

**Antinomy of divine essence?  
Essence, energies, and the metaphysics of powers**

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The Church Fathers distinguished between the unknowable divine essence and knowable divine energies (Bradshaw 2004). This distinction, systematized by St. Gregory Palamas, plays a key role in modern Orthodox theology (Pino 2023). It is sometimes said that this distinction is antinomic and supports the paraconsistent interpretation of the logic of orthodoxy (Lourie 2014).

I will try to interpret this distinction in terms of contemporary analytic discussions in the metaphysics of powers. Some believe, like David Lewis, that properties and powers are distinct and therefore their relation is contingent, while others, such as John Hawthorne, believe that this relation is necessary since properties are reducible to powers.

It seems that the Church Fathers believed that essence and energies are related necessarily, but at the same time, they firmly believed that the divine essence is nevertheless unknowable. Therefore, Church Fathers adopted the view that essences and energies are at the same time distinct and necessarily related. A similar view in the metaphysics of powers can be found in the late works of Sydney Shoemaker.

I argue that there is nothing particularly inconsistent about this view. Church Fathers merely rejected the principle of identity of necessarily coextensive attributes. Hyperintensionality, however, does not entail paraconsistency.

**Bibliography**

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