ROBERTO J.A. LATORRE

TRINITARIAN DOCTRINE AND THE DIVINITY OF THE SON IN ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA’S «REFUTATIO CONFESSIONIS EUNOMII»

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Dr. Lucas F. MATEO Dr. Dominicus RAMOS

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Secretarius Facultatis
Dr. Ioseph Emmanuel ZUMAQUERO

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INTRODUCTION

Judging from merely external considerations, the Books *Contra Eunomium* constitute one of the most important sources for the understanding of the thought and doctrine of St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa. They form the greater bulk of his dogmatic writings; and they were written to carry on the work of his older brother and «master», St. Basil of Caesarea, whose untimely death on January 1, 379, launched Gregory to be one of the foremost leaders of Orthodoxy.

Within the books *Contra Eunomium*, we think that the *Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii* merits a special consideration¹, having been written with greater perspective (several years after Basil's death), already after the Council of Constantinople (381) and after Gregory had been recognized as one of the pillars of orthodoxy². Because of the circumstances of its composition it can be considered a sort of *coup de grâce* of the Arian heresy which had besieged the Church for the last half century. And although not as systematic as Gregory's *Oratio Catechetica Magna* written in 385 and considered to be one of the most important systematizations of Christian teaching since Ori-

1. Jaeger's critical edition (*Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, 2, Leiden, Brill 1960), utilizing Diekamp's internal evaluation (Cfr. «Literargeschichtliches zur Eunomianischen Kontroverse», *BZ*, 18 (1909), 1-13) clarifies the dates of composition of these books, and the resulting reordering is an important contribution to the understanding of this series of books. We dedicated Chapter I of the doctoral thesis to an exposition of these changes, following Jaeger and Diekamp, and completing the narrative with the testimony of ancient ecclesiastical writers.

2. Sozomenus explains how after the Council of Constantinople, the emperor established the communion with certain prominent bishops as a criterion for Orthodoxy: «(...) to those in the cities by the Pontus, from Bithynia to Armenia, who hold communion with Helladius, bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia; with Gregory, bishop of Nyssa; and with Otreinus, bishop of Melitine (...). The emperor was personally acquainted with all these bishops, and had ascertained that they guide their respective churches wisely and piously» (*Hist. eccl.*, IX; LNPF 2, 382; PG 67, 1500A).
gen's *Peri Archon*, the *Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii* written in 383 or later, does reflect a certain amount of theological reflection which rises above the immediate controversy.

1. Aims and plan of this study

This paper is an excerpt of our doctoral thesis (with slight revisions in accordance with the suggestions of the doctoral tribunal), entitled *St. Gregory of Nyssa's Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii: a Theological Analysis*. Its orientation has been predominantly doctrinal, and we have tried to bring to light those theological aspects which, in our opinion, Gregory himself brings to the foreground in this concrete work that is to say, his Trinitarian doctrine and, especially, the Divinity of the Son. While this approach may have the limitation that any conclusion we may draw will necessarily be limited to this one work, it does have the advantage of faithfully reflecting the doctrine of St. Gregory without removing it from its context. We also hope that this study may be a useful starting point for more detailed investigations in conjunction with his other works.

2. Review of the literature and «status quaestionis»

The ever increasing amount of literature on various aspects of St. Gregory of Nyssa's works have been comprehensively compiled in Bergadá's bibliographic paper. This may be updated with the listing found in *Bibliographia Patristica*.

The majority of these studies deal with Gregory's spiritual and mystical doctrine an understandable orientation considering Gregory's important role in the development of the monastic life. On the other hand, his prominent role in the conciliar and Post-conciliar period of the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (381) might also suggest a similar interest in his

dogmatic works. But there are relatively few studies on this, although it has not been entirely neglected. We limit our attention here to those studies which are primarily dedicated to the books Contra Eunomium.

Taking the publication of Jaeger’s critical edition (1960) as a point of reference, we can single out some works realized before the critical edition which utilize the Contra Eunomium but which do not purport to delve into Gregory’s theological doctrine, and those which deal with its textual criticism and later incorporated in the prologue to Jaeger’s edition.

Since the publication of the critical edition, there has been a growing awareness of the importance of these books in the doctrine of the Bishop of Nyssa, together with its more extensive utilization as a primary source.

However, it will be noticed from the partial list that we have presented, that the majority of these later studies deal with certain aspects of Gregory’s doctrine, but that none, as far as I know, have the same purpose and orientation as the study we have proposed and orientation as the study we have proposed to undertake. This observation, of course, does not imply any pejo-


6. «(...) it was there that Gregory was most strongly forced (...) to exercise his speculative power to the full, while at the same time these books were, understandably, neglected by monographs focused on his spiritual doctrine or conception of salvation his history» (BALAS, D., «Eternity and Time in Gregory of Nyssa’s Contra Eunomium», Gregor von Nyssa und die Philosophie, Zweiten intern. Kolloquium über Gregor von Nyssa, Leiden 1976, 129).

rative evaluation of these studies (on the contrary, we have utilized them here, and their approach may have the advantage over ours of being more comprehensive in so far as the particular doctrine is concerned), but is only meant to be a justification for our own work.

A study similar in extension to what we have done has been announced by van Parys\(^8\) but in the absence of its publication, and after a personal communication\(^9\) which to date has had no response, we decided to proceed with our work, there being no guarantee that we would have the same results or orientation. We have, however, utilized van Pary’s preliminary work on the exegesis of Gregory and we have also tried to develop his initial suggestion in the same article, on the «hardiesse spéculative de sa théologie»\(^10\).

Aside from van Pary’s work, we also wish to single out the works of Harl\(^11\) and Balás\(^12\) for their theological orientation in their development of the concepts of aporrhoia and participation, respectively. These two concepts play an important role in Gregory’s refutation of Eunomius in the work that we study.

3. Methodology

The methodology we have followed has been guided by our effort to reflect faithfully the theological doctrine of St. Gregory. Consequently, we have tried to present the context in which the paragraphs we cite are located, and we have tried to relate them within his general effort to refute the Eunomian position. And since Gregory’s avowed intention in this work is the defense of

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8. He is preparing a French translation, with introduction and commentaries, for Soursés Chretiennes, as announced in the proceedings of the Colloques de Chevetogne (22-26. IX. 1969) and the Zweites internationales Kolloquium über Gregor von Nyssa (18-23.IX.1972).
9. Letter addressed to him at the Monastery of Chevetogne, dated 1 April 1981.
10. VAN PARIS, M., o.c., 190.
11. o.c.
12. BALAS, D., Metousia theou: Man’s participation in God’s perfections according to Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Rome 1966.
Orthodox doctrine on those points contested by Eunomius in his *Confession of Faith*, our study concentrates on the arguments that St. Gregory utilizes to defend the divinity of God the Son.

The analysis of Gregory’s doctrine is based primarily on the text itself, aided by philological or historical considerations and, when convenient, tracing his position to his previous predecessors in the orthodox line. We have also tried to compare some of Gregory’s positions with the subsequent theological elaboration of the concept in question, in order to appreciate better his contribution to the development of Theology. Thus, our analysis of Gregory’s positions consists of three moments: 1) a presentation of the Gregorian passage, 2) an explanation of how his position contributes to the refutation of Eunomianism, and 3) an evaluation of Gregory’s contribution to Theology, based on his immediate predecessors and the future theological elaboration of the subject in question.

For the analysis of the texts of the *Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii*, we have relied primarily on Jaeger’s critical edition. For the English texts, we have utilized the LNPF translation, though we have modified it in order to make it more literal or to correspond better with Jaeger’s version. We cite it together with the Greek texts. We also cite Migne’s edition in order to facilitate the reading for those who have no access to the critical edition, indicating what we may have deemed to be important differences from the critical edition. Thus the textual quotations from the *Refutatio* will be cited as follows: LNPF 5, page number; PG 45, page and letter; GNO 2, page and line number.

Quotations from the *Oratio catechetica magna* are based on Srawley’s edition and is quoted in a similar fashion. Quotations from the other works of Gregory, and from other Fathers and ecclesiastical writers are based on Migne and, when utilized, the corresponding English translations in the series *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (ANF) and *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* (LNPF).

The biblical texts we have utilized are indicated in the Bibliography. We have indicated any significant variations between these scriptural texts and Gregory's words if, in our opinion, it is Gregory's intention to quote the scriptural passage verbatim. When he obviously does not intend this, but only utilizes the idea and thus modifies the text, we have indicated the scriptural quotation with a «Cfr.». For English quotations, we have utilized the Confraternity version, unless the passage is quoted within a text of Gregory, in which case we have followed the LNPF translation following the criteria given above.

Books and journals cited appear in italics while articles are cited within quotation marks. Citations from modern authors are indicated by the first few words of the title of their work when more than one of their works is found in our study.

4. Acknowledgements

We wish to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Prof. Dr. Lucas Francisco Mateo-Seco for his kind help, patient guidance, and wise advice in all the stages of the preparation of our thesis. We wish to thank him especially for initiating us into this very interesting field of patristic studies.

We also wish to thank the members of the doctoral tribunal for their suggestions, the staff of the library of the Universidad de Navarra, the professors at the Facultad de Teología, and all those who have contributed in some way in the preparation of this work.
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ABBREVIATIONS

BAC  Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos
BZ   Byzantinische Zeitschrift
CG   Summa Contra Gentiles
CSIC Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas
DHGE Dictionnaire d'histoire et de Geographie Ecclésiastique
DTC  Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique
GER  Gran Enciclopedia Rialp
GNO  Gregorii Nysseni Opera, ed. W. JAEGGER (Leiden 1960)
GOTR Greek Orthodox Theological Review
HThR Harvard Theological Review
JThSt The Journal of Theological Studies
Mansi Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio, ed. J. MANSI (Graz 1960)
PG   Patrologia Graeca, ed. J. MIGNE
PL   Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Prima (Latina), ed., J. MIGNE
REG  Revue des Études Grecques
RHE  Revue d'Histoire Ecclesiastique
RSR  Recherches de Science Religieuse
RT   Revue Thomiste
SA   Studia Anselmiana
STh  Summa Theologica
ThLZ Theologisches Literaturzeitung
TSt  Text and Studies
A complete list of the critically edited works of St. Gregory of Nyssa and those in preparation, up to 1969, can be found in HARL, Marguerite (éd.), *Ecriture et culture philosophique dans le pensée de Grégoire de Nysse* (Actes du Colloque de Chevetogne, 22-26 Sept. 1969), Leiden, Brill 1971, XVII-XVIII. A list of his works of dubious authenticity according to the state of research as of 1966, can be found in BALAS, D., *Metousia Theou: Man's Participation in God's Perfections according to Saint Gregory of Nyssa* (Rome, Herder 1966), XII-XIII. A bibliographical study of St. Gregory of Nyssa up to 1969 was prepared by BERGADA, María M., «Contribución bibliográfica al estudio de Gregorio de Nissa», *Stromata*, 25 (1969), 79-130. We have tried to update our sources according to the extent possible with our available facilities.

I. SOURCES


II. ANCIENT WORKS


The biblical texts used are:


St. Thomas Aquinas is quoted according to the edition of *Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos* (Madrid), whose Latin text is based on the Leonine edition.

III. ARTICLES, MONOGRAPHS, STUDIES


GODET, P., «Grégoire de Nysse (Saint)», *Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique*, VI (Paris 1946), 1848-1852.

— «La identidad de operación en las obras exteriores y la unidad de la naturaleza divina en la teología trinitaria de San Gregorio de Nisa», *Gregorianum*, XIX (1938), 280-301.


MATEO-SECO, F.L., *Estudios Sobre la Cristologia de San Gregorio de Nisa* (Pamplona, 1978). This is a collection of articles which have appeared in varios journals.


IV. GENERAL WORKS

BARDENHEWER, O., *Patrology* (St. Louis, Herder 1908).


I. EUNOMIANISM

In order to appreciate better St. Gregory’s refutation of Eunomius’ Confession of Faith, we present a brief exposition of the main tenets of the Eunomian doctrine based principally on the analysis (corresponding to the first chapter of our thesis) of Eunomius’ Confession.

Eunomianism is an extreme form of Arianism which, unlike the Semi-arians, carried the starting principles of Arius to its logical consequences. Its methodological starting point is rationalism, embodied in the conviction that the essence of God is comprehended by the human mind, and concretely, through the concept of ungeneracy. This rationalism is well illustrated in the following statements of Eunomius:

«God knows no more of his own substance (τῆς έαυτού ούσίας) than we do; nor is there more known to him, and less to us: but whatever we know about the Divine substance, that precisely is known to God; and on the other hand, whatever, he knows, the same also you will find without any difference (ἀπαρ-λάκτως) in us» ¹.

«But we, in agreement with holy and blessed men, affirm that the mystery of godliness does not consist in venerable names, nor in the distinctive character of customs and sacramental tokens, but in exactness of doctrine (δογμάτων ἀκριθεία)².

Characteristic of this rationalistic attitude is a disdain for the revealed truth. And in Eunomius’ Confession of Faith, there is an

1. Socrates, a.c., IV, 7; LNPF 2, 98; PG 67, 473B.
2. LNPF 5, 238; PG 45, 877D-880A.
evident manipulation of scriptural passages through the simple method of quoting them out of context or making slight textual modifications in accordance with the Eunomian doctrine.

The Eunomian trinitarian doctrine is one of perfect subordination. In the first place, there exists God, the supreme and unique being, self-existent and unoriginated. He is neither created nor generated. This God is absolutely simple and is opposed to any distinction of properties or attributes. The essence of God formally consists in his being ungenerate, which for Eunomius is synonymous to being uncreated. Of the three Persons, the Father is the only one who can properly be called God.

Next to God (i.e., the Father) is the Son. The Son is generated by the Father. This generation cannot consist of a mere mutation of God (God becoming the Son) since God is immutable. Nor can it consist of a movement that would transform the one Divine substance into two of the same nature, since God, due to His absolute simplicity, cannot be divided. For his failure to understand any other mode of origin in God (a failure which arises from his conviction that to be ungenerate is a concept that comprehends the essence of the Divinity) the only possible solution left for Eunomius in order to explain the generation of the Son, is to situate that generation in the free will and supreme power of God. Thus, the Son’s generation is nothing more than an act of creation of God, in the strict meaning of *productio ex nihilo*. The concept of a natural generation, even understood analogically, does not find a place in the Eunomian doctrine. Any generation in God which is not a creation would imply, for Eunomius, a passage from non-being to being.

It is the special prerogative of the Son to have been created immediately by the Father. And from here arises all the other prerogatives of the Son, such as his glory and his «divinity».

The Holy Spirit, does not enjoy the same privilege as the Son. He is a product of the Son; he cannot even be considered

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3. This is easily seen through a comparison of eunomius’ version of Mt 10, 32-33; 1 Pet 3, 15; and J oh 1, 1,3,9,18 in his *Confession of Faith* with the corresponding Septuagint text. Our observation is corroborated in VANDENBUSCHE, E., «La part de la dialectique dans la theologie d’Eunomium ‘le technologue’», *RHE*, 40 (1944-45), 47-72.
a creation of the Father since the Son is «only begotten» (only generated, only created). The Holy Spirit is a «work» of the Son, or, if we wish, a creation of the Father through the Son. The Holy Spirit falls under the same category as all the other productions of the Son. His special privilege consists in being the «first and most noble work», and to him has been assigned the mission of illuminating and sanctifying the creatures inferior to him. Eunomius does not descend into the details of how, in his view, the Holy Spirit takes his origin from the Son.

Thus, this perfect and orderly subordination, suggestive of a neoplatonic influence⁴, has as its starting principles, 1) the absolute unity, eternity and immutability of God (the Father), 2) the generation (understood as creation) of the Son, and 3) the creation of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Son.

II. THE «REFUTATIO CONFESIONIS EUNOMII»

One of the merits of St. Gregory of Nyssa’s Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii is that, in spite of its highly charged and polemical tone, Gregory rises above the immediate controversy and contributes to the progress of Theology as such.

Considering the main methodological and doctrinal positions of Eunomianism, it is significant that in the midst of the polemics, Gregory’s refutation contains incisive sections which get at the main roots of the Eunomian errors. On the methodological level, and precisely in the opening paragraphs, Gregory begins his refutation with a detailed explanation of the nature of the Faith as a revealed truth to which a Christian must adhere without mutilating the words employed by God.

Taking into account that Gregory is refuting a confession of Faith, it is not surprising that he should begin his work with a clear explanation on this subject, and stress its revealed character and the kind of adherence called for:

The Christian Faith, which in accordance with the com-

⁴ Cfr. VANDENBUSCHE, E., o.c., 65.
mand of our Lord has been preached to all nations by His disciples, is neither of men, nor by men, but by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Who being the Word, the Life, the Light the Truth and God, and Wisdom, and all else that He is by nature, for this cause above all was made in the likeness of man, and shared our nature, becoming like us in all things, yet without sin⁵.

He ends this paragraph with an exhortation not to pervert the Faith:

In the Faith then which was delivered by God to the Apostles we admit neither subtraction, nor alteration, nor addition, knowing assuredly that he who presumes to pervert the Divine utterance by dishonest quibbling, the same «is of his father the devil», who leaves the words of truth and «speaks of his own», becoming the father of a lie. For whatever is said otherwise than in exact accord with the truth is assuredly false and not true⁶.

5. LNPF 5, 101; PG 45, 465D-467A; GNO 2, 312, 1-10.
6. LNPF 5, 101; PG 45, 468C; GNO 2, 313, 17-24.

This passage and the previous one seem to indicate a fundamental position of Gregory. It is therefore important to take it into consideration when evaluating his thought and doctrine.

«Como es sabido, no son infrecuentes los trabajos en que se ponen de relieve las dependencias filosóficas del de Nisa, cuya cultura era evidente-mente muy vasta. Parece por ello imprescindible no olvidar las opciones fun-
damentales en que se basan tanto sus escritos como todo su pensamiento. Y estas opciones son puestas de manifiesto en el largo parrafo citado, parrafo que por su claridad, por su fuerza y su solmenidad conviene tener muy pre-sente, sobre todo, cuando le veamos argumentar con argumentos de razón y con razones de conveniencia (...). La claridad del párrafo, la insistencia nisena en que nadie mutilé, adultere o añada nada a la fe, el horror que manifiesta a que se le añada algo de la propia cosecha intelectual, exigen como principio hermeneútico —sobre todo al analizar cuanto dice sobre Dios uno y Trino o sobre cristología— que no se confunda nunca lo que aduce como engarce intelectual, con el contenido de la doctrina de la fe. (...) Esta opción radical del Niseno pone de manifiesto su independencia consciente-mente querida, aunque quizás no totalmente lograda, de toda corriente filosó-fica; subraya tambien otro punto de capital importancia en el quehacer teológico de San Gregorio de Nisa: el sumo aprecio a la razón, el uso que hace del pensar a la hora de exponer la doctrina cristiana» (Mateo-Seco, L.F., Estudios sobre la cristología de San Gregorio de Nisa, Pamplona 1978, 82 and 84).
1. The ineffable name: Analogical knowledge of God

This exhortation to fidelity to the revealed truth is complemented by Gregory’s conception of the ineffability of the divine ousia and the roles of the human reason and the Sacred Scriptures in the acquisition of our knowledge of God. In the Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii, this theme is developed lengthily in the section devoted to an analysis of the first part («In the Name...») of the trinitarian formula. Gregory’s words are found immediately after his detailed explanation of the meaning of the three titles («... of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit») of the same formula.

We have concerning it this notion (διάνοιαν), that all things in creation are defined (περιλαμβάνεται) by means of their several names. Thus whenever a man speaks of «heaven» he directs the notion of the hearer to the created object (κτήσιμα) indicated by this name, and he who mentions «man» or some animal, at once by the mention of the name impresses (ένεργειάσαστο) upon the hearer the form (τὸ ἔντον) of the animal (τοῦ ζώου), and in the same way all other things, by means of the names imposed upon them, are depicted (ἐνέγραφαται) him the heart (τῇ καρδίᾳ) of him who by hearing receives the appellation (προσηγορίαν) imposed upon the thing.

For this cause the Word, when He spoke of ‘the name’ in delivering the Faith, did not add what it is, for how could a name be found for that which is above every name? (Phil 2, 8) but gave authority that whatever name our intelligence by pious effort (εὐθερμός κινουμένη) be enabled to discover to indicate the transcendent Nature (ὁπερχεμένης φύσεως), that name should be applied alike to Father, Son and Holy Ghost, whether it be ‘the Good’ (τὸ ἄγαθόν) or ‘the Incorruptible’ (τὸ ἀσθεντόν), whatever name each may think proper to be employed to indicate the undefiled nature (ἀνηράτου φύσεως).

7. LNPF 5, 103; PG 45, 473A; GNO 2, 318, 6-15.
8. LNPF 5, 103; PG 45, 473B; GNO 2, 318, 17-25.
With regard to the refutation of the Eunomian doctrine, the argument is the classical position that, since the one name of God belongs equally to the three persons (the possessors of the titles Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), then these three persons are equally entitled to the contents of the one name. However, Gregory extends his conclusions to say that the one name which, so to speak, has been deliberately emptied of its content (it does not give us any essential attribute) demonstrates the ineffability of the Divine nature, through his analysis of what the term «name» (ὄνομα) indicates.

What does «name» indicate for St. Gregory? The examples which he utilizes leave us only with a rather vague ideas of his conception of «name». The name 1) directs the attention, 2) impresses the form in the hearer, 3) depicts the thing in the heart. It is evidently not his purpose to present us with a 'theory of knowledge. In each case, what he wishes to point out is that the name «defines» (περιλαμβάνεται), not in the strict sense of giving the genus and specific difference, but in the sense of limiting.

No name can define God because he is infinite, and the infinity of God makes him ineffable. This ineffableness of God is not due to the desire of God to remain hidden, but is a result of the limitations of our own minds with respect to the infinity of God. He relies on 1 Tim 2, 4 to demonstrate this: «It follows then that if it were possible for human nature to be taught the essence of God (οὐσίαν...θεού) He ‘who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth’ would not have supressed the knowledge upon this matter».

In the same passage, Gregory shows that we can arrive at a certain knowledge of God through our intelligence (and in particular through the scriptural titles of the Son) but this knowledge will always be limited. In other words, our knowledge of God is analogical, and he thus gets at the root of the Eunomian error.

It is interesting to note that in laying down these principles regarding our analogical knowledge of God, St. Gregory does

9. LNPF 5, 103; PG 45, 473 BC; GNO 2, 319, 3-6.
not end up degrading human reason of human language. In fact, he resorts to what he calls the «natural sense» (προοφυσικός σημασίας) of human words as the starting point of an orthodox effort to penetrate into the mystery of God. This is evident, for example, in his explanation of the baptismal formula in which he says: «For each of these titles understood in its natural sense (διά τῆς προοφυσικής σημασίας) becomes for Christians a rule of truth and a law of piety»\(^{10}\). He uses the concept of «natural sense» in the following phrases of the *Refutatio*:

(...) he (Eunomius) immediately adds the words «not uncreate» (οὐκ ἀκτίλιστον) lest if the natural (ὥς περιφυκε) significance of the term «Son» were apprehended by his readers, any pious conception concerning Him might find place in their minds\(^{11}\).

For as the term Father points to no difference of nature from the Son, his impiety, if he had brought his statement to a close here, would have had no support, seeing that the natural sense (τῆς φυσικῆς...ἐννοιῶν) of the names Father an Son excludes the idea of their being alien in essense (κατ’ οὖσίαν ἀλλότριον)\(^{12}\).

What does St. Gregory mean by «natural sense»? In the two systematic expositions he makes, the first on the concept of generation and the second on the concept of «likeness», his starting point in the investigation of the meanings of the two terms in question is «the meaning (...) plain to all (τῆς φυσικῆς ἐστίν)»\(^{13}\) and how «it is employed in ordinary (συνθείας) use»\(^{14}\). It would seem therefore that he refers to the obvious meaning of the term, taken at face value\(^{15}\). Thus, for St. Gregory, the starting point of our speculations on the Divine mysteries are the terms utilized by the Sacred Scriptures taken in their literal sense\(^{16}\).

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10. LNPF 5, 102; PG 45, 469A; GNO 2, 314, 17-19.
11. LNPF 5, 112; PG 45, 500B; GNO 2, 342, 27-29.
12. LNPF 5, 124; PG 45, 537B; GNO 2, 378, 7-10.
13. LNPF 5, 114; PG 45, 505B; GNO 2, 348,17.
14. LNPF 5, 123; PG 45, 533C; GNO 2, 375,4.
16. St. Gregory is consistent with this hermeneutical principle in the *Refutatio*. 
But the process does not end here. These terms have to be purified of their «corporeal sense» (σωματικάς...ἐμφάσεις) (via negativa) and then to be «lifted up to the loftier kind of assertions (ψηλοτέρας ἐμφάσεις) (...) led onward by the significance of these terms» (via emminentia). And we are helped to arrive at this «loftier» meaning by the Sacred Scriptures themselves: «Wherefore also, when we hear of the ‘spirit of Truth’, we acquire by that phrase such a conception as befits the Deity, being guided (χειραγωγούμενοι) to the loftier (τὸ κρεῖτον) interpretation by the words which follow it».

2. Trinitarian Doctrine

Although the Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii contains many passages with suggestive theological elaborations dealing with various subjects, our analysis is limited to those subjects which deal more directly with the refutation of Eunomius’ positions (on the Trinitarian doctrine and the Generation of the Son), leaving aside for the moment other aspects such as those which deal with Christology or with the Salvation Economy.

Gregory’s theological elaboration of the Trinitarian formula is found very early in the work, immediately after his explanation of the nature of the Faith, and before his point by point refutation of Eunomius’ statements in the Confession of Faith. It is therefore the least polemical portion of the work, and seems to represent a conscious effort on the part of Gregory to clarify the orthodox position before demonstrating its incompatibility with the Eunomian conceptions. His development of the concept of generation, on the other hand, is immersed in the

17. LNPF 5, 112; PG 45, 500B; GNO 2, 343,4.
18. Though he does not use the exact term, he nevertheless lays down the via negativa and the via emminentia as comprising our analogical knowledge of God. This does not support Mühlenberg’s position (o.c.) that Gregory passes over these two vias to fall into a moderate equivocacy based on the infinity of God. Gregory’s position seems rather to maintain that our natural knowledge (and also our supernatural knowledge through Faith) of God is valid, though it falls short of the mystery due to the infinity of God.
19. LNPF 5, 129; PG 45, 552D; GNO 2, 392, 2-4.
polemical portion, but is introduced by him as a «systematic explanation» of a contested point. In both cases, it is evident that there is a conscious effort to present a theological elaboration, and not just a mere refutation of a untenable and illogical Eunomian position.

a. The Trinitarian formulas

In the course of his presentation of the orthodox position with regard to the trinitarian doctrine, Gregory of Nyssa presents two clear-cut formulations of the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity. These are found at the beginning and at the end of his arguments to demonstrate the coeternity and unity of the Son with the Father. The first is a general statement of the case, and the second forms a sort of conclusion of the elaborate argumentation presented (this argumentation will be studied in the next section).

In regard to essence (οὐδόσιας) He is one, wherefore, the Lord ordained that we should look to the one Name (ἐν δόμαι): but in regard to the peculiar properties (γνωστικός...ἰδιώματα) of the Hypostases, our belief in Him is distinguished (διόρθηται) into belief in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost20. For which reason we say that to the holy disciples the mystery of godliness (τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστηρίων), was committed in a form expressing at once union and distinction (συνημένον ἄμα καὶ διακεχριμένον), that we should believe on the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. For the peculiarity (ἰδιότης) of the Hypostases makes the distinction (διαστολήν) of the Persons (προσώπων) clear and free from confusion, while the one Name (ἐν δὲ δόμαι) standing in the forefront of the declaration of Faith (τὴν πίστιν

20. LNPF 5, 102; PG 45, 469AB; GNO 2, 314, 26 to 315, 22. Lampe (ο.ε., 318 and 666) translates γνωστικός and ἱδιωμα as «making known, indicative, revealing» and as «characteristic property, distinctive feature», respectively. The idea is an attribute or quality by which a thing can be distinguished. We have translated it a «peculiar property» in this sense.
clearly shows us the unity of essence (τὴν ἐνότητα τῆς οὐσιᾶς) of the Persons (προσώπων) Whom the Faith declares, I mean, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. For by these titles (καλήσεων) we are taught not a difference of nature (οὐ φύσεως διαφοράν) but only the proper peculiarities (τὰς...γνωριστικὰς ἰδιότητας) of the Hypostases so that we know that neither is the Father the Son, nor the Son the Father, nor the Holy Spirit either the Father or the Son, and recognize each by the peculiar mark (τῶν ἰδιαξοντι...χαρακτῆρι) of the Hypostases, in illimitable perfection (ἀφορίστῳ τελειότητι) at once contemplated by Himself (ἔσετον θεωροῦμενον) and not divided from that with Which He is connected.¹¹

This elaborate formulation of the trinitarian doctrine is occasioned by the Eunomian position that the Son and the Holy Spirit are subordinated to the Father, based on the absolute unity and immutability of God, whom Eunomius identifies exclusively with the Father. The backbone of Gregory’s arguments, already a part of the Orthodox patrimony after many years of the Arian controversy, is to point out that the three titles (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) are purely relative concepts and in themselves, do not say anything about the essence of its bearers; it follows that one cannot deduce any form of subordination within the three divine persons from these titles. On the other hand, the name (which is what should represent the essence) that is given is one. And this indicates that any essential attribute is to be applied equally to the three bearers of the

¹¹. LNPF 5, 103; PG 45, 472 CD; GNO 2, 317, 17 to 318, 2. Lampe (A Patristic Greek Lexicon, London 1961, 665) translates ἰδιότης as «distinctive property, specific character». χαρακτῆρι is translated as «impress, stamp... feature... form» (o.c., 1513). «Mark» seems to be the accurate word in this context.

²². The position is expressed by Gregory of Nazianzus in his Theological Orations, when he points out that each divine person has all that the others have except the relation of origin: «all that the Father has, the Son has also, except the being unbegotten (πᾶλαν τῆς ἀγεννησίας); and all that the Son has, the Spirit has also, except the generation (πᾶλαν τῆς γεννήσεως) and these do not divide the substance (οὐχ οὐσίας ἀφορίζει), as I understand it, but rather are divisions within the substance (περὶ οὐσίαν δὲ ἀφορίζεται)» (Or. XLI, IX, PG 36, 441C).
titles. «Whatever name our intelligence by pious effort be enabled to discover (...) should be applied alike to Father, Son and Holy Ghost (...) for it is plain that the title Father does not present to us the Essence (οὐσίας), but only indicates the relation (σχέσιν) to the Son»

St. Gregory does not limit himself to the bare exposition of this argument, but makes a detailed explanation of the three titles and the one name. In the process he clarifies the nature of these titles (the adaption of Basil’s terminology) and proposes a rationale for the trinitarian formula (in which we see how the ineffability of God is not and indication of poverty, but of the richness of content).

What is immediately evident in the long passage cited is his careful choice of words leading precisely to a clarification of what is meant by the titles Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

It will be noted that St. Gregory is perfectly faithful to the terminology explained by St. Basil in distinguishing between ousia, hypostasis and prosopon:

It is indispensable to have clear understanding that, as he who fails to confess the community of essence (τὸ κοινὸν τῆς οὐσίας) falls into polytheism, so he who refuses to grant the distinction (τὸ ἰδιάζον) of the hypostases is carried away into Judaism. For we must keep our mind stayed, so to say, on a certain underlying subject matter (ὑποκειμένῳ), and, by forming a clear impression of its distinguishing lines (τοὺς χαρακτήρας), so arrive at the end desired. For suppose we do not bethink us of the Fatherhood, nor bear in mind Him of Whom this distinctive quality (τὸ ἰδίωμα) is marked off, how can we take in the ideas of God the Father? For merely to enumerate the differences of Persons (διαφόρας προσώπων) is insufficient; we must confess each Person (ἐκαστὸν πρόσωπον) to have a natural existence (ὑπάρχον) in a real hypostasis (ἀληθινῇ ὑποστάσει). Now Sabellius did not even object to the word prosopon so long as it was not used as synonymous with hypostasis.

23. LNPF 5, 103; PG 45, 473B; GNO 2, 319, 1-3.
24. BASIL, Ep. CCX, V; PG 32, 776BC; LNPF 8,251.
When we consider that one of the factors for the diffusion of Arianism after the Council of Nicea is the confusion of words, the clarification of terms is seen to be of great importance. Without such a clarification of terms, St. Gregory’s argument would be valid, but purely negative. By explaining what these relative terms positively indicate (that is, a peculiarity to distinguish among the titles) he not only refutes Eunomius, but also closes the door to a possible Sabellian interpretation of his argument. Thus, the texts of St. Gregory’s trinitarian formulations reflect the Cappadocian effort to introduce a term (hypostasis as distinct from ousia) which will preserve the union and distinction, but without relegating the Persons to mere modalities of the one Godhead.

A close scrutiny of the Gregorian texts shows that although St. Gregory utilizes the words hypostasis and prosopon to express the Trinity, yet there is a shade of difference in their utilization. In the first formulation he uses only the word hypostasis. In the second formulation he uses them once together («For the peculiarity (iδιότητας) of the hypostases makes the distinction of the Persons (προοόπων) clear and free from confusion»); and then again separately («the unity of essence of the Persons», «the proper peculiarities of the Hypostases» and «the peculiar mark of the Hypostases»).


26. Thus Basil explains: «Ousia has the same relation to the hypostasis as the common (τὸ κοινὸν) has to the particular (τὸ ἴδιον) Every one of us both shares in existence (τὸ εἶναι) by the common term of ousia (τῷ κοινῷ τῆς οὐσίας λόγῳ), and by his own properties (αὐτῶν ἴδιώματα) is such and such and one. In the same manner, in the matter in question, the term ousia is common (κοινός) like goodness or Godhead, or any similar attribute while hypostasis is contemplated (θεωρεῖται) in the special property (ἐν τῷ ἴδιώματα) of Fatherhood, Sonship or the power to sanctify» (Ep. CCXIV, IV, PG 32, 789B).

The position of the Cappadocians has been well summarized: «It (prosopon) could easily have been safeguarded in use from limitation to merely temporary roles (or parts or characters or functions) assumed simply for particular purposes. But Sabellius stole the word away; and Greek theologians were left without any suitable way of expressing the conception, till they could agree among themselves to use another term which properly meant something quite different, and could win general acceptance for the artificial sense which they put upon the term they used». (BETHUNE-BAKER, J., «The meaning of homoousios in the Constantinopolitan Creed», TSt, 7 (1901), 74.)
He seems to attach an ontological priority to the word hypostasis. In the first formulation he speaks of the «peculiarity of the hypostasis», the hypostasis being the subject of these peculiarities. In the second formulation, it is clear that hypostasis has ontological priority over prosopon because it is the peculiarity of the hypostasis which makes the distinction of prosopon clear, and not vice-versa. And when he utilizes hypostasis alone, it is seen to be the subject of the «proper peculiarities» and of the «peculiar mark».

On the other hand, he seems to utilize the word prosopon more in accordance with its original meaning, as that which is more evident and which one immediately deduces when mention of the titles is made. But the reality behind the prosopon, and the subject of the differences, is the hypostasis.

We can thus see in Gregory’s words a stage of development in the acceptance of the Cappadocian terminology. He accepts the word prosopon, and does not oppose it to the word hypostasis. That is to say, from the titles Father, Son and Holy Spirit, it is immediately evident that there are three distinct prosopons (three modes of being) without necessarily saying whether they indicate mere roles or also constitute an independent existence. But he completes this concept by rooting this distinction of prosopons in another term, the hypostasis, which, in the terminology of his brother, is the subsistent subject of the proper peculiarities (γνωστικας ιδιότητας). The titles (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) express these peculiar characteristics, but not directly the hypostases themselves. That is to say, in accordance with his position that these titles do not express the Essence (this is ineffable) but only the relation of the particular essence or hypostasis among themselves, one cannot say that the term «Father» tells us what God is, but only a particular distinction in the Divinity.

There is also an evident difference in St. Gregory’s utilization of the terms ousia an physis. In the first formulation he simply states that God is one with regard to ousia. And this corresponds to the one name (Ἐν ὀνόμα) of the baptismal formula. He restates this position more forcefully in the second formula: «the one Name (Ἐν δε ὀνόμα) standing in front of the declaration of Faith clearly shows to us the unity of essence (τὴν ἐνότητα τῆς οὐσίας)». And then he utilizes physis as a kind of explanation: «For by these titles (κλῆσεων) we are
taught not a difference of nature (οὐ φύσεως διαφοράν) but only the proper peculiarities (γνωστικάς ἰδιότητας) of the *Hypostases*.

It is of course possible to interpret the change in terminology to the effect that St. Gregory uses the two terms interchangeably and that they formally mean exactly the same thing for him. The choice of which word to use would then be due to chance or purely rhetorical considerations. And on this assumption not to have a «difference of nature» would mean, for St. Gregory, the same as to have a «unity of essence» and vice-versa.

We think, on the other hand, that the choice of words is deliberate. The importance which St. Gregory attaches to these formulas are indicated both by their position in the work (the non polemical Introduction in an anti-heretical work) and the preciseness of terminology which he exhibits with regard to the other elements of the formula (*prosopon* and *hypostasis*). It would therefore be justified to look for some reasons for the shift of terminologies from *ousia* to *physis*.

We can observe that there is an evident connection between the «one name» of the declaration of Father and the «one essence» of God. That is, the «unity of essence» or the «one essence» is, for St. Gregory, an immediate conclusion from the fact that the name that is given in the baptismal formula is one. On the other hand the term *physis* is used not as an immediate deduction, but seems rather to be an added explanation to reinforce his statement on the unity of essence through the consideration of the meanings of the terms «Father», «Son» and «Holy Spirit». Thus, the position of St. Gregory would be, that the one name indicates that the essence is one; and this interpretation is reasonable because the three titles which follow do not indicate a difference of nature, but only a mode of being of a subsistent, the *hypostasis*. He does not equate «unity of essence» with «no difference of nature» although the latter is a condition for the former to be true; «unity of essence» means more than just «not to have a difference of nature». From the three titles, we can immediately conclude that there is no difference of nature. But it is from the one name that we arrive at the unity of essence.

At the same time there is a certain equation (not necessarily identification) of the two terms *ousia* and *physis*, that
will allow him to say that not to have a difference of nature becomes an argument in favor of the unity of essence. But if he were to identify the two, why does he not use *ousia* consistently when it would have been more convincing to say that «not to have a difference of *ousia*» is an argument for the unity of *ousia*? And if his intention is to clarify terms so as to distinguish clearly between *ousia* and *hypostasis* (the common and the particular), would it not have been clearer to use the term *ousia* instead of *physis* and say that the three titles do not indicate a difference of *ousia*, but only the properties of the *hypostasis*?

We think that St. Gregory’s shift of terminology may be an indication that he is conscious of the equivocal use of the term *ousia* (i.e., to mean either *natura* or *substantia*-being). In effect, if *ousia* were to be understood in the latter sense in the context of his formulations, the statement which follows would not be true: the three titles, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, do speak of a difference of being (precisely in the mode), and this would jeopardize the understanding of the term he is trying to clarify (i.e., *hypostasis*, which is precisely a being particularized by these titles).

Thus, when he speaks of the «unity of *ousia*» he refers to both meanings of the term: in the first place in the sense of *natura* (and so the connection between this phrase and the argument that there is no difference in *physis*); but also in the sense of *substantia*-being (and thus the change of terminology from *ousia* to *physis* so as not to confuse *ousia* with *hypostasis*). Moreover, this seems to indicate that in the mind of the bishop of Nyssa there is no conflict between the two meanings of the term *ousia*, at least in so far as the Divinity is concerned.

In God there is unity of nature and unity of being. In the phrase under study, he seems to stress the unity of nature, but not in opposition to unity of being but in opposition to trinity of nature. In other parts of the *Refutatio* he will emphasize the unity of being (Cfr. his exegesis of Ioh 14, 10). And later on,

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27. For a more detailed study of Gregory’s use of the term *ousia*, Cfr. Appendix.
we shall see him arguing in favor of a community of nature, but not in opposition to a unity of nature, but in opposition to a difference (in this case a subordination) of nature.\(^{28}\)

We can thus summarize what St. Gregory means by the terms he utilizes in his two trinitarian formulations. The subject of the three titles are the *prosopons* as well as the *hypostases*. His preferred word is *hypostasis* because it implies subsistence in addition to modality. *Physis* is utilized according to the common meaning of the word, that is, as *natura*. It is preferably used to refer to the specific nature, almost to the exclusion of the individual nature.\(^{29}\) *Ousia* is utilized here in the sense of specific essence, but not in opposition to individual essence (*substancia*-being). It is quite possible that he respects these two meanings of the term.

b. Coeternity and unity: a rationale for the trinitarian formula

Still in the non-polemical Introduction of the *Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii*, Gregory presents a series of arguments with

\(^{28}\) The implications of this conclusion on the Neonicene hypothesis will be studied in a later section.

\(^{29}\) His use of φύσις to indicate specific nature is in accordance with the criterion he himself unequivocally lays down in another work: «We say, then, to begin with, that the practice of calling those who are not divided in nature by the very name of their common nature in the plural, and saying they are 'many men', is a customary abuse of language, and that it would be much the same thing to say they are 'many human natures'. (...) Thus there are many who have shared in the nature (μετεσχηματικός τῆς φύσεως) many disciples, say, or apostles, or martyrs but the man in them all is one; since, as has been said, the term 'man' does not belong to the individual as such (ναθ έκαστον), but to that which is common (τοῦ κοινοῦ) «(Quod non sint tres dii, PG 45, 120A).

We shall not discuss the possible implications of this statement on St. Gregory’s ontology. We only wish to point out that for St. Gregory, the term *physis* and the terms which designate (i.e., essential names, such as *man*) properly apply to what is common thus, to the specific nature. And this, to the extent that he is left without the possibility of properly applying the universal concept to the individual which, for him, can only be correctly denominated by its proper name.

The fact that in the same passages he makes mention of the individual (καθ’ έκαστον) indicates that he does not confuse the two realities (individual nature and specific nature), but is rather at a loss as to how the universal concept can be predicated of the individual.
with the express purpose of demonstrating that ‘the Son is from all eternity to be contemplated in the Father’. The full weight of these arguments will be utilized later to refute Eunomius’ subordination of the Son to the Father, since there can be no subordination where the unity is perfect. The arguments that Gregory presents to demonstrate this perfect unity are mutually interdependent:

I. For when we hear «father» we apprehend the meaning (διάνοιαν) to be this, that it is not understood with reference to itself alone, but also by its special significance (ιδίας ἐφράσεως) indicates the relation (σχέσιν) to the Son. (...) Learning «Father», we were taught at the same time, by the selfsame word (τῇ αὐτῇ φωνῇ), faith also in the Son. (...).

II. Now since Deity (τὸ θεῖον) by its very nature (τῇ φύσει) is permanently and immutably the same (ἐξ ὁσαυτώς ἐξῆς) (...) He Who admits no change or alteration in his nature (τροπὴν ἢ ἄλλωσιν ἐν τῇ φυσεῖ) was always entirely what he is now (...) Since then He is named Father by the very Word, He assuredly always was Father, and is and will be even as He was. (...).

III. For surely it is not lawful in speaking of the divine and unimpaired nature (θείας τε καὶ ἀκηρωτοῦ φυσεως) to deny that what is excellent (τὸ καλὸν) always belonged (λέειν) to it. For if He was not always what He now is, He certainly changed either from the better to the worse or from the worse to the better, and of these assertions the impiety (ἀσεβείας) is equal either way, whichever statement is made concerning the Divine nature (θείας φυσεως). But in fact the Deity is incapable of change or alteration (μὴν... τροπὴς τε καὶ ἄλλωσις). So, then, everything that is excellent (καλὸν) and good is always contemplated in the fountain of excellency (τῆν τοῦ καλοῦ ...πειγὴν) But the only-Begotten God, Who is in the bosom of the Father is excellent, and beyond all excellency (καλὸν δὲ καὶ καλὸν παντὸς ἑπέκεινα). (...).
Conclusion

Well then, it has been demonstrated by these proofs that the Son is from all eternity to be contemplated in (ἐν θεω κοσμοθαι) the Father, in (ἐν) Whom He is, being Life and Light and Truth, and every noble name (πάναγαθαθυ ανομο) and conception 30.

Although the immediate object of these arguments is to show he coeternity and unity of the Son with the Father (and by extension, of the Holy Spirit with the Son), there is no doubt that in the mind of the Bishop of Nyssa, they also indicate the Divinity of the Son (and by extension, of the Holy Spirit). In fact there are indications from the passages which follow, that he considers the Divinity of the Son as demonstrated after having demonstrated this coeternity:

While the Son, Who is in the Father, always is what he is, as has been said already, because the Deity (τὸ θεῖον) by its nature (τῇ φύσει) does not admit of augmentation. For it does not perceive any other good outside itself (εξω ἑαυτοῦ), by participation (κατὰ μετουσίαν) in which it could acquire any accession (τὸ πλέον) 31.

The term «Deity» (τὸ θεῖον) here may of course refer either to the Son or to the Father, or to Deity as such without any reference to either Father or Son. But that it refers to the Son is indicated by what follows. He shows that the Holy Spirit «of necessity (ἀναγκαίως) must belong to him (αὐτῷ προοιμιόμενον» and the word «him» (αὐτῷ) refers to the Son since he immediately speaks of the inseparability of the Holy Spirit and the Son:

Thus we conceive no gap (διάλειμμα) between the anointed and His anointing, between the King and his sovereignty, between Wisdom and the Spirit of Wisdom, between Truth and the Spirit of Truth, between Power and the Spirit of Power 32.

30. LNPF 5, 102; PG 45, 469BD; GNO 2, 315, 3 to 316, 3.
31. LNPF 5, 102; PG 45, 472 AB; GNO 2, 316, 19-24.
32. LNPF 5; 103; PG 45, 472 BC; GNO 2, 317, 7-12.
It can be noted that the two elements (coeternity and unity) are necessary for the proof. That is to say, coeternity alone does not prove the Divinity of the Son, as some gnostics had in fact maintained that matter is coeternal with God. On the other hand, «to be contemplated in» the Father still leaves the way open for a Sabellianistic interpretation (the same God changing roles at distinct points of time) if the coeternity were not admitted. Eunomius denied both the Son was created at a point of time (not coeternal) and he is a creature of the Father (he is not contemplated in). So by refuting the Eunomian position in this manner, St. Gregory also avoids gnostic and Sabellian misinterpretations.

The points of departure of St. Gregory’s arguments are the immutability of God (therefore his perfection) and the fact that he is Father (implying the Son necessarily). The immutability of the Divine nature is a position accepted by Eunomius, but interpreted to the effect that consequently, God cannot generate a Son of the same nature. That God is Father is not accepted by Eunomius (for which reason he cannot interpret the generation of God as immanent), and in its stead he puts the concept of agennesia (which he interprets as creation), thus implying that the Son, being gennetos, is created. The equivocal use of the terms agenetos and agennetos is capitalized on by the Eunomians.

33. Commenting on Tertullian’s Adv Hermog., 44, Bethune-Baker explains, «Hermogenes taught that the only hypothesis as to the creation of the world which could be maintained, in view of objections based on the existence of evil, was the hypothesis of the eternal existence of matter. There was thus always the substantia of God, and the substantia of matter out of which God created the world» (o.c., 15). Cfr. also, S.Th., I, q. 46, a. 2, on the hypothesis of the eternity of creation.

34. Lampe (o.c., 15) points out that in many manuscripts, the term ἀγένητος is often confused with a similar term, ἀγένητος; and that the confusion of these two terms was taken advantage of by the Arians. Ἄγένητος, Which means unoriginate or uncreated and implies eternal preexistence, was a term used by the Greek philosophers to refer to various entities which they considered as having no origin (the soul, matter). This use was later modified by the early Christian writers, pointing out that to be unoriginate is strictly applicable only to God. This word was therefore used by the early Christian writers to refer to God and, of course, to the Son, to the Holy Spirit and to the Blessed Trinity. Simultaneously, the word ἀγένητος, or ungenerate, was frequently used interchangeably with ἀγένητος. With the Arian heresy, the Greek Fathers became more careful in distinguishing between the two terms, although even in the pre-Nicene writers, the words were not always used synonymously.

When we study the concept of generation of St. Gregory of Nyssa, we shall
The position that the Son, who is «excellent and beyond all excellency», is contemplated in the Father, who is «Excellent and the fountain of excellence», departs from a Platonic standpoint (God as the source of all perfection, in which the perfection found in creatures is a participation). But the value of the preposition in (ἐν) (Cfr. Exegesis of Ioh 10, 14) does not reduce the Son to a creature who participates in the perfection of God. St. Gregory clearly says that he does not participate: «For it does not perceive any other good outside itself, by participation (κατὰ μετουσίαν) in which it could acquire any accession» 35. He also says that the Son is not just a being with certain perfections but perfection itself («excellent and beyond all excellency»). The preposition in seems to imply identity, such that the Son (excellent) is contemplated in the Father (source of excellency) not as participating but as identified 36.

But aside from proving the Divinity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, St. Gregory will utilize the results of this demonstration to present a rationale for the union and distinction expressed in the Trinitarian formula 37, utilizing what was probably a standard orthodox argument against the Arians, and already formulated by Alexander of Alexandria: «And how, if the Son is the Word and Wisdom of God, was there a time when God was without reason and wisdom (ἄλογος καὶ ἀσοφος)?> 38.

see how he argues against the use of the term ἄγεννητος to express the essence of the Divinity and how he understands this word as applied to the Father and to the Son. For now, it is sufficient to state that in the orthodox view, the word ἄγεννητος does not express the essence of the Divinity but the relationship of the First to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity.

35. LNPF 5, 102; PG 45, 472B; GNO 2, 316,23.
36. Here St. Gregory seems to express the position that the attributes of God are identified with God himself on the basis of God’s perfection. He moreover, equates the Son to these attributes, in accordance with the Origenist position that the Logos reveals God: «Imago ergo est invisibilis Dei Patris Salvator noster, quantum ad ipsium quidem Patrem veritas, quantum autem ad nos quibus revelat Patrem, imago est per quam cognoscimus Patrem, quem nemo alius novit nisi Filius, et cui voluerit Filius revelare. Revelat autem per hoc quod ipse intelligitur. A quo ipse enim fuerit intellectus consequenter intelligitur et Pater, secundum hoc quod ipse dixit: ‘Qui me vidit, vidit et Patrem’» (ORIGENES, Periarchon, I, 26; PG 11, 135B).
37. This rationale is already latent in Origen’s position described above.
38. ALEXANDER OF ALEXANDRIA, Ep. 2, 4; PG 18, 576B. Cfr. ANF 6, 297.
St. Gregory’s version is the following:

For if the Son, as the Scripture saith, is the Power of God, and Wisdom, and Truth, and Light, and Sanctification, and Peace, and Life, and the like, then before the Son existed, according to the view of the heretics, these things also had no existence at all. And if these things and no existence they must certainly conceive the bosom of the Father to have been devoid (κενόν) of such excellencies (πάντως τῶν τοιούτων ἁγαθῶν) 39.

That St. Gregory is presenting a possible rationale for the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity is indicated by his utilization of causal adverbs thrice in his exposition. He says:

To the end (ὅς ἄν) then, that the Father might not be conceived as destitute of the excellencies which are His own, (...) the faith (πίστις) concerning the Son is necessarily included in our Lord’s utterance with the contemplation of the eternity of the Father. And for this reason he passes over all those names which are employed to indicate the transcendent nature (ὑπεροχειμένης φύσεως) and delivers to us as part of our profession of faith the title «Father» as better suited to indicate the truth 40. (...) For which reason (διὰ τούτῳ) we say that to the holy disciples the mystery of godliness was committed in a form expressing at once union and distinction 41.

He does not «rationalize» the mystery of the Blessed Trinity in the sense of demonstrating or proving it, through this explanation. It will be noted that in the series of arguments to prove the unity and coeternity of the Son with the Father, one of his premises is a premise of Faith: that the name revealed to us is «Father». And it is from the consideration of the meaning of this title that he deduces the coeternity of the Son.

What he does is to present a ratio convenientiae, a certain rationale for the Trinitarian formula of unity and distinction,

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39. LNPF 5, 102; PG 45, 469D-472A; GNO 2, 316, 5-10.
40. LNPF 5, 102; PG 45, 472A; GNO 2, 316, 10-17.
41. LNPF 5, 103; PG 45, 472C; GNO 2,317, 17-19. For the meanings of these adverbs and their uses, Cf. Liddell and Scott, Greek-English Lexicon, Oxford 1968,389, 1979, 2038.
which is understandable within the Origenistic tradition of the ineffability of God the Father, and the position that the Son manifests the Father to us. He thereby completes his doctrine on the ineffability of the One name so as not to fall into an «agnosticism» of the Divine nature. The Divine nature is ineffable, and whatever our intelligence can discover about the Divinity is to be applied equally to the three persons. But the Trinitarian formula itself suggests that we are not to conceive the ineffability as arising from a poverty of attributes, but rather from its richness. All the scriptural titles of the Son, «every noble name and conception» (πᾶν ἰγαθόν ὄνομά τε καὶ νόημα) is necessarily contemplated as being in the Father, as the Son is in (ἐν) the Father. The Son manifests the Father (not as in Sabellius he manifest the Father in all the richness of conception that we know the Son to be. And so the Trinitarian formula, expressing union and distinction, by nost directly telling us anything about God except his unity, tells us through the distinction of Persons that the richness of God cannot be exhausted by any one concep, or even many together. Thus, St. Gregorys’s conception of the Blessed Trinity is that the Father is Good and ineffable. The Son, united to the Father Coeter­nally, is God and manifests the Father. The Son is the attributes of Gog which is identified with God by way of perfection. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Son. He is in the Son as the Son is in the Father. Therefore he too is Gog.

This conception clarifies those many passages of St. Gregory here in this work as well as in others where he demonstra­tes the Divinity of the Son by resorting to one of His titles which is identified with the Divinity itself based on God’s perfection.

3. Generation in God

One of the fundamental concepts on which Eunomius bases his doctrine of the subordination of the Son to the Father is the concept of generation. For him, the essence of the Father is to be ungenerate (ἄγεννητός) whereas the essence of the Son is to be generate (γεννητός). Because the Son is generated (i.e., created) the Son is a creature of the Father; but because he is primogenitus, he is above all creatures in rank, and deserves a
special place in creation (Eunomius limits the «Divinity» of the Son to this special dignity). He makes a similar reduction in the case of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is third in rank because he is created by the Father through the instrumentality of the Son.

It is at once evident that Eunomimus has a peculiar conception of the term «generation». St. Gregory himself points out that what Eunomius does is to confuse creation (κτίσις) for generation (γεννησ ησ). But he does not limit himself to pointing out the Eunomian error. He dedicates a good deal of the Refutationis Confessionis Eunomii to making a systematic study of the various senses in which the concept of generation can be applied to God. In this section, we shall see how St. Gregory utilizes the concept of generation to demonstrate the Divinity of the Son. Towards the end we shall analyze the relation of this concept to the procession of the Holy Spirit.

a. The distinction between First-born and Only-begotten

The Arian arguments utilizing certain scriptural passages in which Jesus Christ speaks of himself as being in some way inferior to the Father, is well known; and the orthodox writers before St. Gregory are already concerned with explaining these scriptural passages according to the faith. It seems that Eunomius himself does not add new interpretations to the existing Arian scriptural «dossiers» 42, so it is not surprising that in his refutation of Eunomius, St. Gregory should rely on the same orthodox principles. This basically consists of making a distinction between the pre-temporal Logos and the temporal Logos (i.e., between the Divinity of Christ and his Humanity). The most important passages are those which refer to Christ as the «First-born of all creation» (Col 1, 15) and those in which Wisdom speaks of itself saying, «The Lord created me as the beginning of his ways» (Prv 8, 22). There are clear references

42. Referring to Prv 8, 22, van Parys points out: «Il ne nous propose jamais une interprétation personnelle de ce texte, qu'il semble avoir simplement repris des générations ariennes antérieures» (o.c., 179-180).
to these two passages in Eunomius’ *Confession of Faith*: «We believe also in the Son of God, the Only-begotten God, the First-born of all creatures, very Son, not ungenerate, verily begotten before the worlds, named Son not without being begotten before he existed, coming into being before all creatures, not uncreate» 43.

In the third chapter of our thesis, we have already emphasized the greater degree of systematization in St. Gregory’s, as compared to Athanasius’ and Basil’s treatment of the same passages. For the purposes of this discussion, we only wish to point out that from his exegesis, St. Gregory distinguishes two generations in Christ: «in ‘Only-begotten’ we regard the pre-temporal (προοομοντον) and by the ‘First-born of creation’ the manifestation of the pre-temporal in the flesh» 44. Thus there is a temporal generation of the Logos, which is the Incarnation; and a pre-temporal generation by which He is the natural Son of God.

The temporal generation of the Logos is both a generation and a creation. And as a creation, it implies a beginning at a point of time and an inferiority of the Son to the Father characteristics which Eunomius mistakenly applies to the pre-temporal generation. However, contrary to Eunomius’ idea, even in the temporal generation, there is no corruption involved because of the miraculous character of the virginal conception 45.

**b. The generic concept of generation**

Having distinguished between the temporal generation and the pre-temporal generation, St. Gregory proceeds to explain in what sense the term «generation» can be applied to the pre-temporal Logos. And due to the importance of this clarification in the whole Arian controversy, St. Gregory makes a systematic investigation utilizing the principles of analogy.

43. EUNOMIUS, *Confession of Faith*, Appendix I of our thesis.
44. LNPF 5, 113; PG 45, 505 A; GNO 2, 347, 20-348, 2.
45. Cfr. LNPF 5, 109; PG 45, 492B; GNO 2, 335, 12-20.
As we have seen, St. Gregory's principle of analogy has two starting points: scriptural usage and common language. Departing from the common language, St. Gregory arrives at the generic meaning of the term «generation»: it «conveys the meaning of existing as the result of some cause (ἐξ αἰτής εἶναι)».

It is to be noted that this generic definition does not involve any temporal implication. The generic concept of generation does not imply a becoming. Nor does it imply any qualitative or quantitative difference; it does not imply inferiority or superiority. It only implies 1) existence and 2) causality. Causality does imply and origin: the effect comes from (ἐξ) the cause.

From the generic meaning of the term, St. Gregory goes on to see the different ways in which «generation» is further distinguished in ordinary language. Of these he points out four.

The first type we may denominate as «artificial generation», although Gregory himself does not use the term but merely describes it. Artificial generation is «the result of material (ἐξ ὑλῆς) and art (τέχνης)» such as the generation (or construction) of houses and fabrics. The second, which St. Gregory denominates as «natural generation» is the «result of material and nature (φύσεως)», such as the generation of animals and men. The third is generation from «material efflux» (ἐξ υλικῆς αποθέοδος) in which «the original remains as it was before, and that which flows from it is contemplated by itself (ἐαυτοῦ καθοράται), as in the case of the sun and its beam, or the lamp and its radiance, or of scent and ointment and the quality given off from them». Following St. Gregory’s

46. LNPF 5, 114; PG 45, 505B; GNO 2, 348,16.
47. In this sense, the Son is caused by the Father.
48. LNPF 5, 114; PG 45, 505B; GNO 2, 348,22-23.
49. LNPF 5, 114; PG 45, 505C; GNO 2, 348,25-26.
50. LNPF 5, 114; PG 45, 505C; GNO 2, 349, 2. καθοράται does not figure in Lampe (o.c.) but καθοράτωκος is translated in Liddell and Scott
classification, we can deduce that this third type of generation would also be the result of material, but would differ from the other two in that there is no intervention of art or nature (in the sense of an orderly process), but would rather be the result of a spontaneous act, depending solely on the characteristics of the original material. Much later he will say that there is no «mediator» (διαστήματι) intervening between the original and its effulgence. The generated would differ from the original since «it is contemplated by itself» (ἐαντοῦ καθορήτως). That is, although it flows spontaneously from the original, it is distinct from the original and makes the original manifest.

Finally, St. Gregory speaks of a fourth type of generation which we may denominate as «intellectual generation», which is the «generation of the word by the mind» where «the cause is immaterial and incorporeal, but the generation is sensible and takes place through the instrumentality of the body» \(^{51}\). Here he is obviously referring to the spoken word (logos proforikos) which, however, is a product of the mind. «For the mind being itself incorporeal begets the word by means of sensible instruments» \(^{52}\).

And consistent with his analogical principle, he proceeds to explain how each of these types of generation apply to God, thus refuting Eunomius while clarifying certain theological concepts:

For the inspired teaching adopts, in order to set forth the unspeakable power of God, all forms (πάντα...εἰς) of generation that human intelligence recognizes, yet without including the corporeal senses (τὰς σωματικὰς ἐμφάσεις) attaching to the words \(^{53}\).

\(^{51}\) LNPF 5, 114; PG 45, 505D; GNO 2, 349, 12.
\(^{52}\) LNPF 5, 114; PG 45, 505D; GNO 2, 349, 14-15.
\(^{53}\) LNPF 5, 114; PG 45, 508A; GNO 2, 349, 22-26.
c. Creative generation

What is artificial generation in man, is creative generation in God. By removing the «corporeal sense» from the concept of artificial generation, we form a notion of the «creative power» (κατασκευαστικής δύναμεως) of God, who prescinds of «time, place, the functioning of matter, the fitness of instruments, the design in the things that come into being» and causes the things to exist (generation) by his sole will. St. Gregory quotes Ps 148, 5: «He spake the word and they were made, He commanded and they were created». Later he specifies further: «(...) in the case of God, it is not implied that such generation took place by means of any material, affirming that the power of God’s will (τοῦ θεοῦ θελήματος ...δύναμιν) served for material substance, place, time and all such circumstances». Thus the creative generation is ex nihilo and it is due solely to God’s will. There is no necessity in the creative generation, and, as he will point out further, it is due to «the goodness (την ἀγαθότητι) of him who made it».

The Son cannot be the terminus of creative generation. And the immediate reason he presents (once more in accordance with the Eunomian starting point) is that the creation is precisely attributed to the Son who is the Word of God (i.e., that which expresses the will). Neither is the Holy Spirit generated since He is the breath (that which expresses the Word). St. Gregory explains:

He who has heard that ‘by the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the

54. LNPF 5, 114; PG 45, 508A; GNO 2, 350,2-3.
55. LNPF 5, 114; PG 45, 508B; GNO 2, 350,13-17.
56. LNPF 5, 120; PG 45, 525C; GNO 2, 367, 3-4. The view that St. Gregory identifies ex nihilo with emanation from God, interpreting nihil in the light of the ineffability of the divine essence, (Cfr, WOLFSON, H., «The identification of ex nihilo with emanation in Gregory of Nyssa», HThR 63. (1970), 53-60), is not borne out by this work. While it is true that the divine essence is ineffable, St. Gregory here makes a clear distinction between the creative generation (ex nihilo) and the generation of the Son described by the image of emanation (material efflux). What the ineffableness of God does mean is that no one image can exhaust our conception of God.
breath of his mouth’ (Ps 33, 6) neither understands by ‘word’ (λόγον) mere utterance, nor by ‘breath’ (πνεῦμα) mere exhalation, but by what is there said frames the conception of God the Word (τὸν θεόν λόγον) and the Spirit of God (τὸ θεοῦ τὸ πνεῦμα)⁵⁷.

We of course cannot assign more than a character of attribution to these statements of St. Gregory since, in another part of the Refutatio⁵⁸ and in his other writings⁵⁹ he clearly enunciates the principle that the Divine works ad extra are due to the three Divine Persons together.

Later, St. Gregory will take and even clearer dogmatic position and explain the true meaning of the word generation understood in the sense of creation. Creative generation adds to the generic concept of generation the ideas of «becoming» or change. For not understanding the true force of the term, that the term «ungenerate» (ἀγεννητος) signifies nothing more than «not having come into being» (μὴ γεγεννήθαι) and that «not coming into being» (μὴ γενέσθαι) is common (κοινών) of all that transcends created nature, they drop their faith in the Father, and substitute for «Father» the phrase «ungenerate»⁶⁰.

To be generate in this sense does not apply to the Son nor to the Holy Spirit. Not only is the Father ungenerate, but so are the Son and the Holy Spirit. St. Gregory thus overcomes the Eunomian position by clarifying the distinction between ἀγέννητος and ἀγέννητος⁶¹.

d. Natural generation

Although the concept of artificial generation (creative generation in the case of God) cannot be applied in the sense of the

⁵⁹. Cfr. GREGORY OF NYSSA, Quod non sint tres dìi, LNPF 5, 334 and PG 45, 129B.
⁶⁰. LNPF 5, 116; PG 45, 512CD; GNO 2, 354, 25 to 355, 2. Migne has (γεγεννήθαι) makes a clearer distinction of the equivocal term.
⁶¹. See footnote 30.
Son being its **terminus**, the three other types of generation are applicable to the Son provided they are purified of their corporeal sense.

The image of natural generation is applicable to God:

*Here too, when using the term Son, it rejects both all else that human nature remarks in generation here below, I mean affections and dispositions and the cooperation of time and the necessity of place, and above all, matter, without which natural generation (γέννησις ἐκ τῆς φύσεως) here below does not take place. But when all such material, temporal and local existence is excluded from the sense of the term «Son», nature alone (μόνη ὑπελεξφη ἢ φύσις) is left, and for this reason by the title «Son» is declared concerning the Only-begotten, the close affinity and genuineness of relationship (οἰκείον καὶ γνήσιον) which mark his manifestation from the Father*.  

And this does not detract from the Divinity of the Son because natural generation implies community of nature:

*Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his image (τὸ εἰδος) (Gen 5, 3) (...) in this case the two objects which are alike are not different in nature and the impress and type (χαρακτῆρ καὶ τὸ εἰδος) imply com­nity (χωνωνίαι)*.  

From these statements we can gather that the concept of natural generation adds to the generic concept of «existing from a cause» (ἐξ αἱτίας εἶναι, generation), that the origin and the **terminus** have a common nature. Here St. Gregory approximates the purified concept of natural generation as **origo viventis ab alio vivente secundum similitudinem naturae**. The **origo**

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62. LNPF 5, 114; PG 45, 508 BC; GNO 2, 350, 13-25 and 351, 1. The Greek texts do not specifically mention a «community» of nature (this is the LNPF rendering), but merely «nature». However, the meaning is the same and in other parts he does mention «community of nature».

63. LNPF 5, 123; PG 45, 536B; GNO 2, 376, 22-25. Lampe (o.c., 1513) translates χαρακτῆρ as «impress, stamp...feature...form». This is the rendering in our text. In other works, Gregory will argue the Divinity of the Son from this concept, stressing the perfection of this «image».

64. Cfr. STh, I, q.27, a.2, c.: «(...) sic generatio significat originem alicuius viventis a principio viventi conjuncto (...) sed requiritur ad rationem...»
is to be found in his generic concept of generation, whereas the \textit{similitudo} is the specific quality of natural generation.

The argument in favor of the Divinity of the Son based on his natural generation from God the Father can be traced to the Nicene Creed itself. \textit{Deum de Deo} (θεὸν ἐκ θεοῦ) is not a tautology, but expresses the genuiness of the Divinity of the Son as the son of man is man man from man\textsuperscript{65}. And it is an image which all the Orthodox writers will utilize to demonstrate the Divinity of the Son. In the \textit{Refutatio} St. Gregory capitalizes on this image and stresses that Jesus Christ is the natural Son of God and not, as in our case, an adoptive son:

For the Church believes that the true Father (ἀληθινὸν πατέρα) is truly Father (ἀληθως έλνα...πατέρα of his own Son (...) For thus he declares in one of his (Paul’s) epistles, «Who spared not His own Son», (Rom 8, 32) distinguishing Him, by the addition of «own» (iđiou) from those who are counted worthy of the adoption of sons by grace (χάριτι) and not by nature (οὐ φύσει)\textsuperscript{66}.

\begin{quotation}
\textit{tales generationis quod procedat secundum rationem similitudinis in natura eiusdem speciei, sicut homo procedit ab homine, et equus ab equo»}.
\end{quotation}

\textsuperscript{65}. \textit{Se quiere esclarecer, sin duda, el origen del Hijo afirmando que, procediendo de Dios por generación, es Dios (...) No es, pues, un origen vulgar de «Criatura de Dios», donde no interviene la generación, sino «Dios de Dios», como «hombre de hombre», «animal de animal»; que es el esquema de todo proceso generativo.}

\textsuperscript{66. LNPF 5, 109; PG 45, 492A; GNO 2, 334, 25 to 335, 2.}

St. Gregory, of course, clearly distinguishes between the real Divine filiation and the Divine filiation of Christians. This is evident in his exegesis of the term «First born» and «Only begotten» where he speaks of the Divine filiation proper to Christians. Our divine filiation is due to our baptism, which Jesus Christ made possible through his own baptism (in his temporal manifestation, and not in his pre-temporal existence): «He who for our sakes was ‘born among us and was partaker of flesh and blood’ (Cfr. Heb 1, 14) purposeing to change us from corruption to incorruption by the birth from above, the birth by water and the Spirit, Himself led the way in this birth, drawing down upon the water, by His own baptism, the Holy Spirit» (LNPF 5, 112; PG 45, 501C; GNO 2, 345, 9-14).

The adoptive divine filiation is therefore attributed by St. Gregory to the work of the Holy Spirit: «Who knows not the utterance of the Lord which tells
TRINITARIAN DOCTRINE AND THE DIVINITY OF THE SON

From the many examples and arguments that St. Gregory utilizes, the image of natural generation can be seen to have the following characteristics:

1. It implies an origin (the generated is from the Father).
2. It implies a community of nature.
3. There is no diminution of the essence of the generator. He probably refers here to the specific essence since in his examples, he resorts to the definition of the generator and the generated to demonstrate that there is no diminution: «For both before begetting his child the man was a rational animal (ζῷον ἕν λογικόν), mortal, capable of intelligence and knowledge (εὕρωσις καὶ θέωσις) and also after begetting a man endowed with such qualities» 67.
4. It implies the subsistence of the generated (The subsistence not being the object of the Eunomian controversy, St. Gregory does not explicitly mention this characteristic. But it is implicit in the image itself, and Eunomius himself accepts it but makes the subsistent Son subordinate).

In the Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii, the characteristic which St. Gregory capitalizes on most is the community of nature. And this is precisely what he needs from the concept in order to refute the Eunomian denial of the Divinity of the Son. If the Father and the Son have a common nature, then if the Father is Divine (God), the Son too must be Divine, just as the father of a man (having human nature) must have a son (a natural son) of the same nature 68.

We can also observe that St. Gregory does not overreach the limits of this analogy. By stating that the Father and the Son have a community of nature, he has a sufficient argument against Eunomius’ denial of the Son’s Divinity. Thus he does

us that they who are born of the Spirit are children of God? For thus He expressly ascribes the birth of the children of God to the Spirit, saying, that as that which is born of the flesh is flesh, so that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. But as many as are born of the Spirit are called the children of God» (LNPF 5, 129; PG 45, 553C; GNO 2, 393, 8-14) St. Gregory’s purpose in this passage is not to illustrate the nature of our divine filiation. He presupposes it, in order to prove that the Holy Spirit is divine, being the source of our own divinization.

67. LNPF 5, 109; PG 45, 492D; GNO 2, 336, 16-18.
not conclude the identity of individual nature from this analogy, but he will arrive at it through other means.

He arrives at this identity through the Faith and also through the consideration that the Divinity, by its excellence, can only be one. That is, to have a common divine nature is to have the same divine nature since there is only one divine nature:

For he who truly believes in the one sees in the one Him Who is completely united (ἡνωμένον) with Him in truth, and deity, and essence (οὐσία) and life, and wisdom and in everything whatsoever (καὶ πάσιν ἀπαξιωσίως): or, if he does not see in the one Him Who is all these it is in nothing that he believes.  

And in the exegesis of Ioh 14,9.10, Gregory presents unequivocal statements regarding the numerical unity of the Godhead:

(...) for we who are initiated into the mystery of godliness (μυσταγωγούμενοι) by the Divinely inspired words of the Scripture do not see between the Father and the Son a partnership of Godhead (κοινωνίαν θεότητας), but unity (ἐνότητα).  

For it «he that hath seen the Son seeth the Father» (Ioh 14, 9) then the Father begat another self (ἄλλον ἐαυτὸν), not passing out of Himself (ὁυτε ἐαυτοῦ ἐξιστάμενος) and at the same time appearing in His fulness (ὅλος) in Him.  

The first statement shows that he does not limit his conception to «community» of Godhead, but he goes to assert the «unity». And the second statement could not be clearer. The Son is another self (ἄλλον ἐαυτὸν) of the Father. In both cases

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69. From the concept of generation, one can only arrive as far as to demonstrate a community of nature (specific unity). This, however, is sufficient to prove the Divinity of the Son. «Non enim vere filius potest dici quod ab alio gignitur, etiam si de substantia generantis nascatur, nisi in similem speciem generantis procedat: oportet enim quod filius hominis homo sit. Si igitur Christus est verus Filius Dei, oportet quod sit verus Deus» (CG IV, c. 7).
70. LNPF 5, 104-105; PG 45, 477AB; GNO 2, 322, 9-13.
71. LNPF 5, 107; PG 45, 484C; GNO 2, 328, 16-19.
72. LNPF 5,110; PG 45,493B; GNO 2,337, 18-20.
it can be noted that his conclusion is not based on the purely rational consideration of the concept of natural generation, but on the Revelation.

St. Gregory ends his exposition on the image of natural generation with an interesting remark which calls to mind the limitation of the image of natural generation with respect to the unity of God: «And since such a kind of generation (natural generation) was not sufficient to implant in us an adequate notion of the ineffable mode of subsistence (τῆς ἀγάδητου ...ὑπάρξεως) of the Only-begotten, Scripture avails itself also of the third kind of generation to indicate the doctrine of the Son’s Divinity» 73. This statement is consistent with his view that the Divine nature is ineffable. No single image is sufficient to express the mystery, so that other images have to be utilized, and even then, the mystery remains obscure.

e. Material efflux

St. Gregory also resorts to the image of material efflux. Applying his rule of removing the corporeal sense from the image, he arrives at what he considers the purified concept of material efflux or effulgence as applied to the Son: «(to be) from something and (to be) with something» (ἐξ αὐτοῦ τε καὶ μετ’ αὐτοῦ) 74. And he specifies further:

By such a mode of generation is indicated this alone, that the Son is of (ἐξ) the Father and is conceived of along with Him (μετ’ ἐκείνου νοετοθα), no interval intervening between the Father and Him Who is of (ἐξ) the Father 75.

Now since the generic concept of generation already mentions the aspect of being from, it seems that what St. Gregory emphasizes in addition is the aspect of being with (μετα) That

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73. LNPF 5, 114; PG 45, 508C; GNO 2, 351, 1-5.
74. LNPF 5, 115; PG 45, 508D; GNO 2, 351, 15. The LNPF translation reads «an existence at once derived from and subsisting with the Father». Although this may convey the same meaning in the whole context of the work, at this stage of the discussion, the interest of St. Gregory is to arrive at the abstract concept of material effulgence.

The Greek texts do not use any verb, but we have inserted the verb «to be» to make the meaning clearer. This is justified by the generic concept of generation as «existing from a cause».

75. LNPF 5, 115; PG 45, 509A; GNO 2, 351, 21-25.
is, over the image of natural generation, the image of material effulgence emphasizes unity and identification. Based on St. Gregory’s own examples and the previous history of the image, this mode of generation can be characterized by 76:

1. The derivation of what flows from the original substance.
2. The preservation of the original material, without diminution.
3. The manifestatory character of the effulgence.
4. The absence of intervening factors between the effulgence and the original.
5. The necessity of the effulgence.

On the other hand, the image is not free of a Sabellianistic interpretation because it does not imply the subsistence of the effulgence 77. But within St. Gregory’s system of use (i.e., concentrating only on the positive aspects which can be applied to the Divinity), the image falls within Orthodox conception. And it is precisely one of the images, together with that of natural generation, which gave rise to the Nicene homoousios 78.

76. To the image of material efflux can be classed the Nicean phrase lumen de lumine (φῶς ἐκ φωτός), which already finds its way in the Pre-Nicene Fathers. Hippolytus of Rome utilizes the image against the monarchist Noetus: «I do not mean as two gods, but as light from light (ὡς φῶς ἐκ φωτός), or as water from the fountain (ὕδατι), or as the ray (ἀκτίνα) from the sun» (Contra Haerism Noeit, PG 10, 817C).

It will later be found in the writings of Clement of Alexandria and Origen. In his monographic work on the Nicene Creed, Ortiz de Urbina traces the development of this image from the Apologist Fathers to its final inclusion in the Nicene Creed. In the process, the following characteristics of this image are brought to light:

1. its manifestatory character,
2. a distinction based on derivation, which does not imply separation,
3. the preservation of the original. (Cfr. ORTIZ DE URBINA, I., El Simbolo Niceno, Madrid 1947, 141-142).

The other characteristics enumerated in our text can be inferred from the examples that St. Gregory utilizes: light, odor. It is interesting to note that St. Gregory does not include the flow of water from a fountain as an example of material efflux, in spite of earlier precedents in the development of the image. His conception of material efflux precisely stresses that the original substance is neither augmented nor diminished by the flow. Thus the Arian argument which St. Thomas mentions but does not answer does not apply to St. Gregory’s conception: «Neque iterum potest dico quod natura divina per quondam exuberantiam effluat a Patre in Filium, sicut aqua fontis effluit in rivum et fons non evacuat: quia natura divina, sicut non potest dividii, it nec augeri» (CG IV, c. 10).

77. Cfr. HARL, M., o.c., 217.

78. Thus Origen: «Sic hihiolominus et secundum similitudinem corporalis aporrhaeae, esse dicitur aporrhaea gloriae Omnipotentis pura quaedam et sincera.
Aside from stressing the unity and identification of the origin and the effulgence, this image also stresses the *necessity* of the effulgence and its manifestatory character. It thus distinguishes the generation of the *Logos* from creative generation (the Son is not due to the goodness of the Father, but is necessarily generated). And it is also in keeping with St. Gregory’s *rationale* for the trinitarian formula as a means by which God manifests himself to us.

*f. Intellectual generation*

Finally, St. Gregory resorts to the image of intellectual generation which, however, he does not capitalize on. He limits his observation to the following:

And here the sublime John uses remarkable foresight. That the reader might not through inattention and unworthy conceptions sink to the common notion of «word» (λόγος) so as to deem the Son to be merely a voice of the Father, he therefore affirms of the Word, that he essentially subsisted (τὸ κατ’ οὖσίαν εἶναι) in the first and blessed nature itself (τῇ πρώτῃ και ὑμακαρίᾳ φύσει) thus proclaiming aloud, «In the Beginning was the Word, and with God, and God, and Light, and Life», and all that the Beginning is (πάντα ...ἐστὶν ἧ ἀρχή) the Word was also 79.

Anticipating the subsequent theological elaboration of this image, we can say that it has the following characteristics 80:

1. It stresses the distinction of the Son from the Father, as the word is distinct from the mind that generates it.
2. It stresses the unity of the Son with the Father, since the word is generated immanently.

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Quae utraque similitudinis manifestissime ostendunt communionem substantiae esse Filio cum Patre. Aporrhoea enim ὁμοούσιος videtur, id est unus substantiae cum illo corpore ex quo est vel aporrhoea, vel vapor» (ORIGINES, In Hebr (frag.). PG 14. 1308 CD).

And Athanasius: «But the Radiance (ἀπανγασμα) from the Light, and offspring from fountain (πηγῆς), and Son from Father, how can these be so fitly expressed as by *homoousios* (ὁμοούσιον)? (De syn. 41; PG 26, 766c. 79. LNPF 5, 115; PG 45, 509 AB; GNO 2, 352, 3-10. 80. Cfr. CG IV, c. 11.
3. It stresses the necessity of the Son’s generation from the Father, since the highest form of activity (in this case, intellectual activity) is to be necessarily attributed to God.

4. It indicates the manifestatory character of the generation of the Son, since the word (God’s knowledge of himself) manifests what is in the mind.

5. Finally, it will enable us to distinguish the procession of the Son (*per modum similitudinis*) from the procession of the Holy Spirit (*per modum amoris*).

In the *Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii*, St. Gregory does not touch any of these points but limits himself to safeguarding the subsistence of the Son, aware of a tendency that the term might be understood according to an unworthy conception, sinking to the common notion of the term «word». Given the predominantly prophorical interpretation of the term, he is careful to stress, like other Father of the Church before him, that the Word subsists in the Father. Without this safeguard of course, all the characteristics we have previously mentioned do not defend the Divinity of the Son.

But we can look for some more reasons for St. Gregory’s hesitation to delve into this image.

In the first place, in order to develop the concept of intellectual generation and apply it to God, it is necessary to exa-

82. In the *Oration Catechetica Magna*, on the other hand, the utilizes this image to show the necessity, the distinction and the unity of the Logos: «For he who admits that God is not without logos (μὴ ἄλογον) will agree that a being who is not without logos (μὴ ἄλογον) certainly possesses Logos. (...) But just as in transcendent nature (ὑπερφυσικός φύσεως), through the greatness of the subject contemplated, everything that is said about it is elevated with it. Therefore though mention be made of God’s word it will not be thought of as having its realization in the utterance of what is spoken, and as then vanishing away, like our speech, into the non-existent. On the contrary, as our nature, liable as it is to come to an end, is embued with speech which likewise comes to and end, so that imperishable and ever-existing nature (ἀμέτρητος καὶ ἀει ...φύσεως) has eternal and substantial speech (αἰώνιν ἀκριβοτότα...λόγον).

«(...) As in our own case we say that the word is from the mind (ἐκ τοῦ νοῦ), and no more entirely the same as the mind, than altogether other than it (for, by its being from it (ἐξ ἐκείνου εἰναὶ) it is something else and not it; still by its bringing the mind in evidence it can no longer be considered as something other than it (ἐκεῖνον παρ’ ἐκείνο); and so it is in its essence (κατα τὴν φύσιν) one (ἐν) with the mind, while as a subject (ἐν ὑποσχειμένῳ) it is different) (...) (LNPF 5, 475-476, Srawley, 7, 8, 12; PG 45, 13-17).
mine the psychology of our understanding. And there are indica­tions in this work that St. Gregory avoids the subject. For example, when he talks about the different types of «likeness» utilized in Sacred Scriptures and mentions the likeness between God and man, he does not mention that this likeness is due to the spiritual soul of man, but merely comments, «I do not sup­pose that Eunomius would discern this kind of likeness between the Father and the Son, so as to make out the Only-begotten God to be identical with man» 83. But with respect to the other types of «likeness» the penetrates more deeply and says that «deceptive similarity» (ἀπατηλὴν δομινότητα) is «by virtue of some accidental resemblance» (παρεπομένων δομινόσθαι) 84 and then again, that the likeness arising from natural gene­ration is based on «community of nature».

Another possible motive is the neo-platonic history of the term. Regardless of the question of how far St. Gregory has allowed himself to be influenced by neo-platonic tendencies (many of whose tenets and vocabulary was by then common heritage), in the Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii there is at least an indication that he deliberately avoids identifying platonism with Christianity. And he accuses Eunomius of possibly falling into this.

But if, leaving the Father, he speaks of another Almighty, he is speaking the language of the Jews or following the speculations of Plato, for they say that that philosopher also affirms that there exists on high a maker and crea­tor of certain subordinate gods (neo-platonic). As then in the case of the Jewish and Platonic opinions he who does not believe in God the Father is not a Christian, even though in his creed he asserts an Almighty God, so Eunomius also falsely pretends to the name of Chris­tian, being in inclination a Jew, or asserting the doctri­nes of the Greeks while putting on the guise of the title borne by Christians 85.

And so, while accepting the image of the Word, above all because it is utilized by the Sacred Scriptures, he limits himself to safeguarding the dignity of the Son which might be undermi­ned by a neo-platonic understanding of the image.

83. LNPF 5, 123; PG 45, 536B; GNO 2, 376, 18-20.
84. LNPF 5, 123; PG 45, 536A; GNO 2, 376, 11.
85. LNPF 5, 108; PG 45, 488C; GNO 2, 332, 4-14.
g. The generation of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit

Having seen St. Gregory's conception of generation as applied to God, we can now examine whether in the Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii St. Gregory is able to distinguish between the Son and the Holy Spirit on the basis of this concept. In other words, the question is whether he distinguishes between the procession of the Holy Spirit (what subsequent theology will refer to as «spiration») and the procession of the Son (or «generation»).

In the first place, it is evident throughout the text that St. Gregory does not confuse the Son and the Holy Spirit. There are a number of very clear passages on this point.

St. Gregory presents as the rock bottom foundation to defend the Divinity of the Son, the baptismal formula contained in Mt 28, 19: «We believe, then, even as the Lord set forth the Faith to His Disciples, when He said, 'Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost'» 86. And a little later, he restates the baptismal formula adding the clarification, «Our belief in Him is distinguished into belief in the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; He is divided without separation, and united without confusion» 87.

The texts which he uses to defend the Divinity of the Son, taking for granted that the Son is really distinct from the Father (this latter doctrine not being the main object of the Arian controversy), he will also use to defend the divinity of the Holy Spirit, offering parallel arguments in both cases. Thus, his reasoning with respect to the Son is the following: «So, then, everything that is excellent and good is always contemplated in the fountain of excellency. But the Only-begotten God, 'Who is in the bosom of the Father' is excellent, and beyond all excellency» 88. And his reasoning with respect to the Holy Spirit is similar: «And if there is anything whatsoever blessed, unsullied,

86. LNPF 5, 101; PG 45, 468B; GNO 2, 313, 9-13.
87. LNPF 5, 102; PG 45, 469B; GNO 2, 315, 2-3.
88. LNPF 5, 102; PG 45, 469CD; GNO 2, 315, 25-27.
true and good, associated with Him and in Him, we see of necessity that the good and Holy Spirit must belong to Him» 89.

It is clear, therefore, that just as on the basis of the baptismal formula St. Gregory does not confuse the Father and the Son, he likewise does not confuse the Holy Spirit with either the Father or the Son. The clear formulations of this can be found in the trinitarian formulas we have already seen.

But does he distinguish between the procession of the Holy Spirit and the generation of the Son? A number of texts in the Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii can help us to clarify this point.

Throughout the text, he has utilized the word «procession» with respect to the origin of the Holy Spirit, but he does not resort to it when speaking of the origin of the Son. The text cites Ioh 25, 26, and he uses the word in question to prove the divinity of the Holy Spirit since the Sacred Scriptures do not use the term with respect to anything in creation: «For when the Lord said 'The Spirit of Truth', He immediately added, 'Which proceedeth from the Father', a fact which the voice of the Lord never asserted of any conceivable thing in creation...» 90. It is to be noted that he does not deny the use of the word «procession» with respect to the Son, although he does not utilize it in his arguments to prove the divinity of the Son 91. He does deny it of all creation, «visible and invisible», and makes it a special mark of the divine origin of the Holy Spirit. The antithesis then is between procession and creation, and not between procession and generation.

It seems, moreover, that he distinguishes between the procession of the Holy Spirit and the generation of the Son, and not only with respect to their terminus, but with respect to the mode of origin itself. It is significant that, throughout his whole exposition to defend the Divinity of the Holy Spirit, he does not resort to the use of the concept of generation, although, through other means, he arrives at the same conclusion: that is,

89. LNPF 5, 102; PG 45, 472B; GNO 2, 317, 1-5.
90. LNPF 5, 129; PG 45, 552D; GNO 2, 392, 5-7.
91. The term «procession» refers to both the generation and the spiration (Cfr. STh, I, q.27, a.1-5).
the community of nature of the Holy Spirit with both the Fa­
ther and the Son. And, on the other hand, throughout his expo­
sition on the divinity of the Son, he does not utilize the word «procession».

St. Gregory arrives at the conclusion that the Holy Spirit
has a community of nature with the Father and the Son mainly
through scriptural arguments and the use of the principle _agere sequitur esse_. One of a series of exegetical arguments he utili­
izes consists of showing that the Sacred Scriptures attribute
equally, on separate occasions, the same phrase attributed to
God:

... through the prophet Isaias it is attested, as to the
manifestation of the Divine appearance vouchsafed to
him, when he saw Him that sat ‘on the throne high and
lifted up’ (Is 6, 1): the older tradition, it is true says
that it was the Father Who appeared to him, but the
evangelist John refers the prophecy to our Lord, saying,
touching those of the Jews who did not believe the
words uttered by the prophet concerning the Lord,
‘These things said Isaias, when he saw His glory and
spake of Him’ (Ioh 12, 41). But the mighty Paul attri­
butes the same passage to the Holy Spirit in his speech
made to the Jews at Rome when he says, ‘Well spake
the Holy Ghost by Isaias the prophet concerning you,
saying, Hearing, ye shall hear and shall not understand
(Act 28, 25, 26), showing in my opinion, by Holy
Scripture itself, that every specially divine vision, every
theophany, every word uttered in the Person of God (έξ
προσώπου θεοῦ), is to be understood to refer to the
Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.  

As for the arguments of St. Gregory to prove the commu­
nity of nature of the Holy Spirit with the other two persons
based on the principle _agere sequitur esse_ we can present the
following passages: «For just as, if anything should perform the
functions of fire, shining and warming in precisely the same way,

92. LNPF 5, 129; PG 45, 553D; GNO 2, 393, 19-25 and 394, 1-9. Aside
from demonstrating the Divinity of the Holy Spirit, this passage also indicates
the principle that the works _ad extra_ are attributed properly to the Blessed Tri­
nity. We can also notice the development of terminology in St. Gregory's use
of the phrase «in the Person (prosopon) of God».  


it is itself certainly fire, so if the Spirit does the works of the Father, he must assuredly be acknowledged to be of the same identity of operations it results assuredly that the Spirit is not nature with Him (...). Accordingly, from theal from the nature of the Father and the Son (...) community of nature (φύσεως κοινωνία) gives us warrant that the will of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is one, and thus, if the Holy Spirit will that which seems good to the Son, the community of will (ἔχειν δοῦλεται) clearly points to the unity of essence (τὴν τῆς οὐσίας ἐνότητα)» 93.

Thus, St. Gregory arrives at the same conclusion with respect to the Holy Spirit, on the basis of Sacred Scriptures and the operations attributed by the Sacred Scriptures to the Holy Spirit, as he does in the case of the Son with respect to the use of the concept of natural generation (i.e., community of nature with the Divine nature). It is in this light, I think, that we can properly understand his use of the term «homogeneous» (ὅμογενὲς) when speaking of the Son and the Holy Spirit. He resorts to this term in order, precisely, to avoid confusing the procession of the Holy Spirit with the generation of the Son which would lead to the erroneous conclusion that they are brothers (ἀδελφοι).

It is true that we learn from Holy Scripture not to speak of the Holy Ghost as brother of the Son: but that we are not to say that the Holy Ghost is homogeneous (ὅμογενὲς) with the Son, is nowhere shown in the Divine Scriptures (...). Accordingly the word of godliness agrees in affirming that we ought not to regard any kind of brotherhood as attaching to the Only-begotten; but to say that the Spirit is not homogeneous with the Son, the uprightness with the upright, the good with the good, the life-giving with the life-giving, this has been clearly demonstrated by logical inference (τοῦ λογοῦ ἀρχολογεῖται) to be a piece of heretical knavery 94.

The use of the term «homogeneous» can be explained considering that:

1. It comes immediately after the refutation of Eunomius’ statement that the Son is «Only begotten, not having any bro-

93. LNPF 5, 132; PG 45, 564BC; GNO 2, 402, 16-19, 24-26 and 403, 2-6.
94. LNPF 5, 131, PG 45, 560D-561A; GNO 2, 399, 26 to 400, 14.
ther begotten with him (όμογενη). The intention of St. Gregory being to contradict this attempt of Eunomius to subordinate the Holy Spirit to the Son, it should not be surprising that he resorts to the same term (όμογενές) denied by Eunomius of the Holy Spirit, but explaining it in an orthodox manner.

2. St. Gregory speaks here of «homogeneity» as opposed to «non-homogeneity». There is no suggestion that he is speaking of «homogeneity» as opposed to the homoousion. As is obvious from his statement, his direct intention (in recto) is to stress the community of nature between the Holy Spirit and the Son, and he believes that this can be expressed, or at least the expression is not forbidden by the Sacred Scriptures, by the word homogeneous, provided we do not maintain that the Father were to generate two sons.

What then is his idea of the procession of the Holy Spirit? In the Refutatio, St. Gregory does not delve systematically into the meaning of procession, in the same manner that he had dealt with the concept of generation. However, there are some passages which seem to indicate a mode similar to what he had earlier referred to as «material efflux». In the Introduction, while explaining the baptismal formula and presenting his first argument in defense of the Divinity of the Son, he adds:

And if there is anything whatsoever blessed, unsullied, true and good associated with Him and in Him (περί αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ) we see of necessity (διὰ αὐτοῦ,) that the good and holy Spirit must belong to Him, not by way of accretion. That Spirit is indisputably a princely Spirit, a quickening Spirit, the controlling and sanctifying force of all creation, the Spirit that 'worketh all in all as He wills' (Cfr. 1 Cor 12, 6). Thus we conceive no gap between the anointed Christ and His anointing, between the King and His sovereignty, between Wisdom and the Spirit of Wisdom, between Truth and the Spirit of Truth, between Power and the Spirit of Power, but as there is contemplated (ἐνθεωρομένον) from all eternity in the Father the Son, Who is Wisdom and Truth, and Counsel, and Might, and Knowledge, and Understanding, so there is also contem-
plated with Him (συνθεωρείται) the Holy Spirit, Who is the Spirit of Wisdom, and of Truth, and of Counsel, and of understanding, and all else that the Son is and is called 95.

In this description, the following points can be noted:

1. He insists that there is no «gap» (διάλειμμα) between the Holy Spirit and the Son, just as there is no gap between the Father and the Son.

2. Just as the Son is «contemplated in» (ἐνθεωρομένον) the Father from all eternity, so is the Holy Spirit «contemplated with» (συνθεωρείται) the Son 96.

3. The Holy Spirit, «of necessity (ἀναγχαῖος) (...) must belong to him, not by way of accretion».

These three aspects seem to indicate that St. Gregory sees much in common between the procession of the Holy Spirit and the image of «material efflux» to explain the generation of the Son.

h. Implications of the ‘Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii’ on the Neonicene hypothesis

Our analysis of St. Gregory’s arguments to prove the Divinity of the Son, and his especial concern to demonstrate the «community of nature» of the three Persons in the Trinity, seem to require a deeper investigation into the implications of Gregory’s statements on the Neonicene hypothesis, first suggested by Zahn in 1867 and popularized by Harnack in his History of Dogmas (1886-1888). The hypothesis maintains that the Nicene homoousios came to acquire a different meaning (in

95. LNPF 5, 102-103, PG 45, 472 BC; GNO 2, 317, 1-17.
96. It is interesting to note that in his other works, St. Gregory utilizes these two terms for contemplation, applying the first one also to the Holy Spirit with respect to the Son, and the second to the logos with respect to the Father (Cfr. LAMPE, G.W.H., o.c. 475 and 1330).
the sense of *homoiousios*) in the Constantinopolitan Creed. Whereas in the Nicene Creed it signified a substantial unity of the three divine persons, in the Constantinopolitan Creed it came to signify a merely specific unity. Or, in other words, what was an identity of being came to be a mere likeness of individual beings in a common species. That whereas the term *ousia* originally meant the concrete substance, so that *homoousios* meant unity of substance, it «now got a meaning halfway between the abstract ‘substance’ and the concrete ‘individual substance’» 97. It no longer meant a unity of substance, but a mere unity of nature, a community of substance, or a likeness: «The community of substance in the sense of likeness (or equality) of substance not in that of unity of substance, was from this time the orthodox doctrine in the East» 98.

Among the reasons presented for these assertions is the undoubted fact of a change in terminology, by which *ousia* and *hypostasis* came to be discriminated. Harnack also presents historical events (e.g., the presidency of Meletius, supposedly a former semi-Arian, in the Council of Constantinople), and he places great importance on the absence of the phrase ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας πατρός and of the Nicene anathemas in the results of the Council of Constantinople.

This position has been ably answered by subsequent investigators, from different points of view 99.

In this section we only wish to demonstrate the implications of the *Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii* on the Neonicene hypo-

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97. Quoted en BETHUNE-BAKER, J., o.c., 10.
98. Ibid., 7.
99. Bethune-Baker (o.c.) makes a detailed refutation of various positions. In his work he demonstrates how the term *ousia* signified *substantia* in the Nicene creed and in the Orthodox writers after the Council of Nicea, especially in Meletius and the Cappadocians. He also shows the fallacy of deducing from the absence of ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας ταμωρός, that the *homoousios* came to mean *homoiousios*, since its absence cannot be understood according to an algebraical process. Its absence simply means that its inclusion was not necessary since its meaning was already contained in the *homoousios*.

Ortiz de Urbina refutes the Neonicene hypothesis by demonstrating that the Fathers of the Nicene Council in the first place, did not have the *in recto* intention of defining the numerical unity of the Son with the Father. «(Homoousios) significa formal y directamente que el Hijo es de una naturaleza tan divina como la del Padre, y este en virtud de la generación unívoca y natural; pero no desciende a significar formal y directamente (...) que sean numericamente
thesis. Being based on this work only, we cannot draw final conclusions; but we hope that this may serve to partially clarify the doctrine of the Bishop of Nyssa on this important question. Since we have already analyzed many of the passages we shall present here, we refer the reader to the corresponding sections of the text for a more detailed analysis of the passages.

The problem may be viewed from two levels. In the first place, how does St. Gregory of Nyssa conceive the reality itself of the Unity of God? Is it a substantial and numerical unity (a unity of being), or is it a merely specific unity (a unity or community of nature)? In the second place, how does he conceive the term unity of ousia? Is the ousia of God a substance or is it merely a species, so that the term homoousios would imply a mere likeness but not a unity?

There is an inherent difficulty in demonstrating St. Gregory’s concept of the unity of God with the Neonicene theory in view, because obviously, such phrases as «God is one with respect to ousia» or «The one name indicates the one ousia» cannot be adduced, since it is precisely the term ousia that is being questioned. Neither can we expect to find an expression such as the «unity of hypostasis» since it is precisely the work of the Cappadocians to give this word the meaning of an individual mode of being distinct from ousia. Since we cannot expect to find such statements (and in the Cappadocian context this would be tantamount to a denial of the Trinity), nor can we utilize phrases which speak of a unity of ousia (and much less those numerous statements which speak of a community of nature) we shall have to locate passages in which the unity of God is expressed in less technical terminology.

The Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii contains texts, related to Gregory’s exegesis of Ioh 10, 30 and Ioh 14, 9,10 which uno» (ORTIZ DE URBINA, I., o.c., 203). On the other hand, he shows that the numerical unity of God was firmly maintained, since this is the first article of the Creed (Credo in unum Deum).

Tixeront agrees with Harnack in that, once the starting point that is taken is the Trinity, the Unity necessarily remains a mystery; and that therefore, all the explanations to demonstrate the unity parting from the trinity, will necessarily be incomplete. However, Tixeront demonstrates that the Cappadocians maintained the numerical unity of God without any doubt (Cfr. TIXERONT, J., History of Dogmas, 2, St. Louis 1923, 82-88).
clearly speak of the numerical unity of God, but not expressed in technical terminology:

We (...) do not see (δοθώμεν) between the Father and the Son a community of Godhead (κοινωνίαν θεότητος) but unity (ἐνότητα) inasmuch as the Lord hath taught us this by his own words, when he says «I and the Father are one» and «He that hath seen me hath seen the Father» 100.

For we too say that He who has all that belongs to the Father (ὁ πάντα τὰ τοῦ ιδίου πατρος ἔσω) is this other (ἄλλος ἐκεῖνος ἐστι) save (πλῆν) being Father, and that He who has all that belongs to the Son (ὁ πάντα τοῦ νεόν ἔχων) exhibits in Himself the Son in his completeness (ἄλον τον νεόν) save (πλήν) being generated Son (νός γενεσθα). (...) For if he that hath seen the Son seeth the Father, then the Father begat another self (ἄλλον ἐαυτοῦ), not passing out of Himself (οὐτε ἐαυτοῦ ἐξιστάμενος) and appearing in his fulness (ἄλος) in Him 101.

The first text counterposes the two concepts, community of Godhead or unity of Godhead. And Gregory’s position is clearly in favor of the unity. This distinction is significant when we consider those statements in which Gregory asserts a «community of nature» in the Trinity when explaining the concept of generation. But it may still be argued that what Gregory is talking about here is the «Godhead», which is an abstract concept. This however, is clarified in the second quotation which, in my opinion, goes to the limits of what can be expressed of the Divine unity without falling into a denial of the Trinity.

The phrases, not expressed in technical terminology (it cannot be otherwise), indicate the numerical unity of the Father and the Son. Gregory says that the Son is «this (the Father) other» (ἄλλος ἐκεῖνος ἐστι). And the basis for this assertion is that the Son has all (ὁ πάντα) that belongs to the Father. In other words, the basis of this assertion is that the Son does not participate, but has all, of the Father. And in order to maintain

100. LNPF 5, 105; PG 45, 477D; GNO 2, 322, 26 to 323, 2.
101. LNPF 5, 110; PG 45, 493BC; GNO 2, 337, 11-20. See footnote 41 of this chapter.
the trinitarian doctrine, the only exception to this totality is the Sonship itself.

In the latter phrase, he calls the Son «another self» (ἄλλον ἑαυτὸν) of the Father. And once again, the basis for this assertion is the «fullness» (δυναμός) of the Son’s existing in the Father and vice versa. The generation of the Son does not pass outside of the Divinity (οὖν ἑαυτοῦ ἐξιστάμενος), that is to say, there is no participation 102.

Based on these statements, we think that Harnack’s position that the Cappadocians start from the plurality, reducing the mystery to the unity, is not quite true. In this work, we have seen that one of the arguments of St. Gregory to prove the Divinity of the Son is precisely his unity with the Father (If the Son is completely united and coeternal with the Father, then he must be God.). He does not say that the Son is God and must therefore be united to God the Father. Perhaps it is more exact to say that Gregory’s starting point (and this is more in accordance with his view and method) is the Faith, and the Faith is expounded to us in the Sacred Scriptures. Now the Sacred Scriptures give us the trinitarian formula, «In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit», which expresses unity and distinction.

The following passage illustrates that Gregory’s starting point is the Faith:

For he who confesses that the Father is always and unchangeably the same, being one and only (ἐνα καὶ μόνον δόντα) God, holds fast the word of godliness, if in the Father he sees the Son, without Whom the Father neither is or is named (οὗ τὸ χωρῆς πατὴρ οὖτε ἐστιν οὔτε λεγέται) 103.

Gregory’s starting point here is the word used to deliver the Faith, which is «Father». Thus, his conception of the unity of

102. The importance of the concept of participation in all of Gregory’s thought has been studied by Balás. It is participation which distinguishes God from creatures: «God possesses (or rather is) every (pure) perfection essentially, whereas the creatures only by participation» (BALAS, D., Metousia theou..., 162). Thus, in asserting that the Son and the Holy Spirit do not participate the Divine essence but has it whole, he is clearly distinguishing them from creatures and asserting their divinity. Cfr. Infra, Appendix, note 8.

103. LNPF 5, 106; PG 45, 481D; GNO 2, 327, 13-16.
God is as absolute as that of Eunomius, but the unity necessarily includes the Son. The kind of unity which he conceives of here is not the same kind of unity that we may find in the individuals of a common species, but an altogether special kind of unity in which the Father is eternally and necessarily united to the Son. And he presents his position as the Christian doctrine: «While a Christian, if he believe not in the Father, is no Christian at all».

But even if Gregory’s concept of the unity of God is clear, it can still be asked: «Does he mean a numerical unity when he utilizes the term ousia?» In other words, granted that Gregory conceives of a numerical unity in God, could it not be possible that, in order to attract the semi-Arians, he had compromised his conception for an equivocity that comes about precisely through the introduction of a distinction between the terms ousia and hypostasis?

Indeed, in the Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii there are passages which, taken in themselves, may be interpreted in this light. For example, at times he seems to be satisfied with arriving at a mere «community of nature» (when he argues for the Divinity of the Son based on the concept of generation, or when he demonstrates the Divinity of the Holy Spirit from the divine actions attributed to him). Occasionally, he seems to be satisfied with merely demonstrating that «there is no difference of nature» (in his second trinitarian formula). And when he talks of a «unity of nature» he seems rather to mean a «community of nature». Then again, there is the long explanation to prove the «likeness» of the Son to the Father.

We think that the implications of these passages can be clarified if we keep in mind that St. Gregory is not writing with the Neoenic hypothesis in his mind. His opponent here is Eunomius, an extreme Arian, an Anomean. Consequently, Ortiz de Urbina’s observation with respect to the Nicene Fathers (that their immediate intention was to prove the genuine divinity of the Son, his unity not being put into question) can be applied perfectly to St. Gregory. We can also take into account Tixeront’s admonition that the mystery cannot be throughly explained, the facets of the problem. Bethune-Baker’s observa-

104. LNPF 5, 106; PG 45, 484A; GNO 2, 327, 21-22.
tion, that and so we should not be surprised if the analogies Gregory uses do not quite measure up to all *physis* will often be enough to express what the Cappadocians have in mind and that they are sparse in their use of *ousia* to refer to God because of their view that it is ineffable, is also applicable here. And finally, these passages and phrases have to be interpreted in the light of the unequivocal value of the passages where Gregory absolutely asserts the unity of God, unless we are willing to admit that Gregory is inconsistent with himself in the very same work.

What then does Gregory mean when he says that there is «no difference in nature» or that there is a «community of nature» in the Blessed Trinity? It is evident that the intention here is simply to demonstrate the genuineness of the Divinity of each of the three divine persons. This is the refutation called for by the Eunomian position in which the divinity of the Son is denied, not by saying that he is not God, in any way whatsoever, but that he is not God *by nature*. The numerical or the specific unity of God is not the point in question because both Eunomius and Gregory agree that God is absolutely one.

Besides, a numerical unity cannot be the logical consequence of the analogies Gregory employs (we have already pointed out that the concept of generation can only arrive as far as demonstrating a community of nature), so that Gregory is merely being rigorous and consistent when he arrives at this conclusion in his arguments.

The case is slightly different with regard to the demonstration of the divinity of the Holy Spirit from his divine activity. A community of nature is at once evident if both the Son and the Holy Spirit can be considered authors of actions which are equally divine (in the example he uses, it is creation and sanctification, both applicable to either Son or Holy Spirit). But in fact Gregory draws more conclusions without failing in logical rigor. The principle *agere sequitur esse* can indicate unity and not mere community if indeed the actions referred to are not just of the same kind, but is the very same action. And so he concludes that «every especially divine vision, every theophany, every word uttered in the Person of God (*ἐκ προσώπου θεοῦ*), is to be understood to refer to the
Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit» 105. And if he does not capitalize on this conclusion to show the unity of God 106 but rather concludes from it the community of nature, it is because his immediate intention is to prove the genuineness of the Divinity of the Holy Spirit.

When Gregory seems to be satisfied with merely asserting the «likeness» of the Son to the Father on the basis of the natural generation, we must again keep in mind that he is refuting the Anomean position which denies any real likeness between the two, but only maintains a deceptive and superficial likeness. In fact, when Gregory ends his exposition on the kind of likeness existent between the Father and the Son, he will restate the doctrine of the unity of the two in unequivocal terms, with the addition that this unity involves a mystery:

Look at the want of discrimination and circumspection, at the confused muddle of his statement, how he brings the mystery (τοῦ μυστηρίου) into ridicule, without understanding either what he says or what he is arguing about. For He Who has the Father in his entirety in Himself (ὅλον ἐλον ἐν ἑαυτῷ), and is Himself in His entirety in the Father (καὶ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ δόλος ἐω) as Word and Wisdom and Power and Truth, as His express image (χαρακτήρ) and brightness (ἀπανθαμμα), Himself (ὅλον ἐκων ἐν ἑαυτῷ), and is Himself in His entirety in the Father (καὶ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ δόλος ὦν) as ness of certain other things discerned in the Father prior to Himself 107.

On the other hand, it seems that the use of the term ousia in the sense of essentia is inherent in the very nature of the new terminology that the Cappadocians introduce. That is to say, once the Cappadocian distinction is understood, one necessarily has to understand ousia in the sense of essentia since it is now hypostasis which will stand for substantia (the individual). But this movement has to be understood in the Cappado-

105. See footnote 88.
106. He develops this more in Quod non sint tres dii (PG 45, 115-136).
107. LNPF 5, 125; PG 45, 541D; GNO 2, 382, 25 to 383, 5. In De paerfecta christiani forma (PG 46, 265B) Gregory explains how the terms character and morphe show the Divinity of the Word.
cian way that is, it means a distinction of the common to the particular, and nothing more. In the case of creatures, this relation (ousia-hypostasis) involves a participation. But in God, as Gregory stresses in this very work, there is no participation. Thus, the unity of ousia in God is not understood as an abstract unity, but a concrete unity though it be common. What the concept does introduce, and this again is a logical consequence of the distinction, is the necessity of the multiplicity. «There is no concrete divine substance distinct from or prior to the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost»108. That is, once the mystery of the Blessed Trinity has been revealed, we must necessarily accept that each divine person (each individual) is God, the whole God, and yet there are not three Gods but one God, perfectly united in himself. And this explains Gregory’s statements speaking of the Son and the Father as «the whole in the whole» (δόλος ἐν δόλῳ).

Thus the unity of ousia, the essential unity, in God, is not a merely specific unity because in God there is a unity of being (a real, not an abstract unity) in which the three divine persons do not participate but is the being. And once the distinction between ousia and hypostasis is accepted according to the Cappadocian definition, neither can it mean an absolute numerical unity, because the individual subsistent is the divine hypostasis. The ousia can no longer be understood as substantia (in the sense of subsistentia), but as essentia, that which is common to the individuals, with the special feature that in God, each individual is the whole essentia» St. Gregory has received the faith in the Blessed Trinity without reducing it to Judaism (absolute numerical unity) nor to polytheism (merely specific unity), and he has tried to penetrate the mystery with the awareness that he will not comprehend it.

III. CONCLUSIONS

Our analysis of St. Gregory of Nyssa’s theological method and elaboration as found in his Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii

108. Tixeront, J., o.c., 83.
manifests that Gregory's starting point, in striking contrast with Eunomianism, is the rule of the Faith. His arguments are based on the Revelation, and his theological elaborations are spurred on by an effort to demonstrate that the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity is a truth of the Faith which in no way contradicts naturally known truths.

The harmony between Faith and Reason lies at the root of Gregory's concept of the analogical nature of our knowledge of God. From the orthodox position on the ineffability of the Divine ousia (elaborated from his exegesis of the first part of the Trinitarian formula) and God's infinite perfection, Gregory utilizes the via negativa and the via emminentia, thus purifying those concepts represented by human words and utilized by the Sacred Scriptures to refer to God. Thus, he does not end up degrading human reason or language in his «mysticism of darkness».

Concretely, he proposes a ratio convenientiae for the Trinitarian formulation, which complements his conception of the Divine ineffability and which stresses the manifestatory character of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, without falling into Sabellianism. That is to say, the terms which the Sacred Scriptures utilize to describe the Son and the Holy Spirit, when purified of its «corporeal sense», gives the human mind grounds for predicating perfections in God, which are identified with the divine essence by way of perfection.

In order to safeguard the orthodox position on unity of nature and trinity of persons in God, against the two extremes of Sabellianism and Arianism, Gregory clearly follows the Cappadocian line, in introducing a distinction between hypostasis and prosopon, in which hypostasis is seen to have an ontological status which makes it a real subject of the distinguishing characteristics. As a consequence of this distinction, the term ousia tends to be utilized in the sense of natura without, however, excluding its connotation of substantia but, in all probability, taking this latter meaning into account.

Gregory's explanation of how the concept of generation can be applied to God, manifests his use of the principles of analogy in his theological elaboration. Thus, his generic concept of «generation» implies nothing more than «to be from a
cause», i.e., a certain causality. According to him, the term is used in the Sacred Scriptures to refer to God, in four different ways.

The concept of creative generation adds a «becoming» to the causality. The creation, being an act of God, requires no instrument or material and is therefore ex nihilo. Creative generation is not applicable to the Son nor to the Holy Spirit, as the terminus. Gregory also stresses, precisely in connection with his demonstration that the Son and the Holy Spirit cannot be the terminus, that the creative generation is free and is due solely to the goodness of God.

The concept of natural generation, aside from causality (origin), stresses the community of nature between the principle and the terminus. This concept is applicable to the relationship between the Father and the Son (the Sacred Scriptures suggest and support this use), but this concept does not imply any subordination when applied to God. On the contrary, it demonstrates the divine nature of the Son.

The purified concept of material efflux («to be from and to be with») according to Gregory’s conception, implies not only a certain causality, but also unity. It is a concept which he applies to describe the relationship of the Son to the Father (this concept is also supported by scriptural usage) and to which he seems to resort to describe the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Son.

St. Gregory does not arrive at the purified concept of intellectual generation, although he also resorts to it to describe the relationship of the Son to the Father. However, through the via emminentia, he adds the safeguard that the generated word needs to be susbsistent, thus making the concept apt for its subsequent theological elaboration.

Thus, he follows the line of his predecessors in the orthodox homousian tradition in the utilization of these images, but his treatment demonstrates a greater effort at abstraction in order to arrive at the purified conceptions applicable to God. He also distinguishes clearly between the Holy Spirit and the Son, and between the modes of origin of the two. There is an indication that he conceives the procession of the Holy Spirit according to the image of material efflux.
Finally, the Refutatio shows that Gregory conceives of a numerical unity in God, because each Divine Person does not participate of the Divine Essence, but is the Divine Essence. However, the Cappadocian distinction between ousia and hypostasis involving a movement of the term ousia from the particular to the common without necessarily introducing a movement from the concrete to the abstract, is manifested in Gregory’s peculiar use of the terms in question and in his arguments based on the «community of nature».
HOW GREGORY USES THE TERM OUSIA

Gregory of Nyssa’s awareness and acceptance of the equivocal use of ousia is reflected in his other works. In the Oratio catechetica magna (a.385), clearly a dogmatic and systematic work, we find Gregory utilizing ousia in various senses. With reference to God, he preferentially uses it in the sense of substantial being as opposed to merely abstract being. Thus, when proving the subsistence of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, he says: «But if, as David says, By the Word of the Lord were the heavens established, and their powers had their framing by His breath, then has the mystery of truth been confirmed, which instructs us to speak of a word (λόγον) as in essential being (ἐν οὐσίᾳ) and a breath as in personality (καὶ πνεῦμα ἐν ὑποστάσει) ¹. Here he uses ousia and hypostasis together, both of them meaning the subsistent being.

Again to show that the Word of God, unlike human speech, is subsistent, he utilizes ousia: «Now in what has been previously said, the Word of God has been shown not to be this actual utterance of speech, of the possession of some science or art, but to be a power essentially and subsistently (ἄλλα κατ’ οὐσίαν τις ὑπεστώσα δύναμις) existing, willing all good, and being possessed of strength to execute its will» ².

On the other hand, he utilizes ousia in the sense of natura when speaking of men or created things. The passages need no commentary:

For neither Reason, nor Understanding, nor Receptivity for Science, nor any other like quality proper to the

¹. LNPF 5, 478; Srawley, 19, 14. Srawley (o.c., 19) notes how Gregory here uses the two terms ousia and hypostasis as synonyms, and he gives the translation as «Teaching us to speak of a Word as in actual being and a spirit in subsistence».
². LNPF 5, 479; Srawley, 21, 9.
³. LNPF 5, 480; Srawley, 30, 10.
essence of man (ὅ τις ἄνθρωπίνης ὁδιον οὐσίας ἐστὶ) is opposed to the principle of virtue.  

He (...) conjoined the intellectual to the sentient nature (λόγῳ τὴν νοεράν οὐσίαν), the new principle freely progressing to the extremities by natural consequence  

It is the peculiar property of the essence of fire (ὁδιον ἔστι τῆς τοῦ πυρὸς οὐσίας) to tend upwards  

In the De communibus... and the Quod non sint... (a. 375 or 390), works of vital importance to the topic under discussion, Bethune-Baker has pointed out how the term ousia has the meaning of substantia. In the case of the De Commu­nibus..., he points out how the phrase, «The Father (is) ousia, the Son (is) ousia, the Holy Spirit (is) ousia, and yet there are not three ousiai», cannot possibly be understood as natura  

In Quod non sint... Gregory mentions the basis for the existence of individual men: «Their nature is one (Ἡ δὲ φύσις μία ἐστὶν) ... in its essence, being and continually remaining one (ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἐν οὐσία), inseparable even though it appear in plurality, continuous, complete, and not divided with the individuals (ἐκαστὸν), who participate in it (καὶ τοῖς μετέχουσιν αὐτής)» . Thus, because the individual only participates in the common ousia, he is not ousia  

On the other hand, the example he uses leaves the possibility for an interpretation of ousia in the sense of natura, because the unity of the human ousia speaks more of an essential, rather than a substantial unity. And in the example of gold he utilizes, while it is true that «gold» indicates one substance,

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4. LNPF 5, 489; Srawley, 72, 1.  
5. LNPF 5, 494; Srawley, 92, 2.  
6. Bethune-Baker, o.c., 55. The phrase is found in PG 45, 177B.  
7. LNPF 5, 332; PG 45, 120 B.  
8. We are dealing here with «horizontal participation», following Balás’ distinction between «horizontal» (individuals to species) and «vertical» (creatures to God) participation. His observation is relevant here: «Concerning the terminology it may be remarked that 1. Gregory often develops his doctrine of the unity of the nature or essence without the use of the terms of participation, 2. He uses both μετέχειν and κοινωνεῖν to express the sharing of the human nature, but uses only the second verb and the noun κοινωνία to express the sharing of the one and Divine nature by the Divine persons» (BALAS, D., Metousia theou..., 139-140, note).
still, within an Aristotelian viewpoint, gold as such does not exist unless it be in coin or some other concrete thing.

We can thus say that in these two works, it is clear that St. Gregory conceives of the unity of God as a numerical, substantial unity, as a unity of being. However, he does not always use *ousia* in the sense of the concrete individual substance, but as that which is common which, in the case of the examples he uses, could be limited to a merely specific unity. Nevertheless, he does present the basis by which the numerical unity in God can be distinguished from the specific unity in creatures, in the idea of participation.

In the case of the *Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii*, (a.383) we can observe a similar position. The unity of God is a unity of being. The statements related to the exegesis of Ioh 14, 10 in which he speaks of the Son as «another self» (ἄλλον ἐκατόν) of the Father, of «the whole in the whole» (δόλος ἐν δόλῳ), are clear indications of this position. There are also statements where he denies «participation» in the Divinity: «For It does not perceive any other good outside itself, by participation (κατὰ μετουσίαν) in which It could acquire any accession».

This phrase may refer to the Divinity as such, or to the Father or the Son. It probably refers to the Son, as we have seen in our analysis (Cfr. section on Coeternity and Unity). In any case, it refers to God.


On the other hand, when he does use the term *ousia* to refer to the unity of God, and especially in the explanations he gives, it is still possible to interpret his words in the sense of a specific unity. For example, in the Trinitarian formulas, he says that the one name (ἐν δὲ ὄνομα) indicates the unity of essence (τὴν ἐνόησιν τῆς ὀυσίας). But this too is true of the *ousia* man, in which there is only a specific unity. He even goes further. When explaining the unity of *ousia*, he resorts to the definition:

For not even in the case of us who are born of one another is there any division of essence (ὀνομάζεσθαι διάθεσις). The definition expressive of essence (τὴς ὀυσίας ὁ λόγος) remains in its entirety in each, in him that begets and in him who is begotten (γεννήσάντι). 10

He is obviously using *ousia* here in the sense of *natura*.

10. LNPF. 5, 120; PG 45, 525c; GNO 2, 368, 2-5.
It seems therefore, that he is aware of the two meanings of the term *ousia*, and that he utilizes them both. When he speaks of the *ousia* of God, he seems to conceive of it in the sense of a real concrete being. But it is sufficient for him to defend the unity of God utilizing the analogy of the unity of created *ousia* (specific unity: a being of reason in the aristotelian sense, the real being in the platonic sense). Now if one takes the unity of God as the point of departure (and this is the case in Gregory) a specific unity in God is enough to conclude a numerical unity.

In addition, the use of *ousia* to designate the species has much to do with the distinction which the Cappadocians will introduce between the terms *ousia* and *hypostasis* (the common and the particular). But there is a difference between the Divine *ousia* and the created *ousia*.

We have seen that St. Gregory explains the multiplicity of individuals on the basis of the doctrine of participation. That is, in the case of created beings, although there is one *ousía*, the individual is not the *ousia* because 1) it has individuating characteristics and 2) the individual participates of the one *ousía*. He thus presents the bases for a real multiplicity in creatures (although some of his statements may indicate a confusion of the logical and ontological orders, there is no indication that he denies the reality of the multiple individuals). That is to say, multiplicity within the specific unity is characterized by these two factors: participation and individuality.

So it seems that he does not conceive of the unity of the Divine *ousía* as a specific unity. The Divine persons are not individuals of the species God, because they do not participate the Divine *ousía*, but are merely distinguished (individualized) by their proper characteristics (ιδιοτης).

And to the statement of Harnack that *ousía* received the meaning «halfway between the abstract ‘substance’ and the concrete ‘individual substance’», we can say that it is not «abstractness» or «concreteness» which distinguishes between *ousia* and *hypostasis*. The distinction is between «community» and «individuality» which, in the case of God (and this is part of the mystery) does not imply a movement from the concrete to the abstract.
And while there are indications that Gregory understands *ousia* as *substantia* when speaking of God, there are also indications that he uses it in the sense of *natura*, at least according to Tertullian's definition that «Substance is peculiar to each particular thing, nature however, can be common» \(^{11}\). But he uses it as *natura* only in the sense that it is common, not as participated, so that the common *ousia* God does not constitute a species, nor is it relegated to the abstract. And so the drift of many of the arguments of St. Gregory, at least in the *Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii*, is to speak of the community of nature, or the community of essence while at the same time stressing the indivisibility of the Divine unity in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

\(^{11}\) *De anima*, 32, PL 2, 704.
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