

## GREGORY PALAMAS' READING OF A SEVENTH-CENTURY PSEUDO-ATHANASIAN HOMILY

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**ABSTRACT.** During the Palamite controversy of the fourteenth century, the works of the great Fathers of the Church were scoured by both sides of the controversy, which sought to ground their teaching in recognized authorities. Of these works, one of the most frequently cited by Palamites was a pseudonymous *Homily on the Annunciation* attributed to Saint Athanasius the Great and generally held to have its origin in the seventh century. This article analyzes the *Homily's* range of use among the Palamite party before focusing on its most influential section, which discusses those things “perceived and named theologically around God” as contributing to “the totality and fullness of divinity.” It examines Gregory Palamas’ use of these terms in his own theological system and then considers how his system may serve to clarify a unique and theologically suspect etymological connection contained within the *Homily*, deriving οὐσία from ἰοία.

**Keywords:** late Byzantine theology, essence and energies, unity and multiplicity, cataphasis and apophasis, pseudo-Athanasian corpus, *Nachleben* of late antique and Byzantine writings

The *Homily on the Annunciation* (CPG 2268, inc. Τοὺς θείους ἱεροκήρυκας οὐ πρὸς τὴν ἀσθένειαν τῆς ἀκροάσεως δεῖ ἀποβλέπειν, hereafter *Homily*)<sup>1</sup> is a little-studied seventh-century Byzantine sermon, purportedly by Saint Athanasius of Alexandria, but now almost unanimously recognized as spurious.<sup>2</sup> Regardless

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudo-Athanasius, *Sermo in Annuntiationem Deiparae*, PG 28, 917–940.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of these claims, see Martin Jugie, “Deux homélies patristiques pseudépigraphes: Saint Athanase sur l’Annonciation; Saint Modeste de Jérusalem sur la Dormition,” *Échos d’Orient* 39.199–200 (1941): 283–289; Roberto Caro, “La Homiletica Mariana Griega en el Siglo V. II: Homilias pseudo-epigraficas,” *Marian Library Studies* 4 (1972): 545–554.

of its authenticity, the work would not only find its way into late Byzantine *florilegia* (some of which are still extant)<sup>3</sup> but would most notably become an important proof-text during the Palamite controversy as a genuine homily of Saint Athanasius the Great. Sections of the *Homily* were first used by Gregory Palamas across many works, but it can also be traced in the works of the emperor-turned-monk John (Joasaph) VI Kantakouzenos and Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos (e.g., *Antirrhetics against Gregoras*). The *Homily's* standing would later be cemented forever thanks to its double citation by Kokkinos in the *Tomos* issued by the 1351 Council at the Blachernai palace, which sought to put the controversy to rest for good. Likely due to its profile being raised during this dispute, the *Homily* would go on to be used by various theological authors of the Palamite persuasion through the fall of Constantinople, including Neilos Kabasilas and Makarios Makres. It survives in liturgical use today as an appointed reading in the lectionary of Vatopedi Monastery to be read on the eve of the feast of the Annunciation.<sup>4</sup>

This article will first provide a survey of the range of use of the three most-utilized sections of the *Homily* in order to underline the importance of the work among Palamite authors. It will then focus on the first of these sections, an excerpt that lists the “things around God” that cannot be identified with his essence, examining the aspects of it that speak to points of conflict in the Palamite controversy. Next, the article will select instances where Palamas comments at length on the excerpt in question in order to analyze how he offers greater clarity and definition to the homilist’s teaching regarding “the fullness and totality of the divinity” seen in the names that are “perceived and named theologically” around the persons of the Holy Trinity. Finally, it will address

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<sup>3</sup> E.g., *Vaticanus gr.* 705, copied in the 1360s in Philotheos Kokkinos’ hesychast circles. On this *florilegium*, copied in other fourteenth-century manuscripts, see Basile Markesinis, “Un florilège composé pour la défense du Tome du Concile de 1351,” in *Philohistôr. Miscellanea in honorem Caroli Laga septuagenarii*, eds. Antoon Schoors and Peter Van Deun (Leuven: Peeters, 1994), 469–493; Daniele Bianconi, “La controversia palamitica. Figure, libri, testi e mani,” *Segno e testo* 6 (2008): 337–376, at 366–370; Antonio Rigo, “Il Monte Athos e la controversia palamitica dal Concilio del 1351 al Tomo sinodale del 1368. I. Il Tomo sinodale del 1368,” in *Gregorio Palamas e oltre. Studi e documenti sulle controversie teologiche del XIV secolo bizantino*, ed. Rigo (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2004), 57; Mihail Mitrea, “Novel Insights on the Marginal Notes and Editorial Practice of Philotheos Kokkinos,” in *Le livre manuscrit grec: écritures, matériaux, histoire. Actes du IX<sup>e</sup> Colloque international de Paléographie grecque*, eds. Marie Cronier and Brigitte Mondrain (*TM* 24.1) (Paris: Association des Amis du Centre d’Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, 2020 [2021]), 317–353, at 326–327.

<sup>4</sup> Nicodemus the Hagiorite, *Συναξαριστής τῶν δώδεκα μηνῶν τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ*, vol. 2 (Athens: Νικολαΐδου, 1868), 54, n. 3.

how what Palamas has to offer in these works helps clarify a linguistic ambiguity contained in the original *Homily* that is situated alongside this key excerpt but is omitted by Palamas.

### **Range of Palamite Usage of the *Homily***

While many sections of this *Homily* attributed to “the great Athanasius” would find their way into late Byzantine theological texts, there are primarily three that would be cited in the context of the Palamite controversy:

1. The first half of section III, which concerns the attributes “around the essence” and their relationship to the essence of God.<sup>5</sup>
2. A small section of section V, which addresses the “single essential activity of the Godhead.”<sup>6</sup>
3. The end of section IX, which again addresses theological attributes, that these are “around the essence,” and that they indicate both the human and divine natures in Christ.<sup>7</sup>

The table below serves to showcase the authors and works that utilize these respective sections of the *Homily*. As shown below, these sections were only rarely quoted in full. I have limited this table to those Palamites who were immediately involved in the controversy and have thus excluded the use of the *Homily* by (1) authors who predate the controversy, such as Niketas Seides, (2) anti-Palamites, such as Nikephoros Gregoras and John Kyparissiotis, and (3) Palamites who postdate the controversy, such as Makarios Makres, Neilos Kabasilas, and others. For comprehensiveness, I have included two instances where Palamas cites the *Homily*'s prologue, although he uses it to support rhetorical, rather than theological, points.

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<sup>5</sup> Pseudo-Athanasius, *Sermo in Annuntiationem*, PG 28, 920B2-D9. See my translation in the appendix.

<sup>6</sup> Pseudo-Athanasius, *Sermo in Annuntiationem*, PG 28, 924B6-8.

<sup>7</sup> Pseudo-Athanasius, *Sermo in Annuntiationem*, PG 28, 929D2-15.

	<i>Prologue</i>	Gregory Palamas	<i>Letter to Symeon the Nomophylax</i> 13 (PS, vol. 2, 407.31–408.8) <i>Letter to Dionysios the Monk</i> 6 (PS, vol. 2, 483.30–484.3)
Selection <b>A</b>	Section III	Gregory Palamas	<i>Letter III to Akindynos</i> 9 (PS, vol. 1, 302.10-14) <i>Letter to John Gabras</i> 6 (PS, vol. 2, 333.15-23) <i>Letter to Athanasios of Kyzikos</i> 5 (PS, vol. 2, 415.13-25) <i>Letter to Dionysios the Monk</i> 10, 11 (PS, vol. 2, 488.9-14) <i>Letter to Anna Palaiologina</i> 3 (PS, vol. 2, 546.16-20) <i>Theophanes</i> 9 (PS, vol. 2, 231.22-27) <i>That It Is Barlaam and Akindynos Who Divide the Godhead</i> 2 (PS, vol. 2, 263.15–264.7) <i>One Hundred and Fifty Chapters</i> 114 (Sinkewicz, 214.14-19) <i>Against Nikephoros Gregoras</i> 4.25, 4.65 (PS, vol. 4, 354.26-29, 376.13-18) <i>Antirrhetics against Akindynos</i> 2.21.100, 5.26.108 (PS, vol. 3, 157.9-13, 370.3-5)
		Philotheos Kokkinos	<i>Tomos of 1351</i> , 48 (Lauritzen, 214.1317–215.1330) <i>Antirrhetics against Gregoras</i> 5, 8, 11 (Kaimakis, 138.499–139.514, 306.1547-1551, 312.1750–313.1761, 439.1035-1039)
		John Kantakouzenos	<i>Refutations of Prochoros Kydones</i> 1.26, 1.37, 2.13 (Voordeckers, Tinnefeld, 37.50–38.65, 53.22-27, 129.41-21) <i>Disputation with the Latin Patriarch Paul, Letter</i> 1.6 (Voordeckers, Tinnefeld, 183.16-30)
Selection <b>B</b>	Section V	Gregory Palamas	<i>Theophanes</i> 30 (PS, vol. 2, 258.11-13) <i>Apodictic Treatises on the Procession of the Holy Spirit</i> 2.69 (PS, vol. 1, 141.5-8) <i>Against Nikephoros Gregoras</i> 1.29 (PS, vol. 4, 253.4-6) <i>Antirrhetics against Akindynos</i> 2.19.92, 6.23.85 (PS, vol. 3, 150.18-22, 451.9-12)
		Philotheos Kokkinos	<i>Tomos of 1351</i> , 35 (Lauritzen, 203.907-911) <i>Antirrhetics against Gregoras</i> 8, 9 (Kaimakis, 264.172-175)
Selection <b>C</b>	Section IX	John Kantakouzenos	<i>Refutations of Prochoros Kydones</i> 1.26 (Voordeckers, Tinnefeld, 38.66-70) <i>Disputation with the Latin Patriarch Paul, Letter</i> 1.6 (Voordeckers, Tinnefeld, 183.31-35)
		Philotheos Kokkinos	<i>Antirrhetics against Gregoras</i> 6 (Kaimakis, 205.1216–206.1239)

### Content of *Selection A*

Although each of these excerpts and their use by Palamites is interesting and worthy of study, this article will limit itself to *Selection A*, the most widely-cited of the various sections of the *Homily*, a translation of which I have included in the appendix. Examining this excerpt closely, it is no surprise that it was so widely used by Palamas and his theological inheritors, especially with a name of the caliber of Saint Athanasius appended to it. The standard excerpt begins with a Trinitarian confession bearing the marks of previous controversies, teaching “one God in three hypostases, having one essence, one power, and one activity (ἐνέργεια).”<sup>8</sup> What attracted Palamas’ interest was the phrase that follows, “and we contemplate everything else around the essence (περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν)<sup>9</sup> in theological writings and hymns,”<sup>10</sup> which the homilist follows with a list of divine attributes. The list begins with a series of *alpha* privatives, such as “uncreated, incorporeal, timeless,” which Palamas in one location abbreviates as καὶ ὅσα ἀποφατικῶς ἐπὶ Θεοῦ λέγεται, and then advances to various titles given by Scripture to God, which Palamas correspondingly abbreviates as καὶ ὅσα καταφατικῶς ἐπὶ Θεοῦ λέγεται.<sup>11</sup> Although the homilist does not explicitly connect these lists of attributes to the apophatic and cataphatic dimensions of theology (in this case quite literally “what is said about God”), Palamas makes the implicit explicit.<sup>12</sup> For his part, the homilist treats the attributes all together as a list of “preeminent descriptions and causes of being” (κατὰ τε ὑπεροχὴν καὶ αἰτιολογίαν) which are not essence, but *around* the essence, and, when they are considered together, “the totality and fullness of divinity” (ἄθροισμα καὶ πλήρωμα θεότητος).<sup>13</sup> All of these may be said equally of any of the Three Persons of the Trinity, since they possess equality (ἰσία) of all qualities.<sup>14</sup> This reference to ἰσία is frequently included in Palamite citations of the text to support the claim that these realities are common to the Trinity. At the same time, they tend to omit the author’s later, somewhat questionable, connection of ἰσία to οὐσία, to which I will return below.

<sup>8</sup> Pseudo-Athanasius, *Sermo in Annuntiationem*, PG 28, 920B2-4.

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of Palamas’ identification of the divine energies with “the things around God,” see Tikhon Pino, *Essence and Energies: Being and Naming God in St Gregory Palamas* (London: Routledge, 2022), 63–66.

<sup>10</sup> Pseudo-Athanasius, *Sermo in Annuntiationem*, PG 28, 920B4-5.

<sup>11</sup> Palamas, *That It Is Barlaam and Akindynos Who Divide the Godhead 2*, PS, vol. 2, 263.15–264.7.

<sup>12</sup> On the relationship between cataphasis, apophasis, and the divine energies in Palamas, see Pino, *Essence and Energies*, 55–77.

<sup>13</sup> Pseudo-Athanasius, *Sermo in Annuntiationem*, PG 28, 920B8-9.

<sup>14</sup> Pseudo-Athanasius, *Sermo in Annuntiationem*, PG 28, 920D4-6.

The usefulness of such a concise and theologically-rich excerpt for Palamas' project is manifest. In this one short passage we find a defense of at least four points critical to the Palamite cause:

1. A distinction between the essence and what is "around the essence."
2. An identification of these theological names (τὰ κατὰ θεολογίαν) that includes both apophatic and cataphatic terms, power, and energy, while leaving the door open for many others with the phrase καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα.
3. The acknowledgment of a common name, "divinity," which is not equated solely with the divine nature or essence.
4. The ascription of these attributes to the Three Persons of the Trinity equally.

### **Palamas' Use of *Selection A***

That Palamas found at least twelve occasions to use this excerpt is therefore not surprising. To get a sense of the variety of purposes that Palamas found for *Selection A*, I offer the following list, which is by no mean exhaustive:

1. To indicate that when Christ says, "all that the Father has is mine" (Jn 16:15), he is not referring to created things, but rather to all those things "around the essence," which, like the essence, are uncreated (*Letter to John Gabras*, *Letter to Dionysios the Monk*).<sup>15</sup>
2. To affirm that the Three Persons of the Trinity can be called "divine life," an activity which is uncreated and something other than essence (*150 Chapters*).<sup>16</sup>
3. To support arguments that the divine powers and activities are neither the nature nor the hypostasis, but are something distinct, uncreated, and common to the persons of the Holy Trinity (*Against Nikephoros Gregoras*; *Antirrhetics against Akindynos*).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Palamas, *Letter to John Gabras* 6, *PS*, vol. 2, 333.5-23, and *Letter to Dionysios the Monk* 10, 11, *PS*, vol. 2, 487.10-489.13.

<sup>16</sup> Palamas, *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* 114, ed. Robert Sinkewicz (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1988), 212-215.

<sup>17</sup> Palamas, *Against Nikephoros Gregoras* 4.65, *PS*, vol. 4, 376.6-18, and *Antirrhetics against Akindynos* 2.21.100, *PS*, vol. 3, 156.29-157.23.

4. To show, contrary to Barlaam, that “the essence, the willing faculty, the power, the activity, and suchlike are the single divinity of the Three Persons [...] not being one, indistinguishable from one another and only essence, but all observed in each of the Three Persons” (*Letter III to Akindynos*).<sup>18</sup>
5. To counter Akindynos' claim that the Son and Spirit are the only realities that can be called uncreated energies or powers of the Father (*Tomos of 1351*).<sup>19</sup>

Often, these citations are offered as a kind of bibliographic reference for Palamas' teaching in a recognized authority and are thus not further commented on. On several occasions, however, Palamas engages with the text at greater depth. One topic that occupies his attention across several works is the definition given by the homilist for the divine names: the names are (1) the “totality and fullness of divinity” (ἄθροισμα καὶ πλήρωμα θεότητος) and (2) “what is perceived and named theologically” (θεωρούμενα καὶ θεολογούμενα) about the Three Persons of the Trinity. In the following, this article addresses Palamas' use of these two formulae and shows how his theology might be used to give clarity to a questionable concept introduced alongside them, namely the concept of ἰσία.

### **That Which Is Perceived and Named around God as the “Fullness of the Godhead”**

The purpose of *Selection A*, according to the homilist himself, is to “fill out” his teaching of the Trinity in its “totality and fullness,” advancing beyond the classical dogmatic definitions of essence and hypostasis which he had just expressed in the paragraph prior in order to address “everything else contemplated around the essence in theological writings and hymns.” To affirm that there exist realities besides the essence and hypostasis which may fill out this teaching he points to Colossians 2:9, “for in him the whole fullness of

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<sup>18</sup> Palamas, *Letter III to Akindynos* 8–9, *PS*, vol. 1, 301.22–303.6.

<sup>19</sup> *Tomos of 1351*, 48, ed. Frederick Lauritzen in *The Great Councils of the Orthodox Churches. Decisions and Synodika. From Constantinople 861 to Constantinople 1872*, ed. Alberto Melloni (Corpus Christianorum Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Generaliumque Decreta, IV/1) (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 214.1301–215.1337. Although Philotheos Kokkinos was the author of the *Tomos*, it nevertheless bears the mark of Palamas' influence and demonstrates another utility this excerpt offered the Palamites.

divinity (πλήρωμα θεότητας) dwells bodily,” identifying this “fullness” with the qualities he lists. According to the homilist, it is to this fullness and these qualities that Christ refers when he says to the Father, “all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them” (Jn 17:10), showing by this verse that they are common to the Holy Trinity and not held by any particular member alone. It is here, however, that the homilist seems to take a questionable turn, calling the equal possession of all the qualities *ἰσῖα*, a term which he connects etymologically to essence (*οὐσία*), subsequently appearing to indicate that an essence is somehow the sum of a number of equal constituent attributes. Apart from this, few of the above ideas are entirely peculiar to our homilist, finding precedent in Dionysios the Areopagite and others. Nevertheless, the language used is unique, and it is this which Palamas uses and expounds upon, providing clarity through his own theological system.

As noted above, the language of the *Homily* fits quite readily into Palamas’ theology so that the two end up serving each other reciprocally: the *Homily* serves to vindicate Gregory’s teaching and Gregory’s teaching serves to clarify the *Homily*. In the introduction to his work *That It Is Barlaam and Akindynos Who Divide the Godhead*,<sup>20</sup> Palamas reminds the reader that Barlaam and Akindynos have been synodically condemned because they taught two divinities: the uncreated divinity of the divine nature, on the one hand, and the created divinity, on the other, of the “radiance of the nature” (which the Lord revealed on Tabor) “and every divine power and activity and all of the things around the divine nature that are perceived and named theologically.” This final phrase, *θεωρούμενα καὶ θεολογούμενα*, Palamas borrows from the *Homily*, which he then quotes at length and interprets as the basis of his treatise, notably omitting the homilist’s discussion of *ἰσῖα-οὐσία*. Gregory’s interpretation is essentially a paraphrase which organizes, clarifies, and enriches the text with further patristic citation. Rather than the divided divinity of Barlaam and Akindynos, Palamas honors a single uncreated divinity in its fullness, which includes essence, power, energy, and everything contemplated (*θεωρουμένων*) around the essence, described (*θεολογουμένων*) cataphatically and apophatically. These two participles, which he has formed on the basis of Pseudo-Athanasius’ *θεωρούμενα καὶ θεολογούμενα*, serve to make apparent the relationship between what is perceived around God and the names given to what is perceived. The names have their origin in and point back to realities around God that have

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<sup>20</sup> Palamas, *That It Is Barlaam and Akindynos Who Divide the Godhead* 1–3, *PS*, vol. 2, 263.1–265.3.

been experienced by real people<sup>21</sup> – the original impetus behind the Hesychast Controversy.<sup>22</sup> At this point, Palamas offers a precise definition not found in Pseudo-Athanasius. Those things around the essence “naturally inhere in God without being essence.” While not necessarily a conceptual shift, it is at least a linguistic one from the language of “around” to “in,” which highlights another dimension of the relationship between these qualities and the divine essence. That is, they are natural, even somehow “in” the nature or essence, without being nature or essence. This also shows that the attributes of God are a part of God “as he is” (i.e., *ad intra*) and not only “as he relates to us” (i.e., *ad extra*). Palamas offers affirmative quotations from Saints Cyril of Alexandria and John of Damascus and then further clarifies, “Just as the hypostatic qualities (τὰ ὑποστατικά) are not hypostasis, but characteristics of hypostasis, so, too, are the natural qualities (τὰ φυσικά) not nature, but characteristics of nature.” Here, we may understand the terms “essence” and “nature” and “essential qualities” and “natural qualities” to be used interchangeably.<sup>23</sup> The names indicate the essence without being essence. They are essential without being essence, natural without being nature. This helps us clarify how the ambiguous interpretation of ἰσία might have been interpreted by Palamas.

### The Essential Qualities Perceived as One

On its face, the union of the attributes, which Pseudo-Athanasius calls ἰσία, coming together to form an essence, οὐσία, is problematic for Palamas' theology. After all, a central tenant for Palamas is that every essence possesses attributes and activities that are distinct from it. To say that the essence is somehow composed of attributes or activities would be to seriously misrepresent their relationship, at once marring the essence's incomposite simplicity and suggesting that attributes form essences instead of proceeding from them. This is no doubt the reason why this section is almost always cut short in Palamite writings, ending before the homilist connects ἰσία to οὐσία. We may find in Palamas,

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<sup>21</sup> For an analysis of the Palamite view of the mechanics behind this perception, see Alexandros Chouliaras, *The Anthropology of St Gregory Palamas: The Image of God, the Spiritual Senses, and the Human Body* (Studia Traditionis Theologiae 38) (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), 129–197.

<sup>22</sup> For a history of the controversy, see Norman Russell, “The Hesychast Controversy,” in *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium*, eds. Anthony Kaldellis and Niketas Siniosoglou (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 494–508.

<sup>23</sup> On the usage and interchangeability of these terms, see Pino, *Essence and Energies*, 66–67.

however, a lens of interpretation that safeguards an orthodox interpretation of this passage.

In his *Homily*, Pseudo-Athanasius rightly calls both essence and what is perceived and named around it *divinity*: “As we have been taught according to the rule of distribution, two or more concepts may receive a single designation. In this way, these names are [also] called both the totality and fullness of the divinity according to Scripture.”<sup>24</sup> Yet, from a Palamite perspective, the *Homily* risks subsuming the essential qualities of God into the essence when it asserts that “Essence is interpreted to mean that which is a constituent existence, the totality of its many constituent attributes possessing a single unity.”<sup>25</sup>

At this point, the Pseudo-Athanasian text proves problematic, in that it appears to identify the συστατική περίληψις of the attributes as the very make-up of essence.<sup>26</sup> Palamas maintains their distinction while including them both under the umbrella term “divinity.” “Divinity,” and not “essence,” is the all-encompassing name for Palamas, naming both essence and what is around the essence. Consciously or not, then, Palamas corrects the interpretation of Pseudo-Athanasius in his *Theophanes*, citing the *Homily* thus:

And if the totality of all those things [around God] are called divinity, the divinity of the Three Persons is also one – the essence, in other words, and the things around the essence that are perceived and named theologically, as the great Athanasius says in his festal sermon on the divine Annunciation.<sup>27</sup>

Here, Palamas chooses to juxtapose two concepts found in Pseudo-Athanasius, avoiding the problematic interpretation of the “totality” as the oneness of the divinity while affirming that divinity is both essence and what is perceived and named around it. For Palamite orthodoxy, the essential qualities inhere in the essence without somehow composing it, a fact that requires Palamas to clarify the *Homily* in a way that does not implicate Athanasius, pseudo- or otherwise, in heresy.

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<sup>24</sup> Pseudo-Athanasius, *Sermo in Annuntiationem*, PG 28, 920C6-9.

<sup>25</sup> Pseudo-Athanasius, *Sermo in Annuntiationem*, PG 28, 921A1-3.

<sup>26</sup> On the problem of energies as “constitutive differences,” see Pino, *Essence and Energies*, 149–152.

<sup>27</sup> Palamas, *Theophanes* 9, PS, vol. 2, 231.22-27.

In his *Third Letter to Akindynos*, Palamas, again with the help of Pseudo-Athanasius, looks to convince Akindynos that Barlaam is wrong to collapse “the essence, the faculty of will, the power, the energy, and suchlike” into something “one and indistinguishable from one another and only essence.”<sup>28</sup> Rather, they are all divinity, distinct but perceived (θεωρούμενα) equally in the Three Persons of the Trinity. To deny that these are all the “one, simple, and only uncreated divinity,” acknowledging only the essence, is to “mutilate the divinity,” and to divide it into “created and uncreated parts.” This language of mutilation of the divinity complements Pseudo-Athanasius’ definition of the things around the essence as being the “totality and fullness” of the divinity, for if they are its totality and fullness, to either incorporate them into one indistinguishable reality or to cut them off by making them into created realities would be to diminish this fullness, denying those things in which the Trinity is glorified.

One could easily see how a Barlaamite of the sort Palamas condemns in his *Third Letter to Akindynos* might read his own interpretation into the homilist’s interpretation of ἰσία-ούσία, i.e., collapsing all of the attributes into an indistinguishable essence. While Pseudo-Athanasius asserts that none of what is named around the essence can be called essence, and makes a point of distinguishing these realities from one another, he at the same time appears to indicate that, when considered altogether, these attributes also *form* the essence. Were a late Byzantine to ask for clarification regarding the words of Athanasius the Great, I would suggest that the etymological study of ἰσία-ούσία would be salvageable from the perspective of Palamite orthodoxy if one interpreted it to mean (1) that the totality of the things around the essence *indicate* the essence rather than compose it, or (2) that the essence is the unitive and originating principle of the essential attributes, rather than the other way around. Palamas and his associates, however, are able to avoid the question entirely, and perhaps wisely, by simply excluding this element from the discussion.

## Conclusion

Pseudo-Athanasius’ *Homily on the Annunciation* is an unusual and fascinating text that uses the established dogmatic orthodoxies of previous centuries as a springboard from which to explore all those other things perceived about and said of God in theological writing and hymnography. In the fourteenth

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<sup>28</sup> Palamas, *Letter III to Akindynos 9, PS*, vol. 1, 302.10–303.6.

century, the nature of those “things around God” would become the focus of dogmatic controversy, making the *Homily* excellent source material for Palamas and his associates in their defense of the divine powers and activities. Palamas’ use of the *Homily* served to both establish his teaching in a recognized source while also clarifying the *Homily*’s contents through the application of his theological system. Key lexicological borrowings used by Palamas include two definitions of the divine attributes: (1) as the “totality and fullness of the divinity,” which is not limited to the essence and hypostases alone; and (2) as the things that are “perceived and named theologically” around God, grounding the theology in the lived experience of the Church. Finally, although he does not address the question directly, Palamas’ theology may be used as a corrective lens through which to interpret questionable aspects of the *Homily*, namely any suggestion that the divine attributes are somehow constitutive of the essence.

**Appendix:** Translation of the *Homily on the Annunciation, section III*<sup>29</sup>

<p>[...] ἀλλ' ἓνα Θεὸν ἐν τρισὶν ὑποστάσεσι θεολογοῦντες, μίαν ἔχοντα τὴν οὐσίαν, καὶ τὴν δύναμιν, καὶ τὴν ἐνέργειαν, καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν θεωρεῖται θεολογούμενα καὶ ὑμνούμενα. Καὶ ἵνα τύπον δῶμεν τῷ λόγῳ, καὶ ἄθροισμα ἢ πλήρωμα, τὰ κατὰ θεολογίαν ἔχωμεν. Τί δὲ ταῦτά ἐστιν ἢ περὶ τί ταῦτα, καθεξῆς ἀκούσωμεν· ὅτι τὸ ἄκτιστον, τὸ ἀσώματον, τὸ ἄχρονον, τὸ ἀναρχον, τὸ αἶδιον, τὸ ἀτελεύτητον, τὸ ἄπειρον, τὸ αἰώνιον, τὸ ἄγνωστον, τὸ ἀνερμήνευτον, τὸ ἀσχημάτιστον, τὸ ἀνεξιχνίαστον, τὸ Θεὸν θεῶν λέγεσθαι αὐτόν, τὸ Κύριον κυρίων, τὸ Βασιλέα βασιλευόντων, τὸ παντοκράτορα, τὸ ποιητὴν, τὸ δημιουργόν, τὸ φῶς, τὸ ζῶν, τὸ ἅγιον, τὸ ἀγαθόν, τὸ ἀθάνατον, τὸ ἰσχυρόν, τὸ παντοδύναμον, καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα κατὰ τε ὑπεροχὴν καὶ αἰτιολογίαν, οὐχ ἕκαστον οὐσία λέγεται, ἀλλὰ περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν· ὡς ἐκ δύο καὶ πλειόνων ἐπὶ ἓν ἔχοντα τὴν ἀναφορὰν κατὰ τὸ ἐπιμεριζόμενον ἐμάθομεν, ἃ καὶ ἄθροισμα καὶ πλήρωμα θεότητος λέγεται κατὰ τὴν Γραφήν· οὐ κατὰ μίαν ὑπόστασιν μόνου ἀνάγοντα, ἀλλὰ καθ' ἑκάστην τῶν ἁγίων τριῶν ἐπίσης θεωρούμενα καὶ θεολογούμενα. Διὸ καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ μονογενὴς Θεὸς φησὶ· "Πάντα ὅσα ἔχει ὁ Πατὴρ, ἐμά ἐστι·" καὶ πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα λέγων· "Τὰ ἐμά πάντα σὰ ἐστί, καὶ τὰ σὰ ἐμά, καὶ δεδόξασμαι ἐν αὐτοῖς." Ἐν ἅπασιν γὰρ οἷς δοξάζεται ὁ Πατὴρ θεολογούμενος, ἐν αὐτοῖς δοξάζεται καὶ ὁ Υἱὸς καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον. Καὶ ἐντεῦθεν τέλειος Θεὸς ὁ Πατὴρ λέγεται, καὶ τέλειος Θεὸς ὁ Υἱός, καὶ τέλειος Θεὸς τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον. Ἐπεὶ περ μηδὲν ἐλλείπει τοῦ περὶ τὴν θεότητα πληρώματος ἕκαστον· ἀλλ' ἰσίαν ἔχει πάντων τῶν ἰδιωμάτων, ὧν ἐπίσης καὶ τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος θεωρεῖται. Ἐκ παραγωγῆς γὰρ τοῦ Ἰσοῦ, ἰσία λέγεται θηλυκῆ ἐκφορᾷ ἢ τῆς ἰσότητος τῶν πολλῶν συστατικῆ περιλήψις.</p>	<p>[...] but we theologize one God in three hypostases, having one essence, one power, and one activity, and we contemplate everything else around the essence in theological writings and hymns. In order to give form to this teaching in both its totality and fullness, we have certain theological names. And what these names are or what they are around we will hear in succession: uncreated, incorporeal, timeless, beginningless, everlasting, endless, boundless, eternal, unknowable, inexplicable, formless, incomprehensible, who is called God of gods, Lord of lords, Emperor of emperors, Almighty, Maker, Creator, Light, Life, Holy, Good, Immortal, Mighty, All-powerful, and every other preeminent description and cause of being, none of which is called essence, but are rather around the essence. As we have been taught according to the rule of distribution, two or more concepts may receive a single designation. In this way, these names are called both the totality and fullness of the divinity according to Scripture. These names do not pertain to one hypostasis only, but they are contemplated of and named theologically regarding each of the three. It is for this reason that the only-begotten God himself says, "All things that the Father has are mine" (Jn 16:15), and he addresses the Father, saying, "All things that are mine are yours, and all that are yours are mine, and I am glorified in them" (Jn 17:10). For in all of those names in which the Father is glorified in theology, in them, too, is the Son glorified, and the Holy Spirit. It thus follows that the Father is called perfect God, and the Son perfect God, and the Holy Spirit perfect God. For there is nothing lacking in the totality of what surrounds the godhead in any of them, but each possesses equality of all qualities, and the fullness of divinity is likewise contemplated in each of them. The constituent union of these many equally-held names is called 'equality,' which is derived from 'equal' in the feminine gender.</p>
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<sup>29</sup> Pseudo-Athanasius, *Sermo in Annuntiationem*, PG 28, 920B2-D9.

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