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ΣΧΕΣΙΣ AND ΟΜΟΟΥΣΙΟΣ IN GREGORY OF NYSSA'S *CONTRA EUNOMIUM*: METAPHYSICAL CONTEST AND GAINS TO TRINITARIAN THOUGHT

1. G.C. Stead and the Accusation of Tritheism Made against the Trinitarian Theology of Gregory of Nyssa. A scholar as George Christopher Stead was capable of reinserting the theme of the philosophical sources of the Fathers into the much broader problem that the Fathers had to contend with for at least four centuries, namely, the fact of having to understand the new conception of God that was ushered in by the experience of Christ. With this event, a kind of "metaphysical revolution" occurs for believers, which would bring an entire civilization from the conception of a unique and transcendent divinity shared by Greek philosophy and Judaism, toward the assimilation of the ontological consequences that come from faith in the immanent communion between Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Consequently also anthropology had to change and there had to be a movement from the deification of man – "insofar as is possible" – according to the necessary and dialectical mode of ascension proposed from within a dualistic and graduated conception of being proper to the Platonic ontologies of the late antiquity, toward a conception of a gratuitous deification and gift of divine filiation proper to the logic of creation through Love and of salvation in the Logos incarnate.

Therefore, in his article *The Significance of the Homoousios*, published in "Studia Patristica" in 1961, Stead emphasizes how it would not make sense to seek to understand the Athanasius' meaning of divine οὐσία and ὁμοούσιος, starting from the definitions of the logic of the Academy**.** This Father never had the knowledge or the pretense to enter into the debates of the commentators concerning Aristotle's *Categories*, but rather he wanted to explain, through metaphors and parallelisms, the novelty of the knowledge of the divine being revealed by Jesus of Nazareth and kept by the apostolic tradition. Stead therefore writes:

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> "The question, whether the οὐσία that is common to Father and Son is πρώτη οὐσία or δευτέρα οὐσία, is misleading and should be avoided. For this antithesis, as we now understand it on the basis of Aristotle's Categories, was neither familiar to Athanasius, nor even applicable to the theological debates of his time"[1].

A little further on, the Cambridge professor specifies this unsuitability of such a move even better:

> "The relationship which Athanasius posits between Father and Son cannot be expressed in terms of a logic which was only constructed to deal with ordinary individual objects, the classes into which they fall, and the essential and accidental resemblances between them"[2].

Thus, the statement about Gregory of Nyssa in the article that Stead dedicated to the terminology of the Cappadocian a few years later, becomes particularly intriguing. In *Ontology and Terminology in Gregory of Nyssa*[3] he seems to have not forgotten what he affirmed with regard to Athanasius, ("it was more important to consider what was believed than to insist on a precise terminology"[4]) while he traces the Trinitarian thought of the Cappadocian Father, since he shows how even for the work of Gregory of Nyssa a detailed assessment of philosophical distinctions can become deeply inadequate. However, focusing on the problem of what he believes is lacking in the articulation between the divine simplicity of essence and the identification of the three persons, Stead seems to run the risk of losing the extraordinary wealth of the theological – and thus, metaphysical – contribution of Gregory. Let us proceed, then, to read what directly follows the 1976 article – its conclusions:

> „I would add that in his doctrine of the three hypostases Gregory uses two arguments which have no connection with the logic of universals and particulars. The first is that the names Father, Son and Spirit must each have a real «hypostasis», they must not be empty names. The second is that each person must have his own distinct «hypostasis», i.e. his own distinct manner of origination; this is of course contrary to what is normally found in the members of a species.
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> But does this interpretation of the three persons as individual members of a species give us an adequate theological picture of the Trinity? It has of course been frequently criticized as giving too little emphasis to the unity of the three persons; and I have tried to show that it rests upon a philological myth. But

[1] C.G. Stead, *The Significance of the Homoousios* (1961), in: idem, *Substance and illusion in the Christian Fathers*, London 1985, 411.

[2] Ibidem.

[3] Cf. idem, *Ontology and terminology in Gregory of Nyssa* (1976), in: idem, *Substance and Illusion in the Christian Fathers*, p. 107-127.

[4] Idem, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity*, Cambridge 1994, 162. This concept was already formulated in 1961 and subsequently recovered many times from the same author.

> I will end by submitting a rather different point. I think that we cannot do justice even to human individuality if we think of several individuals as possessing a common character, with certain distinguishing marks simply added to it; human individuality is rather the particular blend and proportion of common characteristics. A fortiori, any adequate doctrine of the three divine persons must somehow do justice to the doctrine of divine simplicity; it must not represent each person as a compound entity, composed of a common «ousia» plus distinguishing characteristics; it must seek to integrate these two facts, and show that the distinct persons represent distinct ways in which the one common «ousia» is developed and manifested. Gregory fails at this point because his philosophical equipment is not handled with the seriousness which is needed in order to do justice to his theological and Christian intuitions"[5].

We want to attempt to engage with this last statement by retrieving certain passages of Gregory from within the context of his theological debate with Eunomius; we will do this in order to see how the individuation of the divine Persons does not negate the cogency of the affirmation of the divine simplicity thanks to a common sense, somewhat pre-philosophical observation: the observation of the reciprocal dimension of the relation that is made known by the divine names that are revealed. We then see that it is precisely this relational character of reciprocity that allows for the interpretation of the difference of hypostases: not as being caused by characteristics that are added to the common essence, but rather as different ways in which the total self-giving of the same οὐσία is in the reciprocal relation of the loving subjects.

2. *Contra Eunomium* I 496-507: The πρὸς ἄλλελα σχέσις in the Ambit of Its Trinitarian Ontological Valence. It may help to first recall how Gregory of Nyssa, in the school of Basil, reiterates the importance of tracing the debate about the value of the ὁμοούσιος back to the revealed names (Father, Son) and not, as did Eunomius, to semantic reductions. These reductions were quite common in the post-Nicene Trinitarian debate, the divine names were converted into the notions of Unbegotten (ἀγέννητος) and begotten (γέννεμα). As is well-known, the argument already advanced by Basil with Eunomius was that the latter was changing the referent as modifying the notion was to neglect the very relationship present in the revelation of Christ, who calls God his "Father"[6].

Gregory, like Basil, appoints to biblical text. The passage that is perhaps the most incisive and concise regarding the question that interests us here, is found in the first book of *Contra Eunomium*. There Gregory focuses on the explanation of the otherness of the intra-Trinitarian communion:

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[5] Idem, *Ontology and terminology in Gregory of Nyssa*, p. 119.

[6] Cf. Basilius Caesariensis, *Adversus Eunomium* I 5, 63-69, ed. B. Sesboüé – G.M. de Durand – L. Doutreleau, SCh 299, Paris 1982, 174-176.

> "By having heard from the truth «Father» and «Son» we learned that in the two subjects [or in the two significants? – ἐν δύο τοῖς ὑποκειμένοις?] there is a unity of nature (τὴν ἑνότητα τῆς φύσεως), being this naturally indicated by the names for the reciprocal relationship (τῆς πρὸς ἄλληλα σχέσεως) and by the voice of the Lord. What could the one who in fact said «the Father and I are one», have meant (σημαίνει) but to express (τί ἄλλο ἢ τό τε […] παρίστησιν) that he himself is not without a principle of his being (μὴ ἄναρχον ἑαυτοῦ) through conformity with the nature[7] of the Father (διὰ τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς ὁμολογίας) [first sense], and [to express] the communion of nature (τὸ κοινὸν […] τῆς φύσεως) through the union/unity with the Father (διὰ τῆς πρὸς τὸν πατέρα ἑνότητος) [second sense]?"[8]

As is well-known, the argument of Gregory refocuses the believer's attention onto the revelation of the filiation of the Word, and onto the eternity of this relation: this is in perfect continuity with the letter of Basil to Maximus of Ephesus.

Let us briefly recall this letter. In it, Basil would trace the source of the Anomean bishops' unorthodox definition back to the doctrine of Dionysius of Alexandria – the Bishop of Alexandria in the middle years of the third century (c. 248-260). This was the inspiration, after Nicaea, for a portion of the episcopate that had not accepted the formula according to which the Son is ὁμοούσιος with respect to the Father. This error was not due to immoral judgment, wrote Basil, but it was due to an emphasis that was placed in opposition to Sabellius, and this was in order to sustain that the Father and the Son "are not the same subject" (οὐ ταυτὸν τῷ ὑποκειμένῳ)[9]. Dionysius had distinguished the Father and the Son not only according to their hypostases (οὐχ ἑτερότητα μόνον τῶν ὑποστάσεως)[10] but also according to their essence (ἀλλὰ καὶ οὐσίας διαφοράν)[11], introducing a subordination of power and glory, and losing the correct doctrine (τῆς δὲ ὀρθότητος τοῦ λόγου διαμαρτεῖν)[12].

Basil explained to Marcellus that Dionysius did not want to accept the term ὁμοούσιος because his opponents adopted it in the sense of denying the reality of the three hypostases[13]. The bishop of Cesarea then expresses the proper position after having shed great light on the meanings attributed to the

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[7] Ὁμολογία, in the sense of stoic philosophy. See also Cicero, *De finibus bonorum et malorum* III 6, 21, ed. H. Rackham, London – New York 1914, 238: "quod ὁμολογίαν Stoici, nos appellamus convenientiam".

[8] Gregorius Nyssenus, *Contra Eunomium* I 498, 1 - 499, 5, ed. W. Jaeger, GNO 1, Leiden 1960, 170, our translation.

[9] Basilius Caesariensis, *Epistula* IX 2, 16-17, ed. Y. Courtonne: Saint Basile, *Lettre*s, I, Paris 1957, 38.

[10] Ibidem IX 2, 19-20, ed. Courtonne, I, p. 38.

[11] Ibidem IX 2, 20, ed. Courtonne, I, p. 38.

[12] Ibidem IX 2, 21-23, ed. Courtonne, I, p. 38.

[13] Cf. ibidem IX 2, 23-27, ed. Courtonne, I, p. 38.

same words prior to him, very cautious of the danger of equivocal words. Basil thus states that his opinion was that of accepting that the Son is called ὅμοιον κατ᾽ οὐσίαν with respect to the Father, but "only if this is understood in the sense of the invariability of the divine essence": the divine essence, he writes, is immutable (ἀπαραλλάκτος)[14]. Basil thus explains the sense with which the term ὁμοούσιος had been introduced at Nicaea, interpreting it in the sense also affirmed by other appositive formulae attributed to the Son: light from light, true God from true God. With these it is understood – he explains to Marcellus – that the Unbegotten has no less glory or power than the Father, because it is not possible to conceive of any variation in light in relation to light or of truth in relation to truth[15].

This argument by Basil was brought to light with great clarity by André Tuilier – calling attention to *Epistle* 52 – in the same years in which Stead published the study on the divine substance in Athanasius. The two are essentially in agreement on the fact that one could not attribute *sensu stricto* the Aristotelian use of the term ουσία to the Trinitarian arguments, because God clearly was not to be treated like composed substances. But not even Tuilier seemed to take the knowledge of reciprocity as a new and fundamental metaphysical knowledge:

> "Dans l'esprit même de saint Athanase, il [Basile] rappelle que l'ousie divine n'a rien de commun avec les essences matérielles. Elle est indivisible dans le Père comme dans le Fils. Au reste, en refusant d'admettre une essence unique commune aux trois personnes, on attribuait naturellement, qu'on le veuille ou non, une ousie particulière à chacune d'entre elles"[16].

Returning to Gregory: he therefore never calls into question the unity of the divine οὐσία but articulates the meaning of the relational names in a new way, introducing and tracing the consequences of the reciprocal relation (τῆς πρὸς ἄλληλα σχέσεως).

We then see what the consequences are on the level of the unity of the divine substance, when this is taken into account starting from the reciprocity of the relation of the Father and the Son.

3. Reciprocity. The point which is in our interest to consider here – responding to Stead's critique of Gregory in light of the semantics of σχέσις – is that Eunomius' theology ends up being aporetic in that it is incapable of maintaining the reality of what has been revealed, which consists of the reciprocity of relation between the Father and the Son. Indeed, to introduce gradation means

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[14] Cf. ibidem IX 3, 1-2, ed. Courtonne, I, p. 39.

[15] Cf. ibidem IX 3, 4-7, ed. Courtonne, I, p. 39: "Ὅπερ καὶ τοὺς ἐν Νικαίᾳ νοήσαντας, Φῶς ἐκ Φωτὸς καὶ Θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ Θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα τὸν Μονογενῆ προσειπόντας, ἐπαγαγεῖν ἀκολούθως τὸ ὁμοούσιον".

[16] A. Tuilier, *Le sense du term* ὁμοουσιος *dans le vocabulaire théologique d'Arius et de l'Ecole d'Antioque*, StPatr 3 (1961) 425.

to deny to relation the characteristic of reciprocity in God, Who is eternal, and this was precisely the great speculative contribution of Basil. This is one point on which Gregory vehemently presses Eunomius: Father, when referring to God, signifies the name of a relation in eternity; and thus it is without separation (ἀδιαστάτος)[17]. The ontological indication in this – provided by the relation implicit in the name Father – denies any difference in substance between unbegotten and begotten on the basis of the reciprocity of the σχέσις, which is implied in the very notion of Father. This all becomes very clear when Gregory recalls how Christian tradition has desired to conserve the names Father, Son, and Spirit because:

> „All men when they hear the titles «father» and «son» immediately recognize from the very names their «intimate and natural relation to each other» (τὴν οἰκείαν αυτῶν καὶ φυσικὴν πρὸς ἄλληλα σχέσιν). Community of nature is inevitably suggested by these titles"[18].

4. Simplicity. Σχέσις as understood in its reciprocity is the pivoting point around which moves a further difficulty that is expressed in the first book of *Contra Eunomium*. It has to do with the argument regarding the simplicity of God's substance, where σχέσις appears in the passage that is focused on the infinite nature of God:

> "In cases where the existent by its nature does not admit of the worse, no limit is applicable to goodness; the infinite is not such by its relation to something else (τῇ πρὸς ἕτερον σχέσει), but itself by definition evades limitation"[19].

One gathers from this how Gregory understands relation in infinity to be the reciprocation of oneself (αὐτὸ καθ᾽ ἑαυτό). Hence, it is through reciprocity recognized in light of the revealed and relative name that Gregory defends divine simplicity:

> "But if he [Eunomius] detaches and alienates the beings from each other (ἀπ᾽ ἀλλήλων), envisaging another being of the Onlybegotten alongside the Father, and yet another of the Spirit alongside the Onlybegotten, and applies to them concepts of greater and less, let it be noted that, while he appears to delight in what is simple, in reality he argues for the composite"[20].

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[17] Cf. Gregorius Nyssenus, *Refutatio confessionis Eunomii* 6, 1-10, ed. W. Jaeger, GNO 2, Leiden 1960², 314, 26 - 315, 6.

[18] Idem, *Contra Eunomium* I 159, 3-5, GNO 1, 75, 3-5: "πάντες ἄνθρωποι πατρὸς καὶ υἱοῦ προσηγορίαν ἀκούσαντες εὐθὺς τὴν οἰκείαν αὐτῶν καὶ φυσικὴν πρὸς ἄλληλα σχέσιν ὑπ᾽ αὐτῶν τῶν ὀνομάτων ἐπιγινώσκουσι".

[19] Ibidem I 236, 1-4, GNO 1, 95, 25 - 96, 2: "ἐφ᾽ ὧν δὲ ἡ φύσις ἀνεπίδεκτός ἐστι τοῦ χείρονος, ὅρος οὐκ ἐπινοεῖται τῆς ἀγαθότητος· τὸ δὲ ἀόριστον οὐ τῇ πρὸς ἕτερον σχέσει τοιοῦτόν ἐστιν, ἀλλ᾽ αὐτὸ καθ᾽ ἑαυτὸ νοούμενον ἐκφεύγει τὸν ὅρον".

[20] Ibidem I 237, 3-10, GNO 1, 96, 6-12: "εἰ δὲ διΐστησι καὶ ἀποξενοῖ τὰς οὐσίας ἀπ᾽ ἀλλήλων, ἄλλην τοῦ μονογενοῦς παρὰ τὸν πατέρα, ἑτέραν δὲ τοῦ πνεύματος παρὰ τὴν τοῦ

Observing in which texts σχέσις appears within the progression of Gregory's argument allows one to draw upon certain considerations which are inherent to the placement of πρός together with the term σχέσις.

As is known, σχέσις is inserted into philosophical and theological discourse with a meaning that is very close to that of πρός τι. This expression has a preposition that is used to indicate that several terms are being placed in relation with one another[21]: in Gregory we thus find this characterization of σχέσις, assuming this preposition, in the passage πρός ἄλληλα σχέσις, πρός ἕτερον σχέσις, πρός τὸν ὑιὸν σχέσις, πρός σὲ σχέσις, πρός τινα σχέσις[22]. Relation is thereby set up like a reality together with its proper name, which is accompanied by a prepostion that grants it a certain definition with respect to what one means to indicate. The name „relation" in and of itself does not indicate anything concrete, since what specifies relation is the series of terms placed in relation or connection to each other.

So what happens with Gregory? In the exposition of his theory of relative names – he will return to this at length in the *Contra Eunomium* II and III – it is made explicit that relation is within the names themselves, showing how the relative name itself can have more meanings according to what is the second term of the relation appointed by the name. This is what occupies sections 569-575 of the *Contra Eunomium* I, wherein Gregory argues the meanings of the term "Father" so as to show how in that term there is also the meaning of relation to the Son as much as there is the meaning of being unbegotten.

This distinction of gnoseological relativity facilitates the display of how the revealed name "Father" can be – on the level of ontology – the bearer of an immanent and relational disposition in the divine essence, even beyond its being said to be a property of God (as unbegotten)[23]. Furthermore, he who

μονογενοῦς ἐννοῶν, καὶ τὸ πλέον καὶ τὸ ἔλαττον ἐπ᾽ αὐτῶν λέγει, μὴ λανθανέτω τῷ μὲν δοκεῖν τὸ ἁπλοῦν χαριζόμενος, τῇ δὲ ἀληθείᾳ κατασκευάζων τὸ σύνθετον".

[21] This is seen in what has been defined by the Grammarians (Dionysus Trace), who on the basis of πρός τι distinguish relative names from absolute names. On this topic, the notes in Moreschini are quite useful. See Gregorio di Nissa, *Teologia trinitaria*, *Contro Eunomio, Confutazione della professione di fede di Eunomio*, ed. C. Moreschini, Milano 1984, 168, note 317. On the influence of the Grammarians in competing cultures, see J. Daniélou, *Eunome l'arien et l'exégèse néo-platonicienne du Cratyle*, REG 69 (1956) 420.

[22] Cf. Gregorius Nyssenus, *Contra Eunomium* I 569, GNO 1, 188. There are examples of this when Gregory tackles the argument regarding relative names. In total there are 75 places in which σχέσις appears with πρός, out of around 180 times that σχέσις appears in any form in Gregory's work.

[23] The relativity of names is found in book two as well, wherein Gregory explains that thought is an operation of the mind and depends on the decisions of the speaker. It does not subsist in and of itself, rather, it has its subsistence in the choice of those who are in dialogue (ibidem II 334, 10 - 335, 1, GNO 1, 323, 31 - 324, 1: "οὐ καθ᾽ ἑαυτὴν ὑφεστῶσα, ἀλλ᾽ ἐν τῇ τῶν διαλεγομένων ὁρμῇ τὴν ὑπόστασιν ἔχουσα"). For Gregory, the freedom of one in dialogue, who makes the decision to use certain meanings which are then placed in dialogue, might give a relational significance or meaning to the relativity, or conventionality, of names.

pronounces the name „Father" can do so "independently of the particular relationship", or otherwise taking on the relational meaning[24].

5. Freedom. Hence, in the commentary on the Lord's prayer (Mt 6:9) or the Abba Father (Rom 8:15), Gregory makes explicit his moving from one relative name that indicates something of the knowledge that one has of God to a name that places in relation and expresses a relation, which is something accomplished on the level of existence and not simply that of knowledge[25]. Progress with respect to Basil is seen precisely in his explicating the theory of names that is already present in the second book of Basil's *Adversus Eunomium*[26], where Gregory ultimately specifies the content of the relative name insofar as it touches upon the names of God and purposefully includes the fact of existence into the body of our knowledge.

On the fixedness of the reciprocal relationship between the Father and the Son, Gregory comes into conflict with Eunomius in multiple places, for, on account of the infinitude of God's nature, relation in God cannot be subject to any law that is not reciprocity of the relation itself, which itself cannot be subordinated to law. Furthermore, contrary to Eunomius' position[27], there cannot be any necessity in the analogy of proportional correspondence between activities and God's substance. And this is what is read in passages that include occurances of σχέσις that provide a revisiting of Eunomius' formula of the εἱρμόν[28]. This is seen in the places where Gregory comments on that kind of "bond" that is rightly thought of in God[29].

The Bishop of Nyssa connects the bond (τὸν εἱρμόν) to what Eunomius means by innate ordering (συμφυῆ τάξις). Indeed, for Gregory innate ordering might be that which maintains an "invariable bond fixed to the reciprocal relationship" only if there is not separation of substance between Father and Son, and only if a distinction of hypostasis is allowed[30].

[24] Cf. ibidem I 572-573, GNO 1, 191, 14 - 192, 2.

[25] Cf. ibidem I 573, 1, GNO 1, 191, 21. Cf. also ibidem II 373, 2, GNO 1, 335, 11; ibidem II 459, 6, GNO 1, 360, 22; ibidem II 559, 1, GNO 1, 389, 29.

[26] Cf. Basilius Caesariensis, *Adversus Eunomium* II 9.

[27] Here we are talking about the second way, as illustrated in the *Apologia*. Cf. Eunomius, *Apologia* 20, ed. R.P. Vaggione, in: Eunomius, *The Extant Works*, Oxford 1987, 58.

[28] Gregorius Nyssenus, *Contra Eunomium* I 406, 1-11, GNO 1, 145, 10–20. The same formulation, recalling substance, invariable bond and fixedness (τῇ πρὸς ἄλληλα σχέσει τὸν εἱρμὸν ἀπαράβατον) occurres in ibidem I 154, 1-13, GNO 1, 73, 3-15.

[29] One might theorize that the theology used to elaborate the response to *Contra Eunomium* regarding the fixed and invariable bond (τὸν εἱρμὸν ἀπαράβατον), might have helped Gregory formulate, or distinguish, the formula τῆς σχετικῆς ἀκολουθίας τὸν λόγον of *Refutatio confessionis Eunomii* 98, 5: the only place in the debate with Eunomius in which Gregory delineates the order of processions, bestowing upon "bond" (ἀκολουθία instead of εἱρμός) the character of a hiearchy of relational notions. This questions has been taken up by others. Cf. J. Daniélou, *L'être et le temps chez Grégoire de Nysse*, Leiden 1970, 36-37.

[30] Cf. Gregorius Nyssenus, *Contra Eunomium* I 412–413, GNO 1, 146, 23 - 147, 13, where in

The relational distinction that Gregory recognizes in the very same οὐσία allows him to consider the ordering of distinction between the Father and the Son, not on the ontological plane of the essence, but in the realm of a logic – that is, not dividing, but distinguishing them according to causality in a manner of relation (in this sense the logical and the relational coincide). But this is true for the reverse as well: the relational distinction of the Father and the Son in the very οὐσία of God safeguards the immutability of the divine essence and the impossibility of knowing God's substance through notions which are derived from activities[31].

In this sense, admitting the value of σχέσις in God thereby preserves apophaticism for three reasons: 1) the names of Father and Son are not identical to activities (ἐνεργεῖαι), for *in* God there is no change; 2) the relative names of Father and Son do not merely speak of a notion, but of a relational reciprocity; 3) this is not reducible to noetic content but suggests a true and proper alterity, or otherness, in one single essence, which nevertheless remains unknowable and unspeakable in itself[32].

We thus find that Gregory works conceptually with regard to innate ordering and the distinction of relational reciprocity, beginning with the immutability of the divine οὐσία and the σχέσις revealed by the divine names. One can thereby trace, though it will be formulated differently, the attention that Basil lends back to the claims of the immutability of the divine substance (ἀπαραλλάκτως)[33] and the natural conjunction (φυσικὴ συνάφεια) of the relation implied in the name Father.

A further question that is tied to this present discussion – by way of the occurrences of σχέσις – is therefore that of the relationship between a name and its notion (ἔννοια). It is with respect to this aspect as well that Gregory's thought takes a noteworthy turn. Whereas in the *Apologia Apologiae* Eunomius remains tied to a one-to-one relationship between the notion, name, and divine substance – while accepting Basil's argument on the centrality of the name of the Father instead of the attribute of unbegotten[34] – Gregory expounds

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an alternative form Eunomius considers the substance of the Father and the Son as two, separate, one apart from the other for reasons of their difference (ἀνομιότητος), according to nature (κατὰ τὴν φύσιν), and contrasts being untied through substance (ἢ γὰρ ἥνωται διὰ τῆς οὐσίας), so that the bond of reciprocal relation remains unaltered.

[31] Cf. ibidem I 419-422, GNO 1, 148, 26 - 149, 26.

[32] The fact that it remains unknowable does not mean that for Gregory man is not included in this same relation. Cf. Gregorius Nyssenus, *In Canticum canticorum* 1, ed. H. Langerbeck, GNO 6, Leiden 1960, 22, 9 - 23, 1.

[33] Cf. Basilius Caesariensis, *Epistula* IX 3, 1-2, ed. Courtonne, I, p. 39.

[34] In the section *Contra Eunomium* I 552ff. Gregory reproduces a passage from the *Apologia Apologiae* in which Eunomius cites Basil, but he omits the passage on the σχέσις, thereby completely passing over the referece to the introduction of the notion of the Son by way of the relation implicit in the name of the Father, and hence passing over any treatment of Basil regarding relative names (cf. Basilius Caesariensis, *Adversus Eunomium* I 5, 68-69, SCh 299, 176). Gregory reintro-

on his thought on the Trinity as deeply centered on the σχέσις of the Father and the Son, which leads him – integrating Basil's theory of names – to consider the relationship as existence and the unity of nature in two subjects (ἐν δύο τοῖς ὑποκειμένοις τὴν ἑνότητα τῆς φύσεως)[35].

6. Unity. Gregory of Nyssa thus establishes that the unity of nature – distinct in the two subjects – is also a unity of the will, characterizing "the natural bond" in a completely different way than does Eunomius[36]. The natural conjunction defended by Basil is spoken of by Gregory as well, as unity of nature (κατὰ τὴν φύσιν) and communion of wills (καὶ τὴν προαίρεσιν κοινωνίας)[37]. Eunomius, interpreting it incorrectly, traces it to a relationship of generation and subordination in the structure of ordering (τάξις) in created nature, thereby attributing two different substances to the Father and the Son[38].

Previously, Gregory marks the commonality of nature – indicated by the word "son" in the expression "son of man" – with the pericope τὸ κατὰ τὴν φύσιν οἰκεῖον[39], where the affinity (οἰκεῖον) indicates both commonality between natures as well as an intimate relation. With this Gregory distinguishes, within relation, unity that is such by nature and what is such by will. He does this not so as to introduce a twofold or dual principle of unity, but rather to point out that the relational nature of God is different than that which is made necessary in the term τάξις, something that we come across in created realities. The polemical context around the origin of all this as driven by Eunomius, actually gives the expression a particular relevance and one which emphasizes the actual reciprocity of relation between Father and Son in the divine nature.

That the will in immanent relation also emerges in a final appearance of σχέσις is worth noting here. It is a quite poetic passage, in which Gregory defines the honor that man must render unto God as a relation of love (ἢ ἀγαπητικὴ σχέσις)[40]. The passages that precede this occurence are dedicated to a description of the relationship between the Father and the Son, from

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duces this in the debate taking up once again the complete citation of Basil in the passage of *Contra Eunomium* I 559, 3-5, GNO 1, 188, 3-5: "καὶ τὴν περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ ἔννοιαν συνημμένως ἑαυτῇ διὰ τῆς σχέσεως συνεισάγειν".

[35] Gregorius Nyssenus, *Contra Eunomium* I 498, 1-2, GNO 1, 170, 13-14.

[36] Cf. ibidem I 502, GNO 1, 171, 15-23. Eunomius maintains that knowledge of Being through works of creation would be by acts of the will and not through the essence (cf. Eunomius, *Apologia* 23-24). The difference in Gregory of Nyssa's vision is that, according to Mülenberg, for him the will is not inferior to, but rather is part of the essence. See E. Cavalcanti, *Studi Eunomiani*, Roma 1976, 71-72.

[37] The Father and the Son are also one, the community of being and of purpose coalescing into unity (Gregorius Nyssenus, *Contra Eunomium* I 502, 4-6, GNO 1, 171, 18-20: "καὶ ὁ πατὴρ καὶ ὁ υἱὸς ἕν εἰσι, τῆς κατὰ τὴν φύσιν καὶ τὴν προαίρεσιν κοινωνίας εἰς τὸ ἓν συνδραμούσης".

[38] Cf. ibidem I 483, 1-5, GNO 1, 166, 13-18.

[39] Ibidem I 298, 6-7, GNO 1, 114, 16-17.

[40] Ibidem I 337, 3-4, GNO 1, 127, 4-5.

which it is gathered that, being Son in a relationship of love with the Father, He must also receive the same honor that is given in tribute to the Father.

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In *Contra Eunomium* I the Cappodocian consideration of the revealed names affirms the reality of the reciprocal distinction of the Father and the Son as being immanent to the divine essence, and this also becomes the vehicle for the dogmatic definition of the unity and unknowable, and hence unspeakable, nature of the substance of God. The distinction between the Father and the Son is acknowledged as real, and – instead of introducing multiplicity and separation, and thereby a subsequent duality of substance as Eunomius intended with the subordination of the Son to the Father – it becomes the foundation of unity and simplicity precisely because of this consideration of the divine nature. The response to Stead can therefore be placed on this level: the reciprocal relationality of the hypostases does not entail the loss of the unity of nature, because the revelation of the God who is Love allows Gregory to overcome the fixedness of Greek metaphysics, which is governed by the logic of necessity, and to extend the reality of the communion of essence to the will – and therefore to freedom. This divine essence must not be thought of as a sort of substratum that precedes and is opposed to the Persons that are in relation, but rather as being in the reciprocity of eternal and infinite love.

This logical passage is made possible by Gregory's firm adhesion to Sacred Scripture as well as his philosophical competency, which he himself must overcome in order to describe a new unity as it is in God: the reality of community within essence is introduced on account of the consideration of relation. And this relation is understood as being implied by the revealed names, but thought of in the context of the characteristics of divine nature – including the characteristics of eternity and infinitude already elaborated upon by theological reflection.

The unity of the divine essence, in the plurality of God's hypostaseis, is therefore indicated not merely through a reference to the metaphysics of essence (communion of nature), but also through reference to the metaphysics of love (communion according to will; τῆς κατὰ τὴν φύσιν καὶ τὴν προαίρεσιν κοινωνίας). Unity is thereby configured as a reciprocal and infinite – hence unspeakable – disposition of love of the Father for the Son and of the Son for the Father. As we have seen, this is achieved through a resemantization of the immanent schesis.

Perhaps it was at this that Stead's dissatisfaction was directed: the need to express the individuation of the hypostasis not through juxtaposition but through relation and reciprocity; these latter considerations constituting a reality which always, existentially, escapes a precise and definitive definition, in addition to the demands of verbal objectification.

(Summary)

The development of Trinitarian thought that occurred in Gregory of Nyssa's *Contra Eunomium* has led some to think that in his debate with Eunomius Gregory introduced a tritheist mode of thinking (G.C. Stead). In having recourse to the σχέσις of the Father and of the Son in his polemic with Eunomius, he actually facilitates a recovery of the sense of ὁμοούσιος in continuity with the doctrine of the two natures as introduced by Athanasius and Basil in the latter's initial response to Eunomius. However, this simultaneously marks a difference in the notion of φύσις, which is at the level of divinity and has repercussions even in created nature. This paper seeks to show the substance of this variation, something that on account of Eunomian heresy has been introduced by Gregory of Nyssa.

ΣΧΕΣΙΣ I ΟΜΟΟΥΣΙΟΣ W *CONTRA EUNOMIUM* GRZEGORZA Z NYSSY: METAFIZYCZNY SPÓR I POSTĘP W MYŚLI TRYNITARNEJ

(Streszczenie)

Ewolucja myśli trynitarnej, która dokonała się za sprawą traktatu *Contra Eunomium* Grzegorza z Nyssy, doprowadziła niektórych naukowców do poglądu, że Grzegorz w swej polemice przeciw Eunomiuszowi wprowadził tryteistyczny sposób myślenia (G.C. Stead). Odwołując się do σχέσις Ojca i Syna w swojej polemice z Eunomiuszem, Grzegorz rzeczywiście ułatwił właściwe rozumienie pojęcia ὁμοούσιος w ciągłości z doktryną o dwóch naturach, którą wypracowali Atanazy i Bazyli w swych wcześniejszych wystąpieniach przeciw Eunomiuszowi. Jednak równocześnie zaznaczył też różnicę w pojęciu φύσις, która jest boska, ale ma skutki nawet w stworzonej naturze. Niniejsza praca ma na celu przedstawić istotę tych zmian dokonanych przez Grzegorza z Nyssy, które wynikły na skutek herezji eunomiańskiej.

Key words: σχέσις, ὁμοούσιος, Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium*, metaphysics, Trinitarian theology.

Słowa kluczowe: σχέσις, ὁμοούσιος, Grzegorz z Nyssy, *Contra Eunomium*, metafizyka, teologia trynitarna.

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