do not: we cannot partake of the Divine essence, we can only know the hypostatic operations (...). Nevertheless, the focus on the Divine essential-esse to explain how the Divine nature relates to the very Being of God in a substantialist model is supported through a Pseudo-Dionysius and Palamite focus on Higher Ousia and even Lossky also argues that for Palamas the Divine Essence was the 'superior divinity', while the operations were inferior*".¹⁰¹

Palamas uses the term "essence" in the Dionysian sense of "dynamic-essence" (*ousiopoios dynamis*, cf. *Divine Names V*,

¹⁰⁰ Nicholas Bamford, *Deified Person. A study of deification in relation to Person and Christian Becoming* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 20), pp. 14 and p. 29. Also, see Andrew Louth, "The Place of Theosis in Orthodox Theology," in M. J. Christensen, *Partakers of Divine the Nature* (Michigan: Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2007), p. 34; Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, (Oxford: University Press, 2004), pp. 115- 205; N. Russell, "Theosis and Gregory Palamas: Continuity or Doctrinal Change," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 50/4 (2006), pp. 357-379; Paul Collins, "Event: The How of Revelation," in *Trinitarian Theology West and East: Karl Barth, the Cappadocian Fathers, and John Zizioulas*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 7-33; Stephen Finlan and Vladimir Kharlamov, *Theosis: Deification in Christian Theology* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2006).

¹⁰¹ Nicholas Bamford, *Deified Person*, p. 37.

1¹⁰²): “If we call the super-essential hiddenness God, or life, or essence (*ousia*), or light, or reason, we mean nothing else than those divinizing, or essence-making (*ousiopoious*), or vivifying, or wisdom-giving powers which come to us from it (the super-essential hiddenness)”.¹⁰³

So, the name essence is here one of the eternal power of God, actived in the world, but not identical with supra - essential essence which has no name. We should remember that for Palamas and for all Eastern patristic tradition, the Logos was the one who told Moses “I am who I am”. Thus, Palamas says, that the essence as dynamic essence (power-giving) comes from super-essential essence and from Logos. He does not say, as Father John Meyendorff thinks, that super-essential essence comes from the hypostasis or person.¹⁰⁴

According to Papanikolaou, because the apophaticism tends to prioritize the hyper-essence of God over the trinitarian persons, „the primary soteriological concept is the energies of God, rather than trinitarian personhood”.¹⁰⁵ Essence and energies are not,

¹⁰² Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names and the Mystical Theology* (english translation by Clarence Edwin Rolt, Lake Worth: Ibis Press, 2004), see Chapter V. “Concerning ‘Existence’ and also concerning ‘Exemplars’”: “I. Now must we proceed to the Name of ‘Being’ which is truly applied by the Divine Science to Him that truly Is. But this much we must say, that it is not the purpose of our discourse to reveal the Super-Essential Being in its Super-Essential Nature” (*On the Divine Names*, p. 68).

¹⁰³ Grégoire Palamas, *Défense des Saints hésychastes*, (Meyendorff ed. 1959, Tr. III, 2, 11), p. 663; Dionysius the Areopagite, (*On the Divine Names* (II, 7), p. 40-41).

¹⁰⁴ J. Romanides, “Notes on the Palamite Controversy and Related Topics II,” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 9:2 (1963-64), pp. 225-270 at p. 270. See also: Saint Gregory Palamas, *The one hundred and fifty Chapters* (edited and translated by Robert E. Sinkewicz, C.S.B., Studies and Texts 83; Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988), *Chap.* 106, p. 203: “Thus, it must be called both substance and nature, but properly the substance-bestowing procession and energy of God, for the great Dionysius says that this is “the proper way for theology to name the substance of the One Who Truly Is.

¹⁰⁵ Aristotle Papanikolaou, *Being with God*, p. 106.

for Palamas two parts of God, but two different *modes of existence* of God, within His nature and outside His nature. Aristotle Papanikolaou, which examines the being-energies distinction as a way of being with God, says that “unlike the neo-platonic view, God is not diminished in God’s natural processions outside the essence. God is *in* the energies and the energies *are* God. Since the energies are God, God is not divided. The energies are simply a distinct mode of existence.”¹⁰⁶ But the main objection is its pantheistic overtones. If the energies are God, then everything is God. Therefore, „*the attempts to express the God’s being, which is beyond being (essence) and radically immanent (energies), must be antinomic*”.¹⁰⁷

Gregory Palamas begins to assert the impossibility of grasping God by reason and to express it in words. To speak about God and about the communion with Him (συντυγχάνειν) is not the same thing. Gregory teaches that man owns the divine likeness at a greater degree than the angels. Because man has a body, he is being sealed by the divine likeness in a much more manner than the purely spiritual angelic natures: „*The intellectual and rational nature of the soul, alone possessing mind and word and life-giving spirit, has alone been created more in the image of God than the incorporeal angels*”.¹⁰⁸

Although there can be no separation between the two, „the Incarnation gives priority to ontology over epistemology”.¹⁰⁹ In God’s act of revelation He remains, at the same time, hidden and it should always be an ontological and epistemological gap between the Creator and the creature. God’s radical

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 26.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 27.

¹⁰⁸ Gregory Palamas, *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, 39, pp. 126-127: „Ἡ νοερά καί λογική φύσις τῆς ψυχῆς, μόνη νουν ἔχουσα καί λόγον καί πνεῦμα ζωοποιόν, μόνη καί τῶν ασωμάτων ἀγγέλων μάλλον κατ’ εἰκόνα τοῦ θεοῦ παρ’ αὐτοῦ δεδημιούργηται.”

¹⁰⁹ Aristotle Papanikolaou, *Being with God*, p. 44f: „The type of knowledge that results from union with God is manifested for Lossky in one person immediately after Christ’s resurrection – the Theotokos”.

incomprehensibility has been pronounced as a reaction against the extreme rationalism of the arians (anomeans). St. Gregory Palamas remains unyielding: „Every nature is utterly remote and absolutely estranged from the divine nature. For if God is nature, other things are not nature, but if each of the other things is nature, he is not nature: just as he is not a being, if others are beings; and if he is a being, the others are not beings”.¹¹⁰

Thus, through negations, an immediate experience of God is being expressed. Thus the ‘essentially’ unknowable God is ‘existentially’ revealed through the ‘energy’: “To express this double truth, that God is both hidden and revealed, transcendent and immanent, Orthodox theology distinguishes between the divine essence and divine energies. Essence (οὐσία) means God as He is in Himself, energies (ἐνέργεια) indicate God in action and Self-revelation... This doctrine of immanent energies implies an intensely dynamic vision of the relationship between God and world. The entire cosmos is a vast burning bush, penetrated but not consumed by the fire of the uncreated divine energies. These energies are ‘God with us’”.¹¹¹

The energies are common to the three Persons of the Trinity. The essence-energies distinction is applied by St. Maximus the Confessor to Christology: each *physis* has its proper *energeia*. Man may experience the divine energies in the form of uncreated light which was manifested during the Transfiguration on the Tabor. There is, also, a significant difference between *energeia* and *energema*: “the *energema* forms a part of the created order as a consequence God’s action,

¹¹⁰ Gregory Palamas, *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, 78, pp. 172-173: “Πάσα φύσις ὡς πορρωτάτω ἐστί καί παντάπασι ξένη τῆς θείας φύσεως, εἰ γάρ ὁ θεός φύσις, τάλλα οὐκ ἐστί φύσις· εἰ δὲ τῶν ἄλλων ἕκαστον φύσις, ἐκεῖνος οὐκ ἐστί φύσις· ὡς οὐδ’ ὄν ἐστίν, εἰ τάλλα ὄντα ἐστίν· εἰ δ’ ἐστίν ἐκεῖνος ὄν, τάλλα οὐκ ἐστίν ὄντα.”

¹¹¹ Kallistos Ware, “Dieu cache et révéle, la voie apophatique et la distinction essence-energie”, *Messenger de l’Exarchat du patriarcat russe en Europe occidentale* 89-90 (1975), p. 45-59, here p. 49.

*but energeia that causes this consequence is in itself uncreated and eternal”.*¹¹²

4 CONCLUSION

Along with the trinitarian ontological character of the uncreated energies, their epistemology also leads us to christological and pneumatological connotation. Therefore, Vladimir Lossky affirms that the union is necessary if the *anthropos* is to experience God. Here the notion of the energies becomes important.

In the person of Christ, human nature is deified through the energies of the divine nature. The two natures maintain their ontological integrity: „Lossky uses the Greek patristic notion of *perichoresis* to express the energetic relationship between the two natures in Christ (...) indwelling of persons, the one with the other, rather than an energetic exchange between two ontologically distinct natures.”¹¹³

According to Lossky, Chalcedon’s adequacy is judged by the soteriological principle of deification, which Nestorianism and Monophysitism threaten. Chalcedon ultimately affirmed that „*if there is no real unity in Christ, a union between man and God is no longer possible. The whole doctrine of salvation loses its ontological foundation. We remain separated from God, Deification is forbidden.*”¹¹⁴

On the other hand, for C. Journet the distinction between Spirit’s hypostasis and His grace is “*the central node of*

¹¹² Kallistos Ware, “Dieu cache et révélé”, p. 53.

¹¹³ Aristotle Papanikolaou, *Being with God*, p. 108.

¹¹⁴ Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1978), p. 97; cf. Aristotle Papanikolaou, *Being with God*, p. 107.

palamisme itself.”¹¹⁵ Palamas clearly distinguished between the hypostasis of the Holy Spirit and His energy;¹¹⁶ he probably took advantage of the clarification made by Gregory of Cyprus. The latter shows that he is familiar with the distinction between essence and energy in God, and he speaks of “uncreated light” in connection with divine energy which he considers it as being eternal. He also makes a convergence between the notions of manifestation, on one hand and the concept of energy, on the other hand, suggesting us that his view is close to that which will be developed by Palamas.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Ch. Journet, “Palamisme et thomisme. À propos d’un livre récent”, *Revue thomiste* 60 (1960), p. 430-452. See also: Grégoire Palamas, *Traité apodictiques sur la procession du Saint-Esprit* (translation by Emmanuel Ponsoye, Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1995), II, & 6-7; 10-11; 18, pp. 82-84, 86-88, 95.

¹¹⁶ Gregory Palamas, *Apodictic Treatise on The Procession of The Holy Spirit*, II, 6, pp. 11-12, 48, 69 (ed. P. Chrestou, *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα*, t. I, Thessalonique, 1988), pp. 82-83, 87-89, 121-122, 140-142. See also, Ralph Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit-christology in trinitarian perspective* (Oxford: University Press 1994), p. 8-33; According to George C. Papademetriou, the essence-energies distinction “*is contrary to the Western confusion of the uncreated essence with the uncreated energies and this is by the claim that God is Actus Purus*”, cf. George C. Papademetriou, *Introduction to St. Gregory Palamas* (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2004), p. 61; John Meyendorff, „The Holy Trinity in Palamite Theology”, in M.A. Fahey and J. Meyendorff, *Trinitarian Theology East and West: St Thomas Aquinas – St Gregory Palamas* (Brookline: Holy Cross Press, 1977), p. 26; C.N. Tsirpanlis, “Epistemology, Theognosis, the Trinity and Grace in St Gregory Palamas”, in: *Patristic and Byzantine Review* 13 (1994), p. 5-27, here p. 15;

¹¹⁷ Gregory Palamas, *Apodictic Treatise*, II, 9 (ed. P. Chrestou, t. I), pp. 122-123; Grégoire de Chypre, *Discours antirrhétique*, (Αντιρρητικός τῶν τοῦ Βέκκου βλασφημῶν δογμάτων, ἐκδοθεὶς πρὸ τοῦ ψήφῳ θεοῦ εἰς τὸν πατριαρχικὸν ἀνελεῖθιν αὐτὸν θρόνον) & 54, 55, 63, 65, PG 142, 250D-251A. See also: A. J. Sopko, *Gregory of Cyprus: A Study of Church and Culture in Late Thirteenth Century Byzantium* (London: King’s Colledge, 1979), p. 146-149; Idem, “Palamism before Palamas and the Theology of Gregory of Cyprus”, *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 23 (1979), p. 141; Joost van Rossum, “Gregory of Cyprus and Palamism”, *Studia*

It must be noted that Palamas doesn't quote the Cypriot in his work. But in his *Apodictic Treatise* about the procession of the Holy Spirit, Palamas “uses some principles established by the Cypriot, without being a testimony of his dependence towards him. Palamas's reference to Gregory of Cyprus' main idea (Spirit's eternal manifestation through the Son) is unquestionably accepted and embedded”.¹¹⁸

In addition, states J.-Cl. Larchet “Palamas has based his theology of the energies on a much broader basis than that of Cyprus (limited to the interpretation of the phrase «through the Son»), in a new epistemological context (in part relating to the critics of Barlaam and Akindynos)”.¹¹⁹ In this regard, Palamas shows himself much dependent on Maxim the Confessor and Gregory of Nyssa, to which the notion of Spirit's eternal manifestation had been theologically understood, and where the distinctions: essence-nature, essence-energy(s), person-energy(s) found their sources.

Starting from the great Cappadocians until Gregory Palamas, as it has been expressed in the patristic thought, “Hesychast epistemology is based on the true nature of divine Revelation (*apophatic* and *kataphatic*) of living God's mystery”.¹²⁰ In the hesychast epistemology, for Athanase Jevtitch love is the foundation for knowledge: “God communicates with us (into Christ and into the Holy Spirit) – because he is the biblical,

Patristica 37 (2001), pp. 627-630; Olivier Clément, “Grégoire de Chypre, ‘De l'ekporèse du Saint-Esprit’”, *Istina* 17 (1972), pp. 443-456.

¹¹⁸ See Jean-Claude Larchet, “Introduction à Grégoire Palamas” in Palamas, *Traité apodictiques sur la procession du Saint-Esprit*, pp. 97-102.

¹¹⁹ Jean-Claude Larchet (ed.), *La vie et l'œuvre de Georges-Grégoire II de Chypre (1241-1290), patriarche de Constantinople* (Paris: Édition du Cerf, 2012), pp. 121-124.

¹²⁰ Athanase Jevtitch, *Études Hésychastes* (trad. Jean-Louis Palierne, Collection *La lumière du Thabor*, L'Age d'Homme, Lausanne 1995), p. 12.

immanent, present and life-giving *Emmanuel* ('God is with us').¹²¹

According to Papanikolaou, which closely follows to Lossky, „knowledge of God is possible through God's economy, or in the realm of *oikonomia*". Knowledge of God in Godself, or *theologia*, is not possible according to Lossky, since God's life is eternal and ontologically distinct from created existence and, hence, beyond any human knowing: „Not even God's economy can reveal anything positive about *theologia* or God in Godself. Though the revelation of God's economy in Christ reveals that God is trinity, nothing more can be said of God's trinitarian existence since ,Trinitarian being belongs to the transcendent nature of God', i.e., *theologia*.”¹²²

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 13.

¹²² Aristotle Papanikolaou, *Being with God*, p. 102: „*The core of theological discourse is an ontology of divine-human communion. Lossky and Zizioulas, both also reject the traditional metaphysical link between being and thought. An ontology of divine-human communion demands... an apophatic approach to theology. For Lossky, however, an ontology of divine-human communion translates into an apophatic ontology*”.