

THE TEACHING OF THE ENERGIES IN *DE OMNIFARIA DOCTRINA* OF MICHAEL PSELLOS

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ABSTRACT. The paper gives an answer to the question if and in what way the doctrine of energies is present in *De omnifaria doctrina* of Michael Psellos, and compared to the background of self-evidence and even simplification of the doctrine in the twelfth century (using the example of Nicetas from Maroneia). It is mainly represented in the form of a valid element of conventional philosophy and theology. It is pointed out that the only model of this doctrine usually considered is the version promoted by Gregorius Palamas in a systematic form, forming the basic axis of his system of thought, which is to serve as the basis for the explanation of all phenomena that can be an object of philosophical and theological reflection. Psellos' version shows some differences in comparison with this model. It is proven (using the example of Prochorus Kydones) that even in the course of the Hesychast controversy most of Palamas' opponents do not question the doctrine. The theory of energy proves to be a philosophical instrument that is valid for all philosophers in Byzantium, regardless of the line of thought they represent. It is a specific feature of philosophy in Byzantium, which characterizes its peculiarity in a comparison with the western medieval philosophical paradigms. It is decidedly emphasized that the theory of energy does not have a clearly defined, "essential" constitution, but rather demonstrates a variety of forms of appropriation and use, so that each philosopher applies it according to the peculiarity of his own philosophy program.

Keywords: teaching of energies, essence, power, activity/energy, perichoresis, participation, causality, Michael Psellos, Nicetas from Maroneia, Gregorius Palamas, Prochorus Kydones.

Since the 30s of the 20th century, some have claimed that the teaching of energies was invented *ad hoc* in the 14th century by Gregorius Palamas and his followers. Since then, others have shown that this doctrine was rather a self-evident interpretative tool for several philosophers in Byzantium, even in earlier centuries. However, one should not conclude that it was always used in

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the form presented by Palamas and his followers. The promoters of such a conclusion refer to authors belonging to what I call the "theocentric line of thought", such as Maximus Confessor or Johannes Damascenus.

In this paper I explore the presence of the doctrine of energies in the "encyclopedic" work of Michael Psellus, usually considered as the emblematic figure of the "anthropocentric line of thought".

As a point of comparison, I will begin by commenting on the use of the doctrine in two authors who represent quite different philosophical models and indeed in different centuries: Nicetas from Maroneia and Prochorus Kydones, who - for admittedly different reasons - should not be counted among the Palamite authors. This step has the purpose to mark the diversity of types of theory of energies in the framework of the philosophical programs presented in Byzantium, without claiming to be comprehensive.

1. Nicetas from Maroneia and the banality of the teaching of energies

In the book about the debate between Latin and Byzantine thinkers in Constantinople in the twelfth century² and even more extensively in the lecture before the S.I.E.P.M. Colloquium in Varna 2019³, I drew attention to the six fictitious dialogues about the procession of the Holy Spirit (Περὶ τῆς ἐκπορεύσεως ἐκπορεύσεως τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος), the only documented writing of Nicetas from Maroneia, who died around 1145 as Archbishop of Thessaloniki⁴. Nicetas

² G. Kapriev, *Lateinische Rivalen in Konstantinopel: Anselm von Havelberg und Hugo Eterianus* (Leuven: Peeters, 2018), 248-251.

³ G. Kapriev, "Gibt es eine richtige Dionysius-Interpretation?," in *The Dionysian Traditions*, ed. G. Kapriev (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021) (im Druck).

⁴ To this day, the work has no uniform edition. Joseph Hergenröther published the general prologue, the first Λόγος and excerpts from the other dialogues in *Patrologia Graeca* – PG 139, 169-222. Nicola Festa published three further dialogues between 1912 and 1915: the second, the third and the fourth – N. Festa (ed., in collaborazione con A. Palmieri), "Nicéas de Maronée (ou de Thessalonique): Λόγοι διάφοροι πρὸς διάλογον ἐσχηματισμένοι περὶ τῆς ἐκπορεύσεως τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος (β'-δ')," in *Bessarione. Rivista di studi orientali*, 28 (1912), 93-107; 29 (1913), 104-13 et 295-315; 30 (1914), 55-75 et 243-259; 31 (1915), 239-246. Martin Jugie concludes extracts from all dialogues in his book on Eastern Christians – M. Jugie, *Theologia dogmatica christianorum orientalium ab ecclesia dissidentium II* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1933), 313-326. A dissertation is mentioned, which is supposed to contain the fifth and sixth dialogues, but it remains inaccessible to me – C. Giorgetti, *Niceta di Maronea e i suoi dialoghi sulla processione dello Spirito Santo anche dal Figlio* (Roma: Pontificia Università Lateranense, 1965). The secondary literature on Nicetas is also not abundant. The information rarely goes beyond the first presentation in the book of Andronikos K. Demetrakopoulos (Α. Δημητρακοπούλος, Ορθόδοξος Ελλάς: ἥτοι περὶ των Ελλήνων των γραψάντων κατὰ Λατίνων και περὶ των συγγραμμάτων αυτών (Leipzig: Metzger und Wittig, 1872), 36-37)). A solid exception is the

lets the Γραικός and the Λατῖνος present and discuss their respective positions. He seeks mutual agreement and strives to achieve “without insults and mockery” the “noblest and necessary truth”⁵. A central element of the “Latin” argumentation certainly surprises the connoisseur of the culture of this time.

During the first dialogue the “Greek” questions the “Latin” model of the emergence of the spirit, because it relativizes according to him the simplicity of the Trinity. The answer of the “Latin” is a remarkable one: Not everywhere, where one perceives diversity (ποικιλία) and difference (διάκρισις), a composition (σύνθεσις) is present. Each essence has nevertheless both power (δύναμις), and activity (ἐνέργεια). For this reason, however, the simple should by no means be called “composite”. Neither does activity exist without power from which it is derived, nor is power without essence, nor is there an essence without power of action (τοῦ ἐνεργεῖν δύναμις). That is why even the simplest of essences has power and energy. However, it is not right to attribute composition to it because around it (περί αὐτήν) are power and energy.

There is one and the same thing (πρᾶγμα) there, which consists of essence, power and energy - if one may say so - which is why reason distinguishes essence from power and power from energy⁶. Again with respect to non-composition, by drawing an analogy with creation, the “Latin” insists that the relation between the essence and its energy does not introduce composition, because the energy emerges from the essence and its power, in that the energy is also not composed once it emerges from the essence and the power. There is no essence without power. No being is without power (ἀδύναμον), as the wise Dionysius says, the “Latin” dialog partner remarks. Even in beings, which are after God (ἐπὶ τῶν μετὰ Θεόν), both the going away from two things (ἢ ἐκ δυοῖν πρόδος) and the coming out of it (τὸ προερχόμενον) are not composed. Moreover, it applies to God⁷.

Shortly thereafter he continues: If one wants to draw a conclusion from those considered around the essence (ἐκ τῶν περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν θεωρουμένων) for a composition, then also the simple essence, because of its energy and the force existing in it (ἐνυπαρχούση), would seem composite. The power and energy dwelling around the essence, although they are mostly in unity, do not

essay by Alexei Barmine (A. Barmine, “Une source méconnue des Dialogues de Nicéas de Maronée,” in *Revue des études byzantines*, 58 (2000), 231-43), in which the theoretical sources of Nicetas are discussed in detail. The analysis of his positions by Alexandra Riebe should also be mentioned (A. Riebe, *Rom in Gemeinschaft mit Konstantinopel. Patriarch Johannes XI. Bekkos als Verteidiger der Kirchenunion in Lyon (1274)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005, 235-243)).

⁵ Nicet. Maron. *Process. Spir.* proemium, PG 139, 169A.

⁶ Nicet. Maron. *Process. Spir.* Λόγος α', PG 139, 188C-189B.

⁷ Nicet. Maron. *Process. Spir.* 193B.

give up any composition of the essence⁸. By a similar argument, which is based on the triad “essence – essential power – essential energy”, the “Latin scholar” justifies his position also in the fourth dialogue: By the process also from the Son no two principles or causes of the Holy Spirit are introduced, but the monarchy in the Trinity is preserved⁹.

The arguments, which Nicetas from Maroneia puts into the mouth of his Latin partner, are mainly not Latin. The whole “Latin” argumentation has a purely Byzantine flavour. It should be noted that the doctrine of energies is present with all its key positions in Nicetas, as formulated by Maximus Confessor, John Damascene or Photius of Constantinople. The ontologically arranged existence of essence, essential power and energy is an evidence for him. Every essence - both the divine and the essence of every contingent being - has power and energy so that it exists in fact. They, power and energy, linger around the essence (περὶ αὐτήν), they do not coincide with the essence. These διάκρισις and the appropriate ποικιλία create thereby no real composition of the actually existing thing (πρᾶγμα). The dynamic presence of οὐσία, δύναμις and ἐνέργεια also constitutes the nature and effect of the principles and causes. Thanks to the present διάκρισις reason distinguishes the essence from the power and the power from the energy. Not only does Nicetas present the teaching systematically, he also values it as an evident and even banal teaching platform. His understanding of it as an unquestionable *locus communis* for anyone who is philosophically trained makes its ascription possible to the “Latin”, who uses it as a prerequisite for his core reflections.

Was this kind of appropriation a new phenomenon of the twelfth century? Or can we talk about a continuity since the time of the Cappadocians through the thinkers of the 7th-8th century and the Byzantine classicism of the 9th-10th century? If so, then one should assume an “essential”, uniform form or a variety of forms of appropriation and use? What was the situation in the 11th century? An answer can be sought in the writing of Michael Psellos *De omnifaria doctrina*, which was written almost eighty years before Nicetas’ dialogues.

2. The application of the teaching of the energies in *De omnifaria doctrina*

The terms “power” and “energy” have no specific place among the dozens of philosophical and theological terms discussed in the work. However, there is no doubt that Psellos - as he shows by the example of the soul - believes that every essence has its powers and energies and it is recognized by its powers

⁸ Nicet. Maron. *Process. Spir.* 193D-196A.

⁹ Nicet. Maron. *Process. Spir.* Λόγος δ', PG 139, 212D-213B.

and energies¹⁰. Psellos emphasizes elsewhere that the essence, the power and the energy of the soul are different: they are three facets of ψυχογονία. Something different is the essence of the one being, something different is the existence, the harmony, the idea, the power and the energy, as well as the *eidos* that results from them. The same, he adds, applies for example to fire with its essence, power and energy¹¹. The example shows, that this definition is valid for all beings. In this sense, the essential power of salt is also discussed¹². Psellos also distinguishes the use of the terms δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in this context from their modal-categorially use in the sense of “possibility” (δυνάμει) and “actuality” (ἐνεργείᾳ)¹³.

For Psellos, differently from almost all the Byzantine tradition, essence (οὐσία) and nature (φύσις) are not identical terms. Nature is a force-δύναμις, which can only be grasped by noetic theory and which is implanted (ἐγκατεσπαρμένη) by God into the bodies, i.e. in the elements and the things they bring together. It is ἀρχή of movement and standstill¹⁴. The φύσις is not an independent principle, but a tool of divine omnipotence, an ὄργανον τοῦ θεοῦ. In this sense φύσις is for him an “intermediary” between God and the world. It is thus the constituent form through which the natural thing gets its shape and actually becomes a φυσικόν¹⁵. The essence is the specific determination of the being. An emphasis is therefore placed on the composition of the elements¹⁶.

At the end of the first chapter¹⁷ it is noted that God is one principle, one nature, one deity, one form (μορφή), as well as one essence and power (οὐσία καὶ δύναμις). Furthermore¹⁸, Providence is defined as the first and highest among all types of knowledge and as the energy of God. At the end of the thirteenth chapter, it is said that the whole nature of God and not only a part of it co-operate (συνενεργεῖται) in the hypostasis of Christ¹⁹.

Symptomatically, the terms appear without any specialized definition for the first time in the fourteenth chapter²⁰ in connection with the two natural wills of Christ, as a means of explanation. According to Maximus Confessor and the Sixth Ecumenical Council, the two natural forces of will and the corresponding two energies of will are discussed. The contribution of Maximus to the Byzantine

¹⁰ Psell. Omn. 66 Westerink p. 44, 8-9.

¹¹ Psell. Omn. 52 Westerink p. 38, 2-6.

¹² Psell. Omn. 180 Westerink p. 90, 11-12.

¹³ Psell. Omn. 174 Westerink, p. 87, 2-5.

¹⁴ Psell. Omn. 57 Westerink, p. 40, 2-11.

¹⁵ Cf. L. Benakis, *Texts and Studies on Byzantine Philosophy* (Athens: Parousia, 2002), 342, 364 and 396.

¹⁶ Psell. Omn. 121 and 131 Westerink, p. 65, 1-6 et 69, 2-3.

¹⁷ Psell. Omn. 1, Westerink, p. 17, 11-12.

¹⁸ Psell. Omn. 94, Westerink, p. 54, 2-3.

¹⁹ Psell. Omn. 13, Westerink, p. 23, 12-13.

²⁰ Psell. Omn 14, Westerink, p. 23, 10-13.

tradition to this topic consists precisely in the fact that the will, in contrast to all forms of earlier philosophical ontology, is regarded as an element of nature and interpreted accordingly ontologically²¹. The one energy of God is explained by Psellos through the consubstantiality of the divine persons. The same applies to the human energy of Christ, which comes from his human nature and his consubstantiality with us.

In his answer to the question *Τίς ὁ Θεός*, Who is God, Psellos explains²²: The φύσις of God and his δύναμις are comparable with the nature and power of no other being. They are unlimited (ἄπειροι) in their principle and their goal and in all respects. The power of God is without origin, endless and eternal (ἀναρχος τε καὶ ἀτελεύτητος καὶ αἰώνιος). At this point Psellos refers to Gregorius the Theologian. In the next chapter the question is to be answered whether and how the divine (τὸ θεῖον) is infinite (ἄπειρον)²³. The whole true being (πᾶν τὸ ὄντως ὄν), the first premise here is, is neither its quantity (πλήθος) nor its size (μέγεθος) infinite, but only its power (δύναμις). However, God is not a quantity, but the One par excellence (κυρίως ἓν). It has no size and it is bodiless. His activity ἐνέργεια is not limited by any border, but all his energies and powers are infinite and non-exhaustive. He is still infinite according to his principle and his goal. He is not principled and not limited (ἀτελεύτητον) and he is the universe of eons (σύμπαν αἰώνιον).

God has a twofold ἐνέργεια through which he stands in a theoretical position to the whole (ἐν θεωρίᾳ τῶν ὅλων ἐστὶ) by knowing the principle (λόγος) of all creatures and actualizes providence (πρόνοια) in what is subject to him. Man, who imitates the divine (ὁ ἄνθρωπος μιμούμενος τὸ θεῖον), recognizes, ascending in theory, the principles of everything, physical, spiritual, noetic and supernatural²⁴. After a brief intermezzo²⁵ which ends with the remark that man's εἶδος has its origin in ἄπειρον but begins to be there in the completion of time-καιρός²⁶, thus introducing the fundamental dimension of time in view of mankind and its way of knowing, Psellos begins his detailed interpretation of the intellect-νοῦς.

Every intellect has perpetual (αἰωνία) essence, power and activity-ἐνέργεια. The intellect understands (νοεῖ) everything at once and not the past as past and the future as future, but everything as present. It does not move, it does not collect piece by piece, it does not build syllogisms. He does not, as the soul does,

²¹ Cf. N. Loudovikos, *Analogical Identities: The Creation of the Christian Self. Beyond Spirituality and Mysticism in the Patristic Era* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019), 69-70.

²² Psell. Omn. 15, Westerink, p. 23, 2-24, 13.

²³ Psell. Omn. 16, Westerink, p. 24, 2-10.

²⁴ Psell. Omn. 72, Westerink, p. 46, 2-12.

²⁵ It explains that the number of angels is greater than the number of people.

²⁶ Psell. Omn. 20, Westerink, p. 26, 11-13.

set conditions to draw conclusions, but recognizes everything in one. Because it is immovable, it is neither its essence nor its power and activity below the measure of time²⁷.

At this point Psellos draws a distinction. He explains that there are two types of participatory human intellect. One kind is divine, as if attached to God, the other is only noetic (νοερός μόνον). The God-participating intellect allows the soul to participate in the divine. The simple noetic intellect does not give the soul the divine. He can become a fool (ἄνοία) through transformation, although he is eternal in his essence and his noetic ἐνέργεια²⁸.

Thanks to the participation of the soul in the intellect, the soul is also noetic, Psellos continues his reflection. But the intellect is according to its essence νοερός and the soul is νοερά according to its participation (κατὰ μέθεξιν) in the intellect. The soul understands because the intellect acts in us. While the intellect has the εἶδη primary, the soul has them secondary. The νόησις of the intellect is different from the νόησις of the soul²⁹. The soul is *per se* a bodiless essence, which is indivisible (ἀμέριστον), but divided by the body (χωριστή)³⁰. The essence of the soul is perpetual, its activity-ἐνέργεια is however in accordance with the time (κατὰ χρόνον) and with that of the time following (τὰ τούτοις ἀκόλουθα)³¹.

The δύναμις of the soul is distinguished from the πάθος and the ἔξις³². Among the powers of the soul, with regard to its cognitive faculties, Psellos mentions ἀντιληπτική, παθητική and πρακτική, to which the φανταστική and the νοερά δύναμις are added. Some of these powers belong only to the soul, others to the soul and the body, others are related to the material spirit (πνεύματι ἐνύλω)³³. Among the powers of the irrational soul, thereby the soul is able to steer the body, the ὀρεκτική, the δοξαστική, which mediates between the rational and the sensitive, the αἰσθητική and the φυσική, which is more near determined as generative cause, are called³⁴. The energies of the soul are of different kinds. Some are stronger and more prominent (κρείττους καὶ προέχουσαι), others are excited by the body, as far as the soul allows itself to be affected by the body, but others are common to the soul and the body, such as changing

²⁷ Psell. Omn. 23, Westerink, p. 27, 2-12.

²⁸ Psell. Omn. 28, Westerink, p. 28, 4-9. Here Psellos applies one of the criteria that distinguishes between theocentric and anthropocentric tendencies in Byzantine philosophical culture. The curiosity from today's point of view is that all researchers accept Psellos as the emblem of the latter line.

²⁹ Psell. Omn. 28-30, Westerink, p. 29-30.

³⁰ The body, which is inseparable from the soul, ἀχώριστος, and indispensable to it, is nevertheless used by the soul as ὄργανον – Psell. Omn. 35, Westerink, p. 31, 1.

³¹ Psell. Omn. 52, Westerink, p. 38, 2-7.

³² Psell. Omn. 77, Westerink, p. 48, 2-6.

³³ Psell. Omn. 56, Westerink, p. 40, 2-13.

³⁴ Psell. Omn. 65, Westerink, p. 43, 2-12.

place: changing place is a matter of the body, but the transferring movement is an energy of the soul³⁵.

In the reflection on eternity and time (περὶ αἰῶνος καὶ χρόνου) Psellos remarks: The bodiless being has an perpetual essence and energy, like the intellect. Its essence is immovable and its energy is unchangeable. Heaven is perpetual according to its essence, but is subject (κείμενος) to its movement according to time. The body has both the essence and the energy in time, ἔγχρονος. This also concerns our body. The soul is perpetual in essence, Psellos emphasizes repeatedly, but participates in time (μετέχει) in energy. It does not have all νοήματα in itself at the same time, but it goes (μεταβαίνει) from one thought to another³⁶.

Psellos distinguishes between energy and movement. He defines movement (κίνησις) as εἶδος and ἐνέργεια of the πράγμα moving in time³⁷. Apart from the fact that he denied some pages earlier that the γένεσις, the μεταβολή from non-being to being, through which the cosmos is created, can be defined as “movement”, in contrast to which he conceives the change, the start-up and the change of place as movements³⁸, in this chapter dedicated to movement he counts the γένεσις among the phenomena that are generally described as movement. As set in motion he mentions the πράγματα, which grow, change, are driven and born. Movements are accordingly the αὔξεις, the φορά, the γένεσις. In principle, following Aristotle in Book IX of *Metaphysics*³⁹, to which he explicitly refers here, he largely does not identify κίνησις and ἐνέργεια par excellence, although the two do so in a first step. The movement is a ἐνέργεια of the time-related πράγμα. It can be neither ἀρχή nor τέλος, but it is a middle thing between them. The principle of οἰκοδομήσεις is neither movement nor is it moved. That concerns also the goal. The movement has its place of being between them⁴⁰. That the movement cannot be ἀρχή and τέλος, but has a barrier in time, which limits both its beginning and its end, already distinguishes it from energy.

The οὐσία-δύναμις-ἐνέργεια-relationship is also used as an explanatory tool in the interpretation of the problem of will. “What is the will (βούλησις) and what is the practical reasoning (πρακτικὸς λογισμός)”, the first question in this context, is clearly answered. The will belongs to the reasonable part of the soul (λογιστικὸν μορίον). It moves the striving (ὄρεξις) for that which is not desired without reason. From it the ἐνεργεία βουλευτική ὁρμή, the activity of the will desire originates. As πρακτικὸς λογισμός the practice and the activity (πρᾶξις καὶ ἐνέργεια) are determined, which are directed by the reason

³⁵ Psell. Omn. 58, Westerink, p. 40, 2-11.

³⁶ Psell. Omn. 107, Westerink, p. 59, 2-12.

³⁷ Psell. Omn. 103, Westerink, p. 58, 2-3.

³⁸ Psell. Omn. 91, Westerink, p. 53, 2-11.

³⁹ Arist. Metaph. IX, 3, 1046b29–1047b2; IX, 8, 1049b8-10 Ross.

⁴⁰ Psell. Omn. 107, Westerink, p. 59, 3-12.

consideration on striving for the desired⁴¹. Strictly connected with it, choice (προαίρεσις) and the attention (προσοχή) are discussed⁴². The directly one on the other referred προαίρεσις and προσοχή are mediating powers, which have their place between the νοερός λόγος and the δοξατικός λόγος⁴³.

In the last chapters, Psellos discusses the soul and the Nous again. Here he talks about the essential movements of the soul, its powers and energies. On the one hand, the interaction of the soul with the body is discussed once again, in that under the title “Περὶ ὁμοῦποστώτου” the being of man in a hypostasis is treated. On the other hand, he emphasizes the superiority of recognizing the human soul. He repeats that the intellect moves the human being, but he does it in cooperation with the soul, whereby the reasonable part of the soul is emphasized, which regulates the unreasonable parts⁴⁴.

3. Περιχώρησις and μέθεξις in the *Omnifaria doctrina*

Both the relation of the intellect to the soul and the human intellect to the divine νοῦς are interpreted as participation, but how does he consider participation-μέθεξις? Does it exist through a relation or through energetic penetration or through another reason? The mutual περιχώρησις of the natures (approximately in the hypostasis of Christ) runs, according to Psellos, without having said it explicitly, by the essential powers and energies, therein the τρόπος τῆς ἀντιδόσεως ἐκατέρας φύσεως consists⁴⁵. The same model can be found in the transition of the bodily πάθη into the soul. They do not arrive in the essence of the incorporeal soul, but they are applied to its powers and energies⁴⁶. For this reason they, soul and body, remain differentiated according to their essences, but their common activity-ἐνέργεια is a mixed one. Therefore, the psychosomatic reference is about the effective acquisition of essential qualities and not about a transformation of the essences⁴⁷. What about participation, however? The doctrine of the noetic soul shows that participation in νοῦς does not have energies at its root, but neither does the essence. The subject of an essence can imitate the energies of any essence inherent in hypostasis, but

⁴¹ Psell. Omn. 62, Westerink, p. 42, 2-6.

⁴² The προαίρεσις precedes the practice. It makes use of reason to decide what is good (τὰ καλὰ) and to direct the striving for the peculiarly good and the everlasting fulfilment of the lacking. The decision of the will arises from both reason and striving. Through προσοχή, we pay attention to our deeds that we do and to our words that we say.

⁴³ Psell. Omn. 63, Westerink, p. 42, 3-12.

⁴⁴ Psell. Omn. 194-201, Westerink, p. 96-99.

⁴⁵ Psell. Omn. 12, Westerink, p. 22, 31-37.

⁴⁶ Psell. Omn. 33, Westerink, p. 31, 10-14.

⁴⁷ Psell. Omn. 34, Westerink, p. 2-13.

cannot essentially appropriate them, as the example with the human soul in relation to the angels and archangels shows⁴⁸. The relation does play a role, but rather an instrumental one. It is to be concluded that the μέθεξις is to be realized in the horizon of the specific being and the corresponding order⁴⁹ and measure of the essence and its existence⁵⁰, laid by the πάντων ὑποστάτης, the non-participating supercosmic and demiurgic νοῦς. Psellos elaborates the theme in more detail in relation to νόες.

Every intellect has permanent (αἰωνία) essence, power and activity-ἐνέργεια. Because it is immovable, it is not subject to the measure of time, neither to its essence, nor to its power and activity⁵¹. The intellect is an essence that has no parts because it has neither size nor body. It is immovable and permanent (αἰώνιος): its understanding (νόησις) is not divisible (οὐ μερίζεται), but continuous, like the essence itself⁵². All noetic species (πάντα τὰ νοερά εἶδη), i.e. souls, intellects, angels, archangels, powers and those similar to them do not participate in the supercosmic and demiurgic νοῦς, but they all participate in the inner-worldly intellect (ἐγκόσμιος νοῦς)⁵³. The participatory intellect, which stands after the non-participatory intellect (ὁ μεθεκτός νοῦς), has both the first intellect and the insight (εἶδησις) of all.

However, the non-participating intellect gives the νόες standing under it an appearance (ἐμφασίς) of its own existence⁵⁴. All intellects are both interdependent as well as existing in themselves. Their intermingling does not bring about any mixing and their being in themselves does not bring about any distribution. These incorporeal noetic species are, like the θεωρήματα in a soul, united in each other, but they are no less separate and different⁵⁵. Every intellect is filled with the divine εἶδη (like those of goodness, beatitude, justice, identity, similarity and those similar to them). But the highest intellect contains entirely the high species. The lower intellects contain them only partially. The higher intellects make use of several divine powers; the lower ones have poorer powers⁵⁶.

Participation is thus brought about by the specific nature and thanks to the existence of the Supreme, through which his powers are accordingly bestowed. The mutual interpenetration of different natures takes place through the essential energies. But the participation is rather possible due to the same εἶδος and/or

⁴⁸ Psell. Omn. 48, Westerink, p. 36, 2-37, 7.

⁴⁹ Psell. Omn. 24, Westerink, p. 27, 9-14.

⁵⁰ Psell. Omn. 25, Westerink, p. 28, 4-7.

⁵¹ Psell. Omn. 23, Westerink, p. 27, 2-12.

⁵² Psell. Omn. 24, Westerink, p. 27, 2-8.

⁵³ Psell. Omn. 21, Westerink, p. 26, 2-8.

⁵⁴ Psell. Omn. 25, Westerink, p. 28, 2-7.

⁵⁵ Psell. Omn. 26, Westerink, p. 28, 2-11.

⁵⁶ Psell. Omn. 27, Westerink, p. 28, 11-29.

corresponding essential qualities. Another kind of participation takes place on the level of energies. Through them essential qualities are not exchanged, such as the energy of the everlasting soul participates with the temporal. Psellos also mentions another kind of participation: in relation to the unification of soul and body, he speaks of a μετοχή, which is inherent in the merging components of the becoming thing and ἀχρόνως⁵⁷. In another place, Psellos allows himself to note that the ἔνωσις of God πρὸς ἡμᾶς is both a μῖξις, because it is issued without unification, and a κρᾶσις because of the τρόπος τῆς ἀντιδόσεως, where, with respect to the πρόσλημμα, it is a καινὴ μῖξις and a παράδοξος κρᾶσις⁵⁸.

Psellos explicitly asks the question why we do not always participate in God when he is always active, ἀεὶ ἐνεργοῦντος. The answer is: because of our incapability (ἀνεπιτηδείότης) for participation. As the sun in the middle of the day illuminates all with its rays, but not all are able (δύνανται) to see it, but only those who have sharp eyes, so not all are able, although God constantly stretches out the noetic light, to participate in God, but only those who carry the purified noetic vision in their souls. Even the pure intellect, however, does not constantly manage to grasp the splendour of the divine, because it is not free and not immaterial, but in matter and connected with the body (ἔνυλος καὶ σωματικός). Only when it detaches itself from the body and achieves the hoped-for restoration (ἀποκατάστασις) does it constantly manage to look at God⁵⁹. Through this kind of participation, the human intellect, which in principle participates in the noetic, can become not only noetic but also divine⁶⁰. One may speculate about the philosophical basis of this consideration. However, one must immediately admit that it is not a question of an agreement based on the definitive penetration of essential energies. The περιχώρησις and the μέθεξις do not coincide in their procedures.

4. The positioning of the theory of the energies at Psellos

It is symptomatic that in the quasi propaedeutic *De omnifaria doctrina* the terms οὐσία, δύναμις and ἐνέργεια are not specifically defined and problematized. In their relationship, they are for Psellos a self-evident technical means of explanation. He lays down the principles and causes at the basis of his system. True knowledge is a knowledge of principles. It is a knowledge about the reasons for a being, no matter if it belongs to the area of νοητά or αἰσθητά⁶¹. It should be noted, however, that he too ultimately understands causality as being derived from the activity of the essential power and energy of God.

⁵⁷ Psell. Omn. 60, Westerink, p. 41, 8-12.

⁵⁸ Psell. Omn. 90, Westerink, p. 53, 8-10.

⁵⁹ Psell. Omn. 95, Westerink, p. 54, 2-55, 12.

⁶⁰ Cf. Psell. Omn. 28, Westerink, p. 28, 4-9.

⁶¹ Cf. D. Walter, *Michael Psellos: Christliche Philosophie in Byzanz* (Berlin – Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 143-144.

The universal key in this context is the axiom that the εἶδος of all creatures has its origin-γένεσις in ἄπειρον, but begins to be there in the completion of time-καιρός, as Psellos emphatically notes about the existence of man⁶². Herein lies the reference to the priority of the eternal essential power and energy over the economic causality effect of God, which forms the basis of all further causality. For this reason, man, who ascends in theory and thereby imitates God, can ultimately recognize the principles and the causes of everything due to the action of the twofold divine energy through which God is in a theoretical position with respect to the whole (ἐν θεωρίᾳ τῶν ὅλων ἐστί) by knowing the principle of all creatures and realizing providence in that which is subject to him⁶³.

Thus Psellos stands in the tradition, which in this thematic area is based on the Byzantine interpretation of the work of Dionysius Pseudo-Areopagites. Dionysius, if he means God, is quite prepared to insist that God is the first principle and the first cause of everything. The Dionysian κυριαρχία is interpreted by his first Greek commentators precisely in this sense⁶⁴. They again distinguish between the names of the divine superiority and the αἰτιολογικά, which are related to creation and its causation⁶⁵. The inner activity-ἐνέργεια of the divine essence precedes the external creative action-ἐνέργεια of God and the divine οἰκονομία⁶⁶. Causality is therefore a function of the Οὐσία-δύναμις-ἐνέργεια relationship. This is considered as a core element of the Dionysian teaching and the adoption of his ideas in the Byzantine tradition. It was, as seen, a position also held by Nicetas from Maroneia.

However, Psellos' work testifies that according to him causality is not a linear function of the οὐσία-δύναμις-ἐνέργεια relationship. The identification of the principles and the causes including the corresponding correlations shows a high degree of autonomy. Moreover, the majority of the topics in *De omnifaria doctrina* concern exclusively the interpretation of οἰκονομία and its phenomena. It goes without saying that the problem of causality comes first and is discussed independently.

5. The general validity and the various uses of energy theory

Psellos, as the account of his procedure has shown, makes no exception to the positions of the Byzantine tradition as he knew it. This tradition regards

⁶² Psell. Omn. 20, Westerink, p. 26, 11-13.

⁶³ Psell. Omn. 72, Westerink, p. 46, 5-12.

⁶⁴ Dion. Ar. CH 8.1 Heil Ritter p. 33.4; PG 3, 237C. See also the gloss on this point in PG 4, 177D.

⁶⁵ PG 4, 216A.

⁶⁶ Cf. И. Христов, "Прόνοια и Σοφία в дискурса на енергиите според гръцките схолии към Ареопагитския корпус," in *Sine arte scientia nihil est. Изследвания в чест на проф. дфн Олег Георгиев*, съст. Г. Каприев (София: Университетско издателство, 2019), 179-182.

the doctrine of the Οὐσία-δύναμις-ἐνέργεια relationship as a universally valid element of the conventional philosophical and speculative-theological apparatus, which has its undoubted place alongside the other technical means of the explanatory and argumentative procedure. The peculiarity of Gregorius Palamas' teaching is that this element is the sole centre of his system of thought. As the main axis of this system, it should serve as the basis for the explanation of all phenomena that can be an object of philosophical and theological reflection.

In the course of the Hesychast controversy his teaching of the essential energies in relation to God is being problematized from various directions. One asks to what extent and how especially the divine essential energies work *ad extra*. In this perspective still the question is asked whether the διάκρισις between the essence of God and its essential energies is πραγματική or only κατ'ἐπίνοιαν⁶⁷. Even if this effect is assumed, it is questioned whether man is able to clearly distinguish these energies from the creative economic energies of God. The doctrine in its reason is nevertheless not questioned even by the most opponents of Palamism. For the sake of brevity I will only recall the position of Prochorus Kydones.

The most prominent Byzantine Thomist dedicates a special text to this problem: Περὶ οὐσίας καὶ ἐνεργείας. Already in the first sentence, he formulates the decisive approach: Those who speak about the essence and energy of God, when it comes to whether they (essence and energy) are different or identical κατὰ τὸ πρᾶγμα, first ask how many species of energy there are⁶⁸. Prochorus explains programmatically that any natural energy comes from any power by dividing the forces into two large groups, namely δύναμις παθητική and δύναμις ποιητική (or δραστική), also called δύναμις ἐνέργητική, which is the ἀρχή of active energy (ἐνέργεια δραστική)⁶⁹. Then he discusses different kinds of the ἐνέργεια δραστική. There is no δύναμις παθητική (passive power, *potentia passiva*) in God, emphasizes Prochorus, which dwells as matter in which the energy would be form. Every matter is δύναμις παθητική and every passive *potentia* is matter.

The energy of God is therefore, in a difference to all other beings, His essence. Even the immaterial creatures have δύναμις παθητική, through which they can receive the Being. Every energy that is separated from its potency, as the energy of the formal-material creatures dwells, is imperfect (ἀτελής)⁷⁰. It is

⁶⁷ Cf. J. A. Demetracopoulos, "Palamas Transformed. Palamite Interpretations of the Distinction between God's 'Essence' and 'Energies' in Late Byzantium," in *Greeks, Latins and Intellectual History 1204-1500*, eds. M. Hinterberger and C. Schabel (Leuven – Paris – Walpole: Peeters, MA, 2011), 263-372; Cf. from a different point of view G. Kapriev, "Gregory Palamas and George Scholarios: John Duns Scotus' Differentiation between Substance and Energy and the Sources of the Palamite Tradition," in *Analogue: The Pemptousia Journal for Theological Studies*, 5 (2018), 35-56.

⁶⁸ Prochor. Cydon. *Essent. Oper.* 1.1, PG 151, 1192B.

⁶⁹ Prochor. Cydon. *Essent. Oper.* 1.2 PG 151, 1193C; cf. 2.5 PG 151, 1236C.

⁷⁰ Prochor. Cydon. *Essent. Oper.* 1.2, PG 151, 1196CD ; 2.5 PG 151, 1233C.

particularly important in this context for Prochorus to prove that in God there is no δύναμις, because the ενέργεια τοῦ Θεοῦ, which is his essence, has no ἀρχή, insofar as it is neither born nor proceed⁷¹. The essence of God coincides with his being⁷². God is εἶδος καθ' αὐτὸ ὑφεστώς⁷³. He is αὐτοενέργεια, παντὸς ενέργεια⁷⁴. While the distinction between the divine persons is ἀναφορὰ πραγματική, one can distinguish between the essence and energy of God μόνῳ λόγῳ, or κατὰ τὸν λόγον only⁷⁵. The whole book clearly demonstrates that both in respect to God and the creature the relevance of the οὐσία-δύναμις-ἐνέργεια perspective remains an evidence for Prochorus, but by insisting that the corresponding terms and what is meant by them ἀναλογικῶς about God and the creatures are predicated⁷⁶.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, it must be expressly repeated that the οὐσία-δύναμις-ἐνέργεια doctrine is a philosophical instrument valid for all philosophers in Byzantium, regardless of the line of thought they represent. It is a specific feature of philosophy in Byzantium, which characterizes its peculiarity in a comparison with western medieval philosophical paradigms. The doctrine is also used intensively as a means of explanation in byzantine speculative theology⁷⁷. One should point out that the theory of energy does not have a clearly defined, "essential" constitution, but shows a variety of forms of appropriation and use, so that each thinker applies it according to the specificity of his own philosophical program⁷⁸.

⁷¹ Prochor. Cydon. *Essent. Oper.* 1.5 PG 151, 1233B.

⁷² Prochor. Cydon. *Essent. Oper.* 1.2 PG 151, 1197A.

⁷³ Prochor. Cydon. *Essent. Oper.* 1.7 PG 151, 1217B.

⁷⁴ Prochor. Cydon. *Essent. Oper.* 1.8 PG 151, 1217C.

⁷⁵ Prochor. Cydon. *Essent. Oper.* 2.5 PG 151, 1236B.

⁷⁶ Prochor. Cydon. *Essent. Oper.* 2.1 PG 151, 1220B.

⁷⁷ This is self-evident for the tradition, which regards speculative theology as a - sublime - part of first philosophy, as this view found a definitive formulation in Photius of Constantinople - cf. Phot. *Amphil.* 27 et 182, PG 101, 200B, 896C et 897D. Psellos himself emphasizes this fact. For him it is in principle a part of philosophy, because also both philosophy and speculative theology deal with analyses - F. Lauritzen, "Psello discepolo di Stetato," in: *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 101/2 (2008): 715-725, here 715. He seeks to rationally establish theological themes and even the Trinity without relying only on authority - cf. Walter, *Michael Psellos: Christliche Philosophie in Byzanz*, 15 and 141-143.

⁷⁸ I am grateful to Frederick Lauritzen for the motivation to write this paper, as well as for the linguistic correction of the text.

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