



Bibikhin, Heidegger, Palamas on the Problem of Energy

Sergey Horuzhy

Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Science

Bibikhin, Heidegger, and Palamas on the Problem of Energy¹

Abstract

The treatment of the problem of energy in philosophy of Vladimir Bibikhin is considered in detail. In the first place, we analyze Bibikhin's treatment of theology of Divine energies by st. Gregory Palamas and we present some critical remarks concerning this treatment. The comparison of Bibikhin's position in the problem of energy with the conception of energy in philosophy of Martin Heidegger is also performed.

Keywords

Energy, essence, Heidegger, ontology, Palamas

¹ A talk given at the international conference “The Philosophical Legacy of V.V. Bibikhin” in St. Petersburg, May 2013.

Without a doubt, the problem of energy is both deep and crucial to the philosophy of Vladimir Bibikhin. But it is also deep and crucial in a much broader sense. Regardless of how we evaluate the contemporary philosophical situation—be it on the major scale of turning toward Another Beginning, or on the minor scale of philosophical timelessness—this situation is bound to “energy” through high expectations. Indeed, energy is viewed as the most important principle of a new philosophical discourse, which must supplement the abandoned classical language of philosophy (to use Bibikhin’s expression). At the same time, the philosophical understanding of energy contains a plethora of open questions, and a stable contemporary foundation for it, is practically lacking.² Bibikhin also points out that energy is a nagging theme of our epoch in its most significant and even non-philosophical sense, particularly within the global economy, and humanity’s “life support systems.” In his reflections, he echoes these extra-philosophical aspects of the problem, too. As a result, the problem appears to be both horizonless and bottomless, and my essay is nothing more than a series of preliminary remarks on it. It is also limited in scope: we will review, in the first place, the conception of energy in the work of Bibikhin, while Heidegger’s and Palamas’s theses will be discussed only in connection with their reflections and refractions in the writings of the Russian philosopher.

In its composition, the theme of energy in Bibikhin has a clear tripartite structure. First of all, it has a firm foundation, which is drawn from the Aristotelian conception of energy. Clearly, this is a classical subject of scholastic philosophy, with a countless number of secondary explanations. But even against this background, the way Bibikhin elucidates this subject is distinguished by its deeply personal and original formulations. Further, what is constructed upon this foundation is not at all the usual historical exposition of the theme. Only a few select texts join the Aristotelian sources including, above all, Kant and Hegel’s lessons. In turn, the main development of the theme follows two other directions. First, the philosopher proposes a critical analysis of the theology of divine energies elaborated by Gregory Palamas (Byzantium, the middle of the fourteenth century); second, he develops the thinking of the role of energy in the contemporary world and for the contemporary consciousness.

Evidently, these two subjects are quite distant from one another, but Bibikhin’s elucidation unites them, such that the philosophy equally considers Palamas’s theology and our contemporary relation to energy as a deviation, as a doubtful and dangerous retreat from the Aristotelian and Ancient understanding of energy, which is, for him, the only true and unsurpassable measure. The phenomena that these two subjects refer to,

² Cf. the most recent fundamental overview of the theme: “virtually everything [...] about this distinction is subject to dispute” (Bradshaw 2004: xi).

carry within themselves an error, though they do so to different extents: while Palamism showcases certain valuable dimensions, there are no such things in contemporary technocratic energeticism. Hence, their treatment entails the elements of unmasking and, at times severe, critique. The character of critique is, however, entirely different in the two cases. Only the critique of Palamism belongs to the theologico-philosophical development of the theme, while the critique of our contemporary relation to energy is conducted in an essayistic style, without the unfolding of philosophical analysis. The philosophical contemplation of the place of energy in the contemporary world was a part of the philosopher's plans, so much so that at the seminar in the Institute of Philosophy (26/1/1993), he says: "The introduction into the problem of being, its energy, must be the contemporary problems of energy" (Bibikhin 2010: 327–328). Nevertheless, the realization of such plans cannot be found in contemporary texts. For this reason, this discussion will be limited to only two out of the three leading themes mentioned above (Aristotle, Palamas, and contemporary technology).

The Aristotelian Basis of Bibikhin's Conception of Energy

Aristotle is truly the alpha and omega of Bibikhin's thought on energy as such. Nonetheless, in the philosopher's works, there is no coherent summary of Aristotelian teaching. Bibikhin's thinking has its own unique creative style, which is demonstratively far from the systematic and academic character of traditional research (thus, it is not by chance that, among Russian philosophers, Bibikhin senses proximity above all to Rozanov and Leontyev). We can find the basis for his conception of energy in a set of several leading, key moments, each of which is reaffirmed with greater emphasis and multiple variations. By and large, these moments are in one way or another close to Heidegger's interpretation of the Aristotelian notion of energy. There are close links, if not selective affinity, between the philosophy of Bibikhin and the thought of Heidegger, and in the theme of energy they announce themselves right away and are traceable almost everywhere, even though direct references to Heidegger are rather rare. For brevity's sake, I will note correspondences to Heidegger only occasionally, but it is worth keeping in mind that they exist at many points in the argument.

The commonalities between the two philosophers begin from the very sources of the theme, from the most common axioms regarding energy. The first is the solution they each propose to the question about the status of energy, and its role in philosophical discourse. Heidegger emphasizes that the place of energy lies beyond, and is *earlier* than, the doctrine of the categories: "For Aristotle, the question about *dynamis* and

energeia [...] is the question about being as such [...]. Asking about *dynamis* and *energeia* [is...] the true philosophizing (*prote philosophia*)” (Heidegger 1981: 9–10). Bibikhin’s solution, albeit expressed somewhat differently, is analogous to Heidegger’s. Bibikhin emphasizes that Aristotle does not provide a definition of energy, despite his promise to do so (Aristotle 1924: 9.6) He thus comes to the conclusion that such a definition cannot be given and that energy belongs to a special kind of things, endowed with a special status: “Aristotle [...] knows that there is no definition of energy [...]. Energy is one of those liminal things that cannot be defined in principle” (Bibikhin 2010: 336). And he makes a very characteristic addendum to this conclusion, positioning the integral human experience as the highest instance for the comprehension of liminal things: “Energy [...] is such a thing, which, if one does not *sense* it, if one does not have the *experience* of it [...] cannot be imparted through any explanations or definitions” (Bibikhin 2010: 31, author’s emphasis).

The next axiom is the following: *for Aristotle, energy is the main name for being*. Heidegger insists on this more than once, varying and developing his thesis that Plato’s being is figured as an idea, while Aristotle’s—as energy. Already in the early Marburg lectures from 1924 he states: “*Energeia* is [...] the most fundamental predicate of being in the Aristotelian doctrine of being,” just as his later texts often accentuate energy as “the main conception in the Aristotelian metaphysics” (Heidegger 2002: 44). Bibikhin’s philosophy stands on the same theses. Here, we read that “gold and energy are the names for being in Heraclitus and Aristotle” (Bibikhin 2010: 324), that “for Aristotle, energy is the moving beginning of everything” (Bibikhin 2010: 39), and that “for him [for Aristotle] [...] energy is earlier than anything; it precedes everything” (Bibikhin 2010: 37). It follows that energy is the very principle of beginning, producing the principle of speaking about being, or ontology. According to Bibikhin, it will maintain its leading role in the future as well, and, indeed, in every epoch:

The Aristotelian energy, the contemporary energy of (say) applied atomic physics, the Hegelian *Wirklichkeit* and Palamas’s energy [...] are not academic terms but the faces of being in Antiquity, in the young revolutionary Europe, and at the start of the Pacific Region’s civilization of the third millennium (Bibikhin 2010: 335).

Further, every time Bibikhin begins his discussion of energy anew, he poses the question: *Is energy the goal or the means toward a goal?* As an exception, this is no longer a Heideggerian question, but one that is imposed by our times, when, according to Bibikhin, “we are already too captivated by energy” (Bibikhin 2010: 333); when “humanity has gotten addicted to energy” (Bibikhin 2010: 336) and when “a wild chase after” energy reigns supreme. His analysis culminates in the conclusion that, for

our contemporaries, energy “is such a means, which is a goal [...], a quantity, in which the difference between the goals and the means is cancelled” (Bibikhin 2010: 388). In Aristotle, however, things are different: “according to Aristotle’s teaching, energy is definitely the goal, not the means” (Bibikhin 2010: 389). “Energy for Aristotle is the goal itself” (Bibikhin 2010: 318), as the philosopher emphasizes several times.

This state of affairs brings us close to the central, key point of Bibikhin’s conception of energy, namely to his insistently repeated argument for *the primacy of the energy of rest*. Here, we are entering the concentrated version of the philosophical problematic of energy, as well as a vast circle of problems and aporia, born from the relation between energy and a complex of notions that are conjugated with it: rest and motion, possibility and entelechy, activity, actuality, fullness, realization, completion, and of course, the first mover. The convoluted and aporetic nature of this problematic, along with the persistence of many questions within it that have remained unanswered since Aristotle to our days, are due primarily to the fact that the Aristotelian “energy” has a rather broad semantic field and complex content. With a noticeable simplification, one may think that in this field and content, there are two distinct main spheres: the first sphere correlates energy with the categories of rest and fullness, and the completion of realization, whereas the second sphere is associated with the categories of movement and activity. Both spheres, with all their definitiveness, exist in Aristotle (in particular, in the foundational text of his doctrine of energy, Book 9 of *Metaphysics*) and neither of the two can be negated in advance. Nevertheless, in almost all interpretations of energy only one sphere dominates, and minor significance is attributed to the other, or it is ignored altogether.

Unbound from any type of movement, the “energy of rest” is the central notion of the first sphere; its standard, for Aristotle, is the energy of the unmoved first mover. In turn, the most important and the most typical trait of Bibikhin’s conception is that precisely this energy is given the decisive leadership and the priority in the entire spectrum of meanings and types of energy. Only occasionally, to keep “things in order,” he mentions that energy may also be other, calling this other “the second energy.” Still, we will not find practically anything in his work about its qualities or its role. Heidegger accords a similar priority to something like the energy of rest, cf., “The Greeks understood movement based on rest” (Heidegger 1985: 95), and many other instances—but he does not accord such total-categorical attention to it; on the contrary, he carefully analyzes the type of energy tied to movement, namely Bibikhin’s “second energy,” too. In this regard, he says: “The mobility of movement is *energeia ateles*, a standing-in-creation, which has not yet come to its end [...]. This *energeia* is something “under way” (Heidegger 1985: 96). Now, examining the problematic of energy in the contemporary world and the interpretation of energy in Palamist theology, Bibikhin evaluates the approaches to energy

that pertain to them based on one main criterion: whether they allot enough space to the energy of rest. As I have said earlier, both approaches receive a negative mark, for the same reason: Bibikhin finds in them the same radical poverty, that is, the loss and ignorance of the energy of rest. In Palamism, and in Palamas's dogma about essence and energy it was forgotten what the energy of rest was," (Bibikhin 2010: 137) whereas in contemporaneity, "we do not understand the energy of rest at all [...]; it is no longer our [conception], but something, which is for us foreign" (Bibikhin 2010: 37, 53).

This main and nearly exclusive for Bibikhin energy is describe by him both vividly and expressively, with emotion. But only very rarely do these descriptions specify that they belong only to the energy of rest; as a rule, they appear to be simply about "energy," creating a mistaken impression that such are the qualities of energy in general, of energy as such. *Fullness* is undoubtedly first among these qualities. Fullness is the leitmotif not so much of a scientific interpretation as of a feeling, of the emotional apperception of energy by the Russian philosopher. Richly varied, the leitmotif "Energy is fullness" (Bibikhin 2010: 269) is throughout his entire treatment of energy. However, "fullness is rest" (Bibikhin 2010: 32), "fullness must be in the sense of its completion by rest" (Bibikhin 2010: 409), which means that Bibikhin's entire discourse of fullness should be, strictly speaking, put on the side of the energy of rest (and only of the energy of rest). For the most part, this discourse unfolds as a chain of approximations and equations: energy as fullness may be equated to a slew of basic metaphysical categories.

Above all, if energy is fullness, then it is not only actualizing (as it is habitually characterized) but also the actualized and the completed. This quality of its nature is affirmed numerous times in weighty and capacious formulae: energy is "the fullness of completion," "that actualization which is full" (Bibikhin 2010: 274), "the unfolded fullness of blossoming actualization (Bibikhin 2010: 344), "energy is the realization of being, which is full in itself, full with itself, and is a goal for itself" (Bibikhin 2010: 439). The last formula, which is quite saturated philosophically, leads directly to the next equation: energy, as it is presented here, is the same as entelechy. Energy and entelechy is a long-standing and vast theme of Aristotelian studies, but Bibikhin does not immerse himself in it, choosing from the outset the nearly complete merging of the two principles. He says that this is the line of Aristotle—cf., for instance: The other Aristotelian names for 'energy', used often without differentiations are *entelecheia* [...] and *ergon*" (Bibikhin 2010: 271); "energy [...] for Aristotle is most often synonymous with entelechy" (Bibikhin 2010: 379). In sum, according to Bibikhin, "energy is the same as completion, accomplishment, *entelecheia*" (Bibikhin 2010: 422, author's emphasis), even though our remark remains valid that here energy is, more precisely, the energy of rest. Further, the following equation is quite evident: the circle of the

main significations of energy includes also actuality. Bibikhin says: “From the Aristotelian energy, which is one, we have two words: [...] energy and more frequent *actuality*. Usually ‘energy’ is translated as ‘actuality’” (Bibikhin 2010: 59, author’s emphasis). As the concept *Wirklichkeit* in classical German philosophy, actuality was most thoroughly elaborated by Kant and Hegel, and it is this teaching about actuality that Bibikhin calls “variations on the theme of the energy of rest and unmoved first mover” (Bibikhin 2010: 460). Finally, we already grasp that, in this line of equations, essence should also inevitably emerge. And it does emerge. For instance, we can read that “the Aristotelian energy is, at the same time, essence” (Bibikhin 2010: 303). For now, this equation will only be marked in passing. It is tightly linked to the discussion of energy in Palamist theology, and it will be discussed in the next section.

In finishing this brief description of Bibikhin’s conception of energy, there is still one important point to discuss: the relationship between *energeia* and *dynamis*, or energy, and potentiality, power, and capacity (these are all typical translations of *dynamis* in Bibikhin). For any interpretation of energy, this is one of the key points, and it is already clear that for Bibikhin, the total primacy of the energy of rest and the merging of energy and entelechy lead to a situation, whereby this relationship is no longer an equation but, the exact opposite, a contraposition. *Dynamis* is “the beginning of change,” as the philosopher often emphasizes; its tie to movement is unbreakable and hence “the Aristotelian energy [...] is opposed to capacity, to power as potentiality” (Bibikhin 2010: 320). As a result, the Aristotelian triad of principles *dynamis—energeia—entelecheia* assumes in Bibikhin a hard and univocal form: energy is equated to entelechy and, as completed realization, is opposed to potentiality (to capacity, power, and generally to the dynamic element as such).

The same primacy of the energy of rest also determines the resolution of the famous question about the consecutive nature of principles: does potentiality precede energy (as a principle, which guides potentiality to its realization) or, vice versa, does energy precede potentiality (as the indispensable preexistence of that which is potential)? In Aristotle’s teaching, there are grounds for both sequences, which is to say that, due to the multiple meanings of energy, it precedes potentiality and follows potentiality. At the same time, it follows potentiality and actualizes its energy as the principle of actualization and activity, while it precedes potentiality by serving as its ontological presupposition: energy as the actualized, the energy of rest. Bibikhin must recognize in this Aristotelian ambivalence the relations among the principles, but his ultra-Aristotelianism, affirming the incommensurable superiority of the energy of rest, pushes him, as much as possible, to minimize the role of “the second energy” as the actualizing potentiality, all the way to ignoring and even to a direct negation of it. Thus, for example:

If we think with regard to the Aristotelian energy that it is the *second* step, *after* capacity [...], then we would be mistaken [...]. The Aristotelian energy is prior to the capacity, potency, power, movement in general, changing [...]. It is the first mover (Bibikhin 2010: 321, author's emphasis).

At times, the debasement of “the second energy” is accomplished in rather pithy expressions. And so, he writes: Energy, which is after power, is but a misunderstanding [...]. That energy [...] which lags behind power and potentiality is not the principled, the basic one; it is [...] but the shadow of energy” (Bibikhin 2010: 32).

It is difficult to ignore the fact that a certain stylization of Aristotle is present here. The Aristotelian energy is not only the first mover; it is not only the energy of rest. And in certain contexts this can turn out to be quite significant.

Bibikhin's Critique of the Theology of Divine Energies

For Bibikhin, Palamas's teaching of divine energies was far from being one of the regional supplements to his conception of energy. To the contrary, his thought was tied to the Palamist thematics by many threads at the same time. This thought is Christian, and it came about not only following the currents of Ancient philosophy and Western philosophical tradition, but also in keeping with the Orthodox worldview and Russian philosophy. He considered himself a participant in this latter current of thinking, using the pronoun “we” whenever he talked about it, and the historical as well as the contemporary destinies of Russian philosophy were an independent subject of his reflection. Bibikhin provided a living tie to this current, to the school of initiation into its element, by his close and long-term collaboration with A.F. Losev. The other part of the school was his translation work: besides Palamas's *Triads*, a cornerstone text in the Orthodox tradition, Bibikhin also translated an important ascetic essay *New Spiritual Conversations* by Makarius/Simeon. As for the subject of special interest and anxiety for the philosopher, this was today's condition of this our current, with its difficulties and problems. He thought about them and expressed himself with all the courage of a thinker and with all the personal passion of a Russian Christian at the threshold of millennia.

Such, briefly put, is the Palamist context of Bibikhin's thought, the context that, without a doubt, has left its mark on his elaboration of the theme of energy.

Following his contraposition of philosophy and method (a particularly original field of Bibikhin's ideas), the philosopher does not provide a systematic overview of Palamas's teaching, as he did not provide such an

overview in the case of Aristotle. Still, the examination of this teaching, the examination of energy in Palamas, is constructed completely differently than the examination of energy in Aristotle. In the first instance, this examination is not at all limited to a theoretical problematic, whether philosophical or theological. It opens with an exposition of Palamas's biography; then passes onto a wider historical, religious, and ideational panorama of Byzantium and its epoch; after which, it engages in rather detailed descriptions of Hesychastic disputations, both as far as their eventual unfolding and their theologico-philosophical content are concerned. Compared to other descriptions, including those in Meyendorff's classical book on Palamas, Bibikhin attributes much greater significance to subsidiary and not at all theological sides of the matter, firmly rooting Hesychastic disputations in Byzantine history, the politics of the state, the court, and the church, the struggle of opinions, parties, and groups. In his elucidation, the circumstances of political and church practice had an essential and direct influence on the course of theological discussions. It was primarily the decisions of the local gatherings of the Byzantine church in the period of the Disputations that impacted the results of these discussions.

By evaluating these decisions, one may get a glimpse of the philosopher's own anti-Palamist position. He addresses all of his critical remarks to the gatherings that affirmed the teaching of Palamas. For example, he writes the following about the first of the gatherings, the Council of 1341: "The Patriarch and the Synod [...] did not want to discuss theological questions in their essence" (Bibikhin 2010: 110); and he writes the following about the Council of 1347: "they hurried, piled things up, failed to convince," and when discussing the most important Council, held in 1351, which accepted the Palamist dogma, he states that "they did not finish discussions [...] and everything ended with screaming" (apropos of its first session) and "a fatal dearth of clarity" (apropos of its final session). Further, the rather detailed overview of the early studies of Palamism and Hesychasm in Russia has the character of a purposeful selection of every anti-Palamist judgment and position. The main hero in this overview is Akindin, "a person with an unclouded and generous mind, with a convincing argument" (Bibikhin 2010: 373). But, overall, one gets a strong impression that the teaching about divine energies is some sort of party ideology, since Bibikhin says that it is "new knowledge, submitted by the party" that invokes "the loud new doctrine of the party of Philotheos, Kantakuzin, and Palamas," and insists that "the Palamist party," "the anti-Western party," or "the anti-Latin party" acted in its favor, and so forth.

As for the very essence of the doctrine, its strictly critical analysis is carried out, once again, in the form of a complex consisting of several repeated and varied crucial points. As I have already stated, Bibikhin considers this teaching through the primacy of the energy of rest, and, without much difficulty, discovers that this primacy is not at all maintained

here. Above all, he finds out that in the most important proposition of Palamas's teaching and the Palamist dogma energy of rest is ignored, specifically in the proposition, according to which "divine essence [...] is absolutely spanless and cannot be participated in; but what one can participate in is divine goodness and energy" (cited in Losev 1993: 896–897). Indeed, the energy of rest, energy as fullness, actualization, and completion is indistinguishable from essence. This is one of Bibikhin's firm theses, which he expressed in the following way: "The energy of rest [...]—the energy of the unmoved mover in Aristotle—must be prior to essence or, in any case, equivalent to it" (cited in Losev 1993: 896–897). But the cited Paragraph 6 of the Council's decision determines that human beings can in no way participate in divine essence, while divine energy can be participated in. In this way, the dogma establishes a distinction between energy and essence, and this distinction does not agree with the primacy of the energy of rest: "With the distancing of Divine essence from His energy, the energy of rest has been forgotten; it was forgotten what the energy of rest was" (Bibikhin 2010: 137). And, as a result of this divergence, Bibikhin categorically rejects the dogma about the non-participatory nature of divine essence. At the same time, he insists that this dogma is a novelty that is unheard of in theology:

Palamas [...] introduced something unheard-of, unprecedented in Christian dogmatics: divine essence closed off, eluding human eyes forever. This has never happened before. God in His entirety was ungraspable and still somehow open, based on His goodness. Only with Palamas He turned out to be forever, unconditionally closed (Bibikhin 2010: 136–137).

According to Bibikhin, this kind of closure carries something dark and threatening in itself: "That, in Palamas, divine essence is, for the first time in the history of dogmatics, closes off to any participation as such betokens something dark and even sinister in Palamism" (Bibikhin 2010: 376). The philosopher composes a succinct accusatory aphorism, which he repeats more than once: in Palamas, essence is a "black box."

In sum, Bibikhin decisively rejects two interrelated cornerstones of Palamas's teaching: the non-participatory character of divine essence and the distinction between divine essence and divine energy. A critique of these theses and of their consequences is the central point and the main content of his reception of Palamas's teaching. He usually conducts his critique in an emotional and sharp tone, and some of its most expressive affirmations should be cited verbatim.

It is absurd to distinguish the first [...] energies, in any one of their aspects, from their essence: their first fullness is precisely the essence (Bibikhin 2010: 304–305).

The distinction between essence and energy in God [...] is unsubstantiated and, above all, unnecessary. No efforts at substantiating it will manage to justify it [...]. The distinction between essence and energy in God is a failure [...] of Palamist thought [...], a sign of a rupture in Christian neo-Platonism [...]and] a symptom of the crisis of Christian theology in general [...]. Palamism, Hesychasm in Byzantium is the very rupture of Christian theology (Bibikhin 2010: 138).

Who weighed and dispensed energies, but held onto essence? [...] All that remains for essence is the impoverished quality of non-participation [...]. Palamist dogma is a dogmatic infelicity (Bibikhin 2010: 141).

This central *topos* of Bibikhin's reception naturally includes a series of critical arguments against Palamas's teaching that have been advanced for a long time in Catholic theology. The most constant of these Catholic arguments is that the distinction between energy and essence contradicts the simplicity of God. And so, Bibikhin writes: "The dogma [of 1351] introduced inexplicable complexity there where traditional theology sees indivisible simplicity and complete equation of essence (nature) and action" (Bibikhin 2010: 477). Such approximation with Catholic thought is an essential feature of Bibikhin's conception of energy, the feature that is crucial for understanding his critique of Palamism (and likewise of his more general religious positions). In particular, the Bibikhin accepts a series of theses derived from Thomas Aquinas, including his conception of God as a pure act, *actus purus*, and his characteristic participation of the human being in God, which Bibikhin considers more justified than in Palamas. He also defends Catholic positions in the question about *filioque*, the Catholic-Orthodox dogmatic argument about the provenance of the Holy Spirit. He relates the problematic of *filioque* quite closely to the Palamist problematic of essence and energy, even considering the second problematic to be a part of the first [cf. "the disputation about *filioque* and a variation on it, namely the disputation about the uncreated nature of divine energies" (Bibikhin 2010: 349); "the theme of Hesychastic disputations was a reflection [...] of debates around *filioque*" (Bibikhin 2010: 383)]. Unfortunately, he does not demonstrate how the two themes are linked. On the whole, Bibikhin finds that "Catholicism [...] with its old philosophical school again and again reminds us of Palamist contradictions, the explicit contentiousness of the distinction between essence and energy" (Bibikhin 2010: 139, author's emphasis). In this conclusion, the words about the school are important: the philosopher deduces the correctness of Catholicism not because of confessional predilections, but because "the old philosophical school" has been more faithful to its strong Aristotelian foundations.

Within his analysis of Palamas's teaching, Bibikhin also includes a detailed discussion of Losev's book *Philosophy of the Name* (Losev 1999), which he calls "a book about energy and essence." He allots more space to

this discussion than to the discussion of Palamas himself, supplementing it with summaries of his own studies on the problem of the name in mythology and linguistics. According to Bibikhin, Losev's book "is a theory of the Orthodox name-praising elaborated in Athos, a theory which marked a return in the twentieth century of the Palamist teaching on the uncreated energies" (Bibikhin 2010: 170). Bibikhin also agrees with the main idea behind Name-praising (*imyaslavie*): the Name of God is God Himself and His uncreated energy; he also believes, as we can deduce from the last citation that the theses of Name-praising correspond quite well to Palamas's teaching. Losev's book is a philosophical apology of Name-praising, which tries to justify it through complex dialectical and phenomenological constructions. At the same time, Losev does not at all object either to the teachings of Palamas or to the dogma of 1351. However, Bibikhin finds that his predecessor makes an effort to correct and soften this dogma: "Losev wishes to soften the hard unknowability of essence in Palamism" (Bibikhin 2010: 232), and precisely with this purpose in mind Losev introduces a symbolic dimension into the interpretation of the Name: "It is the symbol that saves essence from unknowability" (Bibikhin 2010: 233). Although in this way "Losev corrected this subsection of the dogma" (Bibikhin 2010: 217). Bibikhin criticizes Losev's symbolism and finds his attempt at correction to be unsuccessful: "It was necessary from the very beginning *not* to accept the Palamist novelty, saying, decisively, that the essence in the Highest, in the First [...] is *exactly the same as energy*" (Bibikhin 2010: 234, author's emphasis). The lack of success in the correction of the dogma confirms, yet again, its radical infelicity.

There are few other essential elements in Bibikhin's critique of Palamas remaining. Of note is the insistent reiteration of the proximity between Palamism, iconoclasm, and Islam: "Not by chance, Palamism approximated iconoclasm" (Bibikhin 2010: 361, with reference to the accusations of Nicophorus Gregorius) "as a step toward Islam, Palamist dogma was, of course, at the same time, a step away from Catholic Christianity" (Bibikhin 2010: 115). But these approximations are not developed thematically, and remain at the level of passing remarks. Bibikhin's readers also find reflections on the appropriation (or, better yet, the lack of appropriation) of the theology of energies in liturgy and in the life of the Church as a whole:

In theology, the dogma about essence and energy has not really been secured [...as evidenced by] a disappearing, almost entirely erased presence of the Palamist dogma in Orthodox church services [...]. Less and less, does Church practice accept the dogma about the energies (362, 363, 371),

and so on. Nonetheless, even these reflections are not sufficiently grounded.

On the whole, Bibikhin's philosophy presents a rather peculiar and paradoxical reception of Palamas's teaching. Essentially, this reception deems all the main theses and ideas that Palamas advanced, to be wrong. Despite this, the philosophy clearly insists that Palamas's contribution was extremely important and valuable in the context of the Byzantine orthodoxy of his epoch. According to Bibikhin, in this context, there was "a cooling down of official Christianity," [since the] "Church creativity of a dogmatic and any other kind [...] seems to have been extinguished long ago" (Bibikhin 2010: 104), while Orthodox theology was under a threat of "becoming a great museum." Palamas's thought and activity managed to contravene this fatal tendency. The tendency went very far, and, to triumph over it, a breakthrough and maximum tension were required, not to mention desperate efforts and extreme means. Following his creative temperament, Bibikhin always acknowledged and sensed the justified nature of such extreme means, be it in tone or expression. As he often said to me, "*One must scream!*" And in what he considered to be the "unheard-of" and "extravagant" novelties of Palamas, he heard this desperate scream, which, for him, represented an honor, or even a decisive honor.⁵ He wrote: "In Gregory Palamas, everything is desperate, risky [... including] attachment to the One in Whom lies the decisive evidence" (Bibikhin 2010: 348). In the end result, the main evaluation, for him, pertains to Palamism as a living religious feeling: "The experiment of bidding adieu to the actual, active, flaming God—the thrust that aims to stop the departure from such a God—that is the true essence of the Palamist dogma" (Bibikhin 2010: 134).

In these words we discover another important motif of Bibikhin's reception of Palamism, namely, its extreme actuality. The philosopher detects a deep parallel between the spiritual situation of the later Byzantium and the current problem of energy. The basis for this comparison is the common risk of distancing and impoverishment, and the depletion of life-supporting energies. He notably draws a comparison between the spiritual energies in the Byzantium and the physical energies in the contemporary world. The sense of this risk, the sense of concern turns into a dominant feature of the epoch. As Bibikhin writes,

in the fourteenth century, Palamas thematized [...] energies for the same reason that lies behind our own conversation about energy, namely being awakened by the experience of their departure, the cooling down of the world [...]. Palamas speaks about what is most important (Bibikhin 2010: 134, 137).

⁵ That is also how Bibikhin speaks of Losev: "Losev is a scream" (259). A scream as a philosophical act or gesture, as a method of philosophizing and philosophical expression, is, if you will, one of the themes that the study of Bibikhin's philosophy poses before us.

Hence, the necessity of our turning to Palamism and Hesychasm, in all their significance for contemporary thought. “Palamas and the Palamist debates are no less alive today than they were in the fourteenth century” (Bibikhin 2010: 138).

Discussion

In describing Bibikhin’s reception of the Aristotelian notion of energy, I immediately noted its proximity to Heidegger, among other characteristics. But Bibikhin’s elucidation of Palamas’s teaching is much more peculiar. It requires in-depth comments and discussion, which is why I have initially presented it without commentary, in its pure state. A discussion of such a complex and multifaceted subject should be equally multifaceted and well-founded. Within the framework of this article, however, I will limit myself to a bare minimum, concentrating solely on the main points. The first of these will have to do with the relation of Palamism to two key contexts: Eastern (and, in part, Western) Patristics, and Aristotle’s notion of energy.

Palamas and Patristics

We have already seen that Bibikhin considers the axioms of Palamism (its distinction between divine essence and divine energies, as well as the non-participation in (unknowability of) divine essence) as unjustified and unnecessary novelties. In this respect, the first point that needs to be made is that the contextualization of these theses within their historical timeframe does not confirm such evaluations. Examined more carefully, the opposite is the case: although these theses did not enjoy the status of a dogma, they were, for a long time, present in the Greek Church Fathers, in full correspondence to the mainstream of dogmatic Orthodox theology. In contemporary Orthodoxy, this historical rootedness of Palamism is habitually and constantly affirmed as commonplace, but, in contrast to many other commonplaces, it has a strong theoretical foundation. In particular, the entire history of the problem of essence and energy in Eastern Patristics has been recently studied in depth in David Bradshaw’s monograph *Aristotle East and West* (Bradshaw 200).

Before all else, what is reconstructed here is the genesis of the entire theological line, drawing the border between the unknowable divine essence and the knowable divine energies (or other correlated principles). According to Bradshaw, this line is still discernable in anticipation of Christianity, and the Philo of Alexandria plays the decisive role in this discernment. More precisely, Bradshaw notes the following:

Aristotle has in mind primarily *energeia* as actuality, whereas Philo has in mind *energeia* as activity. This opens up an interesting new possibility: that of conceiving the divine *energeia* as an avenue by which God may be known⁴ [...] Proclus, and the Church Fathers [...] will explore this train of thought most thoroughly (Bradshaw 2004: 62–63).

Philo himself managed to indicate, in a clear manner, this direction: “Philo contrasting the knowable *energeia* of the divine Powers with their unknowable *ousia*” (Bradshaw 2004: 63), and he affirms this unknowability quite categorically:

It is quite enough for a man’s reasoning faculty to advance [...] to learn that the cause of the universe is and subsists. To be anxious to continue his course yet further, and inquire about essence ... in God, is a folly fit for the world’s childhood. Not even to Moses [...] did God accord this, albeit he had made countless requests (Philo of Alexandria, “On Cain’s Progeny, 168,” cited in (Bradshaw 2004: 63)).

The common goals of the entire future line of thinking are already clearly demarcated by Philo:

The purpose of distinguishing the divine essence from the Powers, holding that God can be known only through the latter, is much like that which will later be served by the distinction between *ousia* and *energeia* in the Greek Fathers: to safeguard the divine transcendence, while at the same time affirming that the transcendent God has condescended to be known by man (Bradshaw 2004: 64).

Among further developments of this line, the most significant stage for us is that of the fourth century classical Patristics. “They begin during the Trinitarian debates of the fourth century [...] *energeia* coming into prominence as a key term for understanding God’s activity in the world [...] as opposed to divine essence”; a contrast emerges “between *energeia* and *ousia*” (Bradshaw 2004:154). Already Athanasius the Great, and later the Cappadocians, draw “a general and systematic distinction between the divine *energeiai*, which are known [...] and the divine *ousia*, which [...] is known only through the *energeiai* of which it is the source” (Bradshaw 2004: 164). The knowability of divine essence is also affirmed by the hierarch Eunomius, who was attacked in the tractates written by St. Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa. Basilus the Great fights for the distinction between divine essence and divine energy with conviction:

⁴ Hence, one sees that in this line of thought, to which Palamas too will belong, energy plays an important role, which is distinct from the energy of rest. It also becomes clear that the ultra-Aristotelian Bibikhin must not accept of this line, given that he minimizes the significance of such energy as much as possible.

...we know the greatness of God, His power, His wisdom, His goodness, His providence [...] and the justness of His judgment, but not His very essence [...]. But God, he says, is simple, and whatever attribute of Him you have reckoned as knowable is of His essence. The absurdities involved in this sophism are innumerable [...]. The *energeiai* are various, and the essence simple [...]. His come down to us, but His essence remains beyond our reach (Saint Basil the Great, "Letter 226 (234), to the same Amphilochius," cited in (Bradshaw 2004: 166)).

As we can see, what is also decisively asserted here is the non-participatory nature of divine essence. There is not a modicum of semantic distance, but rather a complete coincidence between these pieces of evidence from classical Patristics, and the latest Palamist theses. Without infractions, this consensus of the *Living Testament* is kept in Orthodox thought to this day, and can be read about in the work of our contemporary Metropolitan John Zizioulas: "Being uncreated, 'energy' involves the being of God Himself in history and creation, and yet, since it is different from the 'essence' of God, God's immanent being remains unknowable and, indeed, outside history and creation" (Zizioulas 2012: 261). Returning to Bibikhin, one observes two interrelated conclusions. First, his affirmations to the effect that Palamas and the dogma of 1351 "for the first time" introduce the "unheard-of" and "improbable" theses about the distinction between God's energy and essence, and about the non-participatory nature of the latter. All these affirmations are apriori and scandalously unfair. So, why were they made? It seems to me because, in general, Bibikhin thought that, "*One must scream!*" One must scream about a highly and riskily problematic situation of Orthodox Christianity. But it is also worth mentioning that, later, when returning to the theme and delivering a lecture course on energy in 2002, he decided that to scream *in this way* is nonetheless inadvisable. There are no longer any such assertions in that course, and more relatively moderate ones take their place.⁵ Second, the negation of the theses about energy and essence under the discussion here is indicative of Bibikhin's sharp divergence neither from Palamas alone nor from some "party" in fourteenth-century Byzantium, but from the entire tradition of Orthodox Patristics, or, simply put, his divergence from Orthodox Christianity.

⁵ Cf., for instance, Palamas's "saying that a human can never see the essence of God. It is very important that this is said [...] not in the sense that God has set his nature, or essence, apart or has withheld it from appearance" (Bibikhin 2010: 472). A lecture course from the same year (1990–1991) directly affirms that Palamas conveys *precisely this sense*; that is to say, on this point, the interpretation of Palamas changes to a nearly diametrically opposed one. And again: "Palamas conduct almost a purely energetic discourse. Strictly speaking, Palamas has no discourse whatsoever about essence" (Bibikhin 2010: 472). Clearly, this, too, does not agree with the previous affirmations that Palamas "shuts the question of essence tight," and so on.

On the contrary, Bibikhin's outlook turns out to be in agreement with that of Catholic theology. Reconstructing the concept of divine essence in the West, Bradshaw concludes that Augustine laid the foundations for a crucial tendency in Catholic theology to affirm the knowability of this essence:

The De Genesi ad Litteram [...] Augustine also adds that there is a third type of theophany, one not mentioned in the *De Trinitate*: the intellectual, which occurs entirely without images. The primary examples are Moses' encounter with God on Mt. Sinai and the rapture into the "third heaven" of St. Paul. He concedes that in such extraordinary cases there is a vision of the divine substance[...]. Augustine refers to its object as the divine substance (*substantia*) and glory (*claritas*) [...]. his governing assumption remains that the object of vision must be either a creature or the divine substance. This assumption was so deeply engrained that he seems to have felt no need to justify it (Bradshaw 2004: 228–229).

This Augustinian idea corresponds quite well to Bibikhin's position. Bibikhin, unlike Augustine, defends it based on the primacy of the energy of rest. But precisely here, as Bradshaw emphasizes, "the gulf separating Augustine from the eastern tradition is immense" (Bradshaw 2004: 229); one may then point out "the fundamental antipathy between the Augustinian theology of the divine essence and the hesychasts' theology of the uncreated light" (Bradshaw 2004: 234). Among subsequent developments, the Augustinian way of dealing with this problem will be endorsed by a special decision of the University of Paris, from 1241, the decision that condemns the conviction that "divine essence by itself cannot be seen either by a human or by an angel" as a heresy. Aquinas, too, follows same line, writing in *Summa Theologica*: "The essence of God, which is a pure and perfect act, is, in and of itself, simply and perfectly comprehensible" (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I.87.1). There is every reason to conclude that Bibikhin's position also attaches itself to this Catholic way of dealing with the problem of divine essence.

It is worth noting that, when it comes to other major themes, where Western and Orthodox theologies part ways, Bibikhin's thought invariably finds itself on the Western side. Among such philosophical themes, two are significant above all: *filioque* and synergy. Above, I already wrote about Bibikhin's acceptance of Catholic positions regarding *filioque*. As for synergy, the divergence between the Christian West and East on theme of synergy can again be traced to Augustine, who in a famous disputation with Pelagius about freedom and the good, clearly formulates a completely anti-synergistic position. On the other hand, John Cassian, representing the Eastern tradition, devotes an entire part (Part 13) of his "Conversations" to the theme, giving classical expression to the idea or the para-

digm of synergy: “In the work of our salvation, both God’s goodness and our free will participate [...]. Both act in concert for the purpose of our salvation and both are equally necessary” (John Cassian the Roman: 408, 410). Bibikhin discusses synergy in very condensed terms, conveying two main thoughts. The first and the most important is that synergy is, essentially, meaningless, impossible, or unnecessary, because the relation between God and a human is “post sent one way”: “God [...] has already responded, before the human has written. And what kind of God would He have been if He were searching for answers?” (Bibikhin 2010: 307). A human being cannot “cooperate” with divine energy, since that is complete fullness, which “already is in its *entirety*, prior to the human noting it” (Bibikhin 2010: 306, author’s emphasis). The second thought points to the idea that, in its contemporary quotidian sense, synergy as cooperation (the concerted action of divine and human energies) is foreign to Orthodox Patristics, and can be barely encountered in it.

The first thought means that the philosopher does not fully occupy Augustine’s anti-synergistic position; at the same time, as in the problem of divine essence, the Augustinian position emerges and is substantiated in a peculiar logic that is Bibikhin’s own, based on the primacy of the energy of rest, of energy as absolute fullness. However, the second thought—or, more precisely, not so much a thought as the decisive affirmation about the contents of the Orthodox Testament—pertains to the same category as the affirmations about the “unheard-of novelty” of Palamas’s teaching. Here the philosopher demonstratively ignores the most significant and evident things.⁶ The remark that God does not seek answers directly contradicts the New Testament. After all, in the event of Annunciation, God precisely *awaited Mary’s answer!* And her free answer is understood in Orthodox Christianity as the purest example of synergy.⁷ As Nicolas Cabasilas writes: “The Incarnation was not only the work of the Father, of His Strength and His Spirit [...] but also of the will and faith of the Virgin [...] with her full consent” (St. Nicolas Cabasilas, “Na Blagoveschanie [For the Annunciation], 4–5,” cited in (Ware 1985: 263)). It is easy to supplement this verdict by one of the leading Byzantine theologians with other equally direct expressions of the idea of synergy in Orthodox Patristics. Besides, synergy is deeply rooted not so much in a theological discourse, as in the very element and nature of spiritual experience in Orthodox Christianity. Such key principles of Orthodox spirituality as “the bestowal of the good” or “the bestowal of the Holy Spirit” obviously

⁶ One may surmise, in this regard, that the problem of synergy also awaited a substantial revision by Bibikhin on the occasion of his return to the theme of energy in 2002; however, unfortunately, the lecture course of 2002 did not have the time to reach this problem.

⁷ Cf., for instance: “The Mother of God is the highest example of synergy” (Ware 1985: 227).

carry a synergetic content, while Bibikhin's position, in the footsteps of Augustine, means a full rejection of such works as a strategy of spiritual life. And in this position there is a deeply personal moment, which is, perhaps, still more important than the theological one: Bibikhin was truly convinced that the duty of a human being is not to receive spiritual gifts but simply and inescapably *to be in place*, so that God could express Himself through you... On the whole, however, it is difficult not to agree with the opinion of Bradshaw:

If one were to summarize the differences between the eastern and western traditions in a single word, that word would be 'synergy.' [...] the underlying belief in synergy as a form of communion with God remains as clear in Gregory Palamas as it is in St. Paul [...]. [However] In the West synergy played remarkably little role (Bradshaw 2004:264–265),

and it has frequently been directly negated.

As a result, we can detect a rather strange relation of Bibikhin's thought vis-à-vis the Eastern and Western traditions. This thought approaches all the radical problems of Christian theology from within an Eastern context—the context of the Orthodox tradition and Russian culture, to which it is firmly anchored. However, in all the important problems that divide East and West, it sides with Western positions and Western answers to these problems. It is impossible to forget here that exactly the same was the case of Vladimir Solovyov's relation to the two traditions. Both philosophers are Russians with deep Orthodox roots; Solovyov was the son of a Russian historian and a grandson of a priest; Bibikhin, as he told me, had genealogical ties to Ignatius Bryanchaninov. Both carefully reflected on the situation of Russian and Orthodox thought, and questions pertaining to its fate and development were close to their hearts. And both, equally, came to the conclusion that in all the basic questions dividing Orthodox Christianity and the West, the latter rather than the former provided satisfactory solutions.

At the same time, the approximation with Solovyov only superficially characterizes Bibikhin's philosophy. In contrast to Solovyov, who was genuinely close to Catholicism (which is why he converted to Catholicism) Bibikhin's agreement with Catholic theses was, in reality, a secondary phenomenon, which can be attributed to other, deeper connections and traits of his thought. At the most profound, defining level, this thought is moved by some kind of an attachment and striving, a veritable *Wahlverwandschaft*, not to Catholicism but to antiquity, to the Greeks. It is, in fact, the same *Wahlverwandschaft* as in Heidegger, who, together with Aristotle, was the closest and most important philosopher to Bibikhin. Catholicism, as I have already remarked above, turns out to be correct in Bibikhin's view only because it has preserved the ancient foundations of mental contemplation better than Orthodox Christianity.

The Energies in Palamas and Aristotle

In conclusion, I will return to the concept of energy, and the remaining point is the most crucial one. Bibikhin evaluates the Palamist understanding of energy through the prism of a main criterion, namely the criterion of its correspondence or non-correspondence to the initial conception of energy in Aristotle. Aristotle's conception of energy similarly places at the foreground, as much as possible, the principle of the primacy of the energy of rest, of energy that amounts to entelechy, of energy as the perfect and complete fullness. But how scrupulous is such an approach? Is it not advisable to take into account other criteria or other factors?

It should be noted, before all else, that the theme "The Energies in Palamas and Aristotle" pertains to the fate of ancient concepts, introduced into a Christian context, the body of a Christian teaching. Such an introduction cannot be viewed as a simple carry-over or translation, in which the concepts do not change but retain the same content. Like all other elements of ancient discourse, concepts inevitably undergo changes that are not only external (for instance, the replacement of one set of links with another) but also internal, touching their semantic nucleus. This change is determined by a drastic change in the experiential basis of discourse. An analysis of these changes and a precise determination of their nature or of their qualities is a separate epistemological problematic; however, the very fact of their necessity is acknowledged by both Eastern and Western theologians. Gilson, who is a Thomist, writes: "Any element of Hellenic or any other provenance, which has become an element of Christian synthesis, has suffered assimilation and, therefore, a transformation in this synthesis" (Gilson 2011: 288). On the side of the Orthodox tradition, Georges Florovsky speaks about Patristic theology in the following way: "It was insufficient to take philosophical terms in their usual use [...]. It was necessary to remold ancient words, to weld again ancient concepts" (Florovsky 1931: 75). The term "welding again" seems to be the most adequate for reflecting the ongoing transformation, since it sends us back to Humboldt's famous epistemological metaphor of the melting pot (though Florovsky could not have had this in mind). It follows that the genuine, creative, awakening beginning of a new tradition is some sort of a new experience, and that all contents that this tradition draws from external sources, change their nature in the prism of this experience, as though being re-welded in a melting pot.

As a rule, the transformation-remolding of ancient contents in Christian discourse have been analyzed into the elements derived from Platonism and neo-Platonism, in keeping with a very old theme of the Platonic influences on Christian thought. As for the elements derived from Aristotle, including the concept of energy, their remolding was studied significantly less. Still, there is no reason to think that these elements

were not remolded but merely borrowed without any alterations. In light of this, an analysis of Palamist theology of energies should already at its initial stages include the question: *What kind of a transformation-remolding did the Aristotelian concept of energy undergo when it was included in Christian discourse, first in classical Patristics and later in Palamas?* To describe this remolding completely is a difficult task, which cannot be carried out here. Let us just indicate some of its key moments, especially those that bear upon our evaluation of Bibikhin's reception of Palamas's teaching.⁸

It is impossible to disagree with Johann Meyendorff that the main element, specific to the Christian conception of energy has its closest ties to the conception of personality, to the "personalism" of Christian theology: "Theological personalism is the main feature of the New Testament on which St. Gregory Palamas relies; in it, we find the key to the understanding of his teaching regarding divine energies" (Meyendorff 1997: 287). The energies of God belong to divine essence, *ousia*, but they are actualized, acquire qualities in divine Persons. "Divine energy is not only one but also hypostatized into three [...], reflecting the common life of three Persons. Personal aspects of divine existence do not disappear in the single energy" (Meyendorff 1975b: 186). This way, in the Christian Orthodox teaching, the energies are stamped with personality, describing the *iconomia* precisely of personal being, which is of course, not at all characteristic of Aristotelian energy.

Personal being is a whole ontological formation, radically different from being in its ancient formulation. The most important distinctions between such personal and ancient modes of being are expressed in such fundamental characteristics as love, communication, and *perichoresis*. Each of these principles is connected to other features, related, among other things, to divine energies. Therefore, the conception of divine energies is hereby enriched with new essential content, though the latter will not be considered in this article. I cannot, however, neglect to mention the special significance of the paradigm of *perichoresis* for the problem of the energy of rest. *Perichoresis*, or the extra-temporal circulation of being between the three divine Persons, is neither movement nor unmoved "dead repose." It is rest, saturated with divine energy, which is not the energy of movement or dynamism, but that of complete perfection and fullness, that is to say, energy replete with all the features that Aristotle (and Bibikhin) attribute to the energy of rest, or the energy-entelechy. One might say, therefore, that *perichoresis is none other than the Christian remolding of the Aristotelian first mover and of its energy of rest.*

⁸ The distinguishing feature of the concept of energy in Orthodox Patristics are discussed in more detail in my study "Lichnost' i energiya v bogoslovii o. Ioanna Meyendorffa i v sovremennoy filosofii" (Horuzhy 2012: 289–302).

Nonetheless, divine energies are present, also, in the world and in the human, where they display other features, insofar as they participate in human existence, which Christianity thinks through in a way that is quite distinct from that of antiquity. The ancient cosmos is, by far, not the same thing as Christian Creation, and the key difference between them is the specific dynamism of the Christian world. As a result of the event of the Fall (which is absent from ancient ontology), the existence of the world is represented as the drama of being, with the key events of Creation, Fall, Incarnation, and Reunification with God. Now, such existence is realized in the element of processuality, or dynamism. According to the Orthodox teaching, the human being forms their own constitution, striving and ascent to divinization, that is, to a union with God precisely in His energies. In this ascent, the human first reaches an encounter with divine energies, or synergies. Following this encounter, the human becomes more transparent for these energies, more open to their actions or influences. Now, on the highest steps of this ascent, it is divine, rather than human, energies that realize the transformation and then the overcoming” of human essence. As Meyendorff writes, in this spiritual-anthropological process, “divine energy is that which makes possible the vision of God and communion with God” (Meyendorff 1975b: 144), such that it becomes clear that this energy, immanently driving the highest steps of the ascent to divinization, is not the energy of rest. It is not what Bibikhin calls “realized being, which is full in itself, full with itself, and is a goal for itself.” In Hesychastic practice, in the ascent to synergy and divinization, divine energy is not expressed as the self-possessing and autotelic fullness, but as what participates in the encounter, in the mutual openness and self-giving of God and human, as the “correspondence of love” (Meyendorff 1975b).

As we see, the Christian remolding of Aristotelian energy is quite significant. In the description above, it includes two main aspects. First, the concept of energy is introduced into a cardinal new discourse, namely the discourse of personal being-communication, where it receives another system of ties, including those to many concepts, principles, and paradigms that are unknown and foreign to Aristotle’s metaphysics. Second, the new discourse corresponds to a different ontology, presupposing an actual break between the uncreated divine being and created being as presence. This, in turn, provokes even deeper, inner changes. The concept of energy in Aristotle is complex, complexly structured, and, in its Christian remolding, its configuration is altered. As Bibikhin correctly insists, the previous ancient configuration was defined by the primacy of the energy of rest. *However, in the Christian configuration, there is a sort of inversion: as a result of the strictly dynamic nature of created and fallen being, another energy is foregrounded, notably that which Heidegger qualified as “something on the way” and that, as energeia ateleis, is distinct from the energy of the telos, or entelechy.* It is this other energy that plays the main role in the actualization of the relation between God and human, in the

ascent to synergy and divinization. It is also crucially important that such fullness belongs only to the eschatological dimension of created being, or «the future century of life,” or “the Eighth day,” following the expressions of Maximus the Confessor. That is the firm position of Christian consciousness: all the fullness of divinization, of union with God, is inaccessible in empirical being, which is, precisely, what the famous aphorism of St. Paul, “seeing through a glass, darkly,” is about (1 Cor. 13, 12). Because “the other energy” is also present in Aristotle’s conception of energy, the transition to the new configuration does not contradict the conception’s foundations, but, rather, signifies a broader use of those possibilities for modification that are already implicit in it. This conception is exceptionally multifaceted, rich, *heuristically productive*, and many different versions of energeticism can be created on its basis, in addition to those already elaborated by its author.

Nonetheless, Bibikhin is more Aristotelian than Aristotle himself. Having acknowledged, as though *pro forma*, the existence not only of energy as fullness but also of another energy in the Aristotelian conception, he simultaneously leaves practically no space for the latter and systematically equates energy as such, to the energy of rest. It is already obvious that such an attitude leads him to directly deny the Christian configuration of the concept of energy. Everything Bibikhin says about Palamas’s energy (and, more broadly, about energy in Christian theology) clearly shows that, in his opinion, there has never been any “Christian remolding” of this concept. He sometimes invokes the formulation “Orthodox energeticism,” carrying in itself the idea of such remolding, but he always mentions it with skepticism, a sort of disdain, and irony.⁹ He either ignores or rejects all the elements of remolding, which have pointed out here, having negatively evaluated them. . In the first place, this tendency pertains to the main point, i.e., to the integration of energy into a personalist conception of being. Bibikhin generally avoids the concept of personality, which he deems to be philosophically dubious, since it is absent from ancient thought, for which the face is closer. He writes: “We ought to remember that, compared to the clarity of an open face, personality is a dissimulating formation” (Bibikhin 2010: 398). In a similar manner, he elides the entire discourse of personality. Personal communication, consciousness, identity—all these are, for the philosopher, doubtful, impure concepts, developing on the field of the disdained class of “theologizing philosophers and philosophizing theologians.” Finally, and to an even greater degree, he ignores the dynamism of Christian creation and Christian ontology, thanks to which the energy of rest is displaced from its position of primacy. In sum, any deviation of the energy in Palamas from

⁹ Cf. “A welcome shelter is offered by the Orthodox energeticism. It indicates the immovable truth and reassures consciousness” (Bibikhin 2010: 415).

the energy in Aristotle, (let alone the concept comprehended in an ultra-Aristotelian way, with a hypertrophied primacy of the energy of rest) is taken as a proof of guilt and as a pretext for passing a negative judgment and negating Palamas's teaching.

From what I have discussed above, broader conclusions also follow. What has been detected in the problem of divine essence pertains, on the whole, to the entire theme of energy: behind Bibikhin's treatment of Palamas, is his relation not so much to Palamas himself, as to the Orthodox tradition or even to Christianity as such. Here, the general philosophical outlooks and the aspirations, as well as the customary features of the philosopher's life-world are revealed.

Indeed, the exaggerated affirmation of primacy, as far as the energy of rest is concerned, is applicable to the Christian context and thought, meaning, as we have seen, that the dynamic of being is negated, together with the ontological dynamism of Christian reality. What comes through in this negation is the obvious, not-so-hidden tendency toward removing differences between the ancient and Christian ontologies. Now, such a tendency is very significant, as it carries numerous and serious implications. Let me immediately state the main, central point. I have already discussed the way fullness appears in Bibikhin in the form of the realization of being in its entirety. And so, the tendency toward the merging of ontologies causes *the fullness of being to appear accessible and to show itself as "the fullness here."* The philosopher writes, "Aristotelian energy, which is also essence, which is also *eidōs*, fullness, and realization, is not "there"; it is not in "transcendence" [...but] it [...] is here, just as the world and things are here, though still closer to us than any things" (Bibikhin 2010: 303). I think that this statement is the key to Bibikhin's entire philosophy. He insisted more than once that philosophy has its place, its rights not only to discussions but also to feelings, and in cases of fullness, instead of defining it or providing logical criteria, he sent us back precisely to a feeling. In my view, in this point one glimpses the very pathos of Bibikhin's philosophy, expressed not so much in a philosophical thesis as directly in a philosophical feeling. This is *the feeling of being*, which, as we now understand, he implied in his translation of *Dasein* (the translation he insisted upon): *here-being* (*vot-bytie*). Bibikhin's feeling of being is a feeling that says, "*Being is here! Here it is!*" It is before me and in me, and one only needs to muster all the possible strength to feel this "here," entering into it.

From this, many conclusions follow. Regardless of all his charm, this feeling of being, in its religious dimension, belongs to the ancient rather than the Christian world. I have just pointed out that, for a Christian consciousness, the fullness of divinization is of a strictly eschatological nature. In our "here," it is inaccessible, and a direct answer to the philosopher's reflection on "the fullness of here" may be found in the words of Gregory of Nazianzus: "I embarked on a path in order to conceive of God [...] having gathered myself in myself as much as possible, I climbed a mountain. But,

when I cast my gaze, I barely saw the back of God (Ex. 33:22, 23) [...]. I am contemplating [...] one extremity, extending toward us” (St. Gregory of Nazianzus 1912: 393). A contemporary Hesychast, Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov) adds to this the evidence derived from spiritual practice: “A mortal body cannot tolerate this.” Thus, the ancient feeling of being excludes Christian eschatology, the eschatological dimension, the eschatological hues of the Christian religious and mundane feeling. It equally excludes discussions of the ontological event of the Fall and the notion of fallen, created being, since, in theological discourse, the inaccessibility of fullness, when it comes to divinization, is interpreted as the outcome of the predicate of fallenness, the fallen nature of being-here.

In fact, one will never find in Bibikhin either eschatological discourse or the discourse of a fallen state. Instead, his feeling of being, the feeling of fullness, leads to a representation of the Christian world and experience in accord with this feeling. In other words, it leads to the erasure of boundaries between Christianity and antiquity. This tendency marks many of Bibikhin’s theses and many characteristics of his thought. Minimally and unwillingly, he acknowledges the fundamental differences between the Christian and the ancient, or pagan, consciousness and outlook. He refers to the neo-Platonists as “the so-called pagans,” as though taking the very term “paganism” in quotation marks. Palamas’s thought, along with the Byzantine theology in its entirety, are without discussion, automatically subsumed in the category “Christian neo-Platonism.” Bibikhin also associates the mystic-ascetic experience of Orthodoxy, i.e., the Hesychastic experience, with neo-Platonic currents. That is what his feeling of being dictates: if *being is here*, then on the way to its fullness, to divinization, one need not overcome any ontological ruptures. One must only feel the fullness, or, what amounts to the same thing, to experience a *change of vision*. Such a change is attained in contemplation and ecstasy, which exactly corresponds to neo-Platonic mysticism. Based on this model, Bibikhin also interprets Hesychasm, in particular ascribing to the Hesychastic experience the neo-Platonic paradigm of *haplosis*, simplification [cf. “Ascent and divinization are simplification” (Bibikhin 2010: 140)]. More than that, for him, the example is the only and universal one. In the seminar “The Diaries of Leo Tolstoy,” he transfers on Tolstoy’s spiritual experience (a strictly individualist experience of a modern person) my interpretation of the Hesychastic experience. (Bibikhin 2012: 288–297). And, since Hesychasm is subordinated to the neo-Platonic paradigm,¹⁰ in

¹⁰ In order not to interrupt this narration, let me indicate, by way of a footnote, that this interpretation of Hesychasm, corresponding to old theoretical position, is recognized as misguided in the contemporary study of Hesychasm and of spiritual practices. Hesychasm is a holistic practice of self, oriented toward a personalist *Telos*, as opposed to the impersonal One of the pagan spiritual practices, and it corresponds to a principally different paradigm of mystical experience. In this paradigm, in particular, a

the end, ancient spirituality appears as the only and universal method of spiritual life, the current of human spiritual experience for all epochs. This way, in the erasure of the boundaries separating the ancient and the Christian worlds, the priority of antiquity is asserted.

Quite often, the European philosophical tradition is characterized as a return to antiquity, the reunification with antiquity after a long period of separation from it in the Middle Ages. Heidegger corrects the commonly accepted view, finding that in classical metaphysics a return was insufficient or even illusory. He concludes that a genuine reunification with antiquity is still a task for contemporary thought—indeed, a difficult and vast task. He conveys its essence through a formula encountered in Nietzsche: *Schrittweises Wiedergewinnen des antiken Bodens. Step by step, to conquer ancient ground*. Bibikhin also cites this formula and eagerly uses the discourse of war, talking about the life of culture and spirit. As is the case in many other things, he joins Heidegger in the way of comprehending the main philosophy task, and his own philosophy actively participates in its resolution. Nietzsche's formula fits ideally his concept of energy. Through it, he leads a campaign, conducts a veritable war, using any allowed and forbidden means, with battle cries, for the return and the primacy of the energy of rest. No doubt, this is the conquest, step by step, of ancient ground. In Bibikhin's campaign, he acts as a comrade of Nietzsche and Heidegger; however, in contrast to them, he conducts the campaign on new territory, where it has not been conducted before, namely the territory of Orthodox thought, of the discourse that pertains to Eastern Christianity.

The philosopher's plans presupposed the unfolding of the campaign on yet another territory, which is extremely important—the territory of the contemporary problems of energy and, more broadly, of our civilization's contemporary condition. In the lecture course "Energy," we find his starting positions for this campaign. Bibikhin really considered his address to the contemporary "race for energy" to be the conquest of ancient ground, akin to the struggle for reestablishing ancient, harmonious relations to nature. He also announces such plans in his very interesting lecture course "The Wood(s)," with the attention it pays to the world of animals. If only the philosopher had the time to unfold this campaign, a unique experience of radically ecological philosophy, or, perhaps, of "deep ecology" on an ancient foundation would have formed.

Another point is worth mentioning. Developing on this territory, Bibikhin's philosophy of energy would have inevitably formed relations with other parts of his philosophy, while actualizing its fundamental role, serving as a united ideational base for the entire corpus of his philosoph-

radically different role is played by the *method*, which is why a vast majority of Bibikhin's comments on method, applied to Hesychastic experience, turn out to be equally misguided. Cf., for instance (Horuzhy 2012).

ical thought. In conclusion, I must say that this corpus is of an unusual and impressive breadth, as it includes philosophy of language and philosophy of right, philosophy of culture and of property, studies in the history of philosophy and in the works of select philosophers, as well as an independent and original hermeneutics... The philosopher's output almost encompasses the entire universe of philosophy. There are enormous riches before us, bequeathed to us by Vladimir Bibikhin.

Losev, who was so close to Bibikhin, finished his voluminous study of Solovyov with simple words: *thanks be to him*. That is how I would also like to conclude these few words about the thought of my friend. Thanks be to him.

P.S. Behind the standard style of this article, hides the fact that this text is not an academic one, but is, more accurately, a kind of "spiritual exercise" in combining un-combinable tasks.

I am his friend, who was destined to live for some time after his death, and I've always sensed that we must live for our deceased, represent them on earth, so that, through us, in us, their presence could continue. "Now he cannot by himself, so I must for him," for him *to be here*.

But I am also a philosopher, who has always been not only his interlocutor but also his opponent, and in this text I must be, precisely, a philosopher.

All this is very strange.

I do not know how it has turned out.

Translated by Michael Marder

Bibliography

- Aristotle (1924). *Aristotle's Metaphysics*, ed. W.D. Ross. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Bibikhin, Vladimir (2012). *Dnevnik L'va Tolstogo* [The Diaries of Leo Tolstoy]. St. Petersburg: Ivan Limbach Publishing House.
- Bibikhin, Vladimir (2010). *Energiya* [Energy]. Moscow: St. Thomas Institute of Philosophy, Theology, and History.
- Bradshaw, David (2004). *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and a Division of the Christian World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Florovsky, Georges (1931). *Vostochnye otsy IV veka* [The Eastern Fathers of the Fourth Century]. Paris.
- Gilson, Étienne (2011). *Dukh srednevekovoy filosofii* [The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy]. Moscow: St. Thomas Institute of Philosophy, Theology, and History.
- Gregory of Nazianzus (1912). "Slovo 28 (O bogoslovii vtoroe)." In *Tvoreniya v 2-kh tomakh*. Vol. 1. St. Petersburg: P.P. Soikin Publishing House.

Bibikhin, Heidegger, and Palamas on the Problem of Energy

- Heidegger, Martin (1981). "Aristoteles, Metaphysik IX 1–3. Von Wesen und Wirklichkeit der Kraft." In *Gesamtausgabe*. Vol. 33. Frankfurt Am Maine: Vittorio Klostermann.
- Heidegger, Martin (2002). "Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie." In *Gesamtausgabe*. Vol. 18. Frankfurt am Maine: Vittorio Klostermann.
- Heidegger, Martin (1995). *On the Essence and Concept of phusis in Aristotle's Physics B-1*. Moscow: Medium.
- Horuzhy, Sergey (2012). *Issledovaniya po isikhastskoy traditsii* [Investigations in the Hesychastic tradition]. Vol. 2. St. Petersburg: Izdatelstvo Russkoi Khristianskoi Akademii.
- John Cassian the Roman (1993). *Pisaniya* [Writings]. Holy Trinity Sergiyeva Lavra: RFM. *Acts of the Constantinople Synod of 1351, against Barlaam and Akindynos*, quoted in Losev, Aleksey Fedorovich (1993). *Ocherki antichnogo simvolizma i mifologii* [Studies in Ancient Symbolism and Mythology]. Moscow: Mysl.
- Losev, Alexey Fedorovich (1999). *Filosofia Imeni* [Philosophy of Name]. Moscow: Exmo.
- Meyendorff, John (1975a). *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*. London: Mowbrays.
- Meyendorff, John (1975b). *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*. Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press.
- Meyendorff, John (1997). *Zhizn' i Trudy svyatitelya Grigoriya Palamy: Vvedenie i izuchenie* [The Life and Works of St. Gregory Palamas: Introduction and Study]. St. Petersburg: Vizantinorossika.
- Ware, Timothy (1985). *The Orthodox Church*. New York & London: Penguin Books.
- Zizioulas, John (2012). *Obschenie i inakovost': Novye ocherki o lichnosti i Tserkvi* [Communication and Otherness: New Studies of Personality and the Church]. Moscow: BBI.