

NARCISSISM BEYOND PLEASURE AND INTER-SUBJECTIVITY WITHOUT MEANING: READING MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, GREGORY PALAMAS, AND THOMAS AQUINAS TODAY¹

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This study is a systematic effort to understand modern narcissism-without-pleasure and intersubjectivity-without-meaning, with the help of the Maximian teaching on pleasure and pain, and the Palamite distinction between essence and energies. This is, at the same time, an effort to understand tradition in the context of a lively re-appropriation of the spiritual findings of the past. In order to express this, some new terms such as inter-meaningfulness are thus created with the help of modern Philosophy.

Introduction: The Strawberries of Tradition and the Blood of Interpretation

It was in Cambridge where Virginia Woolf, in 1923, started her famous lecture on modern literature with the phrase: ‘Suddenly, around 1910, human nature changed’. Indeed, human nature had started changing long before Woolf’s circle of artists and thinkers, along with other groups of intellectuals in Cambridge, such as the poisonous ‘Apostles’, realized it. If this change represents the ‘self-sufficient humanism’, its story has recently been told again, brilliantly, by thinkers such as Charles Taylor (*A Secular Age*) and Rémi Brague (*Le Règne de l’homme*).² In any case, even the Enlightenment’s ‘detached self’ was strongly doubted: by Nietzsche and his change of ecstatic transcendence into will to power, along with the parallel re-evaluation of materiality; or by Freud and his (re-)discovery of the Unconscious, which is now decisively psycho-biological; and of course by Feuerbach, Hegel and Marx,

¹ Half of this paper, in an earlier form, was published as ‘Δι-εννοημάτων or Inter-meaningfulness: rereading Wittgenstein through Gregory Palamas’ and Thomas Aquinas’ readings of Aristotle’, in S. Mitralaxis, ed., *Ludwig Wittgenstein between Analytic Philosophy and Apophaticism* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 151–165. This half has undergone substantial changes.

² Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Rémi Brague, *Le Règne de l’homme* (Paris: Gallimard, 2015).

and the wake of socialism; and later by Husserl and the Personalists, and their new grounding of inter-subjectivity.

However, this lack of any commonly accepted meaning concerning humanity which was suddenly discovered (or, perhaps, imposed) by intellectuals like Virginia Wolf is, in a sense, revealing. This is, in my opinion, the first sign of the great change that happened in the Western mode of existence during the 20th century; a change that took place within what I have recently called ‘the ontology of the self-referring subject’,³ and finally allowed this subject to radically dispute human nature itself, since it gradually led to what we can call Narcissism, in a philosophical, and not only psychological, language. This happened because, as a spiritual phenomenon, Narcissism is not an affirmation, as many perhaps think, but rather a denial of human nature. Its closest philosophical concept is that of the will to power, as an unlimited internal transcendence, which always forces human beings to go beyond any essential limit, beyond their natural identity; the closest ethical concept here is perhaps MacIntyre’s ‘emotivism’,⁴ which unsurprisingly also results in the will to power. Narcissism culminates in evaporating human nature into a pure fantasy of power, an imagined spiritual omnipotence and pan-domination—Jean Luc Bresson’s film ‘Lucy’ is an accurate description of it. Moreover, narcissism is not a denial of relation as it is usually thought, but is, on the contrary, the most common type of relation—it is an inclusion of any relation within the self, a sort of *monological reciprocity*, if you allow me this oxymoron.

Narcissism is not necessarily against tradition; as Anthony Giddens⁵ has shown, modern man prefers an eclectic use of the latter, in a way that the dream of omnipotence is maintained and even reinforced. Sometimes these persons seem to be extremely devoted to tradition, which they totally destroy by dissolving it into quanta of power, both individually and as communities—‘imagined communities’, to use Benedict Anderson’s⁶ term. In these cases, tradition becomes a dangerous ideological salad of concepts contradicting each other, a weapon made of sacred texts always taken literally and killing imaginary or real opponents. It is also possible that tradition be rejected, in an alleged ‘eschatological’ way, in both the theological and the secular sense—the latter concerning a blind faith in an eternal and blissful progress (in a way already paved by Condorcet, and staying alive through modern lifestyle), while the former represents a kind of ‘ecstatic’ eschatology, the continuity

³ See my ‘Being and Essence Revisited: Reciprocal Logoi and Energies in Maximus the Confessor and Thomas Aquinas, and the Genesis of the Self-Referring Subject’, *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 72, no. 1 (2016): 117–146.

⁴ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (London: Duckworth, 2004), 23–35.

⁵ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Oxford: Polity Press/Blackwell, 1996), ch. 1. See my engagement with Giddens’s thought in my *Οι Τρόμοι του Προσώπου και τα Βάσανα του Έρωτα: Κριτικοί στοχασμοί για μια μετανεωτερική θεολογική οντολογία* [The Terrors of the Person and the Ordeals of Love: Critical Meditations on a Post-modern Theological Ontology], (Αθήνα: Αρμός, 2009), 119–120, 144–145.

⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Books, 1983).

of which with the theological past is constantly fading. However, mainly for cultural and historical reasons, it tends to become the most common attitude of many Orthodox theologians who cannot find ways to facilitate a fertile communication with their uncommitted intellectual environment.

But can we, after all this discussion, give an anti-narcissistic ecclesial definition of tradition that excludes some of the dangers described above?

In our post-Derridean times, where all the existential or ontological concepts, along with the texts they draw on, are suspicious of exercising an oppressive authority, and so they clearly need some de-construction, tradition can no longer be defined as merely a deposit of texts. However, it is true that the Christian tradition had never been defined primarily as a certain deposit of texts, but as a worshipping community, a Eucharistic assembly, where interpretation was precisely a Eucharistic interpretation (i.e., a description, a reference to, an announcement of a new divine mode of existence, brought into creation through Christ, by the Spirit, in the Church). The Greek word *παράδοσις*, coming from the verb *παραδίδωμι* or, in the passive voice, *παραδίδομαι*, means first, of course, a sort of complete and total offering, but it also means to surrender, both in ancient and modern Greek, either as a verb or as a noun. Thus, *παράδοσις* can be understood as a dynamic historical event of a constant decision on the part of a community or a man to surrender himself to the truth, which is, on the other hand, surrendered to us precisely through our surrendering to it.

This existential definition of tradition as *paradosis*/surrender is exemplified, excellently in my view, in a wonderfully bold phrase by Maximus the Confessor: ‘δῶμεν οὖν ἑαυτοὺς ὁλοκλήρως τῷ Θεῷ, ἵνα ὁλόκληρον αὐτόν ἀντιλάβωμεν’ (‘Let us then give the whole of ourselves to God, in order to receive back the whole of him’).⁷ In this sense, *paradosis* is a mutual exchange of gifts, out of God’s providential love, and man’s grateful *antidosis*/counter-offering, or, as I have called this in the past, a *dialogical reciprocity*.⁸ Thus, the essence of tradition/*paradosis* is freedom and love: a free and unconditionally loving divine offering on the one hand, and on the other a free and grateful human response as participation, or, better, participatory interpretation, on the other. This dialogical freedom gives us the chance to understand divine and human things in our own personal rhythm and way; Christ becomes each person’s own Christ, according to Maximus’ wonderful phrase—though not without sacrificing a part of our buffered self’s vanity.

But, perhaps, even the term *interpretation* here must be understood, somehow, beyond Gadamer or Ricoeur, in a maximalist manner, as meaning the whole of human and worldly existence, which is given as an absolute gift—*παραδίδεται*—, and this precisely means that created nature, as a whole, surrenders itself to its ultimate

⁷ *Liber Asceticus* 43 (PG 90:953B). Author’s translation.

⁸ See my *A Eucharistic Ontology: Maximus the Confessor’s Eschatological Ontology of Dialogical Reciprocity* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2010).

source and meaning, to its source of unperishable life, through and in the worshipping community. The Eucharist is the only ontological interpretation of creation and the only dialogical reciprocity/*paradosis* that we really have. In this sense, in a way, human nature, through this understanding of *paradosis*, is always new, always other, always more, enlightened as it is by its divine source. In this sense *paradosis*/tradition has to do with the life in the Spirit, and the continuity of this life in the Spirit within the Church, and it is not a repetition of ideas accepted in the past; it is possible for someone to be a contemporary Father of the Church in the Spirit, without having read the texts of the Fathers—this is why I sometimes do not like the Florovskian term ‘Neo-Patristic synthesis,’ if by this we mean a sort of given matrix of concepts and meanings, which have to be exclusively followed, and un-critically repeated. On the other hand, it is utterly important to read the works of the great Fathers, precisely in order to fathom the deeply laborious and, thus, creative, existential way they have assimilated, in the Spirit, the written tradition; genuine theology is always new, always contemporary, always contextual, always surrendering itself to Christ, who is the only theo-logian, and having him surrendered to their total surrender. But this is far from being self-evident and easy. Because Christ’s way of doing theology unavoidably passes through the Cross. From Christ on, theology is no more just metaphysics, but passion for doing the Father’s will, which transforms our various ranks of varied death into life eternal and invincible meaningfulness.

Thus, I dare to say, paraphrasing Nietzsche, that the theologian has to read tradition with his blood: the strawberries of tradition need our blood of interpretation...

Beyond Pleasure and Pain

After this long introduction, let me now switch to my subject. First, how can we read Maximus the Confessor’s doctrine on pleasure and pain today? For Maximus, this doctrine presupposes an internal split in man due to his autonomous use of the senses, not as a channel for God’s spiritual beauty to be admired, but as a means for pleasure. Thus, pleasure was created, not by God, but by man, and this forced God to allow pain, along with death—which is the ultimate pain—to punish and educate human deviation⁹—since pleasure is, at its deep core, ‘idolatry’.¹⁰ Therefore, pleasure and pain do not initially belong to human nature, but they are both post-lapsarian, and they resemble the irrational natures, the former showing the corruption of human *prohairesis*, and the latter bringing the dissolution of human nature in order for this irrationality to be abolished.¹¹ In this way, an existential dialectic between pleasure and pain has been established within human nature, on

⁹ *Capita Quinquies Centenorum* V, 33 (PG 90:1361A).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, IV, 75 (PG 90:1337B).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, I, 65 (PG 90:1204C–1205A).

the common ground of *philautia*, which is then precisely defined in terms of this dialectic, as the endorsement of sensual, bodily pleasure and the avoidance of pain.¹² It is notable that Maximus defines pleasure, almost exclusively, as a matter of senses and as purely irrational (*ἐπιθυμία ἄλογος*),¹³ pulling the inattentive mind towards this irrationality, to its detriment.¹⁴ Thus, if the mind is trapped in the ‘surface of things’, it loses its natural divine object of contemplation and love, and becomes a prisoner of the sensual beauty of things, and their pleasures.¹⁵

So, it seems that for Maximus, to disengage the mind from the senses and make it their master is the only way to escape pleasure and pain and to transform pleasure into contemplation. However, things have become considerably more complicated today. On the one hand, man still does not want to quit pleasure, since it is part of his personal truth and his self-understanding passes through it—it is a part of the modern ‘technologies of the self’, in Foucault’s¹⁶ terms, though a great part of the so-called ‘sexual revolution’ of the sixties and seventies has now lost any revolutionary meaning and it is closely bound to multiple forms of frustration or even depression; nowadays, man finds himself searching for new forms of pleasure. On the other hand, and without the modern man feeling this as a contradiction, contrary to the Maximian *philautia*, modern narcissistic pleasure is not necessarily bound to sensual pleasure, but can be utterly painful and ‘ascetical’—let us remember, for example, Weber’s Capitalist, or Kenneth Gergen’s modern ‘saturated self’, where the deepest narcissistic pleasure is connected with the most inexorable privation of both psychological and bodily pleasures. The final absolute affirmation of narcissism today, not only on the part of the modern lifestyle, but also on the part of modern Psychology (Freud, for example, would never agree with Kohut in accepting narcissism), along with its peculiar ‘asceticism’, shows that modern *philautia* is clearly part of a religious-like narcissism. *Philautia* has surmounted the temptation of pleasure! Finally, and entering now the realm of so-called ‘spirituality’, the self-referring subject is not simply ambitious, but he organizes his self-fulfillment, through his narcissistic desire of melting with the Ultimate Thing/Meaning/God, regardless of the existential cost, making it a part of his own self-development (something that can finally turn to become even paranoiac). This odd communion-without-participation is the narcissistic ‘spirituality’ *par excellence*.

Thus, *Philautia* or narcissism has nowadays become a sort of Kantian categorical order, regardless of pleasure, and even bound to pain! Thus, after the culture of continuous and unlimited pleasure in the post-war period, we smoothly passed to a sort of culture of narcissism *per se*, beyond pleasure and pain, or as a pleasure in

¹² Ibid., I, 53 (PG 90:1197C–1200A).

¹³ Ibid., V, 72 (PG 90:1377CD).

¹⁴ Ibid., IV, 75 (PG 90:1337B).

¹⁵ Ibid., IV, 2–6 (PG 90:1304C–1305B); II, 34–35 (PG 90:1233AC).

¹⁶ Michel Foucault, *Technologies of the Self* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1988).

itself, regardless of sensual or sentimental pleasure or pain. In this way, narcissism has nowadays become monstrous, and uncontrollably excessive—and it lies, indeed, beyond pleasure and pain. How then can we read Maximus on pleasure and pain today?

It was impossible for Maximus to know that a time would come when *philautia* would even exceed pleasure, and there would be a sort of *philautia* which is even opposed to pleasure. Of course, his idea was not that every bodily pleasure leads us unavoidably to *philautia*, needing a painful punishment to recover. The core of such a thought would perhaps be, in modern terms, that the absence of the other, through his *instrumentalisation*, in order to serve one's own narcissistic fantasy, transforms narcissistic pleasure into an idolatry of an autonomous selfhood, where, to follow Lacan, the subject's *jouissance* is, in its deep core, pure pain, as the absolute narcissistic fear, and the subsequent elimination of any criteria in order to tell the difference between pleasure and pain—these criteria being decisively inter-subjective. In any case, doxology is the other path left open, once the question of the ultimate meaning (i.e., of the divine presence within the created beauty, or, in our terms, of a *meaningful intersubjectivity*) is answered in the affirmative. The quintessence of St Maximus' teaching for us is thus always to search for this ultimate meaning (i.e., the *dialogical* divine presence behind any sort of pleasure and pain) rather than surrendering ourselves to this peculiar asceticism of narcissism. Pleasure and pain have somehow become identical today in the great painful pleasure of narcissism, which is the contemporary idolatry *par excellence*—and Maximus can be read as fighting precisely against any sort of idolatry which denies the divinity of creation for the sake of the fake divinity of the subject's narcissistic consummation.

Inter-meaningfulness: an inter-subjectivity-in-the-making.

Narcissism being a meaningless intersubjectivity, we need a way of establishing a meaningful intersubjectivity. We shall try to do this with the help of St Gregory Palamas. Once again, it is not self-evident that the essence-energies distinction, supported also by all the great Orthodox theologians of the 20th century (even Bulgakov finally identified his Sophiology with the doctrine of the uncreated energies), can be properly understood by the modern Western man, precisely because the modern understanding of the term 'energy' has nothing to do with what Palamas and so many of his spiritual ancestors and successors wanted to convey. Thus, while Palamas wanted to show, through this doctrine, that the Triune God—the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit—indeed enters into personal communion with created beings, a communion that takes place both inside and outside him, the modern understanding of energy is impersonal, and this means that it has nothing to do with intention, goal, and, in a word, meaning. However, as I will strive to show, the Palamite *inter-hypostatic syn-energy* between God and man, as I call it, mainly

aims at creating an *inter-meaningfulness* between them, a term that is the closest equivalent I can find to the Greek term *διεννοημάτως*. Indeed, in this perspective, through the term energy we return for ever to the realm of meaning, and we can thus form a true and meaningful intersubjectivity. But we will rely mainly on Wittgenstein, and secondly on Aristotle in order to prove this.

It is undoubtedly true that, as Wittgenstein himself repeatedly asserted, he never read Aristotle. And it was also of course impossible for him to have read any Palamite text, since, first of all, he was unable to read Greek. However, there seem to exist some fascinating proximities between the way the so-called second Wittgenstein understood the intersubjective constitution of meaning, and the Palamite understanding of the Aristotelian concept of energy in *Metaphysics* Λ. It is also important to compare this reading with Thomas Aquinas' assimilation of the same text and search for the consequences of such readings for modern thought.

1

Let us start our investigation from Palamas. As I have claimed elsewhere at some length,¹⁷ in order to explain the Palamite definition of the essence-energies distinction better, we must start with his initial endorsement of the Patristic distinction between essence and will in God. Gregory starts here from Justin Martyr and continues through Cyril of Alexandria, Athanasius the Great and Maximus the Confessor to John Damascene.¹⁸ Thus, for Palamas, 'will is the energy of nature'¹⁹ for God as well as for man. Gregory here consciously draws on Patristic sources. A whole series of Greek Patristic texts passes through his work, starting with the Cappadocians, along with Athanasius, Cyril, Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus and John Damascene, and ending with the Fifth and Sixth Ecumenical Councils,²⁰ postulating the distinction between uncreated essence and uncreated energies in various terms. These are being defined as the multiple 'names' of God (Basil), or 'processions' (Dionysius), or 'participations' (Dionysius and Maximus), or as 'divinity' (Gregory of Nyssa, Anastasius of Sinai), or as the uncreated 'things around God' (Maximus and Palamas),²¹ or as 'natural symbols' of God (i.e., of the same uncreated nature with God—Palamas with reference to Maximus)²², or as 'continual and eternal glory' (John Damascene)²³, or as 'philanthropy and providence and

¹⁷ See my 'Striving for Participation: Palamite Analogy as Dialogical Syn-energy and Thomist Analogy as Emanational Similitude', in *Divine Essence and Divine Energies. Ecumenical Reflections on the Presence of God in Eastern Orthodoxy*, eds C. Athanasopoulos and C. Schneider (Cambridge: J. Clarke, 2013), 122–148.

¹⁸ *Against Acindynus*, 1, 4, 10; 1, 7, 15–16; 2, 20, 97–98.

¹⁹ *To Dionysius*, 8. All the translations of Palamite texts are mine.

²⁰ *Against Acindynus*, 2, 10, 37–53.

²¹ *Against Acindynus*, 2, 10, 37–53.

²² *Ibid.*, 4, 5, 7–9.

²³ *Ibid.*, 2, 16, 73.

goodness of God' (Palamas with reference to Gregory of Nyssa)²⁴, or as 'wisdom and power and art' of God (Basil)²⁵, or, finally, as the 'divine *logoi* of things' (reference to Maximus again).²⁶

Thus, for the Hesychast saint, 'if there is no difference between divine essence and divine energy, then giving birth [to the Son]', or 'spirating [the Spirit] is no different from creating'.²⁷ That means that for Palamas, following the Greek Patristic tradition, it is impossible to establish a real distinction between God and the world, or a deep connection between them, without the concept of divine energies. In Palamas' vocabulary, however, this distinction does not compromise either the divine unity or the divine simplicity; in other words, this distinction simply means that God is always more than his essential expressions, as it only means that, paradoxically, divinity is not exhaustively expressed in its communion with creation, although it is divinity in its totality that comes in communion with beings. Or, in other words, this distinction means that God is always more than his essential expressions. Furthermore, as we will later see, created beings do not participate in God by nature, but through their own created energies.

However, this does not mean that energies are ontologically different from essence. On the contrary, there exists a fundamental ontological identity between essence and energies. For Gregory,

when you hear the fathers calling the divine essence 'non-participated in' (*ἀμέθεκτον*), think that they mean that this is the essence as it is in itself, without expressing itself to the world. When you hear them calling it 'participated in' (*μεθεκτὴν*) think that they thus mean that it is the procession and the expression and the energy, which pre-exists in God (...) But if you think that, through this energy, it is the very divine essence that expresses itself, though not thoroughly, you are not out of the terms of piety...²⁸

Thus, Palamas asserts that 'it is possible to use the name of divine essence even for the energies', and 'it is impossible to consider energies as sorts of natures or beings different from the essence'.²⁹ Furthermore, Palamas claims, God in his wholeness of divinity is present in each one of the energies and, consequently, anyone who participates in any of these energies participates truly in God as he is,³⁰ since in each energy 'there is God in his fullness being present in his creatures, imparting himself

²⁴ Ibid., 4, 9, 21.

²⁵ *Theophanes*, 9.

²⁶ *Triads*, 3, 2, 24.

²⁷ *Chapters* 150, 97–98.

²⁸ *Theophanes*, 17.

²⁹ *Against Acindynus*, 2, 17, 86; 2, 14, 63; 3, 13, 42.

³⁰ Ibid., 5, 27, 114.

to them and absolutely participated in, according to the image of the sunbeam, in a little part of which we can see the sun in its wholeness'.³¹

The final texture of the doctrine of energies is Christological. In his treatises *Against Acindynus*, Palamas refers explicitly to St John Chrysostom's teaching on the fact that Christ's possession of the Spirit does not mean anything other than the acquisition of the fullness of divine energies in his human nature.³² For Palamas, this is parallel with St Cyril's position that, through the hypostatic union (which, of course, as an event, exceeds any simple exchange of energies), Christ gives his human nature all the energies of his divine nature,³³ possessed by him in common with the Father and the Spirit. This assertion is repeated in the Palamite *oeuvre*, thus establishing a Christology of the energies,³⁴ as he understands the Christ-event as the very foundation of his ultimate understanding of energies as dialogical events: in Christ we do not have a confusion of natures but an absolute and infinite hypostatic union through the perfect *perichoresis* of the two natures, expressed through the complete dialogue of created and uncreated energies in him. Christ's theandric energy is nothing other than a real and balanced dialogical syn-energy of his two natures through their respective energies, which, through the hypostatic union, perfectly co-exist and co-act. In other words, while we can affirm that every energy comes from the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit, after the Incarnation, energies as donations of the Spirit to created nature are received through this ontological/dialogical syn-energy of Christ's two natures in his unique hypostasis.

It is thus crystal clear that, for Palamas, the energies are not 'essences and hypostases around God'.³⁵ This is why Palamas insists, in many passages, that the energies are not enhypostatic, as only the three Persons of the Trinity are.³⁶ There is only one sense in which the energies can be called 'enhypostatic, but not self-hypostatic': 'they are called so, because the Spirit infuses the energy into another person's hypostasis, where it can be seen',³⁷ or, in another understanding 'because the energy remains forever in the beings where it is sent'.³⁸ This stresses the permanently personal/dialogical/relational/participatory character of the energies, something that we will discuss below.

2

It is perhaps here that a discussion of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Λ can start. We are going to deal with the question whether the 'Prime Mover' forms only a transcenden-

³¹ Ibid., 5, 26, 110.

³² Ibid., 3, 7, 17.

³³ Ibid., 3, 5, 11.

³⁴ See, for example, his *To Athanasius of Cyzicus*, 22.

³⁵ *Against Acindynus*, 1, 7, 30.

³⁶ *Against Acindynus*, 1, 8, 22; 3, 13, 48.

³⁷ *Triads*, 3, 1, 9.

³⁸ *Dialogue Between Orthodox and Varlaamite*, 26.

tal pure actuality/final cause of creation, or both this actuality and also the efficient cause of creation. There is an important discussion among the experts concerning this problem. K. Oehler, S. Broadie, R. Brague and, in my view, especially A. Kosman and E. Berti, are perhaps the most important among them—although my interpretation goes a little further, as will become apparent below. Thus, for Kosman,³⁹ the very notion of circular movement within the Prime Mover implies energy *ad extra*, while at the very same moment, the Prime Mover can be conceived as ‘unmoving’ precisely because of this internal circularity. For Berti,⁴⁰ the Prime Mover is also an efficient cause precisely because as an *actus purus* it can act *ad extra* in a perfect way.

With regards to the question posed in the first lines of the previous paragraph, it seems that in the Greek East the latter option is the case, forming a line of thought, which, concerning its philosophical aspect, also comprises Iamblichus and Proclus, and, concerning its theological dimension, is composed of the work of Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Dionysius the Areopagite, John Damascene. In fact, this series of authors is referred to by Palamas, in whose writings all this line of thought culminates. Of course, the passage read in this direction was initially the 1071b.⁴¹

According to this text, ‘if there is something which is capable of moving things or acting on them, but is not actually doing so, there will not necessarily be movement; for that which has a potency need not exercise it’, and so we gain nothing concerning creation ‘unless there is to be in them (i.e., the Forms) some principle which can cause change’. Thus ‘there must, then, be such a principle, whose very essence is actuality. Further, then, these substances must be without matter; for they must be eternal, if anything is eternal. Therefore, they must be actuality’, so that the Prime Mover ‘must, then, act in one way in virtue of itself, and in another in virtue of something else’.

In this way, we clearly see that actuality in this text is twofold: it is the inner actuality/energy of the Prime Mover, and its creative actuality/energy *ad extra*: ‘For how will there be movement, if there is no actually existing cause?’ Internally fulfilled existence becomes the efficient cause and energetic mover of creation:

Therefore, the first heaven must be eternal. There is therefore also something which moves it. And since that which moves and is moved is intermediate, there is something which moves without being moved, being eternal, substance, and actuality. And the object of desire and the object of thought move in this way; they move without being moved. The primary objects of

³⁹ Aryeh Kosman, ‘Aristotle’s Prime Mover’, in *Self-Motion. From Aristotle to Newton*, eds M.L. Gill and J.C. Lennox (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 135–53.

⁴⁰ Enrico Berti, ‘Unmoved Movers as efficient causes in *Metaphysics* Λ6’, *Aristotle’s Metaphysics Lambda*, eds M. Frede and D. Charles (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 181–206.

⁴¹ Book 12, ch. 6, in W.D. Ross’s translation.

desire and of thought are the same. For the apparent good is the object of appetite, and the real good is the primary object of rational wish.⁴²

The way this unmoving mover moves beings is thus already made apparent. Even clearer:

That a final cause may exist among unchangeable entities is shown by the distinction of its meanings. For the final cause is (a) some being for whose good an action is done, and (b) something at which the action aims; and of these the latter exists among unchangeable entities though the former does not. The final cause, then, produces motion as being loved, but all other things move by being moved. Now if something is moved, it is capable of being otherwise than as it is. Therefore, if its actuality is the primary form of spatial motion, then insofar as it is subject to change, in this respect it is capable of being otherwise, in place, even if not in substance. But since there is something which moves while itself unmoved, existing actually, this can in no way be otherwise than as it is.⁴³

Two other elements are thus added: first, the final form becomes the efficient cause through 'being loved', and secondly, its external energy produces changeable beings. There is no textual witness that this 'love' causing the world is reciprocal, but the unmoving mover, since he is mind, has life as his energy and this excellent life is imparted to beings:

And life also belongs to God; for the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality; and God's self-dependent actuality is life most good and eternal. We say therefore that God is a living being, eternal, most good, so that life and duration, continuous and eternal, belong to God; for this is God.⁴⁴

This life is *νόησις νοήσεως νόησις* ('thinking as a thinking on thinking', in Ross's perhaps not accurate translation, since the Prime Mover in this text seems not to think on thinking, but on himself as thinking). As it is further explained:⁴⁵

But evidently knowledge and perception and opinion and understanding have always something else as their object, and themselves only by the way. Further, if thinking and being thought of are different, in respect of which

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Book 12, ch. 9 in W.D. Ross's translation.

does goodness belong to thought? For to be an act of thinking and to be an object of thought are not the same thing. We answer that in some cases the knowledge is the object. In the productive sciences it is the substance or essence of the object, matter omitted, and in the theoretical sciences the definition or the act of thinking is the object. Since, then, thought and the object of thought are not different in the case of things that have not matter, the divine thought and its object will be the same, i.e., the thinking will be one with the object of its thought.

However, it is impossible to think of knowledge, or perception, or opinion, or understanding, without thinking, at the very same time, of the subject who knows, or understands, etc. whether this subject is identified with the object or not. So the Prime Mover's internal energy of thinking that realizes itself as life—through thinking on himself-as-thinking—moves beings, thus imparting this energy/life/ thinking outside him, turning towards the world in an intentional way: briefly, that was the way Palamas, following the Greek Patristic line of thought, understood Aristotle. The problem of dialogical reciprocity or syn-energy between God and creation (along with that of Providence) remains of course unsolved by the Greek philosopher. There are also some other difficult problems here, as pointed out by some Aristotelian scholars. I do not simply mean the aforementioned problem of the existence of Providence here—it is true that only Franz Brentano was so bold as to claim such a position, which was convincingly refuted by Zeller and others—but also the problem of whether God possesses an objective knowledge of the world or not, according to *Metaphysics*. Starting from Hegel, this problem caused a great variety of answers, the most important of which being perhaps that of Kosman,⁴⁶ for whom the concept of *νόησις νοήσεως* does not simply mean a self-thinking self-consciousness, but also a need for intentional reference *ad extra*. First, however, this reference is not simply an act of understanding—objective or not—but an act of automatic radiation and imparting of life. Secondly, this reference seems to be only an internal requirement of Aristotle's theo-logic, just in order for God's self-thinking/acting to have an 'audience', a second 'pole', and for it not to be arbitrary or irrational—and not an intentional relationship (reciprocal or not) with beings existing outside him. This is the collapsing point of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, and it is precisely here that Palamas can advance much further.

3

For Palamas, the saints unite with God, 'they become one with him'. If this happens 'by essence' that would result in Monophysitism (a confusion of created and

⁴⁶ Aryeh Kosman, 'Metaphysics Λ9: Divine Thought', *Aristotle's Metaphysics Lambda*, eds M. Frede and D. Charles (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 307–26.

uncreated essences); if this happens ‘by hypostasis’ that would result, according to Palamas, in Sabellianism (one essence in many hypostases). What is left is to achieve union ‘by energy’.⁴⁷ The term that is used to describe this union is *ἀνάκρασις*,⁴⁸ a term not easily translatable into English—we might translate it as commixture, if we take the meaning of the Greek word into account, which is that the elements commixed remain unconfused, although they indwell in each other. Palamas understands the deifying participation precisely as *ἀνάκρασις*. This is the existential content of the baptismal *huiiothesia* (adoption) of man, in Christ, through the Spirit, when this adoption is consciously elaborated through grace. The body and the soul in their absolute unity of mind, desire, and affectivity, become co-eternal in this transforming psychosomatic vision of the uncreated light⁴⁹—which is what we finally call union with God, a state where ‘man becomes light, and sees through light, and sees himself through light, and whatever he sees is also light’. In other words, a state where the eschatological status of human nature in God seems to start here and now in order to be accomplished in the end times. This also changes our concept of historical becoming, which can thus become a becoming of creating common meaning, an inter-meaningfulness.

But the most important thing concerning the Palamite concept of deification, as a participational *ἀνάκρασις*/ascent to God through the divine energies manifested in Christ by the Spirit, is its absolutely relational/koinonetic character, beyond any monological Aristotelian/Neoplatonic divine intentionality. The energies themselves are ‘relational and participatory’⁵⁰ (i.e., dialogical as analogical, for two absolutely connected reasons).

For Palamas, following Dionysius and Maximus, this is firstly due to the fact that the divine processions/participations/*logoi*, as expressions of the divine loving will, are deeply connected with the concept of analogy. This is a term which signifies a deep dialogue of synergy, or better syn-energy, since for the above authors, analogy refers not to a similitude of essences but to an analogous action between different agents in order for them to achieve union.⁵¹ Thus, divine energy, as a participable expression of divine will, is dialogical, in the sense that it calls for an energetic/active response on the part of its recipients. This is the first way of understanding energies as dialogical/syn-energetic events of analogical participation, or, in our terms here, as events of creating common meaningfulness, or, even better, inter-meaningfulness, between man and God. What I want to initially signify through the term inter-meaningfulness, (which is the perhaps inaccurate English translation of the Greek term *δι-εννοημάτως* that I have in my mind) is precisely this syn-energetic process of

⁴⁷ *Against Acindynus*, 3, 14, 51.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 2, 9, 28; 5, 4, 11.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 2, 3, 50.

⁵⁰ *Against Acindynus*, 1, 3, 6.

⁵¹ See my *Eucharistic Ontology*, ch. 6, 3.

creating meaning, both divine and human, by the loving God and the responding man together, initially for the sake of each man's personal life; on the other hand, it is also God's offering to be given meaning by man, and become Abraham's and Isaac's and Jacob's God (i.e., a God who respects and perpetuates human otherness without dissolving it or absorbing it).

The second way of understanding energies, and through them, participation, as an analogical/dialogical syn-energy of inter-meaningfulness, is connected to the first. This again has to do with their relational character, as this is ultimately expressed in the ecclesial/koinonetic core of the Palamite understanding of participation. If energy exists only as an analogical syn-energy, this syn-energy does not have to do only with the vertical relation with God, but also with the horizontal relation of what we can call inter-meaningfulness between creatures. Gregory precludes any possibility of a merely intellectual analogical elevation/meaningfulness to God, as for him, this is only imaginary. Any real elevation to God has to happen by the grace/energy of the Holy Spirit, in Christ, only as a promotion of reciprocal and not individual meaningfulness, and that means, in Palamas' words, that man has to bring with him 'every kind of creature, as he himself participates in everything and is also able to participate in the one who lies above everything, in order for the icon (image) of God to be completed'.⁵² In this remarkable passage, horizontal participation becomes an absolute prerequisite of the vertical. In metaphysical terms, that means that it is only in the process of the realization of the ecclesial dialogical/analogical synergetic communion/meaningfulness that elevation to God can be achieved. There is no possibility of any private or solipsistic language or meaning before God, and, furthermore there is no possibility of any 'individual' vision of uncreated light, or participation in the divine energies (i.e., of participation in any process of inter-meaningfulness with God) without progressing at the very same time in a consubstantial, dialogical *perichoresis*/inter-meaningfulness of all other beings in me. In other words, the absolute way for the vision of God is the dialogical realization of an authentic ecclesial communion, as inter-meaningfulness; for example, through reciprocal prayer, friendship, and Eucharistic commemoration. If the others cannot find their meaning in me, through the ways just mentioned, it is impossible for me 'to see the divine light' (i.e., the final divine meaning-of-becoming-in-communion of all things in the Spirit) and enter into union with God. In order to become a syn-energy/dialogue/inter-meaningfulness with God, my action has to happen as a syn-energy/dialogue/inter-meaningfulness with the other, and with 'every kind of creature'. This is why for Palamas, as we read in his *Confession* (§7), the Eucharist, which is also called by him communion and synaxis (gathering) of all creatures, is placed above any ecclesial activity, since it is precisely in the Eucharist where the double analogy of this inter-meaningfulness/ dialogical syn-energy is accomplished.

⁵² *Against Acindynus*, 7, 11, 36.

We can now include Wittgenstein into our discussion. In his second great philosophical work, the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein tries to emerge from his logical atomism, from the solipsism which he essentially accepts in the *Tractatus*, by creating what one might call a social phenomenology of language.⁵³ Thus, in the *Tractatus* solipsism is essentially accepted with the correction that, here, language does not express the world but shows it via its limits, and the metaphysical subject is regarded as the limit of the world—a non-extended limit between beings and Being, through language, in such a way that the solipsism is identified with a pure realism. On the contrary, in the *Investigations* ‘private language’ and any kind of solipsism are condemned. The concept of the ‘language-game’ is introduced,⁵⁴ with common linguistic rules and criteria of meaning,⁵⁵ which make the common linguistic proposals purely empirical (i.e., non ‘philosophical’),⁵⁶ exercising a regulative pressure within the framework of specific ‘forms of life.’⁵⁷ These forms dictate specific common linguistic usages and justify them absolutely, precisely within the set boundaries of their common usage. Being or the Good continue to remain inaccessible, hidden like hints at the surface grammar of the common language-games,⁵⁸ whereas philosophy continues to be unable to draw metaphysical conclusions apart from ‘affirming only that which all accept’.

It is, I think, very interesting that although Wittgenstein appears to reveal the social character of language/meaning, he continues to deny it any access to the absolute. He is unable to discern any trace of ontology in this movement towards inter-meaningfulness (to use the term we have coined here) and consequently to attribute an ontological base and function to it. Thus, this sort of apophaticism risks working to the detriment of ontology.

The radical criticism, at any rate, of private language in the *Investigations* is especially significant because it deals a fatal blow to solipsism and the foundations of a theory of language that would have served precisely as an instrument of an atomistic, metaphysical, ecstatic possession of meaningfulness on the part of the subject. Defining such a language as ‘those sounds that all the others do not understand although I appear to understand them,’⁵⁹ Wittgenstein regards the private language, and, subsequently the private meaningfulness, as the greatest enemy of the

⁵³ See my ‘From the Daydreams of a Private Religious Language to its Ecclesiology: Wittgenstein and Maximus the Confessor’, in my book *Church in the Making: An Apophatic Ecclesiology of Consubstantiality* (New York, NY: St Vladimir’s Press, 2016), where the relevant bibliography is discussed.

⁵⁴ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953), 259–268.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 7.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 54.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 85.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 217–41.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 269.

common ‘forms of life,’ which, as common social realities, constitute the common truth of human life.

In our terms here, this double participational analogy of this inter-meaningfulness seems to be close to what the second Wittgenstein wanted to signify by replacing any remnant of philosophical metaphysics with a deeper *intersubjectivity-in-the-making*, as I would like to call it—or, as I have already called it elsewhere, ‘interlinguality’⁶⁰—and replacing metaphysical claiming with paying attention to everyday conditions where common meaning is created, in mutual understanding and responsibility, beyond any ecstatic solipsism.⁶¹ If thus the mature Wittgenstein would like to speak of Christian theology, his only concern would be, perhaps, the hidden presuppositions of doing theology, the practical (i.e., ascetic) everyday ways of creating common theological meaning, as a syn-energetic inter-subjectivity-in-the making, by means of an analogical, reciprocally achieved and verified inter-meaningfulness. Paradoxically, this seems to be close to what Palamas taught about the practical and applied (ascetic, precisely in the sense of an anti-narcissistic self-denial) way the personal energies, divine and human, converge into a reciprocal syn-energetic meaning/life in Christ, where both human self and divine being, along with human beings between them, and between them and creation, unite, actively and not passively, without confusion. Of course, Palamas clearly goes much further in this direction, and re-founds a (now non-metaphysical) ontology beyond Wittgenstein.

5

Let us now say a few words on Thomas’ reading of Aristotle, in order to conclude this paper. For the reader of *Quaestiones disputatae De Potentia*⁶² it is clear that, on the one hand, Thomas strives to avoid the dark, narcissistic aspect of an overflowing divinity, which produces the universe in a more or less unconscious way, but on the other hand, he seems to feel completely obliged to somehow combine the Biblical Creator with the Aristotelian Prime Mover. Thus, the divine operation does not have any real external relationship with what it creates in terms of reciprocity—this relationship only exists in the divine mind. This is another way for Thomas to express his Aristotelian conviction of *Sententiae*,⁶³ that, since an object can be an object of knowledge by a subject in a twofold way—either in connection with the subject’s very being or simply as it is in itself—God knows everything only in the former way. Since his action is his substance, to return to our first text,⁶⁴ everything that is

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ See Miltiadiadis N. Theodosiou, *Η φιλοσοφία του Wittgenstein. Η στροφή στην ερμηνεία της και η αξιολόγησή της* [The Philosophy of Wittgenstein. The turn in its interpretation and its evaluation], (Αθήνα: Ευρασία, 2007), 337.

⁶² Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae De Potentia* q. 3, art. 3.

⁶³ Ibid., I, 35, 2.

⁶⁴ Ibid., q. 7, 10.

included in this substance is totally alien to created realities. Thus, it is impossible to claim that God receives any additional good through the fact that he produces beings—his action is pure generosity, continues Thomas, referring to Avicenna. Finally, ‘it is impossible for him [i.e., God] to be the subject of a real relation with a creature, even if a creature is the subject of a relation of which he is the end, in the way an effect is bound to its cause’. This technical expression does not mean that God does not create communion with creatures, but that this communion, first, takes place in him, and not outside him, and second, that it takes place in his own terms, and without imparting his own divinity to creatures—since they participate in a created similitude of it. Thus, in a way, we do not have two centers of true reciprocity when we speak of the communion between man and God; the center is in man, while, regarding God, reciprocity is taking place within him. This is different from what Palamas seems to mean when he claims that ‘the energy remains forever in the beings where it is sent’, as we saw above. If the divine energy remains as it is, and forever where it is sent, that means that here a permanent dual reciprocal human-divine process of real and authentic inter-meaningfulness is possible. But in Thomas’ case, and in the terms that we have already established, we have a dictated meaningfulness on the part of God rather than an inter-meaningfulness, and in response, a human, created meaningfulness (i.e., divine meaningfulness changed into a subjective, human event, even supernatural, but not clearly uncreated, precisely when it reaches man). This is implied by the fact that beatitude, while it is uncreated on the part of God, is decisively created on the part of man. In Thomas’ words:⁶⁵ ‘The created intellect does not see the divine essence according to the mode of this essence, but according to its [the created intellect’s] proper mode, which is finite’. When these views were secularized some centuries later, God became the Lacanian false Other of ideology, or the Feuerbachian fantasy of God in human mind—a view which derives precisely from the conviction that the Infinite is simply a function or projection of human intellect.

I do not claim that we cannot find a theory of participation in Thomas, but it seems that this theory also suffers from a strong philosophical/metaphysical influence, despite it trying to get rid of it. Thomas’ reading of Aristotle is of course decisively Christian, but he nonetheless seems at times to need a Biblical complement, since he tends to exhaustively overstress God’s unity, something which is not wrong, but becomes controversial when it happens at the expense of God’s ontologically real and intentional energetic involvement in creation. Some years ago, and as a contribution to Athanasopoulos and Schneider’s volume on the Uncreated Energies,⁶⁶ I wrote a

⁶⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia* IV, 49, q. 2, 5, 3.

⁶⁶ Nikolaos Loudovikos, ‘Striving for Participation: Palamite Analogy as Dialogical Syn-ergy and Thomist Analogy as Emanational Similitude’, in *Divine Essence and Divine Energies. Ecumenical Reflections on the Presence of God in Eastern Orthodoxy*, eds C. Athanasopoulos and C. Schneider (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2013), 122–48.

paper comparing Thomas and Palamas, where, while accepting Thomas' account of God's unity, I suggested a Palamite correction of Thomas' thought, concerning a possible better articulation of the doctrine of the distinction between divine essence and energies, so familiar to St Gregory and the Greek Patristic thought in general. Some convinced pro-Palamites thought that even a comparison between Palamas and Thomas would contaminate the former's theological wisdom. However, I think that it is precisely the opposite, and I will try to show that this is exactly what the Orthodox theology tried to do immediately after the first encounter between East and West (i.e., after the translations of Aquinas made by Kydonis). The foremost theologian of that period is of course Patriarch George-Gennadios Scholarios. I will make the following points, drawing on Scholarios' *Commentary on De Ente et Essentia*:⁶⁷

1. According to Thomas, says Scholarios, 'there exists a relationship/synthesis between being and essence in beings, analogous to that of *dynamis* and *entelecheia*'.⁶⁸ Being is the *entelecheia* of essence.
2. However, it is impossible to think of God as a synthesis, say, of matter and species, or nature and subject, or being and essence, or subject and accidents, etc.⁶⁹ Thus the divine essence, along with its *perfections or energies*⁷⁰ 'are not many things but one'⁷¹ (and it is important to say that Thomas, according to Scholarios, admits both *internal* ('natural') *energies* in God, such as generation and procession, and *external* ('willing') *energies*, united with his essence, such as creation⁷²—a distinction that can hardly be found in the Greek Patristic tradition and probably comes from Plotinus).
3. Furthermore, 'each of God's names corresponds/refers to something that exists in reality'.⁷³
4. However, this means both that this distinction, on the one hand, is not real as a synthesis, and, on the other hand, that it is real in the sense that it really happens. In Scholarios' words: 'Divine essence is one thing (sc. according to Thomas); and its perfections or energies are also called things, not in the same way, but in the sense that they belong to that thing and are in that thing, and finally in the sense that they are real (*πραγματικά*); in this way, on the one hand, we do not have synthesis in God, between energies and divine essence, but, on the other hand, these are real and true perfections'.⁷⁴

⁶⁷ L. Petit, X.A. Siderides, and M. Jugie, eds, *Oeuvres Complètes de Georges (Gennadios) Scholarios*, vol. VI (Paris: Maison de la Bonne Presse, 1933).

⁶⁸ Ibid., 275.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 278.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 280.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 279.

⁷³ Ibid., 278.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 280.

5. Scholarios then attacks Varlaam and Akindynos, defending Gregory Palamas in a Thomist way. Varlaam's and Akindynos' mistake is that they argued that 'the energies cannot be distinguished from God's essence, but they are distinguished only by our mind, which creates terms in order to describe this unreal distinction'.⁷⁵ So, for them, this distinction is made only by mind (κατ' ἐπίνοιαν μόνην).⁷⁶ But for Palamas and his followers this distinction is real (πραγματική), without abolishing God's simplicity, as happens with the distinction between essence and hypostases, which likewise does not disturb divine simplicity.⁷⁷

6. Now, Scholarios claims that there also exist other Latin Fathers who would agree with Palamas on that point. It is obvious that he means here John Duns Scotus, as he makes this clear in another point of the same work.⁷⁸ Here he clearly aligns Thomas, Scotus and Palamas... This is the only positive reference of Scotus that he makes, since he opposes many times his views on the *Filioque*. Of course, he does not identify Palamas with Scotus, as some modern Western scholars did, in order to prove him totally remote and alien to Thomas—and oppose the latter to the former.

7. Scholarios suggests that, by denying any other distinction in God except the one 'made by reason', Thomas of course does not mean two different things—essence and perfections/energies in God—but a distinction 'of one thing and in this thing' (τοῦ τε πράγματος ὄντα καὶ ἐν τῷ πράγματι).⁷⁹ In this way Thomas stresses unity of essence and energy in God, as both belong together to the one divine thing/being, which is what the Patriarch asserts in the end.

8. In a similar way, Palamas, on the one hand, 'following the ancient teachers, and the opinion of our mother Church, asserts that divine energy and divine essence are indeed/really (πραγματικῶς) distinguished, without considering the divine perfections/energies as (separate) things [...], but thinking of them as belonging to the thing and in the thing, that means real and not [independent] things (πραγματικά μᾶλλον ἢ πράγματα), [...] and not accepting their distinction as only made by mind' like Varlaam and Akindynos. On the other hand, like Aquinas, he 'distinguishes them according to the reason and in the theological discourse, which wants to describe what they are in their nature'.⁸⁰ Thus, according to the Patriarch Scholarios, the distinction between essence and energies in Palamas is at the

⁷⁵ Ibid., 282.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 283.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 282.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 180.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 283.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 285.

same time both real and made by mind (i.e., 'according to the reason and in theological discourse').

9. Furthermore, it is absolutely crucial to note that Scholarios, as he clearly claims in the foreword of his summary of the *Summa contra Gentiles*, is adamant to declare that Thomas is wrong, concerning his position on the procession of the Holy Spirit, but he is also incomplete in his doctrine concerning the real distinction between essence and energies. Here he emphatically stresses that only Palamas and the Greek Patristic tradition have properly understood the whole thing.⁸¹ In a way, Palamas is a much better Thomas, since he showed that this real, but also 'made by mind', distinction, means a *real uncreated presence in the world*, and a real reciprocal relation between God and creation, where God is present as uncreated, and not in the form of a created grace, in order to allegedly fit with human finiteness. According to Thomas, God's unity somehow underplays his real synergetic *ekstasis*, although he admits that God's perfections or energies are real *inside* God; while for Palamas, both the issues of unity and that of distinction between essence and energies co-exist, along with the subsequent real diffusion of the divine essential energies in creation, which by grace transforms the mode of existence of beings into divine. Divine participation is thus not simply 'supernatural', but uncreated indeed.

Scholarios' dialogue with the West was not confessional but theological. He does not hesitate to reject Thomas' or Scotus' claims concerning the *Filioque* or the papal monarchical and universally jurisdictional ambitions, and he strongly and frankly believes, although for theological and not confessional reasons, that Palamas does not necessarily oppose Thomas in his account both of the unity of God's essence and the distinction between divine essence and energies. He nevertheless expresses the whole thing in a considerably more biblically accurate way. Perhaps that was the only way for him to show his conviction that Palamas was a universal teacher and not just a confessional apologist.

In this way, Palamite theology seems to be a fully-fledged theology of participation as intersubjective meaningfulness. It goes without saying that Thomas was likewise absolutely positively disposed towards inter-subjectivity, but his metaphysical on-to-logical restraints did not allow him to articulate a true theological ontology of reciprocal presence/meaningfulness. If, as I have claimed elsewhere,⁸² it is true

⁸¹ Vol. V, 2.

⁸² See my 'Consubstantial Selves; a Discussion between Orthodox Personalism, Existential Psychology, Heinz Kohut, and Jean-Luc Marion', in the volume *Personhood in the Byzantine Christian Tradition; Early, Medieval and Modern Tradition*, eds A. Torrance and S. Paschalidis, (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 182–196. See also my 'Being and Essence Revisited: Reciprocal logoi and energies in Maximus the Confessor and Thomas Aquinas, and the Genesis of the Self-referring Subject', in *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 72, no. 1 (2016): 117–146.

that, when the Thomist views were secularized, the modern self-referring subject appeared, then it leads us to think that perhaps Wittgenstein had precisely this sort of secularised ex-Thomist subject in his mind—along with this subject’s imaginary way of constructing (private) language and metaphysical meaning—when he made his decisive anti-metaphysical turn toward what I called inter-subjectivity-in-the-making or what, following Palamas’ understanding of dialogical syn-energy, we can even better call reciprocal meaning-creating *δι-εννοημάτωσις*/inter-meaningfulness.

We can stop here. It is important, I think, to read tradition with ‘a soul and a body’, as Rimbaud once wrote; but it is most important to read it while being surrendered to its living spiritual source. Then, the Spirit will always give new life and meaning to the letter.

