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THE LOGIC OF LANGUAGE IN GREGORY OF NYSSA'S TREATISE "AGAINST EUNOMIUS"

Anyone who has an interest in Gregory of Nyssa's conception of the logic of language must make an in-depth study of his "Contra Eunomium". The logically refined dogmatic discourses, found in this work, contain many significant statements about the nature of language and its functioning. They may be represented as comprehensive theory, although it is not a goal that the author of these books sets for himself: the technical equipment of theory could not serve with profit the main purpose of this work – defence of the divine truth about the Holy Trinity.¹

Since Gregory of Nyssa does not tend to reflect in a systematic way, this causes some difficulties for the modern reader, who is much disposed to

* The paper of the conference.

¹ Cf. *Contra Eunomium* (CE) II, 580: 378, 11. See for the quotations: *Gregorii Nysseni opera, Contra Eunomium libri*, ed. V. Jaeger, pars I (liber I et II) Beroloni 1921; pars II (liber III; *Refutatio confessionis Eunomii*), Beroloni 1921. St. Gregory is ready to leave the formal classification of names and phrases to them, who are scientifically ambitious. In regard to his own aim, he says: "we investigate the thought alone, whether it is within or beyond the circle of pious and appropriate conception (*ὑπόληψις*) of God". That the theory created in this way has a long path of cultural reception, is justified at any rate by the fact that this theory influenced linguistic speculations of the times of humanism. This is well shown in Theo Kobusch's brief, but rich survey with the following treatment of the problem: "Ist Gregor von Nyssa also der erste christliche Aufklärer? Jedenfalls kann nur dann, wenn der Zusammenhang zwischen der Position des Nysseners und der Position der Aufklärung berücksichtigt wird, auch der Grundgedanke moderner Sprachphilosophie in seiner historischen Wahrheit erkannt werden: Er ist die späte Folge einer spezifisch christlichen Idee, nach der die menschliche Vernunft und das, was sie in Freiheit hervorbringt, in ihrer eigenen Würde anerkannt ist und auch als von Gott anerkannt gewußt wird" (Th.Kobusch. *Name und Sein. Zu den sprachphilosophischen Grundlagen in der Schrift Contra Eunomium des Gregor von Nyssa: El "Contra Eunomium I"* En la produccion literaria de Gregorio de Nisa (VI Coloquio Internacional sobre Gregorio de Nisa), ed. L.F.Mateo Seco y J.L.Bastero, Pamplona 1988, 247. 247-268.

schematize; he strives to classify closely interdependent topics in order to make them clear in an analytical mode.

This is also the approach used in the present paper.

1. The common characteristics of discursive language

Recalling the historical situation in which Nyssa's conception of language was created, I would limit myself to a brief comment on the frequently considered problem: St. Gregory's theory as a matter of fact arose from the dogmatic polemic around God's one attribute – ungenerated (ἀγέννητος) and was formed as an alternative to the Neo-arian view on the names given by God.² This fact must be taken into consideration since it explains the specificity of Nyssa's theory – its centrifugal trend to one term.

In the case of the Cappadocians and their Neo-arian opponent two different semiotic models must be distinguished. Eunomius divides all names by their origin and cognitive value into those that are created by human reason and those of Divine origin; the former type of names has no chance to grasp reality, whereas the latter is believed to contain the substance of a thing in utterance.³ To criticize this rather simplified semiotic structure Basil and Gregory of Nyssa apply the three components' structure theory, found in Plato and entirely formed by Aristotle and the Stoics. It distinguishes between a thing, human thought and the significant linguistic expression.⁴ Any significant name for the Cappadocians is a product of man's reasoning. It has no independent existence, but exists through ontological and mental entities, expressing some movement of thought, which is directed to the knowledge or contemplation of some reality.⁵ In the controversy with Eunomius, Basil and Gregory develop the theory of ἐπίνοια (conception), using a term already well known from the Stoic theory of knowledge.⁶ In his dogmatic discourse

² To show the priority of this term for Eunomius and his followers was very important since through it they could assert, that "generated" is not an appropriate name of God; hence all other attributes of the Son would be ascribed only to the Father. Because of that the nomination is one of the main dogmatic topics in Gregory. Mateo Seco rightly calls it "nucleo intimo del suo pensiero". See L. F. Mateo Seco. *Cristologia e linguaggio in Gregorio di Nissa*, in: *Lingua e teologia nel cristianesimo greco (Atti del convegno tenuto a Trento l'11-12 dicembre 1997)*, a cura di C. Moreschini e G. Menestrina, Brescia 1999, 231.

³ Basil., *Adv. Eun.* 520C (MPG 29). Cf. with the view of Cratylus in the dialogue of Plato (*Crat.* 429b), who called name only the correct name and asserted that "whoever knows the names knows the things" (435d).

⁴ Basil., *Adv. Eun.* 520C ff. Gr. Nyss., CE II, 572: 393, 14; CE I, 539: 182, 22.

⁵ Cf. Basil., *Adv. Eun.* 520C-521C; 524 BC; CE II, 125: 251, 14; II, 589: 380, 32; II, 572: 393, 14 ff.; I, 539: 182, 22; II, 150: 257, 23; III, V, 60: 172, 17-18.

⁶ Basil., *Adv. Eun.* 520C-521C. CE II, 44-50: 228, 16-230, 3; II, 179-193: 264, 23-268, 27. Cf. Gr. Naz., *Or.* 29, 13 (Gregor von Nazianz. *Die fünf theologischen Reden*, hrsg. von J. Barbel,

with Basil, Eunomius employs the word to denote the exercise of a groundless imagination. In his opinion ἀγέννητος, which signifies the nature of God, cannot arise in any way from such a low faculty as man's ἐπίνοια.⁷ As a matter of fact Eunomius emphasizes only one aspect of the term's semantics, as it had in the philosophical and theological usage of his time.⁸ The Cappadocians on their part apply to the same ambiguous notion with special intention, for it corresponds well to their doctrine of the sovereignty of human nature and its reasoning. According to Basil's view, shared by Gregory, the conception is such an ability of human reason which follows sensory experience, is able to analyse and abstract its objects, not only invent them as mere fancies. Both Cappadocians attach high cultural significance to human ἐπίνοια. It is the basis of sciences and arts and all other benefits that has been discovered for the service of human life. The object of its inquiry

Düsseldorf 1963, 150). In the Cappadocian theology ἐπίνοια is a parallel term to διάνοια, νόησις, νόημα, κατάληψις, καταλπτική διάνοια, ὑπόληψις. As attests G.C. Stead (Logic and the application of names to God (El "Contra Eunomium I " En la producción literaria de Gregorio de Nisa (VI Coloquio Internacional sobre Gregorio de Nisa), ed. L.F.Mateo Seco y J.L.Bastero, Pamplona 1988, 311) the treating of ἐπίνοια in Philo has prepared the way for the theological application of the term.

About the Stoic origin of the Epinoia – theory in Gregory of Nyssa and the Epicurean interpretation of it by Eunomius see Th.Kobusch, op. cit., 253-254; cf. G.C.Stead, op. cit., 309-311.

⁷ Basil., Adv. Eun. 520 C; Greg. Nyss., CE II, 125ff.: 251, 9 ff. Gregory in general remarks concerning Eunomius that the reason for his incorrect theory of language was his misreading of the "Cratylus" of Plato (cf. CE II, 404: 329, 23). J. Daniélou discerns in Eunomius' mystical interpretation of language the influence of the Neoplatonic commentaries on the "Cratylus"; at the same time he suggests that Origen also must have influenced the Neo-arian's mystical attitude to language as well as his interpretation of ἐπίνοια (see J. Daniélou, Eunome l' arien et l'exégèse néo-platonicienne du Cratyle, in: Revue des Études Grecques, t. LXIX, Paris 1956, 412-432, see 417-418, 422-424, 427). This idea, as important as it is, needs substantial revision on both points, as long as in the case of both Neoplatonists and Origen Eunomius' dipartite semiotic division is compared with the tripartite one. The tripartite semiotic model in the form of definition one can find in the Peripatetic and Neoplatonic commentaries on the "Categories" of Aristotle. See Alex. of Aegae apud. Simpl. 10, 19; Alex. Aphr. apud Simpl. 10, 10; Iambl. apud Simpl. 13, 11 (Simplicii in Aristotelis Categorias commentarium, ed. C.Kalbfleisch, in: Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca (CAG), v.VIII, Beroloni 1907); Porph. in Cat. 56, 36; 59, 20; 115, 25 (Porphyrii Isagoge et in Aristotelis Categorias commentarium, ed. Ad. Busse, CAG, v.IV, p. I, Berolini 1887); Dex. 10, 26 (Dexippi in Aristotelis Categorias commentarium, ed. A.Busse, CAG, v. IV, p. II, Berolini 1888). For Origen see – Orig., in Jo. IV, 1 (ex Philoc.), 98, 1-6; I, 28. 36, 25; VI, 41. 151, 3; II, 9. 63, 21ff; II, 12. 67, 30; XIX, 5. 303, 14ff. (Origenes. Werke. B. IV. Der Johanneskommentar, hrsg. v. E. Preuschen: Die griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte (GCS), Leipzig 1903).

⁸ See ἐπίνοια as διάνοια, νόησις, ὑπόνοια in Plot., Enn. II, 9,1, 26; II, 9, 17, 5; VI, 6, 3, 27; Porph., Sent. 46, 13; 48,7; 53, 7-8;21. (ed. E. Lamberz, Lzg. 1975); in Cat. 73, 7; 90, 15; Dex., in Cat. 10, 11; 12, 14. 15. (ed. R. Bentler, W. Theiler, Hamburg 1967).

may also be the transcendent First Principle about whom the conception may reveal the true predicates by a logical sequence of thought.⁹

Gregory considers two realms of the functioning of *ἐπίνοια* according to the dichotomic division of worlds into the sensible and intelligible. The world of senses may be defined as a realm of knowledge (*γνώσις*), because on account of perception the judgement of sensible phenomena creates per se no occasion for a false opinion about the things discussed. As to the intelligible world, human reasoning can find there no obvious ground which could ensure comprehension of the object of study, but the process of discovery develops within the limits of probability, surmising something about the sublime object of thought.¹⁰ Gregory of Nyssa explains the transition of our mind from *γνώσις* to *ὑπόληψις* (also *ὑπόνοια*) in the intelligible realm on the basis of his well known ontological doctrine of the infinity of God, as opposed to the finite creative existence. The cognitive status of language in this ontological structure is quite clear: belonging as it does to the finite order of being, language is unable to express the knowledge of infinite God, since it is impossible to grasp the nature of infinity in the finite words.¹¹ When man's thought turns to the transcendent realm two occurrences may arise: it may happen that the thought hits the object of investigation and the appropriate utterance interprets it, but may be that there are also two-fold hindrances on this path; failure in both – comprehending and interpreting capacity, or in one of them. In this case, Gregory believes, it is more important to reach the true thought even though the word itself may happen to be less appropriate to it.¹² Following Plato's Seventh letter he explains the reason of this theoretical alternative: in the realm which is beyond human knowledge the possibility of enunciation is more removed from truth than human reasoning is.¹³ It seems that St. Gregory considers reasoning and linguistic expression to be of different origin: God is the

⁹ See CE II, 180-190: 265, 2-268, 19; II, 147: 256, 27; Basil., Adv. Eun. 524 D – 525C.

¹⁰ CE I, 365-369: 128, 18-129, 25.

¹¹ CE II, 69: 235, 22; I, 169: 73, 3; I, 619: 196, 1. cf. Basil., Adv. Eun. 533 C, 541 C.

Gregory compares a man, who tries to express in language the Divine nature with one, who believes that he can enclose the whole sea in his own hand. "for as the hollow of one's hand to the whole deep, so is all the power of language in comparison with that Nature which is unspeakable and incomprehensible." Cf. Gregory of Nyssa. Dogmatic Treatises etc., transl. into Engl. with Prolegomena, Notes and Indices by W. Moore and H.A. Wilson, Grand Rapids 1979, 198; cf. CE III, V, 55: 170, 10. Contra the cognitive optimism of Eunomius, the Cappadocians asserted that not only the essence of God is unknowable, but as well the essence of any kind of creature. Cf. e.g. Greg. Nyss., CE II, 71-78: 236, 14-239, 1.

¹² Cf. Orig., in Jo. IV, 1, GCS, 98, 2-6.

¹³ CE II, 572 – 576: 376, 8 – 377, 16; II, 61: 233, 6 – 13.; cf. Plat., Epist. VII, 343 a.

creator of the world and man, but the latter is entirely the creator of language.¹⁴

But what is the objective background of human reasoning? Gregory more concretely answers this question. He mentions the existence in our mind of some ἐπιθεωρούμεναι ἔννοιαι, τῆς ψυχῆς αἰσθητήρια or simply νόησις as intuitive premises of discursive reasoning. It seems right to connect these notions with the first principles of demonstrative science, which belong to the intuitive mind (νοῦς) in Aristotle.¹⁵

While ἐπίνοια and its apriori causes are in potentia present in all men, they assume most diverse phonetical shapes in different languages. This is a strong argument for Gregory to uphold the conventional character of human language.¹⁶ In the framework of conventionality of language he does not exclude a subjective approach to it; language may differ according to men's different conceptions in the same social setting, not only in various people but even in various periods of one and a same man's life. The ambivalence of human conception and the relativity of language in Gregory's semiotic theory is a part of his profoundly dialectical 'Weltgefühl'.¹⁷ It aims to show the manifold variety of our world also on the level of human ἐπίνοια and language as an ability of its enunciation.

Having considered the general features of discursive language in Gregory of Nyssa, let us pass on to an examination of Gregory's views on true linguistic expression.

2. The criteria of truth in discursive language

Nyssa accepts the point of view of the Greek philosophy of language – beginning with Plato – which treats nomination in its close connection with the categories of truth and falsehood. As Gregory shows Eunomius' statement about divine names leads to a number of logical fallacies. He accuses

¹⁴ For Gregory the first inventor of names is Adam, as soon as he gives in Genesis different names to the creature. cf. Philo, Leg. all., 11, 14-15. Eunomius asserted the divine origin of nomination through the literal understanding of the expression "God said" in the same book of the Bible; see CE II, 402: 329, 6; CE II, 205: 272, 20; II, 412: 331, 19.

¹⁵ According to the definition of ἐπίνοια in the CE II, 182: 265, 22 conception is a method, which adopts through the logical consequence the end of the inquiry with the first presumption (νόησις). Cf. Plat., Symp. 209e ff.; Arist., Anal. post., II, 12, 99b 15 ff.; 100b5 ff. See in this reference Th. Kobusch, op.cit., 255, 264 (note 43).

¹⁶ CE II, 404-407: 329, 23-330, 11. II, 545-546: 368, 23-369, 2; CE III, V, 50-53 : 168, 18-169, 18. Cf. Arist., De Interpr. 16a 7; 16a 20ff.

¹⁷ For the topic: T. Dolidze, κίνησις-Begriff der griechischen Philosophie bei Gregor von Nyssa in: Gregory of Nyssa. Homilies on the Beatitudes. Proceedings of the Eighth International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa, (Paderborn, 14-18 September 1998), ed. R.Drobner, A.Viciano, Brill:Leiden, Boston, Köln 2000, 221-245.

Eunomius of logical inconsistency, specifically of ignorance of Aristotle's syllogistic. For his part, he demolishes his opponent's "spontaneous course of reasoning"¹⁸ with the same Aristotelian method of proof, and according to the subject's specificity especially with his "Categories",¹⁹ though the terminological aspect of Aristotle's doctrine is largely neglected. The doctrine of so-called antepredicates (homonyms, synonyms, paronyms) and of the category of substance are the important "tools" for the defence of true nomination.²⁰

All of Gregory's numerous amendments in regard to naming are reducible to the following requirement of Platonic-Aristotelian origin, which was further developed in the Stoic theory of language: nomination of things requires to be orientated to things and has to work from the very meaning of words, strictly distinguishing their semantic boundaries.²¹ These criteria are opposed to Eunomius' model of discursive language, in which, as Gregory remarks, no word has its proper signification: Eunomius confuses the terms that express different ideas, and differentiates those that are in natural

¹⁸ See for instance III,V, 6: 153,13. III, VIII, 60: 248, 11.

¹⁹ Arist., Cat. 1a1-4b19. For the influence of the doctrine of substance in the "Categories" of Aristotle on the dogmatic argumentation in *Contra Eunomium* see B. Pottier, *Dieu et le Christ selon Grégoire de Nysse, Étude systématique du "Contre Eunome" avec trad. inédite des extraits d'Eunome*, Bruxelles 1994, 87-95.

²⁰ I see them to be the main, but not the only means of arguing. The influence seems to be of quite complex character. See commentary of J. Dillon on Alcinous' (Albinus') "Handbook of Platonism" (Alcinous. *The Handbook of Platonism*. Translated with an Introduction and Commentary by J.Dillon, Oxford 1993, 72ff.).

²¹ The Platonic, Aristotelian and Stoic views about naming seem much closer to each other, than it is usually assumed. In this regard it is significant what Alcinous (Albinus) says about Plato's view in "Cratylus": "He is enquiring whether names arise from nature or from convention. "His view is that the correctness of names is a matter of convention, but not absolutely nor as a result of chance, but in such a way that conception arises from the nature of a given thing" (Didasc., VI 10; see Alcinous. *The Handbook of Platonism*, 12). Cf. Plato, *Crat.* 387d, 388 bc, 397a-422d, 435c-436c. The interpretation of Plato's doctrine in Alcinous resembles very much the Aristotelian demand that language must be related to Being, as well as the Stoic *κατὰ θεῶν + κατὰ φύσιν* combination in the theory of nomination.

A. Graeser calls Aristoteles the realist in three meanings of this word: he is metaphysic realist because he suggests a reality beyond our thought; he is a realist in the theory of knowledge, because he considers that our mind comprehends objectively external reality and he is a semiotic realist, because he thinks that our language in some way reflects this reality in articulation (See A. Graeser, *Aristoteles*, in: *Klassiker der Sprachphilosophie von Platon bis Chomsky*, hrsg. von T. Borsche, München 1996, 37). Gregory of Nyssa may be called a realist in the same meanings of word, but it is quite difficult to determine the immediate source of his realistic position within the general acknowledgement of the conventionality of language. I would tend to disagree with Daniélou, who distinguishes the conceptions of Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, seeing on the one hand in Basil's view of naming the reception of the Stoic theory and on the other hand tracing in Gregory the Presocratic and Aristotelian ideas (see J. Daniélou, *op.cit.*, 415, 422).

affinity.²² Nyssa's critique results in the formation of his own theory of a true logical-discursive language.

I Topic: The nomination must have reference to a thing

Eunomius issues from the formal contradiction between the names generated/ungenerated and concludes from it the diversity of substances.²³ Gregory sees the opposed terms as *contradictio in adjecto*, hence of the same kind as attributes said of substance: "generated" and "ungenerated" are contradictories in the meaning of the expressions "is seated"/"is not seated".²⁴ Tracing Gregory's way of thinking, we can judge about *contradictio in subjecto* only through names that correspond to the category of substance. In this case, when names signify relation, it means the affinity of the designated subjects (ὑποκείμενα), because the relation of names is to be considered in subjects (for example the related words "Father" and "Son" manifest the natural relation between the subjects).

II Topic: Nomination must be based on the logical division of notions

Gregory criticizes Eunomius for his non-logical mode of thinking in discussing the transcendent reality. This means that we determine something rightly only if we begin from an exact mental classification.²⁵ Gregory argues against Eunomius: it is not right to work from the common significance of the First Cause as simple and assert that because He is simple He must be also ungenerated (i.e. they are not synonyms in the aristotelian sense). Gregory requires to specify the semantics of notions: What we call simple is a derivative (i.e. paronym) of the notion simplicity, and ungenerated – is derived of ungeneracy, and not vice versa.²⁶ Further, in the mental classification of reality a proper attribute (distinguishing difference) must be distinguished from the name denoting substance. E.g. there must be a logical distinction between ungenerated and ungeneracy. Because Father is

²² See for instance CE I, 601 ff: 190, 20 ff. Cf. the critique of the Neo-arians' language in Gr. of Naz., Or. 1-2, 7-8: Barbel 38-40; 48-52.

²³ In such a mode of thinking Eunomius shows himself actually as a nominalist, inasmuch as he begins from the formal interrelationship between terms neglecting the relation of signifying words to things denoted. But we could not call him of course a nominalist in the common sense of this word, so far as Eunomius sees only two members in the process of cognition (name and think). Cf. Th. Kobusch. *Sein und Sprache. Historische Grundlegung einer Ontologie der Sprache*, Leiden, New York, Copenhagen, Köln 1987, 53.

²⁴ CE II, 17-21: 221, 26-222, 24.

²⁵ Cf. Plato, *Crat.* 338c; 339c.

²⁶ CE II, 23-34: 223, 8-13.

ungenerated, it does not mean that his substance is ungeneracy; as the term "ungenerated" is a derivative from the abstract notion "ungeneracy", it is indicative of a difference of conceptions, distinguishing that which is generated from that which is ungenerated.²⁷ The confusion is basic in Eunomius and is the main point in the opposition between him and the Cappadocians. One of the private cases of the confusion of terms is related to the important topic of the functioning of ordinary and special languages.

III Topic: Terminological relation of a special language to ordinary

Nyssa does not apply these technical terms to distinguish two kinds of language, but his judgement obviously implies this difference. As he sees, the terms of a special language, e.g. theological, stem from lexics of ordinary language and correspond to common meanings of words. As a matter of fact, the opposition generated/ungenerated, which Eunomius represents as the metaphysic ideas in men's mind, are analytic terms borrowed from the philosophic language. Gregory states that being alien to the lexical stock of the Bible, these opposed terms cannot be identical with the names "Father" and "Son"; Eunomius errs in believing that the name "Father" in theological usage coincide with the semantic limits of the title "First Cause", hence "ungenerated" (i.e. He, Who cannot be generated from another cause).²⁸ The conception of "Fatherness" in our mind always has natural intimacy with the name "Son"; particularly in theological language it may be connected with the name "ungenerated", as long as it implicitly carries this meaning too.²⁹ Of the two significatives of the first person of the Holy Trinity Gregory of Nyssa gives preference to the term from the Holy Scripture – firstly because it has a connotation with the meaning of the giver of Life, and secondly, because "ungenerated" is an ambiguous term connoting nonexistence, since

²⁷ CE II, 23-41: 223, 8-227, 30; II, 192 ff: 268, 20 ff; II, 506-508: 357, 19-358, 14; III, I 67-72: 24, 21-26, 20; III, V, 60: 172, 5.

²⁸ Eunomius automatically acknowledges here the conventional character of special language.

²⁹ CE I, 552-554: 177, 20-178, 17; 559-560: 179, 20-28. Ordinary language must be taken as a guide also in relationship between subject and predicate. It is not correct to say: "an action follows an actor", as Eunomius says, but the correct expression is: "an actor acts". Eunomius actually aimed with the first expression to build a basis for the hierarchal interpretation of Divine Hypostases. Through its content and terminology Eunomius' judgement stays very near to Plotin's discourse in Enn V 4,2. On his part Gregory aims to show with the reference to the common language, that God's creative energy belongs to him and may not be considered as something apart from it.

nonexisting mythological fantasies, which have been never generated, may be denoted with the same word.³⁰

IV Topic: The interrelationship of a significative word and context

Gregory underlines the significance of context as the criterion of true nomination, thus testifying once more the relationship of his logic of language with Plato and especially Aristotle who systematically investigated the problem on the level of a sentence. The smallest types of a context are definition and description, being at the same time the most important for naming things. Nyssa repeats often that Eunomius while giving a name to a thing neglects its definition, which could have prevented him from the main error – the confusion of special property and substance, as long as they have different definitions. Eunomius could have avoided as well the dogmatic blunder that the Son of God may be created, if he had kept in mind the description of Him; if the Holy Scripture says of the Son that it is God, Word, Life, Light, Image and none of them correspond to the creature, hence he is not created.

The fact of the dependence of simple sign on the context implies also a subjective element in Gregory: the relation of the term "ungenerated" to truth differs according to who mentions it; the term expresses truth if it is applied by him who accepts the orthodox conception of Son-God, that he is not created. However, the objective value of the term is for Gregory above all contexts: although he admits the term "ungenerated" to be in the catalogue of the appropriate attributes of God, he himself does not use it beyond the polemic context.³¹

V Topic: The equivocation of language

In the controversy with Eunomius about the nature of nomination Gregory develops a very productive idea from the treatment of Aristotle's remark

³⁰ The example of course aims not only at showing the priority of the title "Father" in comparison with "ungenerated", but also to transfer Eunomius' eminent term to the despised *ἐπίνοια*, more precisely to its realm of fantasies.

³¹ Cf. Basil, Adv Eun. 516D-517A.

For the lexical relation of the language of Eunomius and Gregory see F. Mann. Das Vokabular des Eunomios im Kontext Gregors: El "Contra Eunomium I" En la produccion literaria de Gregorio de Nisa (VI Coloquio Internacional sobre Gregorio de Nisa), ed. L.F.Mateo-Seco y J.L.Bastero, Pamplona 1988, 173-202, specially 189. One of the reproaches to Eunomius is that he steals Basil's expression from his context;" drags it from its surrounding body into naked isolation." Cf. Basil, Adv Eun. 516D-517A.

about homonyms.³² Along with paronyms and synonyms, Eunomius does not distinguish homonyms in his model of language. To Gregory the latter is the only way of speaking about the intelligible world.³³ This topic concerns the hermeneutics of the Bible. Gregory criticizes his opponent for understanding the words of the Bible in the common sense.³⁴ When we try to describe the divine world of which we are ignorant, because of the limitations of our language we apply the same words to it as we commonly use for things of the sensible world. Thus the cataphatic and apophatic names of God denote in fact human characteristics or other known things;³⁵ through our conceptions of Him, we judge which of these attributes may be appropriate or not to the nature of Deity. Since the distinguishing properties of human and Divine life are entirely different, Gregory states accurately that none of the affirmative expressions of God may be extended in the proper sense to Him.³⁶ However, the equivocation of language concerning the Divine realm has a cognitive faculty in Gregory and hence he gives a concrete method of how to approach the transcendent world through the equivocation of our language. This is an analogy which results through the abstraction of a known image, i.e. its coherent separation from the sensible attributes.³⁷ As an analogy in Platonic tradition it has to do with ascent.³⁸ We can find many such analogies in Gregory, but here I would adduce one of them.

Gregory argues that to be generated does not imply the divergence of the Son from the Father by essence: Adam was made by God and his son Abel came into existence by way of generation, but both are men by substance. The conclusion may be taken as a guide to the apprehension of the Divine Nature; our thought has to shake off all material conceptions from the two mentioned

³² Arist., Cat. 1a1.

³³ All analogies which compare the finite existence with the infinity of God is for Gregory equivocal. Stead seems not to pay an attention to this fact, when he criticizes Gregory of Nyssa for his inconsistency: "he sometimes argues as if there were an exact analogy between human and divine realities, sometimes draws attention to fundamental differences"; see G. C. Stead. *Why Not Three Gods? The Logic of Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Doctrine*, in: *Studien zu Gregor von Nyssa und der christlichen Spätantike* (V. C. Suppl. XII), ed. H.R.Drobner u. C. Klock, Leiden: Brill. 1990., 149-163, see 157.

³⁴ CE II, 199: 270, 30 : Eunomius has to learn that the Christian is a disciple not of the letter but of the spirit.

³⁵ CE II, 577 ff: 377, 17; II 551: 370, 23; II 584-7: 379, 13-380, 16.

³⁶ CE III, II, 9-10: 51, 4-17; cf. Plot., *Enn.* VI, 7, 36.

³⁷ About abstraction (ἀφαίρεσις) in Gregory's theory of language see: A.Th. Böhm, *Theoria. Unendlichkeit. Aufstieg. Philosophische Implikationen zu De Vita Moysis von Gregor von Nyssa*, Leiden /New York/Köln 1996, 215-222.

³⁸ Cf. Plat., *Rep.* VI, 508c. *Alcin.*, *Didasc.*, X, 5.

men and, beholding only the idea of relation between them, we would be led by the remaining conception to the unapproachable metaphysical realm.³⁹

One example that Gregory calls "the sublime speech at its height" is also to be mentioned – the prologue of John's Gospel.⁴⁰ Its language does not involve the analogy of sensible with intelligible. The abstract language of metaphysics here comes to mind as an immediate analogy. And in accordance with this, the question may be raised: could the wording of the prologue be really considered the language of philosophy? In spite of the similarity, we must say with Gregory of Nyssa – No. The simple justification for this is the context – inexplicable, hidden and obscure. According to Gregory it is the language of Divine mystery, which is proclaimed by the efflatus of the Holy Spirit. It is not a speculative quest that is at work in these words, but a simple knowledge of Divine Truth that transcends human utterance. We are already in the realm of inspired language: it might be the subject of the logic of language only so far as it is submitted to hermeneutics.⁴¹

I have attempted here no more than to outline the main topics of the logical interpretation of language in Gregory of Nyssa. Even this brief summary points to a quite wide scope for comparative research in the direction of Greek philosophical theories of language. Here Aristotle, Plato and the Stoics should be emphasized as the main influences, but we can as well presume that in these doctrines accepted by Gregory, intermediaries must have played their significant role – primarily through the school tradition. I think it would not be useless also for a specialist in the modern philosophy of language to search for important archetypes in Nyssa's theory that found their way into the modern analytic and hermeneutic reflexions on language.

³⁹ III, I, 71-79: 26, 6 – 27, 25.

⁴⁰ Specially I, 1-5.

⁴¹ An example of such *translatio* is given briefly in Gregory (CE III, II, 16-23: 52, 29-55, 21; Ref. 91-96: 331, 21-334, 10), in much more detail in his great Alexandrian master (Orig., in Jo. I, 16-28, 20, 1-85, 25).