

4. Ousia and Energeia (Substance and Activity)

The main topic of Eunomius' *Liber apologeticus* (*Apology*) is to argue that generation of the Son of God is in fact creation, and, therefore, His substance is different from that of the Father. This thesis can be demonstrated by the fact that we can conceive the essence of God, that is we can know this essence as ingenerate. Those statements are exactly the same as what we have seen in *Syntagmation* by Aetius, but because of the dialectical austerity of this work, it remained relatively unknown, whereas the *Apology* of Aetius' disciple was commonly read as a main expression of Anomean's beliefs. Eunomius not only puts them in a more comprehensible manner, but he proposes a specific theological methodology to demonstrate his view. However, one can argue that ingeneracy is the *essence* of God only when we can show that any grasp of this essence is possible. If we cannot know the essence of God, any effective demonstration of the created nature of the Son is impossible, because there is no reason to discern whether the essences of the Father and the Son are different. Therefore, in *Liber apologeticus*, the question of the knowledge of God once again plays the leading role. As we have seen in the previous chapters, the main goal of Anomean missionary activity was to convince the Orthodox that they must know the essence to be able to worship God properly. But it must be demonstrated that such cognition is possible and how can we achieve it. Therefore, Eunomius puts forward his theological method (or methods) in his writings, and in his approach to theology, the distinction between substance and activity is of utmost importance.

4.1 Eunomius and the two ways of theology

The way of how Eunomius wants to defend the Anomean teaching is reflected in the structure of *Liber apologeticus*. The first approach makes us look at the beginning of the work, where he presents the way how he wants to make his exposition. He refers to the short Trinitarian Creed composed of three sections, which he has taken from the Fathers.³⁸⁹ This

389 LA 5, 1–8 (Vaggione, p. 38).

text was based on 1 Cor. 8:6, and we know from Basil that it was presented by Arius as a token of his faith to bishop Alexander of Alexandria.³⁹⁰ So he proposes, as the basis of his defence, the short text which, as Eunomius says, can be accepted by all who want to call themselves Christians.³⁹¹ His method and the structure of the work would then follow the text of the creed, which presents Eunomius' opinions and arguments regarding its contents. Therefore, the structure of *Liber apologeticus* can be presented as following the arguments on the three persons of the Trinity, with a summary and conclusion at the end.³⁹²

However, R.P. Vaggione notes that: "Yet, while this analysis clearly does reflect the external structure of the Apology, in other ways it is less adequate as a full expression of Eunomius' meaning."³⁹³ In the middle of the text, we find that he introduces a method (or methods) which he wants to follow in a more technical fashion:

"There are two roads marked out to us for the discovery of what we seek - one is that by which we examine the actual essences and with clear and unadulterated reasoning about them make a judgement on each; the other is an enquiry by means of the activities, whereby we distinguish the essence on the basis of its products and completed works - and neither of the ways mentioned is able to bring out any apparent similarity of essence."³⁹⁴

This fragment is for R.P. Vaggione a basis of recognizing the structure of Eunomius' work in a new way since it: "In some ways this might almost be taken as a summary of the contents of the treatise."³⁹⁵ Therefore, the first part of the work after introduction would comprise chapters 7 to 20, which describe the first way. After that, Eunomius puts forth his explanation of

390 *Con. Eun.* I, 4 (SC 299, pp. 162–163).

391 LA 6, 1–4 (Vaggione, p. 38).

392 This structure is presented by R.P. Vaggione, Introduction in: *Eunomius, The Extant Works*, Oxford 1987, p. 11.

393 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

394 LA 20, 5–10. δυνεῖν γὰρ ἡμῖν τετμημένων ὁδῶν πρὸς τὴν ζητουμένων εὗρεσιν, μιᾶς μὲν καθ' ἣν τὰς οὐσίας αὐτὰς ἐπισκοπούμενοι, καθαρῶ τῷ περὶ αὐτῶν λόγῳ τὴν ἐκάστου ποιούμεθα κρίσιν, θατέρως δὲ τῆς διὰ τῶν ἐνεργειῶν ἐξετάσεως, ἣν ἐκ τῶν δημιουργημάτων καὶ τῶν ἀποτελεσμάτων ἰδακρίνομεν, οὐδετέραν τῶν εἰρημένων εὐρεῖν ἐμφαινομένην τὴν τῆς οὐσίας ὁμοιότητα δυνατὸν (Vaggione, pp. 58–59).

395 R.P. Vaggione, Introduction, in: *Eunomius, The Extant Works*, Oxford 1987, p. 11.

the two ways. The second part would comprise chapters 20 to 26, which is followed by a summary, conclusion, and appendix.³⁹⁶ R.P. Vaggione calls those two methods a priori and a posteriori since the first one begins with an analysis of the essences revealed by names (ἀγέννητος, γέννημα), which leads to the understanding of the activities of the Persons, and the second one begins with the activities and concludes in the identification of essences.³⁹⁷ But can we say that the second way of dividing the structure of *Liber apologeticus* was indeed more important for Eunomius himself, or he only accidentally explains his methodology, while the explanation of the simple creed is more important?

The importance of the two methods of theology for Eunomius is confirmed by his *Apologia Apologiae*, which unfortunately has been preserved only in fragments quoted by Gregory of Nyssa in his *Contra Eunomium*. Gregory also recognizes those two methods as playing the key role in Eunomius' theology, since he calls them the system, or the "technology of blasphemy" (τεχνολογία τῆς βλασφημίας).³⁹⁸ A long fragment quoted by Gregory begins with the statement:

"Our whole doctrine is summed up in the highest and principal substance, in the substance which exists through it but before all others, and in the substance which is third in terms of origin and the activity which produced it. This same order is revealed whether we consider the substances themselves or approach them through their characteristic activities."³⁹⁹

396 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

397 *Ibid.*, p. 11. Naming the two ways "a priori" and "a posteriori" is not very accurate. Since both substances and activities cannot be identified by experience, none of them can be truly a posteriori. Those ways correspond to what in Medieval theology was named argumentation "propter quid" – from cause to effects, or "quia" – from effects to cause.

398 CE I, 155, 1 (GNO I, 73, 16).

399 CE I, 151, 1–10. Πᾶς ὁ τῶν καθ' ἡμᾶς δογμάτων συμπληροῦται λόγος ἐκ τε τῆς ἀνωτάτω καὶ κυριωτάτης οὐσίας καὶ ἐκ τῆς δι' ἐκείνην μὲν οὔσης μετ' ἐκείνην δὲ πάντων τῶν ἄλλων πρωτευούσης καὶ τρίτης γε τῆς μηδεμιᾶ μὲν τούτων συνταττομένης, ἀλλὰ τῇ μὲν διὰ τὴν αἰτίαν, τῇ δὲ διὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν καθ' ἣν γέγονεν ὑποταττομένης, συμπεριλαμβανομένων δηλαδὴ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ παντός λόγου συμπλήρωσιν καὶ τῶν ταῖς οὐσίαις παρεπομένων ἐνεργειῶν καὶ τῶν ταύταις προσφῶν ὀνομάτων (GNO I, 71, 28–72, 10; tr. Hall, p. 57). As I noted above, S.G. Hall constantly translates οὐσία as "being"; in my quotation of his translations, I change "being" to "substance" for clarity of the discussed issues.

In this fragment, Eunomius once again returns to the two methods of theology, but he adds some explanations. In the following verses, he claims that each of the persons of the Trinity must be perceived as an absolutely simple substance and, therefore, their activity must be simple. He also systematically explains that their activities can be defined by the effects which they produce:

“since the activities are defined at the same time as their works, and the works match the activities of those who effected them, there is surely every necessity both that the activities accompanying each of the substances are lesser and greater, and that some occupy the first and others the second rank, and in sum that they reach the same degree of difference as their works reach.”⁴⁰⁰

The work (ἔργον) which reveals activity and helps to discern various types of activities, which was also mentioned in *Liber apologeticus*, now has its place in a systematic exposition of the theological method. Eunomius is convinced that it also helps to discern different levels of activities, and, therefore, it is possible recognize different substances of the Divine Persons. He also insists on the substances having primary activities, which are helpful in grading the Persons without mixing them together:

“...should any dispute arise about the substances, to base their belief about what is being demonstrated and the resolution of disputed points on the primary activities peculiar to the substances, and to resolve any doubt about the activities with reference to the substances, and to reckon it surely more fitting and generally more accomplished to descend from primary to secondary things.”⁴⁰¹

This long quotation of Gregory helps us to understand that Eunomius has a great confidence in his methods of theology. As we will see, Basil’s criticism primarily undermined the first way (from substance to activity), since he

400 CE I, 152, 3–10. τε καὶ νοουμένης κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν ἀξίαν, συμπεριγραφομένων δὲ τοῖς ἔργοις τῶν ἐνεργειῶν, καὶ τῶν ἔργων ταῖς τῶν ἐργασαμένων ἐνεργείαις παραμετρούμενων, ἀνάγκη δήπου πᾶσα καὶ τὰς ἐκάστη τῶν οὐσιῶν ἐπομέναις ἐνεργείαις ἐλάττους τε καὶ μείζους εἶναι, καὶ τὰς μὲν πρώτην τὰς δὲ δευτέραν ἐπέχειν τάξιν, συνόλωσ τε εἰπεῖν πρὸς τοσαύτην ἐξικνεῖσθαι διαφοράν, πρὸς ὁπόσην ἂν ἐξικνηῖται τὰ ἔργα· (GNO I, 72, 12–20; tr. Hall, p. 57).

401 CE I, 154, 6–13. εἰ μὲν περὶ ταῖς οὐσίαις κινουῖτό τις ἀμφισβήτησις, ἐκ τῶν πρώτων καὶ προσεχῶν ταῖς οὐσίαις ἐνεργειῶν ποιεῖσθαι τῶν δεικνυμένων τὴν πίστιν καὶ τῶν ἀμφισβητούμενων τὴν διάλυσιν, τὴν δὲ ἐπὶ ταῖς ἐνεργείαις ἀμφιβολίαν διαλύειν ἐκ τῶν οὐσιῶν, ἀρμυδιωτέραν γε μὴν καὶ τοῖς πᾶσιν ἀνυσιμωτέραν ἡγεῖσθαι τὴν ἀπὸ τῶν πρώτων ἐπὶ τὰ δευτέρα κάθοδον (GNO I, 73, 8–15; Hall, p. 58).

concentrated on the impossibility of having any knowledge of the essence based on the term “ungenerated.” Therefore, in *Apologia Apologiae*, Eunomius tries somehow to combine the two ways, but he mostly underlines the second way (from activity to substance) adding to it the point of defining activities according to their effects.

Nevertheless, it can be seen that the distinction between substance and activity plays the central role in Eunomius’ theology, and in obtaining the knowledge of God. Therefore, to understand better his claims about the possibility of knowing the essence of God, we must turn to the sources of the distinction between substance and activity which were available to Eunomius. It is also necessary to look for earlier uses of this distinction as a theological method.

4.2 The philosophical sources of οὐσία and ἐνέργεια

Although almost all scholars agree that Eunomius, just like Aetius, used Greek philosophy in his teaching, but there is still no clear answer to the question as to the extent of such influence. The question is even more complicated as regards the sources of Eunomius’ understanding of substance and activity. The standard approach follows the accusations which were made by his opponents, who frequently pointed out that he uses the Aristotelian language and concepts.⁴⁰² Basil and Gregory frequently point out that Eunomius uses Aristotle’s concepts, and Basil even recognized that at some point, he referred to *Categories*.⁴⁰³ There are also similar accusations addressed against Anomeans by historians.⁴⁰⁴ But those accusations of relying too much on Aristotle and philosophical works were made on both sides. Therefore, scholars are very cautious in admitting that Anomeans could be named Peripatetics.⁴⁰⁵ M.R. Barnes also put in

402 M.R. Barnes presents the discussion on the sources of Eunomius’ use of activity: cf. *The Background and Use of Eunomius’ Causal Language*, in: *Arianism after Arius*, ed. M.R. Barnes, D.H. Williams, Edinburgh 1993, p. 222.

403 Cf., Basil, *Con. Eun.* I, 5, 43–45 (SC 299, pp. 172–174).

404 Cf., Ephraim, *Panarion* 76. 2. 2 (GCS 37, pp. 342–343); Scocrates Scholasticus, *HE* IV, 7 (GCS NF 1, pp. 332–334).

405 M. Ludlow notes that: “...it is difficult to conclude that Aristotelianism was uniformly characteristic or distinctive of Aetius, Eunomius and their followers.”

doubt Aristotle's influence on Eunomius' concept of activity by pointing out that the Anomean does not use ἐνέργεια with the related term δύναμις, and, therefore, the sources of his theology must be looked for elsewhere.⁴⁰⁶ As we will see below, the use of ἐνέργεια in the context of capacity is only one of many which the Stagirite exploits in his writings. I would like to underline that the term was coined by Aristotle, and it was used both in philosophical and Christian writings. Its meaning was developing, but ἐνέργεια was seen as a term which was especially well fitted in the descriptions of the actions of God.

4.2.1 Aristotle – the origins of ἐνέργεια

Although similar concepts can be found in earlier writings, the word ἐνέργεια appears for the first time in the writings of Aristotle, who uses it very frequently.⁴⁰⁷ Aristotle himself discusses the etymology of the word maintaining that it is derived from “deed” or “thing done” (τὸ ἔργον).⁴⁰⁸ Although the term is new, the combination of *en* with *ergon* can be found in earlier Greek texts. The meaning of it can be explained by the adjective *energos* which means “active, effective” or the verb *energein* meaning “to be active or effective to operate.” Therefore, the meaning of the term would be “activity, operation or effectiveness.”⁴⁰⁹ But Aristotle also expresses difficulties in understanding this new concept, which can be best seen in his remarks on its definition. In a fragment from *Metaphysics Theta*, he says:

Contra Eunomium III – Who Is Eunomius? in: Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium III*, ed. J. Leemans, M. Cassin, Leiden, Boston 2014, p. 456.

406 Cf. M.R. Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

407 In his writings, he uses this term 670 times, cf. J.-C. Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines*, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

408 *Met.* IX, 8, 1050 a, 22–23. ἡ δὲ ἐνέργεια τὸ ἔργον, διὸ καὶ τοῦνομα ἐνέργεια λέγεται κατὰ τὸ ἔργον καὶ συντείνει πρὸς τὴν ἐντελέχειαν.

409 Cf. D. Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*. *op. cit.*, p. 1. J. Beere points out that *energeia* is “merely an abstract noun form a familiar adjective (*energos*)”, cf. J. Beere, *Doing and being*, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

“What we want to say is clear on the basis of the particular cases, by induction, and one should not seek a definition of everything, but should also comprehend some things by analogy.”⁴¹⁰

As J. Beere suggests analogy is the key concept for the understanding of the term. He thinks that Aristotle simultaneously intended to exclude ambiguity from the understanding of what ἐνέργεια is and preserve various cases which this term covers. Therefore, the most suitable approach to the understanding of the term should not exclude any cases and examples which Aristotle gives to describe ἐνέργεια in his works.⁴¹¹ However, we must remember that he focuses on the meaning of the term in *Metaphysics*.

In his seminal work on the topic, D. Bradshaw proposes a different approach. He wants to cover various cases of using the term by tracing the development of this concept in the works of Aristotle.⁴¹² His method leads him to present several modes of understanding ἐνέργεια in Aristotle: as an exercise of capacity, in its distinction with motion, as actuality, and most of all its use in describing the activity of the Prime Mover. This method, although it relies on the uncertain time sequence of the *Corpus Aristotelicum*, is especially useful because it is able to show the development of the understanding of the term. It seems that both of those two approaches are profitable, but for the purpose of our study, we shall concentrate on explaining the meaning of ἐνέργεια in the context of its application to the activity of God.

The earliest meaning of ἐνέργεια in the Aristotelian corpus is the exercise of capacity. Aristotle develops here the concepts of Plato, who expressed similar ideas without using the term ἐνέργεια.⁴¹³ We can observe such understanding in the preserved fragments of *Protrepticus*, which seems to be very important to show the use of the term by Eunomius. When explaining the body and soul as parts of a human being and the operations proper of those parts, he says:

410 *Met.* IX, 6 1048 a, 35–37. τὸ δὲ ἐνέργεια. δῆλον δ' ἐπὶ τῶν καθ' ἕκαστα τῆ ἐπαγωγῆ ὁ βουλόμεθα λέγειν, καὶ οὐ δεῖ παντός ὄρον ζητεῖν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ἀνάλογον συνορᾶν (tr. Barnes).

411 Cf. J. Beere, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

412 Cf. D. Bradshaw, *op. cit.*, pp. 1–2.

413 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

“that which is composite and divisible into parts has several different activities, but that which is by nature simple and whose being does not consist in relation to something else must have only one excellence, in the full sense of the word.”⁴¹⁴

As D. Bradshaw suggests, if ἐνέργεια simply meant activity, it would be odd to correlate the number of parts with the number of activities.⁴¹⁵ The term also must mean the exercise of capacity because in the next part of this fragment, the term is linked with the possession of faculties (δύναμις).⁴¹⁶ In *Protrepticus*, we can also observe the use of expressions κατὰ δύνάμιν and κατ' ἐνέργειαν,⁴¹⁷ which is a symptom of the development of the concept in the context of the levels of being. Aristotle explains that the man who exercises the capacity of rational thinking “lives more” than the one who simply possesses it, and exercising capacity rather than having it is described as “true being” (ὄπερ εἶναι).⁴¹⁸ Aristotle expands this use of the two senses of such words as “live,” “perceive,” and “know” in his other works.⁴¹⁹ Using his example of the knower, he notes that calling man a potential knower is ambiguous. The first kind of being a potential knower means that man can think because of what he is, he has such capacity as a human being, or as Aristotle puts it “the man falls within the class of beings that know or have knowledge.”⁴²⁰ In the second meaning, man can be called as capable of thinking only when he has knowledge (e.g., of grammar) and can “realize this knowledge in actual knowing at will.”⁴²¹ Only man who possesses knowledge in the second sense can fully realize this knowledge in the state of actual thinking.⁴²² In the following analysis of a change from the state of capacity to the actual use of knowledge, ἐνέργεια is understood as the fulfilment of man’s nature and the path to a fuller reality. As D. Bradshaw

414 *Protrep.* 64, 1–3, Τοῦ μὲν οὖν συνθέτου καὶ μεριστοῦ πλείους καὶ διάφοροι εἰσιν ἐνέργειαι, τοῦ δὲ τὴν φύσιν ἀπλοῦ καὶ μὴ πρὸς τι τὴν οὐσίαν ἔχοντος μίαν ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι τὴν καθ' αὐτὸ κυρίως ἀρετὴν (tr. Barnes).

415 Cf. D. Bradshaw, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

416 *Protrep.* 64, 5–7.

417 *Protrep.* 79, 1–2.

418 *Protrep.* 86, 1–4.

419 Cf. D. Bradshaw, *op. cit.*, pp. 5–6.

420 *De anima* II, 5, 417 a, 24 (tr. Barnes).

421 *De anima* II, 5, 417 a, 27–28. ὁ δ' ὅτι βουλευθεὶς δυνατὸς θεωρεῖν (tr. Barnes).

422 Cf. J. Beere, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

notes, the transition from the second to the third step does not require any involvement of an external agent, but it happens of itself. He also points out that in *Physics* VII, 4 Aristotle uses ἐνέργεια to explain the proper behaviour of the elements such as water. The term is used to describe simply being in a place according to the natural features of the element, or even having a certain dimension according to certain quantity.⁴²³

At this point, we can note that ἐνέργεια already means more than simply the exercise of capacity. As it also describes the levels of reality, it is intrinsically linked not only with acting, but also with the life and being of certain things. But to understand Aristotle's conception, it is necessary to have a closer look at the relation of ἐνέργεια to change (κίνησις), because he himself notes "For it seems that actuality (ἐνέργεια) most of all has its being qua change."⁴²⁴ This problem is also very important because the generation of the Son in Eunomius is also described as motion.

Aristotle discusses the relation of ἐνέργεια to change in the famous though difficult fragment of the sixth chapter of *Metaphysics theta*.⁴²⁵ The main problem in this distinction is the relation of both concepts to the end. There are two kinds of action: the first one is change and the second one is ἐνέργεια. Change is the kind of movement which does not have its limit in itself. The process of building is incomplete until it reaches the end (a house is built). On the other hand, ἐνέργεια is the kind of action which has its end in itself and is complete. Therefore, Aristotle explains:

"Of these then [it is necessary] to call some changes, and others actualities (ἐνέργεια). For all change is incomplete, thinning, learning, walking, house building; these are changes and surely incomplete. For it is not at the same time that one is walking and has walked, nor building a house and having built a house, nor coming to be and having come to be, nor being changed and having been changed, but these are different, and so too if something is bringing about change and has brought about change. But the same thing at the same time has seen and is seeing

423 Cf. D. Bradshaw, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

424 *Met.* 1047 a, 32. ἡ ἐνέργεια μάλιστα ἡ κίνησις εἶναι (tr. Makin, p. 4).

425 This fragment (1048 b, 18–35) was the subject of discussions which are referred by J. Beere, *op. cit.* pp. 221–230. It is interesting that this is the only fragment where Aristotle explicitly contrasts the terms "energeia" and "change." Although J. Beere thinks that its contents should not be treated as the standard Aristotelian doctrine (cf. *ibid.*, p. 230), it seems to be useful for the purpose of understanding the claims of his successors including Eunomius.

and is thinking and has thought. So I call such a thing an actuality (ἐνέργειαν), but that thing a change.”⁴²⁶

Although some actions are incomplete, they can be called actions in a way, but properly speaking, ἐνέργεια is the kind of action which is complete and has its end in itself. Therefore, change stops when it reaches the end, but it is not necessary for ἐνέργεια to end.⁴²⁷ To explain this further, D. Bradshaw tries to add to the remarks from *Metaphysics* the notions from *Nicomachean Ethics*, where Aristotle discusses the nature of pleasure. Although they do not contain the distinction from *Metaphysics*, he argues that pleasure and ἐνέργεια are intrinsically linked. Therefore, the distinction between change and pleasure seems to be an addition to earlier observations.⁴²⁸ Aristotle rejects the notion that pleasure is a movement, because:

“But the form of pleasure is complete at any given moment, so it is clear that it is different from a process, and that pleasure is something whole and complete. This would seem true also from the fact that a process must take time, whereas being pleased does not, since what takes place at the present moment is a kind of whole.”⁴²⁹

This fragment allows us to admit that ἐνέργεια is complete at any moment and does not take place in time, and as D. Bradshaw suggests, it is characterized not only by “its intrinsic atemporality,” but also “its teleological self-closure.”⁴³⁰

426 *Met.* 1048 b, 28–35. τούτων δὴ <δεῖ> τὰς μὲν κινήσεις λέγειν, τὰς δ’ ἐνεργείας. πᾶσα γὰρ κίνησις ἀτελής, ἰσχυασία μάθησις βάδισις οἰκοδόμησις· αὗται δὴ κινήσεις, καὶ ἀτελεῖς γε. οὐ γὰρ ἅμα βαδίζει καὶ βεβάδικεν, οὐδ’ οἰκοδομεῖ καὶ ὠκοδόμηκεν, οὐδὲ γίγνεται καὶ γέγονεν ἢ κινεῖται καὶ κινήηται, ἀλλ’ ἕτερον, καὶ κινεῖ καὶ κινήηκεν· ἑώρακε δὲ καὶ ὄρᾳ ἅμα τὸ αὐτό, καὶ νοεῖ καὶ νενόηκεν. τὴν μὲν οὖν τοιαύτην ἐνεργείαν λέγω, ἐκείνην δὲ κίνησιν.

427 Cf. J. Beere, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

428 J. Bradshaw quotes Aristotle saying that pleasure “completes the activity” (1174 b, 23), cf. *op. cit.*, p. 9. The analysis of *Nicomachean Ethics* allows him to make a table of the main differences between change and ἐνέργεια, cf. p. 10.

429 *Eth. Nic.* X, 4, 1147 b, 5–9 τῆς ἡδονῆς δ’ ἐν ὁπωῦν χρόνῳ τέλειον τὸ εἶδος. δῆλον οὖν ὡς ἕτερά τ’ ἂν εἴεν ἀλλήλων, καὶ τῶν ὄλων τι καὶ τελείων ἢ ἡδονῆ. δόξειε δ’ ἂν τοῦτο καὶ ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ἐνδέχεσθαι κινεῖσθαι μὴ ἐν χρόνῳ, ἥδεσθαι δέ· τὸ γὰρ ἐν τῷ νῦν ὄλον τι (tr. R. Crisp, p. 188).

430 D. Bradshaw, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

Until now, ἐνέργεια was presented as the type of exercising capacity which has a specific character. For the purpose of our study, the most important use of the term proposed by Aristotle is related to substance (οὐσία). But to understand better the meaning of this term, we must clarify the meaning of ἐνέργεια in its relation to actuality (ἐντελέχεια). This second term was also coined by Aristotle and is usually understood as “having completeness,” “being fully real,” or “actuality.” The first term (ἐνέργεια) also has that meaning, but Aristotle much more often uses ἐντελέχεια to express that kind of existence, than exercise of capacity,⁴³¹ so actuality could be understood as having a more abstract sense.

In the eighth chapter of *Metaphysics Theta*, Aristotle argues for the priority of actuality to potency in the aspects of definition, time, and substance. Although Aristotle does not define what does he exactly mean by “prior in substance,” his explanations of the matter in this fragment suggest that he means “that a thing is prior in substance when it characterizes a more fully realized stage of natural development.”⁴³² He gives examples of the man who is prior to the boy and explains that:

“everything that comes to be proceeds to an origin and an end (for that for the sake of which is an origin, and the coming to be is for the sake of the end), and the actuality is an end (τέλος δ’ ἡ ἐνέργεια), and the potentiality is acquired for the sake of this.”⁴³³

But priority of ἐνέργεια could be seen much better in the case of eternal beings. Aristotle explains:

“But indeed actuality is prior in a more proper way too. For eternal things are prior in substance to perishable things, and nothing eternal is potentially.”⁴³⁴

Aristotle talks here about heavenly bodies, and he clarifies in the next fragment of this passage that they do not have potency of non-existence, and the only potency they have is the potency to change place (from-where to

431 Good example is *Met.* V, 7, 1017 a, 35-b, 2: “Again, ‘being’ (τὸ εἶναι) and ‘that which is’ (τὸ ὄν) mean some of the things we mentioned, ‘are’ potentially (δυνάμει) and others in complete reality” (ἐντελέχεια) (tr. Barnes).

432 Cf. D. Bradshaw, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

433 *Met.* IX, 8, 1050 a, 6–9 (tr. Makin, p. 11).

434 *Met.* IX, 8, 1050 b, 6–8. - ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ κυριωτέρως· τὰ μὲν γὰρ αἰδία πρότερα τῆ οὐσία τῶν φθαρτῶν, ἔστι δ’ οὐθὲν δυνάμει αἰδίων (tr. Makin, p. 12).

to-where). That is why the Sun and the stars are always acting, and there is no fear that they would stop.⁴³⁵ Eternal activity of the movement of heavenly bodies is simply the state of their being; such ἐνέργεια is in their nature, or is in their nature *per se*. That is also why perishable things imitate them when their activity is intrinsically tied to their nature, like fire which cannot exist without burning.⁴³⁶ Therefore, we can assume that there are substances which cannot exist without their proper ἐνέργεια, and when we apply this to eternal beings, their eternal existence is always realized by their activities. Such a description of activity of eternal beings is even more telling when we remember what has been previously said about ἐνέργεια as not happening in time and having its own end in itself. That is why it is also perfectly fitting to describe the actuality of the Prime Mover, which is pure and subsistent actuality.

This can be seen already in the famous demonstration of the necessity of existence of the Prime Mover, which we find in *Metaphysics* XII, 6, which Aristotle ends with the following conclusion:

“Further, even if it acts, this will not be enough, if its substance is potency; for there will not be eternal movement, since that which is potentially may possibly not be. There must, then, be such a principle, whose very substance is actuality.”⁴³⁷

Therefore, as the Prime Mover is pure actuality, it cannot undergo any change because he has no potency. In the next chapter, Aristotle explains that such “primary simple substance existing in actuality” is also the primary object of thought and desire.⁴³⁸ D. Bradshaw draws attention to the shift which happens in this place of the discourse. Aristotle changes here the perspective from the Prime Mover as the primal object of desire to “what it is like to be a Prime Mover.”⁴³⁹ He starts to treat the Prime Mover as a live being whose

435 *Met.* IX, 8, 1050 b, 22–24. διὸ αἰεὶ ἐνεργεῖ ἥλιος καὶ ἄστρα καὶ ὅλος ὁ οὐρανός, καὶ οὐ φοβερὸν μὴ ποτε στῆ, ὃ φοβοῦνται οἱ περὶ φύσεως. οὐδὲ κάμνει τοῦτο δρῶντα· (tr. Makin, p. 12).

436 *Cf. Met.* IX, 8, 1050 b, 29–32.

437 *Met.* XII, 6, 1071 b, 17–20. ἔτι οὐδ’ εἰ ἐνεργήσει, ἢ δ’ οὐσία αὐτῆς δύναμις· οὐ γὰρ ἔσται κίνησις αἰδίου· ἐνδέχεται γὰρ τὸ δυνάμει ὄν μὴ εἶναι. δεῖ ἄρα εἶναι ἀρχὴν τοιαύτην ἣς ἢ οὐσία ἐνέργεια (tr. Barnes).

438 *Met.* XII, 7, 1072 a, 31–32. ἢ οὐσία πρώτη, καὶ αὐτῆς ἢ ἀπλῆ καὶ κατ’ ἐνέργειαν.

439 D. Bradshaw, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

life is activity which is at the same time the supreme pleasure.⁴⁴⁰ His life also realizes in thinking, since he is the thought which thinks of itself. In thinking, he does not pass from potency to act, because he does not receive the object of thought, but rather possesses it; therefore, he is “active when it possesses this object (ἐνεργεῖ δὲ ἔχων).”⁴⁴¹ As D. Bradshaw observes, it’s only after having admitted that the Prime Mover is a live being that Aristotle begins to refer to it as God,⁴⁴² whose life is the supreme activity.⁴⁴³

Up to this point, we can see clearly that God, described as being the activity of the self-thinking thought and also being the actuality in the fullest sense, is the best example of activity which does not involve any opposition to potency. Therefore, M.R. Barnes’ argument on seeking the sources of Eunomius’ distinction cannot be true.⁴⁴⁴ He certainly did not share the Aristotelian view of activity, and – as we shall see – he rejected some of his opinions, but the tradition of describing the operation of God as ἐνέργεια certainly dates back to Aristotle. Not only did he coin the term himself, but also made clear that ἐνέργεια is the best expression to describe the supreme reality in its existence and its life and his is followers, pagan as well as Christian, will continue to use it when speaking of God.

4.2.2 The use of ἐνέργεια in Middle-Platonism and Plotinus

Although there is some confusion about accessibility of Aristotle’s works in the Hellenistic period and in the 1st century after Christ, the teaching

440 *Met.* XII, 7, 1072 b, 14–16. “And it is the life such as best which we enjoy, and enjoy for but the short time (for it is ever in this state, which we cannot be) since its actuality is also pleasure (ἐπεὶ καὶ ἡδονὴ ἢ ἐνέργεια τούτου)” (tr. Barnes).

441 *Cf. Met.* XII, 7, 1072 b, 19–20.

442 *Cf. D. Bradshaw, op. cit.*, p. 28.

443 *Cf. Met.* XII, 7, 1072 b, 26–29. ἔχει δὲ ὄδε. καὶ ζωὴ δὲ γε ὑπάρχει· ἢ γὰρ οὗ ἐνέργεια ζωὴ, ἐκεῖνος δὲ ἢ ἐνέργεια· ἐνέργεια δὲ ἢ καθ’ αὐτὴν ἐκεῖνου ζωὴ ἀρίστη καὶ αἰδῖος. φημὲν δὴ τὸν θεὸν εἶναι ζῶον αἰδῖον ἀριστον, ὥστε ζωὴ καὶ αἰὼν συνεχῆς καὶ αἰδῖος ὑπάρχει τῷ θεῷ· τοῦτο γὰρ ὁ θεός. “And life also belongs to God; for the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality; and God’s essential actuality is life most good and eternal. We say therefore that God is a living being, eternal, most good, so that life and duration continuous and eternal belong to God; for this is God” (tr. Barnes).

444 *Cf. M.R. Barnes, op. cit.*, p. 223.

on ἐνέργεια was passed on and developed with respect to the exercise of capacity as well as the description of the perfect activity of God.⁴⁴⁵ The most interesting, however, seems to be the continuation and evolution of Aristotle's thought which occurred in Middle-Platonism, especially in Alexandria, and the most interesting character in this tradition – Philo. In his writings, we find probably the first use of this term in the context of the knowledge of God.⁴⁴⁶ Although we have already discussed his claims on God's incomprehensibility in one of the previous chapters, but here we have to say more about the relation of incomprehensibility to the activities of God.

He frequently uses ἐνέργεια in the sense of “activity” or “characteristic activity,” especially when he describes the operations of the mind, senses, and parts of the body.⁴⁴⁷ But Philo is especially important because he uses the term for the first time to describe creative activity of God. For him, the perpetual activity of God is rather restful than laborious, which is why he describes His rest after six days of creation as ἐνέργεια.⁴⁴⁸ Since the activity of God is perpetual, he eternally creates the world by thinking the ideas. Philo also draws a borderline between creations and the Creator by claiming that since the fundamental feature of God is his activity, we cannot think that activity is also a characteristic of any created being. While God acts, creations are rather receptive and passive.⁴⁴⁹ Therefore, we can assume that

445 D. Bradshaw refers its development in various fields of literary criticism, historical writing, religious thought, and science. *Cf. op. cit.*, pp. 45–58.

446 It is not easy to find the proper place for Philo in the historical context of the development of ἐνέργεια, but since he was used as a source by both Non-Christian and Christian writers, as we will see below, it seems better to show his teaching in the context of Middle-Platonism.

447 *Ibid.*, p. 59.

448 *Cher.* 87–90. “Moses does not give the name of rest to mere inactivity. The cause of all things is by its nature active (δραστήριον); it never ceases to make all that is best and most beautiful. God's rest is rather a working (ἐνέργειαν) with absolute ease, without toil and without suffering...” (Colson/Whitaker, vol. 2, pp. 61–64).

449 *Cher.* 77–78. “What deadlier foe to the soul can there be than he who in his vainglory claims to himself that which belongs to God alone? For it belongs to God to act (ποιεῖν), and this we may not ascribe to any created being. What belongs to the created is to suffer (πάσχειν), and he who accepts this from the first, as a necessity inseparable from his lot, will bear with patience what befalls him, however grievous it may be” (Colson/Whitaker, vol. 2, pp. 54–55).

for Philo, the activity of God is not constrained to self-thinking, but His being-in-energeia means that he is even more understood as pure activity than as pure actuality. This allows Philo to treat the activity of God in a personal way, which is certainly in accord with how God is presented in the Holy Scripture.⁴⁵⁰

Such radical statements on the activity of God make all activities in the created world the activity of the Creator present in His works. That certainly opens up a new possibility of obtaining the knowledge of Him. In Philo's doctrine, we observe probably the first attempt to turn the activities of God into path to know the Creator. But Philo makes a clear distinction between God's essence and His activities. While His activities, since they are present in the world, are knowable, He remains totally beyond apprehension (αὐτὸς δὲ μόνος ἀκατάληπτος).⁴⁵¹ The only knowledge which man can obtain of God is to know that He is:

“It is quite enough for a man's reasoning faculty to advance as far as to learn that the cause of the universe is and subsists. To be anxious to continue his course yet further, and inquire about essence or quality in God, is a folly fit for the world's childhood.”⁴⁵²

Philo insists that only the existence of God can be known, and the knowledge which we have on His activities does not allow us to know even His Powers through which He acts:

“But while in their essence (κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν) they [Powers] are beyond your apprehension (ἀκατάληπτοι), they nevertheless present to your sight a sort of impress and copy of their activity (ἐνεργείας). You men have for your use seals which when brought into contact with wax or similar material stamp on them any number of impressions while they themselves are not docked in any part thereby, but remain as they were. Such you must conceive my Powers to be, supplying quality and shape to things which lack either and yet changing or lessening nothing of their eternal nature. Some among you call them not inaptly Forms or Ideas (ιδέας), since they bring form into everything that is, giving order to the disordered, limit to the unlimited, bounds to the unbounded, shape to the shapeless, and in general

450 Cf. D. Bradshaw, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

451 Cf. *Post.* 169 (Colson/Whitaker, vol. 2, pp. 428–429).

452 *Post.* 168–169. ἀνθρώπου γὰρ ἐξαρκεῖ λογισμῶ μέχρι τοῦ καταμαθεῖν ὅτι ἔστι τε καὶ ὑπάρχει τὸ τῶν ὄλων αἴτιον προελθεῖν· περαιτέρω δὲ σπουδάζειν τρέπεσθαι, ὡς περὶ οὐσίας ἢ ποιότητος ζητεῖν, ὡγγιός τις ἡλιθιότης (Colson/Whitaker, vol. 2, pp. 428–429).

changing the worse to something better. Do not, then, hope ever to be able to apprehend Me or any of my Powers in our essence (κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν). But I readily and with goodwill admit you to a share of what is attainable."⁴⁵³

Philo tells us that Powers are the same as ideas or forms in the mind of God, and although they should be known, because they are principles of order, limit, shape, etc., he insists that they are unconceivable. Like God, they are limitless and, therefore, cannot be grasped by human intellect.⁴⁵⁴ This is the statement which seems to be against the entire Platonic tradition since for Plato, forms are the primary objects of intellectual cognition. But here, ideas are active powers not passive objects, and therefore each of them can have their own ἐνέργεια. Those activities leave behind the effects of their actions, and those are the only things which we can know. But Philo's words also mean that any reasoning based on those effects cannot lead us to the knowledge of the Powers. We can clearly see only general effects of their actions. So the only possible conclusion is that there must have been some activities which caused this effect, but in our reasoning, we can barely go further. The second step in this reasoning can only give us a hint that there are some Ideas or Powers, which are the source of order, shape, and "general changing the worse to something better," but that is all. This may give us only a conviction that someone who has those Powers must exist.

Jean-Claude Larchet sees Philo as the main source of the distinction between οὐσία and ἐνέργεια by later Christian writers as a way to secure

453 *Spec.* I, 47–49. πεφικυῖαι δ' ἀκατάληπτοι κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν ὅμως παραφαίνουσιν ἐκμαγεῖόν τι καὶ ἀπεικόνισμα τῆς ἐαυτῶν ἐνεργείας· οἷαι αἱ παρ' ὑμῖν σφραγίδες - ὅταν <γάρ> προσενεχθῆ κηρὸς ἢ τις ὁμοίτροπος ὕλη, μυρίους ὄσους τύπους ἐναπομάττονται, μηδὲν ἀκρωτηριασθεῖσαι μέρος, ἢ ἀλλ' ἐν ὁμοίῳ μένουσαι, τοιαύτας ὑποληπτέον καὶ τὰς περὶ ἐμὲ δυνάμεις περιποιούσας ἀποίοις ποιότητας καὶ μορφὰς ἀμόρφους καὶ μηδὲν τῆς αἰδίου φύσεως μῆτ' ἀλλαττομένας μῆτε μειουμένας. ὀνομάζουσι δ' αὐτὰς οὐκ ἀπὸ σκοποῦ τινες τῶν παρ' ὑμῖν ιδέας, ἐπειδὴ ἕκαστα τῶν ὄντων εἰδοποιοῦσι τὰ ἄτακτα τάττουσαι καὶ τὰ ἄπειρα καὶ ἀόριστα καὶ ἀσημάτιστα περατοῦσαι καὶ περιορίζουσαι καὶ σχηματίζουσαι καὶ συνόλως τὸ χεῖρον εἰς τὸ ἄμεινον μεθαρμοζόμεναι. μῆτ' οὖν ἐμὲ μῆτε τινὰ τῶν ἐμῶν δυνάμεων κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν ἐλπίσης ποτὲ δυνήσεσθαι καταλαβεῖν. τῶν δ' ἐφικτῶν, ὡς εἶπον, ἐτοίμως καὶ προθύμως μεταδίδωμι (Colson/Whitaker, vol. 7, pp. 124–127).

454 Cf. J.-C. Larchet, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

incomprehensibility of God.⁴⁵⁵ So it is remarkable that for Eunomius, this distinction can serve a completely different purpose, namely to demonstrate that the knowledge of the essence of God is possible. But Philo's teaching of the knowledge of the activities of God is a source not only for the Fathers. Most of all, it also inseminated Middle-Platonic thinkers, who treat this Aristotelian concept as an inherent part of their doctrines. Although it is not widely discussed, it is still present in the preserved writings of such philosophers as Numenius, Alcinous, and Alexander of Aphrodisias, and it evolves alongside new elements in the understanding of the nature of the Deity.⁴⁵⁶ It seems that the most important moment of this development may be observed in Alexander of Aphrodisias, who identified the Aristotelian Prime Mover with active intellect, but also treated such conceived Deity as creative in his process of thinking.⁴⁵⁷ Those additions, however, seem of little importance as compared to the doctrine of Plotinus, where *ἐνέργεια* occupies a prominent place in the understanding of the creative activity of intellectual hypostases.

To understand how the Aristotelian concept was incorporated in Plotinus' system, we must first have a look at his criticism of Aristotle's categories of being. Plotinus discusses the kinds of being in the first three treatises of the sixth Ennead. The main problem is whether the set of the kinds of being (substance and nine accidents) from Aristotle's *Categories* can be applied to the intellectual world. He reports that there are different opinions regarding the kinds of being, but the main question is: "Are the ten [categories of Aristotle] found alike in the Intellectual and in Sensible realms? Or are all found in the Sensible and some only in the Intellectual?"⁴⁵⁸ In the Aristotelian view, the kinds of being imply a division between substance and properties, since property is an "external" addition to substance of which it is predicated. Therefore, they could not be perceived as simple genera in the intellectual world where the primary characteristic of substance is its

455 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 79–80.

456 The understanding of *ἐνέργεια* in Middle-Platonism is discussed broadly by D. Bradshaw, *op. cit.*, pp. 64–72, and J.-C. Larchet, *op. cit.*, pp. 38–42.

457 Cf. D. Bradshaw, *op. cit.*, pp. 71–72.

458 *Enn.* VI, 1, 1, 19–20. μᾶλλον δὲ ἐκεῖνο πρῶτον ἐρωτητέον, πότερα ὁμοίως ἐν τε τοῖς νοητοῖς ἐν τε τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς τὰ δέκα (Henry/Schwyzler, vol. 3, p. 3; tr. MacKenna/Page, p. 252).

higher degree of integrity and oneness. That is why, the genera of being in the intellectual world are rather those which can be found in Plato's *Sophists* (being, motion, stability <or rest, or remaining>, identity and difference).⁴⁵⁹ A.C. Lloyd points out that this is not the case that Aristotle's genera must have a different meaning in the intellectual world, they "have no place in the intelligible world."⁴⁶⁰ On the contrary, the simple genera of Plato are proper in the intellectual world because, while they describe the substance, they are not its properties. What are they then? A.C. Lloyd answers: "They are not attributes of substance/being – otherwise it would not be simple – but activities of it."⁴⁶¹ We can see that A.C. Lloyd is not exactly right when he says that Aristotle's genera have no place in the intellectual world at all. Since Plato's genera are activities, the only exception seems to be activity itself, but it is clear that it must be predicated differently on the two levels of reality. While in sensual world, it can be perceived as a property, in the intellectual one, it is identical with substance. A crucial question here is how does Plotinus understand the simple genera of Plato as activities.

It is easy to understand movement as activity, but what about such genera as identity, difference, remaining,⁴⁶² and especially being? A.C. Lloyd explains once again: "Plotinus, like Aristotle, is conscious that οὐσία is a nominal form of the verb 'to be' and primarily in its existential sense."⁴⁶³ Therefore, here we should rather understand substance in the existential sense: the first internal activity of substance is its being substance. We can apply this explanation to other genres: identity is being-in-identity (or existing in identity), difference is being-in-difference, and so on. It is essential that those genera are simply what substance is in itself; they do not add anything to substance. In his criticism of Aristotle's categories, Plotinus explains that when one predicates a property, which makes substance different, he adds something to it and it is completed "from the outside."

459 *Soph.* 236 D-264 B.

460 A.C. Lloyd, *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism*, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

461 *Ibid.*, p. 87.

462 The terms *μονή* or *στάσις* are often translated as stability, or rest, but I prefer Lloyd's term 'remaining' because it better shows how it could be perceived as activity.

463 *Ibid.*, p. 87.

Properties which make substance different are mostly qualities, and in his discussion of these qualities, Plotinus says:

“Nevertheless, we ventured to assure elsewhere that while the complements of substance are only by analogy called qualities, yet accessions of external origin and subsequent to Substance are really qualities; that, further, the properties which inhere in substances are their activities (ἐνεργείας αὐτῶν), while those which are subsequent are merely modifications (αὐτὰς ἤδη πάθη): we now affirm that the attributes of the particular substance are never complementary to the substance [as such]; an accession of substance does not come to the substance of man *qua man*; he is, on the contrary, substance in higher degree before he arrives at differentiation, just as he is already <living being> before he passes into the rational species.”⁴⁶⁴

The substance of the intellectual realm possesses all qualities, because they are what it is, and, therefore, we can truly say that it has those qualities, but they do not make it substance by defining it. Plotinus explicitly says that those qualities are activities of substance, while in the sensual world they are rather passive. We can understand what Plotinus means that by referring to his notion of the procession of intellectual hypostases, which occurs not by diminishing a higher entity, but rather by the division and multiplication of something which hypostasis already possesses in a simpler and undivided way. According to this mode, we can also explain “remaining” as an activity, which is somehow hidden in the higher substance, but becomes distinct in the lower one. Therefore “what remains is not something alongside the internal activity: it is that activity.”⁴⁶⁵ Plotinus states it very clearly that all supreme genres of Plato could be ascribed to substance without qualifying or particularizing it:

“If motion is the act (ἐνέργεια) of substance, and being and the primaries (τὰ πρῶτα) in general are its act, then motion is not the accidental attribute (συμβεβηκός): as the act of what is necessarily actual [when necessarily involves act], it is no longer

464 *Enn.* VI, 2, 14, 18–22. Καίτοι ἐν ἄλλοις ἤξιοῦμεν τὰ μὲν τῆς οὐσίας συμπληρωτικὰ ὁμονύμως ποιά εἶναι, τὰ δ’ ἔξωθεν μετὰ τὴν οὐσίαν ὑπάρχοντα ποιά, καὶ τὰ μὲν ἐν ταῖς οὐσίαις ἐνεργείας αὐτῶν, τὰ δὲ μετ’ αὐτὰς ἤδη πάθη. Νῦν δὲ λέγομεν οὐκ οὐσίας ὅλως εἶναι συμπληρωτικὰ τὰ τῆς τινὸς οὐσίας· οὐ γὰρ οὐσίας προσθήκη γίνεται τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ καθὸ ἀνθρώπος εἰς οὐσίαν· ἀλλ’ ἔστιν οὐσία ἄνωθεν, πρὶν ἐπὶ τὴν διαφορὰν ἔλθειν, ὥσπερ καὶ ζῶον ἤδη, πρὶν ἐπὶ τὸ λογικὸν ἦκειν (Henry/Schwyzler, vol. 3, p. 62; tr. MacKenna/Page, pp. 276–277).

465 A.C. Lloyd, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

to be considered as complement of substance but substance itself. For this reason, then, it has not been assigned to a posterior class, or referred to quality, but has been made contemporary with the being. The truth is not that being first is and then takes motion, first is and acquires stability [remaining]: neither stability nor motion is a mere modification of being. Similarly, identity and difference are not later additions: being did not grow into plurality; its very unity was plurality; but plurality implies difference, and unity-in-plurality involves identity. Substance [real Being] requires no more than these five constituents; but when we turn to lower sphere, we find other principles giving rise no longer to substance (as such) but to quantitative substance and qualitative: these other principles can be regarded as genera but not primary genera.”⁴⁶⁶

We can imagine that here Plotinus simply fully draws the conclusions of what Aristotle claimed on the activity of motion/change as not occurring in time and having its own end in itself. In the intellectual reality Aristotle’s genera are sufficient to describe the constitutive elements of substance. It is simply substance, but in the sensual realm, it is no longer substance as such, but rather substance with the property of quality or quantity. Such perception of the activity of intellectual substances tells us much about how Plotinus understood the intellectual cosmos. Since even remaining is a kind of activity, this is not a static place, but rather the world of unending dynamism. This can also be observed in the second aspect in which Plotinus describes activity. This is no longer the aspect of “activity of existence,” but rather activity which is creative.

This creative aspect of the understanding of activity is presented in the fourth chapter of the fifth Ennead. In this treaty, he wanted to explain how the Intellect (νοῦς) comes from the One. Plotinus starts with elaborating on natural activity which is present in the Cosmos. To show the productive nature of the One, Plotinus claims that in every productive activity which

466 *Enn.* VI, 2, 15, 6–18 εἰ γὰρ ἡ κίνησις ἐνεργεῖα ἐστὶν αὐτῆς, ἐνεργεῖα δὲ τὸ ὄν καὶ ὄλως τὰ πρῶτα, οὐκ ἂν συμβεβηκὸς εἴη ἡ κίνησις, ἀλλ’ ἐνεργεῖα οὐσα ἐνεργεῖα ὄντος οὐδ’ ἂν συμπληρωτικὸν ἔτι λέγοιτο, ἀλλ’ αὐτῆ· ὥστε οὐκ ἐμβέβηκεν εἰς ὕστερόν τι οὐδ’ εἰς ποιότητα, ἀλλ’ εἰς τὸ ἅμα τέτακται. Οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν ὄν, εἴτα κεκίνηται, οὐδὲ ἐστὶν ὄν, εἴτα ἔσται· οὐδὲ πάθος ἡ στάσις· καὶ ταῦτόν δὲ καὶ θάτερον οὐχ ὕστερα, ὅτι μὴ ὕστερον ἐγένετο πολλά, ἀλλ’ ἦν ὅπερ ἦν ἐν πολλά· εἰ δὲ πολλά, καὶ ἕτεροτης, καὶ εἰ ἐν πολλά, καὶ ταυτότης. Καὶ ταῦτα εἰς τὴν οὐσίαν ἀρκεῖ· ὅταν δὲ μέλλη πρὸς τὰ κάτω προίεναι, τότε ἄλλα, ἃ οὐκέτι οὐσίαν ποιεῖ, ἀλλὰ ποιᾶν οὐσίαν καὶ ποσὴν οὐσίαν, καὶ γινέσθω γένη οὐ πρῶτα (Henry/Schwyzler, vol. 3, p. 63; tr. MacKenna/Page, p. 277).

we find in the Universe, we can find imitation of what the One does in producing the Intellect. This does not involve only the things which have cognition and choice, but all existing beings.⁴⁶⁷ Therefore, every productive activity is for us a path which leads to understanding the activity of the One. Such activity is in fact divided into two activities: internal and external, which Plotinus explains in this most important fragment:

“In each and every thing there is an activity which belongs to substance (*ἐνέργεια τῆς οὐσίας*) and one which goes out from substance (*ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας*); and that which belongs to substance is the active actuality which is each particular thing, and the other activity derives from that first one, and must in everything be a consequence of it, different from the thing itself: as in fire there is a heat which is the content of its substance, and another which comes into being from that primary heat when fire exercises the activity which is native to its substance in abiding unchanged as fire. So it is also in the higher world; and much more so there, while the Principle abides “in its own proper way of life,” the activity generated from the perfection in it and its coexistent activity (*συνούσης ἐνεργείας*) acquires substantial existence, since it comes from a great power, the greatest indeed of all, and arrives at being and substance: for that Principle is “beyond being.” That is the productive power of all things, and its product is already all things.”⁴⁶⁸

The first activity is then coexistent and identical with substance, and it is itself the very existence of it. The second activity comes out of substance not as something added to it, but rather it is a necessary consequence of the first one. Therefore, the second activity could be understood as the revelation of the very substance of the first one.⁴⁶⁹ This fact is very important because the only way to gain any kind of knowledge of the One can be obtained, thanks to what is revealed in the second activity. This concept is very similar to the

467 Cf. *Enn.* V, 4, 1, 26–36 (Henry/Schwyzler, vol. 2, p. 55).

468 *Enn.* V, 4, 2, 27–39. “Ἐνέργεια ἢ μὲν ἐστὶ τῆς οὐσίας, ἢ δ’ ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας ἐκάστον· καὶ ἢ μὲν τῆς οὐσίας αὐτὸ ἐστὶν ἐνέργεια ἕκαστον, ἢ δὲ ἀπ’ ἐκείνης, ἢν δεῖ παντὶ ἔπεσθαι ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἐτέραν οὐσαν αὐτοῦ· οἷον καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ πυρὸς ἢ μὲν τίς ἐστὶ συμπληροῦσα τὴν οὐσίαν θερμότης, ἢ δὲ ἀπ’ ἐκείνης ἤδη γινομένη ἐνεργοῦντος ἐκείνου τὴν σύμφυτον τῇ οὐσίᾳ ἐν τῷ μένειν πῦρ. Οὕτω δὲ κάκει· καὶ πολὺ πρότερον ἐκεῖ μένοντος αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ οικείῳ ἦθει ἐκ τῆς ἐν αὐτῷ τελειότητος καὶ συνούσης ἐνεργείας ἢ γεννηθεῖσα ἐνέργεια ὑπόστασιν λαβοῦσα, ἅτε ἐκ μεγάλης δυνάμεως, μεγίστης μὲν οὖν ἀπασῶν, εἰς τὸ εἶναι καὶ οὐσίαν ἤλθεν· ἐκεῖνο γὰρ ἐπέκεινα οὐσίας ἦν. Καὶ ἐκεῖνο μὲν δύναμις πάντων, τὸ δὲ ἤδη τὰ πάντα (Henry/Schwyzler, vol. 2, p. 236; tr. D. Bradshaw, *op. cit.*, p. 76).

469 Cf. D. Bradshaw, *op. cit.*, pp. 77–78.

second method of theology of Eunomius, who also saw the activity of God as the way to gain knowledge of Him. A second important observation is the relation of activity to life. The two acts are the way in which the One lives its most perfect life. It is worth noting that the theory of the two acts is explained by the example of fire, which is also often used by Gregory of Nyssa in his criticism of Eunomius' opinions, as we will see below.

One of the questions which arise here involves the problem of how the One can be a self-thinking thought without the duality of the subject and object. It seems that Plotinus was aware of the problem and tried to find a solution.⁴⁷⁰ Traces of such attempts can be found in the eighth treaty of the sixth Ennead, where he considers the will of the One. Although, as Plotinus observes, there are profound difficulties in forming any conception of what the One is, we can say:

“If then we are to allow activities in the Supreme and make them depend upon will (ἐνεργείας αὐτοῦ οἷον βουλήσει αὐτοῦ) - and certainly act cannot there be will-less - and those activities are to be very essence, then will and essence in the Supreme must be identical (ἡ βούλησις αὐτοῦ καὶ ἡ οὐσία ταῦτὸν ἔσται). This admitted, as He willed to be so He is; it is no more true to say that He wills and acts as His nature determines than that His essence is as He wills and acts. Thus He is wholly master of Himself and holds His very being ad His will.”⁴⁷¹

If there is any will in the One, it also must be an activity, and it also must be identical with its substance. In this fragment, Plotinus persistently repeats that the activity of will is for the One some kind of self-establishment, and he ends by saying:

“The Good, then, exists; it holds its existence through choice and will (ἡ αἴρεσις καὶ ἡ βούλησις), conditions of its very being; yet it cannot be a manifold; therefore the will and essential being (τὴν οὐσίαν) must be taken as one identity; the act of the will must be self-determined and the being self-caused; thus reason shows the Supreme to be its own Author. For if the act of will springs from God Himself and is as it were His operation and the same will is identical with essence (δὲ ταῦτὸν

470 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 87–88.

471 *Enn.* VI, 8, 13, 5–11. Εἰ γὰρ δοίημεν ἐνεργείας αὐτῶ, τὰς δ' ἐνεργείας αὐτοῦ οἷον βουλήσει αὐτοῦ—οὐ γὰρ ἀβουλῶν ἐνεργεῖ—αἱ δὲ ἐνέργειαι ἢ οἷον οὐσία αὐτοῦ, ἢ βούλησις αὐτοῦ καὶ ἡ οὐσία ταῦτὸν ἔσται. Εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, ὡς ἄρα ἐβούλετο, οὕτω καὶ ἔστιν. Οὐ μᾶλλον ἄρα ὡς πέφυκε βούλεται τε καὶ ἐνεργεῖ, ἢ ὡς βούλεται τε καὶ ἐνεργεῖ ἡ οὐσία ἐστὶν αὐτοῦ. Κύριος ἄρα πάντα ἑαυτοῦ ἐφ' ἑαυτῶ ἔχων καὶ τὸ εἶναι (Henry/Schwyzler, vol. 3, pp. 256–257; tr. MacKenna/Page, p. 349).

τῇ ὑποστάσει αὐτοῦ), he must be self-established. He is not, therefore, “what he happened to be” but what he has willed to be.”⁴⁷²

The One cannot be many, and it cannot be drowned by anything else but itself. But here we encounter the same problem which we have seen in the case of intellectual activity, because there are also the subject and object of the will. So there is no clear answer to how can the One be simultaneously absolutely simple and divided into the One that wills and that is willed. Another question is how the activity of the will is related to the theory of the double activity of the thought. The text above seems to suggest that we can also speak of the two acts of the will: internal and external. Another solution is to admit that the first activity is the activity of the will and the second one is the activity of the intellect, but Plotinus does not explain clearly that he understood it this way. The final problem which is present here and to which there is no easy answer is what should be understood as first – the activity of the will or the activity of the intellect. Since the One is simple and there is no temporal succession in it, the question seems inadequate. But since the activity of the will is described as self-establishment, it would be logical to assume that such eternal act of establishment is somehow prior to the activity of thinking, which is creative.

This last question is of paramount importance in the context of the Arian controversy, since, as we have already seen, Arius himself conceived the generation of the Son by the Father as the act of will. Therefore, the generation of the Son which is willed by the Father is the primary activity of God. It is worth noticing that Eunomius is here in complete agreement with Arius, and he also sees generation as the act of will, but he explicitly calls it activity. It is yet to be determined below whether we can find any traces of the influence of Plotinus in Eunomius and his Cappadocian opponents, but,

472 *Enn.* VI, 8, 13, 50–59. Εἰ οὖν ὑφέστηκε τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ συνυφίστησιν αὐτὸ ἡ αἴρεσις καὶ ἡ βούλησις—ἀνευ γὰρ τούτων οὐκ ἔσται—δεῖ δὲ τοῦτο μὴ πολλὰ εἶναι, συνακτέον ὡς ἐν τὴν βούλησιν καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν καὶ τὸ θέλειν· τὸ δὲ θέλειν <εἰ> παρ’ αὐτοῦ, ἀνάγκη παρ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ εἶναι αὐτῷ εἶναι, ὥστε αὐτὸν πεποιημέναι αὐτὸν ὁ λόγος ἀνεῦρεν. Εἰ γὰρ ἡ βούλησις παρ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ οἷον ἔργον αὐτοῦ, αὕτη δὲ ταῦτὸν τῇ ὑποστάσει αὐτοῦ, αὐτὸς ἂν οὕτως ὑποστήσας ἂν εἴη αὐτόν· ὥστε οὐκ ὄπερ ἔτυχέν ἐστιν, ἀλλ’ ὄπερ ἐβουλήθη αὐτός (Henry/Schwyzzer, vol. 3, p. 258; tr. MacKenna/Page, p. 349).

as we shall see, the problem of will and how it is related to the substance of God is understood by Eunomius in a completely different way.

4.3 The Holy Scripture and early Christian concepts of ἐνέργεια

4.3.1 The Holy Scripture on the activities of God as a way to know His attributes

When making his own version of the theological methods based on substance and activity, Eunomius does not only have an open philosophical tradition to refer to, but we must remember that ἐνέργεια is also present in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament and in the New Testament as well.⁴⁷³ In the Septuagint, the term is used in the second and third *Book of the Maccabees* and in *The Book of Wisdom*.

In the second *Book of Maccabees*, the term describes the mighty intervention of God in the case of Heliodorus, who planned to rob the treasury of the Temple in Jerusalem (2 Macc: 3, 24–27; 29). In the third book, the activity is ascribed to the operation of the Divine Providence which protects Israel (3 Macc: 4, 21). In *The Book of Wisdom*, ἐνέργεια generally is not applied to God, but to the operations of man, elements, and produced objects.⁴⁷⁴ We can find it being used in a fashion already observed in Aristotle, namely to describe the operation of life. In chapter 15, the term appears in the criticism of the pagans, who create their own gods and fail to recognize their Maker. Therefore, “Their heart is ashes, their hope is cheaper than dirt, and their lives are of less worth than clay, because they failed to know the one who formed them and inspired them with active souls (ψυχὴν ἐνεργοῦσαν) and breathed a living spirit into them.”⁴⁷⁵ We find similar concepts in chapter 13 (1–5), where ἐνέργεια also appears in

473 R.P. Vaggione notes that the problem of ἐνέργεια was so important precisely because for the Christian writers, it was not a philosophical issue, but rather it was an exegesis of the Holy Scripture, cf. *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution*, Oxford 2000, pp. 130–131.

474 Cf. J.-C. Larchet, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

475 Wis 15: 10–11. σποδὸς ἢ καρδία αὐτοῦ, καὶ γῆς εὐτελεστέρα ἢ ἐλπίς αὐτοῦ, πληοῦτε ἀτιμότερος ὁ βίος αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ἠγνόησε τὸν πλάσαντα αὐτὸν καὶ τὸν ἐμπνεύσαντα αὐτῷ ψυχὴν ἐνεργοῦσαν καὶ ἐμψύησαντα πνεῦμα ζωτικόν· (tr. NRSVCE).

the context of failing to recognize the Maker from the beauty of the world and natural activity of elements:

“...but they supposed that either fire or wind or swift air, or the circle of the stars, or turbulent water, or the luminaries of heaven were the gods that rule the world. If through delight in the beauty of these things men assumed them to be gods, let them know how much better than these is their Lord, for the author of beauty created them. And if men were amazed at their power and working (*δύναμιν καὶ ἐνέργειαν*), let them perceive from them how much more powerful is he who formed them. For from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator.”⁴⁷⁶

Although this fragment does not use *ἐνέργεια* to describe directly the creative activity of God, it seems to suggest that there is a correlation between the natural activity of created beings and the activity of God. It also confirms that, thanks to proper recognition of the activity of created beings, one can recognize the existence of God. And we have certain analogy here: the beauty of activity found in creations can tell us the eminent degree of the beauty of God. As we have seen above, Philo of Alexandria presented similar ideas in his concept of activity.

From the perspective of the Arian controversy, the most important is a long fragment where Salomon describes impersonated Wisdom (7: 21–11: 3). At the beginning of the fragment, Wisdom is characterized as follows:

“For wisdom is more mobile than any motion; because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things. For she is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her. For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God (*τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐνεργείας*), and an image of his goodness.”⁴⁷⁷

476 Wis 13: 2–5. ἀλλ’ ἡ πῦρ ἢ πνεῦμα ἢ ταχινὸν ἀέρα ἢ κύκλον ἄστρον ἢ βίαιον ὕδωρ ἢ φωστήρας οὐρανοῦ πρυτάνεις κόσμου θεοῦς ἐνόμισαν. ὢν εἰ μὲν τῇ καλλονῇ τερπόμενοι ταῦτα θεοῦς ὑπελάμβανον, γνώτωσαν πόσῳ τούτων ὁ δεσπότης ἐστὶ βελτίων, ὁ γὰρ τοῦ κάλλους γενεσιάρχης ἔκτισεν αὐτὰ· εἰ δὲ δύναμιν καὶ ἐνέργειαν ἐκπλαγέντες νοησάτωσαν ἀπ’ αὐτῶν πόσῳ ὁ κατασκευάσας αὐτὰ δυνατώτερός ἐστιν· ἐκ γὰρ μεγέθους καλλονῆς κτισμάτων ἀναλόγως ὁ γενεσιουργὸς αὐτῶν θεωρεῖται (tr. RSV).

477 Wis 7: 24–26. πάσης γὰρ κινήσεως κινητικώτερον σοφία, διήκει δὲ καὶ χωρεῖ διὰ πάντων διὰ τὴν καθαρότητα· ἀμίξ γὰρ ἐστὶ τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ δυνάμεως καὶ ἀπόρροια τῆς τοῦ Παντοκράτορος δόξης εὐλικρινῆς· διὰ τοῦτο οὐδὲν μεμιαμμένον εἰς αὐτὴν παρεμπίπτει. ἀπαύγασμα γὰρ ἐστὶ φωτὸς αἰδίου καὶ ἔσοπτρον ἀκηλίδωτον τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐνεργείας καὶ εἰκὼν τῆς ἀγαθότητος αὐτοῦ (tr. RSV).

Although Wisdom is not named the activity of God, it is evident that being “a spotless mirror of the activity of God,” it is the best way to gain the knowledge of the Creator. Those fragments of *The Book of Wisdom*, however, are far more important in the context of the Arian controversy and the teaching of Eunomius. The Wisdom of God is also described and praised in the Proverbs (8: 1–9: 18), and this fragment contains the key verse 8:22, which was (in the Septuagint version) the only place in the Holy Scripture which could be interpreted as supporting the Arian claim as to the created substance of the Son of God. Anomeans repeatedly quoted Wisdom saying about it: “The Lord created me the beginning of His way for His works (κύριος ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ).”⁴⁷⁸ The combination of the verse with 1 Corinthians 1:24, where St Paul calls the Son of God Wisdom allowed Eunomians to claim that the Son is “offspring and thing made (γέννημα καὶ ποίημα).”⁴⁷⁹

Therefore, if we look at the fragments from *The Book of Wisdom* in the context of the teaching on wisdom in Proverbs, we discern the significance of the claims that Wisdom is the mirror of God’s activity. This is certainly one of the most important sources of Eunomius’ second way of theology. But, as we will see, those verses from *The Book of Wisdom* are significant not only because they speak about the way of recognizing God and Creator, but also because of the famous fragment of the Letter to the Romans which refers to them.

In the New Testament, the term ἐνέργεια is used in various forms to describe the spiritual activities of man, of Satan, but most of all is applied to many aspects of the operations of God, who acts in sacraments, in the soul of man, and in Christ. Most occurrences are to be found in Paul’s

478 R.P. Vaggione, *Eunomius of Cysicus and the Nicene Revolution*, Oxford 2000, pp. 83–84. Gregory of Nyssa also confirms a very frequent use of the verse: “However, that passage from Proverbs may perhaps be quoted to us by them, which the advocates of the heresy constantly quote as proof that the Lord was created...” Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* III, 1, 21 (GNO II, p. 10).

479 Eunomius uses this expression in *Liber apologeticus*, 12, 1–3 (R.P. Vaggione, pp. 46–48). For a full discussion on the verse and its meaning, cf. T. Stępień, *Created or uncreated Wisdom? op. cit.*, pp. 147–155.

letters.⁴⁸⁰ For our purposes, two fragments need to be mentioned. As we shall see, Eunomius strongly opposes the conception of identity of the activity of the Divine Persons, but in the Gospel of John, there is passage 5: 19 which reads: “My Father is working still, and I am working.”⁴⁸¹ Those words of Jesus were understood by his interlocutors as making himself equal to God. They also were very often used by the Orthodox to claim the unity of the activity of the Divine Persons.

The second fragment that was mentioned above is a passage from Romans 1: 18–2:

“For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened.”⁴⁸²

Although in this passage, the term ἐνέργεια is not present, it confirms that the Greeks obtained the knowledge of God from what He has made. The context of failing to draw conclusions from this knowledge and honouring God makes it very similar to the fragments of *The Book of Wisdom* where the term occurs (13: 1–5) in the context of knowing the attributes of God from His works which one can observe in creations. It is worth noting that this time, the accusation does not refer to pagans in general, but directly to Greeks.

It is worth noting that in his letters, St Paul now and again repeats that the activity of man, especially the Apostolic one, is in fact the activity in accordance with that of God, who Himself works. He also draws special attention to the activity of God in the human soul.⁴⁸³

480 Cf. Jean-Claude Larchet analyses the occurrences of ἐνέργεια in the New Testament in *op. cit.*, pp. 86–91.

481 ὁ πατήρ μου ἔως ἄρτι ἐργάζεται, καὶ γὰρ ἐργάζομαι (tr. RSVCE).

482 διότι τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ φανερόν ἐστιν ἐν αὐτοῖς· ὁ γὰρ Θεὸς αὐτοῖς ἐφανέρωσε. τὰ γὰρ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου τοῖς ποιήμασι νοούμενα καθοράται, ἢ τε αἰδῖος αὐτοῦ δύναμις καὶ θειότης, εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτοὺς ἀναπολογήτους, διότι γνόντες τὸν Θεὸν οὐχ ὡς Θεὸν ἐδόξασαν ἢ εὐχαρίστησαν, ἀλλ’ ἐματαιώθησαν ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν, καὶ ἐσκοτίσθη ἡ ἀσύνετος αὐτῶν καρδία (tr. RSVCE).

483 Cf. D. Bradshaw, *op. cit.*, pp. 121–122.

As we can see the fragments of the Old and New Testament, which use various forms of ἐνέργεια, certainly do not contain a systematic theological teaching on the activities of God. But they certainly include many elements which will be commented upon and developed by the Fathers,⁴⁸⁴ and they also explain why Eunomius insisted that his teaching comes directly from the Holy Scripture.

4.3.2 The Church Fathers and the sources of Eunomius' methods

Looking for the sources of Eunomius' notion of ἐνέργεια, we must also make some remarks on the earlier Christian tradition. Although the occurrences of ἐνέργεια are not very frequent, we can observe it being used already in the works of Athenagoras. He is probably the first author who tries to make a distinction between substance and activity and apply ἐνέργεια to the Logos. At the beginning of *De resurrectione*, he says about those who do not believe in resurrection:

“For such men have left no truth free from their calumnious attacks – not the being of God, not His knowledge, not His operations (οὐ τὴν οὐσίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, οὐ τὴν γνῶσιν, οὐ τὴν ἐνέργειαν), not those books which follow by a regular and strict sequence from these and delineate for us the doctrines of piety.”⁴⁸⁵

Although this text refers rather to those who argue for the impossibility of resurrection, it clearly states that there is a difference between substance, knowledge, and activities of God. Athenagoras also uses ἐνέργεια to describe the act of creation which is completed, thanks to the Son of God. Therefore, he says that “the Son of God is the Logos of the Father, in idea and in operation (ἐν ἰδέᾳ καὶ ἐνεργείᾳ); for after the pattern of Him and by Him were all things made.”⁴⁸⁶ In this fragment, Athenagoras not only explains the role of the Logos, but also tries to explain how the Father generates the Son, who is equal to him.⁴⁸⁷ It is also worth mentioning Theophilus of Antioch, who also shared the conviction that we can know God, thanks to

484 Cf. J.-C. Larchet, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

485 *De resurrectione* I, 2 (SC 397, pp. 214–219; tr. ANF, vol. 2, p. 149).

486 *Libellus pro christianis* 10, 2 (SC 397, p. 102; tr. ANF, vol. 2, p. 133).

487 *Ibid.* 10, 3 (SC 397, p. 102; tr. ANF, vol. 2, p. 133). It is worth noting that the activity of the Son resembles the work of the Demiurge who gives the form and is the source of life (J.-C. Larchet, *op. cit.*, p. 99).

His activities, but he claimed that we can know only His Power, whereas God Himself remains incomprehensible.⁴⁸⁸

We can also observe some important occurrences of ἐνέργεια in the writings of the Alexandrian Fathers. Explaining the prologue of the Gospel of John Clement, it says: “<all things were made through him>, according to continuous activity of Logos in constant identity: spiritual and intellectual as well as sensual things.”⁴⁸⁹ This verse is the continuation of his comment on J 1:1–2, and thus Clement seems to confirm identity of the activity of the Father and the Son. The Logos play a prime role in creation, but his activity does not make him separate from the Father.⁴⁹⁰ In *Stromata*, when arguing against the Gnostics that Christ is the Saviour of all things, he explains the nature of the Son from the perspective of God and His creative power. In his excellence and perfection, he is beyond time and place, and he does all things in accordance with the will of the Father. Therefore, he not only plays the most important role in the creation, but he also is the supreme ruler of the world. Therefore, he: “holds the helm of the universe in the best way, with unwearied and tireless power, working all things in which it operates, keeping in view its hidden designs.”⁴⁹¹ Therefore, Clement calls the Son certain activity of the Father,⁴⁹² and he seems to make a link between substance, power, activity, and the product.⁴⁹³

488 Cf. *Ad Autol.* I, 3, 2, 6–13, especially where he claims that “...if I call Him Power, I am mentioning His activity (δύναμιν ἐάν εἶπω, ἐνέργειαν αὐτοῦ λέγω)” (SC 20, pp. 62–64; tr. ANF, vol 2, pp. 89–90).

489 *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 8, 1, 2 «Πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο», κατὰ τὴν προσεχῆ ἐνέργειαν τοῦ ἐν ταυτότητι Λόγου, τά τε πνευματικὰ καὶ νοητὰ καὶ αἰσθητὰ (SC 23, p. 72; tr. Pierce/Casey, p.47).

490 *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 8, 1, 1 (SC 23, p. 72).

491 *Strom.* VII, 2, 5, 4. καὶ τὸ πᾶν ἄριστα οἰακίζει, ἀκαμάτω καὶ ἀνθρώπῳ δυνάμει πάντα ἐργαζομένη, δι’ ὃν ἐνεργεῖ τὰς ἀποκρύφους ἐννοίας ἐπιβλέπουσα (SC 428, p. 48; tr. ANF, vol. 2, p. 524).

492 *Strom.* VII, 2, 7, 7, “Now the energy of the Lord has a reference to the Almighty; and the Son is, so to speak, an energy of the Father.” πᾶσα δὲ ἡ τοῦ κυρίου ἐνέργεια ἐπὶ τὸν παντοκράτορα τὴν ἀναφορὰν ἔχει, καὶ ἔστιν ὡς εἰπεῖν πατρικὴ τις ἐνέργεια ὁ υἱός. (SC 428, p. 56; tr. ANF, vol. 2, p. 525).

493 A similar view of causality will be later presented by Eunomius. Cf. M.R. Barnes, *The Background and Use of Eunomius’ Casual Language*, op. cit., p. 229.

But the most interesting use of ἐνέργεια can be found in the fourth chapter of the eighth book of *Stromata*, where Clement claims that to solve any question, one must begin with a clear definition of the thing discussed. Sometimes, the object of investigation is the mere essence (οὐσία) of the thing, like in the case of stones, plants, and animals, in the case of which the activities are unknown to us (ὧν τὰς ἐνεργείας ἀγνοοῦμεν).⁴⁹⁴ In other cases, we know certain powers or properties of things, but we do not know the essences and, therefore, we must make them the object of investigation:

“But in many instances, our understanding having assumed all these, the question is, in which of the essences do they thus inhere; for it is after forming conceptions of both - that is, both of essence and activity (ἀμφοτέρων γάρ, τῆς τε οὐσίας τῆς τε ἐνεργείας) - in our mind, that we proceed to the question. And there are also some objects, whose activities, along with their essences, we know, but are ignorant of their modifications.”⁴⁹⁵

And he adds: “Such, then, is the method (μέθοδος) of the discovery [of the truth].”⁴⁹⁶ Since Clement concentrates mostly on investigating the essence of animals, it is obvious that activity is treated by him as a property which can lead us to knowledge, that the essence in question is the essence of animals. Then he recalls the positions of Plato and Aristotle. While the former called plants the animals, the latter insisted that since they do not possess the power of sensation, they cannot be properly called animals.⁴⁹⁷ To resolve those antagonistic positions, one must answer the question using two methods of applying the term “animal”:

494 *Strom.* VIII, 4, 9, 1–2. εἶναι δὲ <δυνατὸν> τὴν γνῶσιν τὴν προϋπάρξασαν τοῦ ζητουμένου παντὸς ποτὲ μὲν τῆς οὐσίας ψιλῶς ἀγνοουμένων [δὲ] τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς, οἷον λίθων, φυτῶν, ζώων, ὧν τὰς ἐνεργείας ἀγνοοῦμεν, ἢ παθῶν ἢ δυνάμεων ἢ ἀπλῶς εἰπεῖν [ἐν] τῶν ὑπαρχόντων τοῖς οὐσιν· (GCS 17, p. 85; tr. ANF, vol. 2, p. 560).

495 *Strom.* VIII, 4, 9, 3–6. ἐν πολλοῖς δὲ, τῆς νοήσεως αὐτῆς τῆς ἡμετέρας ὑποτιθεμένης ἑαυτῇ ταῦτα πάντα, τὴν ζήτησιν εἶναι, τίνι τῶν οὐσιῶν ἂν οὕτω μὲν ὑπάρχη· ἀμφοτέρων γάρ, τῆς τε οὐσίας τῆς τε ἐνεργείας, τὰς ἐπινοίας ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ λαβόντες οὕτως ἐπὶ τὴν ζήτησιν ἐρχόμεθα. ἔστιν δὲ ὧν καὶ τὰς ἐνεργείας εἰδότες ἅμα ταῖς οὐσίαις ἀγνοοῦμεν τὰ παθήματα. Ἔστιν οὖν ἡ μέθοδος τῆς εὐρέσεως τοιαύτη· (GCS 17, p. 85; tr. ANF, vol. 2, p. 560).

496 *Strom.* VIII, 4, 9, 6. Ἔστιν οὖν ἡ μέθοδος τῆς εὐρέσεως τοιαύτη· (GCS 17, p. 85; tr. ANF, vol. 2, p. 560).

497 *Strom.* VIII, 4, 9, 3–6 (GCS 17, p. 86, ANF, vol. 2, p. 560).

“But as there are two methods, one by question and answer, and the other the method of exposition, if he declines the former, let him listen to us, while we expound all that bears on the problem.”⁴⁹⁸

It seems that here Clement passes from the method of recognizing the essence to the ways of discussion, so there is only a vague reference to the two methods of theology of Eunomius. But the first part of this fragment bears more visible reference. In the first case, we can know only the “mere essence” of the thing (e.g., stone), and since it is inanimate, we cannot recognize its proper activity. In the second case, since we deal with something which is alive, the activity can be known and therefore it is the way of discovering the essence. Therefore, Clement seems to be a predecessor of Eunomius, who considers his two methods in a more developed way and applies it to the essence and activity of God.⁴⁹⁹ But it is worth noting that this reference evokes only the second method of Eunomius: from activity to substance.

Origen, who is far more important because of his influence on the writers of the 4th century, also provides some important uses of ἐνέργεια, especially when he comments on Wisdom 7, where he tries to formulate a definition of activity:

But wisdom is also called the stainless mirror of the ἐνέργειας or working of God. We must first understand, then, what the working of the power of God is. It is a sort of vigour, so to speak, by which God operates either in creation, or in providence, or in judgment, or in the disposal and arrangement of individual things, each in its season. For as the image formed in a mirror unerringly reflects all the acts and movements of him who gazes on it, so would Wisdom have herself to be understood when she is called the stainless mirror of the power and working of the Father: as the Lord Jesus Christ also, who is the Wisdom of God, declares of Himself when He says, “The works which the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.”⁵⁰⁰

498 *Strom.* VIII, 4, 11, 4. ἰ δὲ δυοῖν τρόποιν ὑπαρχόντων, ἑτέρου μὲν τοῦ κατ’ ἐρώτησίν τε καὶ ἀπόκρισιν, ἑτέρου δὲ τοῦ κατὰ διέξοδον, ἡρηται τὸ ἕτερον, ἐπακουσάτω πάντα τὰ εἰς τὸ πρόβλημα διεξιόντων ἡμῶν· (GCS 17, p. 86; tr. ANF, vol. 2, p. 561).

499 Cf. M.R. Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

500 *De princ.* I, 2, 12, 411–425. “Sed et speculum immaculatum ἐνέργειας (id est inoperationis) dei esse sapientia nominatur. Ergo inoperatio uirtutis de qua sit, prius intellegenda est; quae est uigor quidam, ut ita dixerim, per quem

Although this text was preserved only in the Latin version, it is remarkable that Tyrannius Rufinus left the Greek term in the translation. He probably thought that there was no proper Latin equivalent of ἐνέργεια.⁵⁰¹ In this fragment, Origen not only explains 7: 24–26, drawing special attention to Wisdom being the clear mirror of the activity of God, but he also links the text of Wisdom with the Gospel of John 5: 19. By doing this, Origen confirms the unity of the activity of the Father and the Son, which was later rejected by Eunomius. Moreover, Origen also claims that there are multiple activities, such as creation, providence, or judgement, which is also important in the context of the problem, present in Eunomius' *Apology*, whether we can assume the multiple or only one activity of God.

The last Father which must be presented before we turn to Eunomius is Athanasius. As D. Bradshaw notes, in the 4th century, during the Arian and Neo-Arian controversy, the term ἐνέργεια became the key term to describe the activity of God in the world, and human soul and participation in the divine activities began to be understood as divinization.⁵⁰² But it could be understood in this way only because the term became also the main way of describing the activities of the Divine Persons. Athanasius uses the distinction between substance and activity to demonstrate consubstantiality of the Divine Persons in opposition to those who denied the Divinity of the Holy Spirit. Saying that the three persons are the source of life, justification, and

inoperatur pater, uel cum creat uel cum prouidet uel cum iudicat uel cum singula quaeque in tempor suo disponit atque dispensat. Sicut ergo in speculo omnibus motibus atque omnibus antibus, quibus is qui speculum intuetur mouetur uel agit, isdem ipsis etiam ea imago, quae per speculum deformatur, actibus et motibus commouetur uel agit, in nullo prorsus declinano: ita etiam sapientia de se uult intellegi, cum speculum immaculatam pateranae uirtutis inoperationisque nominatur; sicut et dominus Iesus Christus, qui est sapientia dei, de semet ipso pronuntiat dicens quia *opera quae facit pater, haec etiam filius facti similiter*" (SC 252, pp. 138–141; tr. ANF, vol. 4, p. 251).

501 Rufinus does a similar thing in the translation of another fragment of *Peri Archon* (III, 3, 4, 151–172; SC 268, pp. 192–195), where Origen speaks about the activities of human soul. Here, however, he simply puts the Greek word in the Latin version as "energeia." Commenting on this passage, D. Bradshaw notes that Origen presents the standard understanding of ἐνέργεια (*op. cit.*, pp. 124–125).

502 Cf. D. Bradshaw, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

sanctification, he demonstrates that the Son is equal to the Father because of the unity of the activity:

“This consideration shows that the activity of the Trinity is one. The Apostle does not mean that the things which are given are given differently and separately by each Person, but that what is given is given in the Trinity, and that all are from the one God. Him therefore who is no creature but is one with the Son as the Son is one with the Father, who is glorified with the Father and the Son, who is confessed as God with the Word, who is active in the works which the Father works through the Son – is not the man who calls him a creature guilty of a direct impiety against the Son himself? For there is nothing that is not originated and actuated through the Word in the Spirit.”⁵⁰³

For Athanasius, the activity of the Holy Spirit is then the same as that of the Father and the Son, and, therefore, all grace is given by the Trinity, but can be recognized as having the intrinsic order. There is, however, certain difficulty because Athanasius does not say precisely how we can draw a distinction between the persons while their activity is unified.⁵⁰⁴ But he seems to be satisfied with showing the sequence: the Father, “through” the Son and “in” the Holy Spirit, which we also can see in one of the preceding passages:

“The Trinity is holy and perfect, confessed in the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, having nothing foreign or external mixed with it, not composed of one that creates and one that is originated, but all creative; and it is consistent and in nature indivisible, and its activity is one. The Father does all things through the Word in the Holy Spirit. Thus the unity of the holy Trinity is preserved. Thus one God is preached in the Church, who is over all, and through all, and in all.”⁵⁰⁵

503 *Ep. ad Serap.* I, 31, 1–3. Μία ἄρα καὶ ἐκ τούτων ἡ τῆς τριάδος ἐνέργεια δείκνυται. Οὐ γὰρ ὡς παρ’ ἐκάστου διάφορα καὶ διηρημένα τὰ διδόμενα σημαίνει ὁ Ἀπόστολος· ἀλλ’ ὅτι τὰ διδόμενα ἐν Τριάδι δίδονται, καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐξ ἐνὸς Θεοῦ ἐστὶ. Τὸ τοῖνον μὴ ὄν κτίσμα, ἀλλ’ ἠνωμένον τῷ Υἱῷ, ὡς ὁ Υἱὸς ἦνεται τῷ Πατρὶ, τὸ συνδοξαζόμενον Πατρὶ καὶ Υἱῷ, καὶ θεολογούμενον μετὰ τοῦ Λόγου, ἐνεργοῦν τε ἅπερ ὁ Πατὴρ διὰ τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἐργάζεται, πῶς ὁ λέγων κτίσμα οὐκ ἄντικρυς εἰς αὐτὸν τὸν Υἱὸν ἀσεβεῖ; Οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ μὴ διὰ τοῦ Λόγου ἐν τῷ Πνεύματι γίνεσθαι καὶ ἐνεργεῖσθαι (Savvidis, p. 526; tr. Shapland, pp. 142–143).

504 Cf. D. Bradshaw, *op. cit.* pp. 155–156.

505 *Ep. ad Serap.* I, 28, 2–3. τριάς τοῖνον ἁγία καὶ τελεία ἐστίν, ἐν πατρὶ καὶ υἱῷ καὶ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι θεολογουμένη, οὐδὲν ἀλλότριον ἢ ἐξώθεν ἐπιμιγνύμενον ἔχουσα, οὐδὲ ἐκ δημιουργοῦ καὶ γενητοῦ συνισταμένη, ἀλλ’ ὅλη τοῦ κτίζειν καὶ δημιουργεῖν οὐσα· ὁμοία δὲ ἑαυτῇ καὶ ἀδιαίρετός ἐστι τῇ φύσει, καὶ μία ταύτης ἡ

The unity of the Trinity can be recognized according to one activity of the Persons, but here we also find traces of a distinction between the nature and activities of God, which has almost the same meaning as that between substance and activity which we find in Eunomius.

At the end of our quest for the sources of Eunomius' understanding of activity, we may note that the Church Fathers did not make this concept the central idea in their notion of God. But we can see continuity of the tradition and systematic development of the theological idea, which becomes more and more important until the 4th century. Therefore, there are two observations to be made here. Firstly, this development seems to be linked with the understanding of the Trinity and evolution of Trinitarian theology, so it appears that the growing problems of naming the oneness of God who exists as three Persons forced Christian writers to search for the terms and concepts which could express and describe the most important dogma of the faith.

Secondly, since the term invented by Aristotle was also present in *Septuagint* and especially in the Letters of St Paul, Christian writers had no objection to exploit it. However, we must also notice that it has various meanings in the Holy Scripture, and we find no solid explanation of its meaning, especially in early writings. There is also a very limited discussion of how to understand its use when applied to the operations of God. But since it was present both in the Holy Scripture and the philosophical tradition, its meaning and importance grow in proportion to its use of philosophy in explaining Christian beliefs. Especially the writings of Philo, which were widely read by Christians, provided the most important link between philosophical concepts and the Father's teachings. It is obvious that those two features become most important during the Arian controversy, when there is an urgent need to explain the relation of the Son to Father, and, therefore, there is also a need to find the concepts to express it. That is why the philosophical ideas found their new place in theological systems of the 4th century as never before in the history of Christian writings, despite

ἐνέργεια. Ὁ γὰρ πατήρ διὰ τοῦ λόγου ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ τὰ πάντα ποιεῖ· καὶ οὕτως ἡ ἐνότις τῆς ἁγίας τριάδος σώζεται· καὶ οὕτως εἰς θεὸς ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ κηρύττεται, «ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων, καὶ διὰ πάντων, καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν.» (Savvidis, p. 520; tr. Shapland, pp. 134–135 with my own alterations).

constant accusations from both sides of being too fond of using the Hellenic concepts. Therefore, during the Arian controversy, the concept of ἐνέργεια of God also becomes the key theological problem.

4.4 The knowledge of the Unbegotten substance in two ways

The historical analysis of the use of ἐνέργεια clearly shows that Eunomius could treat his two theological methods as being rooted in the Holy Scripture and Christian tradition. But since its use was not so common in the writings of his predecessors, it seems that it was his own idea to ascribe such a great role to the distinction between substance and activity. It is also noticeable that with a small exception of Clement of Alexandria, nobody before Eunomius made any attempt to build a theological method based on this distinction, which is crucial to obtaining the knowledge of the essence of God. Therefore, we can now examine the two ways of Eunomius and his claims that those are the ways which can give us the knowledge of the unbegotten essence of God.

4.4.1 The first method – from substance to activity

Eunomius begins his first way with a statement that God was not generated by Himself or any other being, because it is impossible. He claims that such a statement is in accordance “both with innate knowledge (τε φυσικὴν ἔννοιαν) and the teaching of the Fathers.”⁵⁰⁶ It is impossible that something existed before God, and that God existed before Himself, because then in both cases, we should admit that this first being was God, and the latter must be called a creation.⁵⁰⁷ However, these claims are obvious and nobody can deny it. Already at the beginning of the passage, Eunomius prepares his further demonstration because he does not use the term κτίζω but γίνομαι.⁵⁰⁸ This term leads directly to ἀγέννητος and serves well the conclusion of this

506 LA 7, 1–3 (Vaggione, p. 40).

507 LA 7, 3–11 (Vaggione, p. 40).

508 LA 7, 3 (Vaggione, p. 40).

passage, where he says that God is “Unbegotten or rather unbegotten essence (οὐσία ἀγέννητος).”⁵⁰⁹

In the next chapter, Eunomius further demonstrates why the name “Unbegotten” is the proper name to honour God. This is not:

“only the name in conformity with human invention (κατ’ἐπίνοιαν ἀνθρωπίνην); rather in conformity with reality, we ought to repay him the debt which above all other is most due God: the acknowledgement that he is what he is.”⁵¹⁰

This statement is an expression of the theory of names, which was popular with Heteroousians. They believed that the real knowledge of beings is a kind of the comprehension of their essences. As we have seen in the preceding chapter, this conviction was the basis of their missionary activity, but in this belief, they were also heirs of the philosophical tradition which is already well analysed by F. DelCogliano.⁵¹¹ Just like for Aetius the name “Unbegotten” is not based on any human recognition or invention (ἐπίνοια) or privation (στέρησις), and although Eunomius never expresses it, the only way by which man can know this true name is that it was revealed.⁵¹² Eunomius provides an explanation why this name cannot be obtained by privation and thus cannot be treated as a negative one. In a much clearer way than Aetius, he states that being generated is not a property of God, and, therefore, the name “Ungenerated” cannot be privation of a property that God does not have.⁵¹³ The language that is used by Eunomius especially in this fragment was recognized by R. Mortley as a

509 LA 8, 11 (Vaggione, p. 40). F. DelCogliano points out that the second statement, that God is “unbegotten substance” is controversial, and since it does not follow logically from the premises, it can only be explained by Eunomius’ theory of names, *cf. op. cit.*, p. 33.

510 LA 8, 1–3. οὐκ ὀνόματι μόνον κατ’ἐπίνοιαν ἀνθρωπίνην σεμνύνει οἰόμεθα δεῖν, ἀποτινῆναι δὲ κατ’ ἀλήθειαν τὸ πάντων ἀναγκαιότατον ὄφλημα τῷ θεῷ, τὴν τοῦ εἶναι ὃ ἔστιν ὁμολογίαν (Vaggione, pp. 40–42).

511 *Cf.* DelCogliano’s analysis of the Heteroousian claims (*op. cit.*, pp. 38–48) and the discussion on their philosophical background (pp. 49–95). He concludes that the most probable source for Heteroousians was the doctrine of Plato’s *Cratylus* developed and modified in Middle-Platonism mainly by Philo (see conclusions on pp. 92–95).

512 *Cf.* DelCogliano, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

513 LA 8, 7–14. (Vaggione, pp. 42–43).

very sophisticated application of negative theology.⁵¹⁴ His main conclusion is that the Neo-Arian distinguished negation from privation, because he recognized, developing the statements of his teacher Aetius, that the privative type of negation “carried with it a positive statement of some sort.”⁵¹⁵

But there still remains one fundamental issue of the conception of God which is the outcome of negative theology. Can we say that the goal of the application of negative language is to demonstrate that God is open to our intellectual capabilities and can be comprehended at least in part? Or negative theology is rather the way to say that we cannot comprehend God at all, and, therefore, while speaking of Him, we can use only negative terms. In my opinion, the following passages from *Liber apologeticus* will show that Eunomius cannot escape from using the negative language when he explains how we should understand unbegotten God, but it is not enough to name him a negative theologian.

From this point in his *Apology*, Eunomius goes on in the Aetius-like fashion proposing the hypotheses and showing that the conclusions are impossible to accept. He tries to show that, if one accepts the conception of the “unbegotten essence,” any demonstration based on sharing or passing on this essence to any other being must lead to absurdities (ἀτοπίας).⁵¹⁶

The first concept which Eunomius examines is sharing the same essence of the Unbegotten by separation and division (διαίροῖτο καὶ μερίζοιτο).⁵¹⁷ It is impossible because God cannot be the result of separation. Since division is the principle of corruption, so if the Unbegotten shares His essence this way, He would be destructible. His essence also cannot be compared to anything else since it has nothing in common with any other beings which

514 R. Mortley, *From Word to Silence*, *op. cit.*, pp. 135–139.

515 *Ibid.*, p. 137. It is worth noting that R. Mortley also expresses the doubts of whether Eunomius himself was deliberately using the sophisticated Neoplatonic logic and understood all consequences of his philosophical claims. He says: “Eunomius’ attempt to have this two-level function of privation mean ontological primary and secondariness, may not be entirely convincing, but is nevertheless clever and shows a knowledge of contemporary philosophy” (p. 139).

516 LA 9, 6 (Vaggione, p. 42)

517 LA 9, 7 (Vaggione, p. 42). This fragment could be an allusion to the objection made to the Arian movement in general which was present at the Council of Nice (*cf.* SC 305, p. 251, footnote 5).

are begotten, but if one does so, the name must also be common to all beings which have comparative essence.⁵¹⁸

The second topic aimed at showing the absurdity of the Orthodox claims which Eunomius proposes is the presentation of the various meanings of the sequence of substances, such as time (χρόνος), age (αἰών) or order (τάξις).⁵¹⁹ In the case of the latter, he simply states that implying order to God would be ascribing to His substance something from the outside, while there is no property which He does not already possess.⁵²⁰ Similarly, understanding the sequence in a manner of time and age would mean applying to God something which is prior to Him. What is interesting, Eunomius uses the definition of time which has its deep philosophical roots in Plato's *Timaeus*: "time is a certain motion of the stars" (ὁ τε χρόνος ἀστέρων ποιά τις ἐστι κίνησις).⁵²¹ He explains that since the stars were created not only after the intelligent beings, but also after the creation of some material elements, as one can read in *The Book of Genesis* (1, 14); therefore, to imply that there is time in the essence of God is unthinkable, since time depends on the movement of created material beings. In the case of the third possibility (sequence of the ages), to refute it, Eunomius simply quotes Psalm 54, 20 which reads: "God exists before the ages" and those words, as he says, are confirmed by "common opinion" (τῶν κοινῶν λογισμῶν).⁵²² All those cases

518 LA 9, 8–13. (Vaggione pp. 44–45). Although this fragment sounds like pure logical expressions, it is hard to find any clear philosophical references. It is, however, similar to what Aristotle says on the division and simultaneity in *Categories* (13, 14 b, 24–15 a, 13), and also about the division as the method of demonstration, which cannot be used to demonstrate either essence or of accidents of being in *Prior Analytics* (I, 32, 46 a, 32–46 b, 37).

519 LA 10, 4–5 (Vaggione pp. 44–45).

520 LA 10, 5–6 (Vaggione pp. 44–45).

521 LA 10, 5–6 (Vaggione pp. 44–45), Although the obvious reference is *Timaeus* (37 C–39 C), where Plato explains that time was created along with the universe, and it is intrinsically linked with the evolution of heavenly bodies, this passage of Plato was not clear. Simplicius refers that Eudemus, Theophrastus, and Alexander proposed a definition identical to that of Eunomius, since they identified time with the movement of the heavenly spheres (A. Smith, *Eternity and Time*, in: *Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, ed. L.P. Gerson, Cambridge 1996, p. 206).

522 LA 10, 10 (Vaggione, pp. 44–45).

would either imply the existence of something prior to God, or a composite nature of his absolutely simple substance. This cannot be accepted, as well as the composition, which implies shape, mass, or size.⁵²³

Having excluded all cases whereby something prior to the substance of God must be accepted, Eunomius enumerates possible situations when something is equal to it. But even likening, comparison, and association with the substance (κατ'οὐσίαν ὁμοιότητος ἢ συγκρίσεως ἢ κοινωνίας) of the Unbegotten is impossible, because it would lead to a conclusion that the substance of the Son which is in such relation with the Unbegotten is unbegotten as well.⁵²⁴ It not only ends with the illogical conclusion that the Son is unbegotten, but also is contrary to the word of Jesus who said: “the Father who sent me is greater than I” (14: 28).⁵²⁵

At this point of his *Liber apologeticus*, Eunomius significantly changes the main line of the demonstration. He evokes the famous Arian watchword that the Son is “<offspring> and <thing made>” (γέννημα καὶ ποίημα), and he insists that those are “the words of the Saints” which resolve all the problems with the nature of the substance of the Son.⁵²⁶ But it seems that Eunomius is not so sure about the obvious truth of these words, because the subsequent chapters contain an explanation why it is necessary to admit that the generation of the Son must be understood as creation. He discusses possible ways of conceiving generation as a physical change, augmentation, or transformation and argues that all those must sustain the conclusion that the Son is a creation.⁵²⁷

Those arguments lead Eunomius to the exposition of the proper understanding of generation as applied to God. He makes here a very important

523 LA 10, 10–11.3 (Vaggione, pp. 44–47).

524 LA 11, 4–10 (Vaggione, pp. 46–47).

525 LA 11, 11–14 (Vaggione, pp. 46–47).

526 LA 12, 1–3 (Vaggione, pp. 46–48). It is worth noticing that although Eunomius claims that reference is clear, it is in fact very uncertain, and Basil points out that Eunomius must first explain what “Saints” he had in mind (Basil, *Con. Eun.* 2, 2, 1–2; SC 305, p. 12).

527 LA 12, 7–17, 3 (Vaggione, pp. 46–55). For a complete analysis of Eunomius' arguments of this fragment as well as the counterarguments of his opponents, cf. T. Stępień, *op. cit.*, pp. 148–150.

distinction between two kinds of names that we apply to God, which are homonyms and synonyms:

“What well-disposed person would not acknowledge that there are some words which have only their sound and utterance in common but not at all their signification? For instance, ‘eye’ is used of both human beings and God, but in the case of the one it signifies a certain bodily member while in the case of the other it means sometimes God’s care and protection of the righteous, sometimes his knowledge of events. On the other hand, the majority of words [referring to God] are different in their verbal expression but have the same meaning, as for instance, ‘I Am’ (Ex 3:14), and ‘only true God’.” (J 17:3).⁵²⁸

Eunomius states that the names used of both simple and complex beings are homonymous, whereas all names used of simple beings are synonymous. Therefore, such names as “I Am” and “Only true God” can be applied to God in the same way as “Unbegotten,” since they name His unbegotten substance. They simply cannot mean anything else because of God’s simplicity.⁵²⁹

But such names as “Father” and “eye” do not name the same substance in the case of creatures and God, so they are homonyms. Therefore, they do not name the substance as such, but rather the activities of God. Somewhat earlier, Eunomius argued that generation or creation of God cannot be understood in a sensual way, and it is exactly the “error of Greeks” (Ἑλληνική πλάνη) who thought that Divine generation must necessarily presuppose pre-existent matter as a kind of a receptacle of creation.⁵³⁰ It seems to be once again the reference to *Timaeus* of Plato, but while the first one was simply the quotation of the definition of time from the dialogue (or rather

528 LA 16, 9–17, 3. τίς γὰρ οὐκ ἂν ὁμολογήσειεν τῶν εὐφρονοῦντων ὅτι τῶν ὀνμάτων τὰ μὲν κατὰ τὴν ἐκφώνησιν καὶ προφορὰν τὴν κοινωίαν ἔχει μόνον, οὐκ ἔτι δὲ κατὰ τὴν σημασίαν; ὡς ὀφθαλμὸς ἐπὶ τε ἀνθρώπου καὶ θεοῦ λεγόμενος, τοῦ μὲν γὰρ σημαίνει τι μέρος, τοῦ δὲ ποτὲ μὲν ἀντίληφιν καὶ φυλακὴν τῶν δικαίων, ποτὲ δὲ τὴν πραττομένων γνῶσιν· τὰ δὲ πολλὰ κατὰ τὴν ἐκφώνησιν κεχωρισμένα τὴν αὐτὴν ἔχει σημασίαν, ὡς τὸ ὄν καὶ μόνος ἀληθινὸς θεός (Vaggione, pp. 53–55).

529 Cf. F. DelCogliano, *op. cit.*, pp. 39–40. He is right to suggest that what Eunomius means here is God’s simplicity based not only on the lack of composition of bodily parts (as R.P. Vaggione’s translation suggests) but having no composition of any parts.

530 LA 16, 4–6 (Vaggione, pp. 52–53).

its later interpretations) which supported his thesis, this time the teaching of Plato is rejected as false.⁵³¹

Having expounded on homonyms and synonyms, Eunomius once again explains that the name “Father” has a different meaning in the case of God and bodily things, but this time, he uses the term ἐνέργεια:

“Accordingly, it is by no means necessary, when God is called ‘Father’, to understand this activity as having the same meaning that it does with human beings, as involving in both cases the idea of mutability or passion; the one activity, is passionless, while the other involves passion.”⁵³²

The activity of God which is generation cannot involve any concepts taken from the bodily one, and it must be recognized as passionless. Such understanding of the activity of generation is possible only because the substance of the Unbegotten was conceived earlier as absolutely simple. Eunomius thinks that also such names as “spirit,” “thing made,” and “offspring” are homonymous, because there are many beings which can be called with those names, so they do not necessarily name specific essences.⁵³³

Despite all those explanations, there is very little we can say about the activity of God which is generation. We can confirm that it must be abstracted from all bodily features and from all composition. Similarly, the name “Unbegotten,” although it cannot be treated as a negative predicate, can be described only in a negative way. Although Eunomius seems to be unaware that he uses negative terms, he constantly says that God is without composition, without equality with any other being, without any priority

531 Plato introduces his conception of a receptacle as “third kind” (*tritōs genos*), (48 E – 57 D) apart from the forms and what participates in the forms. It is very likely that Eunomius refers once again to *Timaeus*, but it is also worth noting that “receptacle is probably the hardest and most philosophically challenging concept in *Timaeus*” (A. Gregory, Plato, Introduction in: *Timaeus and Critias*, tr. R. Waterfield, Oxford 2008, p. XLIX).

532 LA 17, 4–6 (Vaggione, pp. 54–55). Οὐκοῦν οὐδὲ ὅταν λέγηται πατήρ κοινήν ἐνοεῖν χρῆ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους τὴν ἐνέργειαν, ἐπ’ ἀμοιβῶν συνεπινοοῦντας ταῦτη ῥεῦσιν ἢ πάθος, ἐπειπερ, ἢ μὲν ἐστὶν ἀπαθής, ἢ δὲ μετὰ πάθους (Vaggione, pp. 54–55).

533 Cf. LA 17, 7–17 (Vaggione, pp. 54–55). In chapter 19 (3–24), he also explains that such names as “life,” “light,” and “power” should be understood this way, and the light, power, and life of the Unbegotten is different in the case of the begotten, since they name different substances.

or posterity, and without any change and order. It is obvious that all those expressions are in fact negative statements explaining the name “Unbegotten,” which is claimed to be a non-negative one.

It can also be seen in the fragment where Eunomius summarizes his first way. After the passage, which establishes the two ways, he makes a quick exposition of the first way by saying:

“For if anyone begins his enquiry from the essences, he finds that essence which transcends all authority and is wholly incapable of undergoing generation - the essence that gives instruction in these things to the mind approaching them with good will - that essence commands him to reject any comparison with another as being wholly foreign to the law of its nature. As a consequence he is also brought to recognize that its action too conforms to the dignity of its nature.”⁵³⁴

The substance which is found at the beginning of this way is above authority, incapable of generation, and its proper understanding does not allow for any comparison with another. Therefore, although it is somehow known to man, thanks to the revealed name “Unbegotten,” it can be described best in a negative way. It seems that the activity of this substance, since it must be conformed to it, can be also described according to what we can say about the substance, so this passage also suggests that the best way to conceive the activity is negative. So, although Eunomius is usually perceived as a strong opponent of negative theology,⁵³⁵ he cannot express his view without negative expressions.

Since the description of the substance is practically negative, it seems that the only justification of the claim that we can know the essence of God in a positive way is the theory of names. This theory is based on the claim that no man can give any name to any essence. As Eunomius explains in the fragments of *Apologia Apologiae* quoted by Gregory of Nyssa, the words do not come from poets or authors of the Bible. Even the naming of animals by Adam (Gen 2: 19–20) was not the activity of

534 LA 20, 10–15. Εἶτε γὰρ ἐκ τῶν οὐσιῶν ποιητό τις τῆς ἐπισκέψεως τὴν ἀρχήν, ἢ ἐν ἀνωτέρῳ βασιλείας καὶ πάντη γενέσεως ἀνεπίδεκτος οὖσα, τούτοις τε παιδεύουσα τὴν μετ’ εὐνοίας προσιοῦσαν διάνοιαν, ἀποθεῖν ὡς πορρωτάτω παρακελεύεται νόμῳ φύσεως τὴν πρὸς ἕτερον σύγκρισιν, ἀκόλουθον καὶ προσήκουσαν τῷ τῆς οὐσίας ἀξιώματι παρέχουσα νοεῖν καὶ τὴν ἐνέργειαν (Vaggione, pp. 58–61).

535 Cf. R. Mortley, *From Word to Silence*, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

man, but rather of Adam as the type of Christ.⁵³⁶ If the names of creations are not of human origin, the name “Unbegotten” must be even more precedent to human invention, since God was unbegotten even before the creation of man. Eunomius relies here on a rather weak claim that the name giver must have existed prior to named things.⁵³⁷ But such a position is true only when we accept the previous assumption, that a name signifies and reveals the essence, so such argumentation seems to contain a logical flaw. Therefore, if God Himself is the sole name giver, he must have taught them to man. As F. DelCogliano notes, Eunomius seems to imagine this teaching as a kind of a dialogue between God and first human beings,⁵³⁸ but this is another weak point of his naturalist theory of names, because his explanations of how such conversation could look like are very unclear.⁵³⁹ Therefore, the entire attempt to tie the name with the essence is based on the naming activity of God. Although it could be perceived as very pious, it is very unconvincing, and Eunomius is unable to prove it not only on the ground of pure reasoning, but also by using biblical passages, which he must interpret in a very strange fashion.

Finally, we must note that the first way of theology was probably Eunomius’ own invention, because it is hard to find any previous attempts to recognize the activity of God based on the knowledge of His substance. Such a method seems to be impossible to invent apart from the theory of names which supports it, so once again, we must assume that the entire demonstration relies on the theory of names, which makes the first way possible.

536 Gregory of Nyssa, CE II, 414–416 (GNO I, 347–348); 444 (GNO I, 356).

537 Cf. DelCogliano, *op. cit.*, pp. 44–45.

538 Cf. *ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

539 Gregory of Nyssa points this out in: CE II, 398 (GNO I, 342); II, 417 (GNO I, 348). It is also worth noting that Eunomius seems to think that bestowal of names is the work of Divine Providence and its rejection undermines the very existence of providence, and makes Basil equal to Epicurus: CE II, 195–196 (GNO I, 281–282).

4.4.2 The second method – from activity to substance

Eunomius begins the discussion on the second way by claiming that the starting point for the demonstration are the things that are created (τῶν δημιουργημάτων). Then he says:

“...is led up to the essences and from them discovers that the Son is the ‘thing made’ of the Unbegotten, while the Counsellor is that of the Only-begotten. Thus, having confirmed the difference in their activities from the pre-eminence of the Only-begotten, he accepts as indisputable the proof that their essences are distinct as well.”⁵⁴⁰

So in the demonstration, the created things lead to the essences and the conclusion is that the Son was created by the Father, and the Holy Spirit by the Son, but it is the difference of the activities (τῆς ἐνεργείας διαφορά) which can confirm that the essences are different. Eunomius states that in order to accept such conclusion, there is no need to add that the Father creates through his own power, while the Son creates at the Father’s command.⁵⁴¹ Although he is convinced that the difference between the activities is obvious, in this last statement he provides the real difference between them, since the Father’s activity is His own, whereas the Son’s is made at the command of the Father. Therefore, one should not ascribe the same goods to essences, actions, authorities and names (οὐσίας, ἐνεργείας, ἐξουσίας, ὀνόματος) of the Father and the Son, because this leads to speaking of the two Unbegottens.⁵⁴²

In the next section Eunomius argues that neither it is possible even to speak of the similarity (ὁμοιότητος) of things listed above, because multiple fragments of the Holy Scripture read that He is the only (μόνος) God, alone mighty, wise, only immortal⁵⁴³ and He could not be “only” if His nature would be the same or even similar (ὁμοιότητα τῆς φύσεως) to the nature of any other being.

The consideration of those things leads once again to the confirmation of a difference between the activity of God and man:

540 LA 20, 16–19. ἐκ τούτων ἐπὶ τὰς οὐσίας ἀνάγοιτο, τοῦ μὲν ἀγεννήτου τὸν Υἱὸν εὐρίσκων ποιήμα, τοῦ δὲ Μονογενοῦς τὸν Παράκλητον, κάκ τῆς τοῦ Μονογενοῦς ὑπεροχῆς τὴν τῆς ἐνεργείας διαφορὰν πιστούμενος, ἀναμφισβήτητον λαμβάνει καὶ τῆς κατ’ οὐσίαν παραλλαγῆς τὴν ἀπόδειξιν (Vaggione, pp. 60–61).

541 LA 20, 20–22 (Vaggione, pp. 60–61).

542 LA 21, 1–4 (Vaggione, pp. 60–61).

543 LA 21, 10–22, 22, 5 (Vaggione, pp. 60–61).

“we must understand that God’s mode of action too is not human, but effortless and divine, and must by no means suppose that that action is some kind of division or motion of his essence.”⁵⁴⁴

At this point Eunomius begins his most important passage concerning the understanding of the activity of God. He draws attention to the problem of the unity of activity and essence, refuting it as the opinion of Hellenes:

“This is in fact what those who have been led astray by pagan sophistries do have to suppose, because they have united the action to the essence and therefore present the world as coeval with God.”⁵⁴⁵

Eunomius underlines that the conception of the unity of substance and activity leads to absurdity (τὴν ἀτοπίαν) – to a conclusion that the generative action of God has no beginning and no end.⁵⁴⁶ That would mean that creation is coeval with God. We find similar statements rejecting the identity of essence and activity in one of the preserved fragments of scholia on Aetius’ *Syntagmation*,⁵⁴⁷ to which we shall come back later, but an important question is why Eunomius was convinced that the claim of the identity of substance and activity is of Hellenic origin. The statement that this is the claim of those who have been led astray by Hellenic sophistries (Ἑλλήνων σοφίσμασιν) could simply be a kind of a rhetorical expression, but it could also refer to specific philosophical opinions. We have seen above that direct claims on the unity of substance and activity in the case of God were made already by Aristotle in *Metaphysics*,⁵⁴⁸ and they were developed and extended to all intellectual substances by Plotinus.⁵⁴⁹ Perhaps, Eunomius is convinced that those opinions were accepted by his Orthodox opponents,

544 LA 22, 7–9. τὴν δὲ περὶ τούτων ἔννοιαν ἀκριβῶς διακαθαίροντας καὶ τὸν τῆς ἐνεργείας τρόπον οὐκ ἀνθρώπειον νομίζουσιν, εὐμαρῆ δὲ καὶ θεῖον· οὗτοι μερισμὸν ἢ κίνησιν τινα τῆς οὐσίας τὴν ἐνέργειαν ἡγουμένους (Vaggione, pp. 62–63).

545 LA 22, 10–12. ἄπερ ἐπινοεῖν ἀναγκαῖον τοὺς ὑπαγομένους τοῖς Ἑλλήνων σοφίσμασιν, ἐνούτων τῇ οὐσίᾳ τὴν ἐνέργειαν καὶ διὰ τοῦθ’ ἅμα μὲν τῷ Θεῷ τὸν κόσμον ἀποφαινομένων (Vaggione, pp. 62–63).

546 LA 22, 13–15 (Vaggione, pp. 62–63).

547 *Frag.* I, (Vaggione, pp. 176–177).

548 *Met.* XII, 6, 1071 b, 17–20.

549 As it has been shown above, Plotinus made this move in the first treatise of the sixth *Ennead*, especially in VI, 2, 15, 6–18, and later on about the activity of will which is identical with essence VI, 8, 13, 50–59.

and for him, this meant the rejection of God's creative power and denial of His transcendence. Therefore, he accuses his opponents of the deliberately false teaching, which is the result of depravation of their intellect (κακόνοια).⁵⁵⁰

On the other hand, Eunomius states that:

“We ourselves, however, judge the activity from its effects in accordance with the principles enunciated just a moment ago, and do not consider it unhazardous to have to unite the activity to the essence. We recognize that the divine essence is without beginning, simple, and endless, but we also recognize that its activity is neither without beginning nor without ending. It cannot be without beginning, for, if it were, its effect would be without beginning as well.”⁵⁵¹

The generative activity of God must have a beginning and an end, whereas His essence must be deprived of them. Otherwise, we would have to admit that the activity which is the same with the substance must be unbegotten and unending in itself (ἀτελεύτητον λέγειν τὴν ἐνέργειαν).⁵⁵² For Eunomius, this leads to ridiculous conclusions that “either the activity of God is unproductive or its effect is unbegotten.”⁵⁵³ Therefore, the only remaining option is Eunomius' own point of view. We can also find here a difference with the conclusions which we have made above about Aristotle' teaching of activity. He described ἐνέργεια as being atemporal and having its own end in itself.⁵⁵⁴ Eunomius, on the other hand, claims that the activity of the generation of the Son must have the point where it began, and also must have its end in the creation of the separate substance of the Son.

Having discussed the need of the beginning and the end of generation, Eunomius presents the next characteristic point of his understanding of ἐνέργεια. The generative activity of God must be the act of His will:

550 LA 23, 3 (Vaggione, p. 62).

551 LA 23, 4–7. ἡμεῖς δὲ κατὰ τὰ μικρῶ πρόσθεν ρηθέντα τὴν ἐνέργειαν ἐκ τῶν ἔργων κρίνοντες, οὐκ ἀσφαλὲς οἰόμεθα δεῖν ἐνοῦν τῇ οὐσίᾳ, τὴν μὲν ἀναρχον ἀπλήν τε καὶ ἀτελεύτητον εἰδότες, τὴν δ' ἐνέργειαν οὐκ ἀναρχον — (ἧ γὰρ ἂν ἦν καὶ τὸ ἔργον ἀναρχον)... (Vaggione, pp. 62–63).

552 LA 23, 9–10 (Vaggione, pp. 62–65).

553 LA 23, 11–12. ἢ τὴν ἐνέργειαν ἄπρακτον εἶναι τοῦ θεοῦ ἢ τὸ ἔργον ἀγέννητον (Vaggione, pp. 64–65).

554 Cf. D. Bradshaw, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

“On the contrary, we must believe that the action which is the truest and the most befitting God is his will (βούλησιν), and that that will is sufficient to bring into existence and to redeem all things, as indeed the prophetic voice bears witness: ‘Whatever he willed to do, he did.’ God needs nothing in order to bring what he intends into existence; rather, at the same moment he intends it, whatever he willed comes to be.”⁵⁵⁵

As we have seen when discussing negative theology of Arius, he also claimed that generation of the Son is the activity of will. Eunomius shares the same opinion that the act of generation of the Son must have been wanted by God. After what has been said on the philosophical concepts of the activity of God, we can see that they presented it primarily as the activity of the intellect. Such activity cannot have a starting point because of substantial actuality of God, who is always actual, and there is no passage from potency to act in Him, as we have seen in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*.⁵⁵⁶ Therefore, when Plotinus considers activity of will, he also states that this activity must be identical with essence and thus eternal as the One Himself. This activity could neither have started at some point, but here we could see the problem which seems to be present in his discussion. In the case of will, it is easier to see the starting point of activity, and it is not as spontaneous as thinking. Even in comparison with our own thinking and willing, we can see that while thinking is usually spontaneous, willing is more often deliberate. That is why Plotinus says that the One is not “<what happened to be>, but what He has willed to be.”⁵⁵⁷

For Eunomius, the activity of God is primarily that of the will, and he only vaguely discusses the cognitive activity of the Father. He could have thought that while the philosophers discussed primarily the operation of the intellect of God, the true Christian view of God who creates the universe must be different; his primary activity should be rather that of the will. He

555 LA 23, 16–20. ἀληθεστάτην δὲ καὶ Θεῷ πρεπωδεστάτην ἐνέργειαν ἡγεῖσθαι τὴν βούλησιν, ἀρκοῦσαν πρὸς τε τὸ εἶναι καὶ σώζεσθαι τὰ πάντα, μαρτυρούσης καὶ προφητικῆς φωνῆς «Πάντα γὰρ ὅσα ἠθέλησεν ἐποίησεν.» Οὐ γὰρ ἐπιδέεται τις πρὸς τὴν ὧν βούλεται σύστασιν, ἀλλ’ ἅμα τε βούλεται καὶ γέγονεν ὅπερ ἠθέλησεν (Vaggione, pp. 64–65).

556 Cf. *Met.* XII, 6, 1071 b, 17–20; XII, 7, 1072 b, 26–29.

557 *Enn.* VI, 8, 13, 59. ὥστε οὐκ ὅπερ ἔτυχεν ἔστιν, ἀλλ’ ὅπερ ἐβουλήθη αὐτός (Henry/Schwyzler, vol. 3, p. 258; tr. MacKenna/Page, p. 349).

is the one who created the universe, which came to being from nothing, and not, as Eunomius insisted, from a pre-existing receptacle. Therefore, the universe is not created spontaneously, does not flow from Him, but rather it must have been wanted by God and created by the act of His will, which is the activity “most befitting God.”

But Eunomius does not stop here and explains further the character of the activity of will. He claimed earlier that activity must be different from substance, but if it is so, a question arises how exactly the ontological status of such activity should be understood. Eunomius tries to make it clearer by saying:

“Accordingly, if this argument has demonstrated that God’s will is an action, and that this action is not essence but that the Only-begotten exists by virtue of the will of the Father, then of necessity it is not with respect to the essence but with respect to the action (which is what the will is) that the Son preserves his similarity to the Father.”⁵⁵⁸

Although Eunomius is not clear about it, we can see that the generative act of will, which is not identical with essence, seems to be a kind of an entity between the Father and the Son. Therefore, the similarity of the Son to the Father is not a simple similarity of one substance to another, but rather the similarity of the substance of the Son, to the activity of the will of the Father.⁵⁵⁹ Making such a claim, Eunomius tries to preserve his opinion on dissimilarity of substances, and based on this principle, he goes further with an explanation how to understand the Son as the “image” (εἰκών) of the Father. He uses here the same scheme by saying that the Son is not the image of the Father, but rather the image of the activity of the Father.

This is a very important fragment because Eunomius attempts to reconcile the doctrine of generation of the Son with the understanding of creation of all other beings, and to show what is the difference between those two creative acts:

558 LA 24, 1–4. Οὐκοῦν εἰ τὴν μὲν βούλησιν ἀπέδειξεν ὁ λόγος ἐνέργειαν, οὐκ οὐσίαν δὲ τὴν ἐνέργειαν, ὑπέστη δὲ βουλήσει τοῦ πατρὸς ὁ μονογενῆς, οὐ πρὸς τὴν οὐσίαν, πρὸς δὲ τὴν ἐνέργειαν (ἣτις ἐστὶ καὶ βούλησις) ἀποσώζειν τὴν ὁμοιότητα τὸν υἱὸν ἀναγκαῖον (Vaggione, pp. 64–65).

559 As M.R. Barnes notices, this also means essence itself is deprived of any kind of causality, cf. *Power of God. Δύναμις in Gregory of Nyssa’s Trinitarian Theology*, Washington 2001, pp. 177–178.

“The word ‘image’, then, would refer the similarity back, not to the essence of God, but to the action unbegottenly stored up in his foreknowledge prior to the existence of the first-born and of the things created ‘in him’.”⁵⁶⁰

Eunomius does not explain what he has in mind when he mentions the action which was stored in the foreknowledge of the Father (τὴν ἐνέργειαν ἐναποκειμένην ἀγεννήτως τῇ προγνώσει), but the text seems to suggest that there was only one activity of will, the same with creation and generation, and, therefore, the power of the Father (τοῦ πατρὸς δύναμιν) can be seen in the Son.⁵⁶¹ In the following passages concerning the Holy Spirit, Eunomius also talks about the sequence of creation. The Father generated (created) the Son, but the Son created the Holy Spirit “at the command of the Father by the activity of the Son.”⁵⁶² So there is an order of creating subsequent persons of the Son and the Spirit.⁵⁶³ Therefore, generation of the Son would be the only activity of the Father, the creation of the Holy Spirit – one activity of the Son, and so on. Such an interpretation of creation would be most supportive for Eunomius’ claims as regards knowing substance from activity. As we have seen in the fragments from *Protrepticus*, Aristotle made similar claims as to a simple being, which, because of its simplicity, can have only one activity.⁵⁶⁴ But in one of the preserved fragments of the scholia, Eunomius clearly denies such an interpretation. It begins with rejecting the identity of the substance and will of God:

‘...because the will and the purpose of God are not identical (ταὐτόν) with his essence: the act of willing has both a beginning and an ending.’⁵⁶⁵

And in the next passage of this fragment, he adds:

560 LA 24, 10–13. οὐ πρὸς τὴν οὐσίαν φέροι ἂν ἡ εἰκὼν τὴν ὁμοιότητα, πρὸς δὲ τὴν ἐνέργειαν ἐναποκειμένην ἀγεννήτως τῇ προγνώσει καὶ πρὸ τῆς πρωτοτόκου συστάσεως καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ κτισθέντων (Vaggione, pp. 64–65).

561 LA 24, 15 (Vaggione, p. 64).

562 LA 25, 23 (Vaggione, pp. 68–69). προστάγματι τοῦ πατρὸς, ἐνεργεῖα δὲ τοῦ υἱοῦ γενόμενον.

563 LA 25, 10–11 (Vaggione, pp. 66–67).

564 *Protrep.* 64, 1–3, Τοῦ μὲν οὖν συνθέτου καὶ μεριστοῦ πλείους καὶ διάφοροί εἰσιν ἐνέργειαι, τοῦ δὲ τὴν φύσιν ἀπλοῦ καὶ μὴ πρὸς τι τὴν οὐσίαν ἔχοντος μίαν ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι τὴν καθ’ αὐτὸ κυρίως ἀρετήν.

565 *Frag.* I, 1–3 Ὅτι ἡ θέλησις καὶ ἡ βούλησις οὐ ταὐτόν τῇ οὐσίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ· ἡ μὲν γὰρ θέλησις καὶ ἄρχεται καὶ παύεται (Vaggione, pp. 176–177).

“Besides, if the purpose of God were identical (ταυτόν) with his essence, then, since there is only one essence, there would have to be only one act of willing.”⁵⁶⁶

But, as Eunomius notes, this is inconsistent with the Holy Scripture which reads that God wills many things (Ps 113:11) and as *The Book of Genesis* states, during the days of creation, God subsequently willed the heavens, the Sun and the Earth (Gen. 1: 1–2). Therefore, there are multiple acts of His will, which does not destroy the simplicity of God since they are not identical with His substance. Those activities are different from generation, but we can assume that they were made through the Son. Although Eunomius recalls here a fragment of Genesis and claims that this teaching is clear in this context and confirms the multiplicity of activities of will, this does not solve the main problem of how those acts differ from generation of the Son. It seems that Eunomius was aware of the problem, and, therefore, in *Apologia Apologiae*, he tries to explain this distinction by calling generation and creation of the Spirit “characteristic activities” (παρεπομένων ἐνεργειῶν).⁵⁶⁷ Such a concept seems to refer to earlier views of activity which is linked with nature in Aristotle and Philo of Alexandria. However, those activities were seen as flowing out of nature, and they were not purposeful in the meaning in which Eunomius understands generation of the Son. Unfortunately, in the preserved fragments, there is no other discussion of the meaning of characteristic activity, and it seems that there is still no clear answer to the question of how and why does generation of the Son, which is in fact creation, differ from all other acts of the creative activity of God. And this is the crucial problem since according to Eunomius, such an activity should be the way to have a clear knowledge of substance.

The final question which must be asked is what we can say about the knowledge of God’s substance and the cognition that it is unbegotten. We have seen that the first way of Eunomius relies only on his theory of names. Undermining this theory destroys the conviction that we can have the knowledge of God’s essence. But what about the second way? Contrary to the first one, of which we noted that it was probably Eunomius’ own invention, the second way is presented widely in the earlier Patristic

566 *Frag.* I, 4–6 εἰ ταυτόν ἦν τῇ οὐσία τοῦ θεοῦ ἢ βούλησις, ἐχρῆν μιᾶς οὔσης τῆς οὐσίας, μίαν εἶναι καὶ τὴν θέλησιν. (Vaggione, pp. 176–177).

567 *CE I*, 151, 1–10 (GNO I, 71, 28–72,10; tr. Hall, p. 57).

tradition. But here we can observe another crucial difference. Earlier versions of the second way very clearly pointed at the activities of God which can be perceived in the sensual world and in the soul of man, as a starting point for the demonstration from activity to substance. Eunomius, however, insists that this activity specifically is generation of the Son, and that its very name and character lead to its proper understanding. Therefore, it cannot be conceived in any other way but as the creative activity of will, and since that activity is generation, we can demonstrate from it that the Father is Unbegotten. However, to accept such reasoning, one must be convinced why this activity must be perceived as so very specific, and why does it differ from other creative activities. This is the key distinction since we no longer start from the activities of God perceived in the world, but from generation itself, and Eunomius seems to fail in explaining how he understands it.

But even if we take for granted that we start from generation, there is still one unsolved problem, which will be exploited by Gregory of Nyssa. If the activity of will is different from substance to such an extent that it should be rather understood as a separate entity, it cannot provide the clear perception of the substance of God. To preserve his own view on the dissimilarity of substances, Eunomius treats activity as a kind of a buffer between them but by doing this he weakens his claim on the knowledge of substance from activity.

4.5 Basil of Caesarea on language and comprehensibility of God

The first of the two ways of theology presented by Eunomius had one profound weakness. To follow the reasoning which starts from substance and leads to the activity of generation, one must previously know the essence, which is revealed by the name (*ἄγέννητος*). Therefore, the effectiveness of the first way is based on the assumption that names give us the direct knowledge about substance. The polemic with this claim is one of the main topics of *Contra Eunomium*, which being Basil's early work is at the same time one of the most important. The problem of names has been already analysed by scholars since it is the most obvious part of Basil's response to Eunomius' theory. The most important study concerning this topic has been recently

presented by M. DelCogliano,⁵⁶⁸ but in order to keep the logic and adequate proportions of the argument, it is impossible to omit this part of the debate, since the connection between names and activities also must be underlined.

The audacious statement that the name ‘unbegotten’ (ἀγέννητος) reveals the substance of God to us was based by Eunomius on his own preconceptions concerning the theory of names, so in order to abolish the Eunomian main claim, Basil must have also disqualified, perhaps first and foremost, the assumptions underlying Anomean theories. As Basil formulated his theory of names in response to and as part of the polemic with Eunomius, we cannot analyse it separately.

It was Aetius who first came up with an idea that the name ‘unbegotten’ “communicates the subsistence of God (τὴν ὑπόστασιν τοῦ θεοῦ παρίστησιν),”⁵⁶⁹ but it was Eunomius who provided a theoretical background for this claim. He underlines that we cannot use the same names in both orders – divine and mundane – and although the words used to describe both may be the same, they would mean different things.

“What person of sound mind would not confess that some names have only their pronunciation and utterance in common, but not their meaning? For example, when ‘eye’ is said of a human being and God, for the former it signifies a certain part while for the latter it signifies sometimes God’s care and protection of righteous, sometimes his knowledge of events. In contrast, the majority of the names [used of God] have different pronunciation but the same meaning. For example, *I Am* [Ex 3:14] and *only true God* [John 17:3].”⁵⁷⁰

The philosophical background of Eunomius’ theory was subject to various interpretations, starting with J. Daniélou, who found Neoplatonic inspirations there,⁵⁷¹ through L. Wickham⁵⁷² and J. Rist,⁵⁷³ who listed stoic

568 M. DelCogliano, *Basil of Caesarea’s Anti-Eunomian Theory of Names*, *op. cit.*

569 Aetius, *Synt.* 12; M. DelCogliano, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

570 LA 16, 9-17, 3 (Vaggione, pp. 53–55).

571 J. Daniélou, *Eunome l’Arien et l’exégèse néo-platonicienne du Cratyle*, *op. cit.*, pp. 412–432.

572 L. Wickham, *The Syntagmation of Aetius the Anomean*, JTS vol. 19, no. 1 (1968), p. 558.

573 J. Rist, *Basil’s “Neoplatonism”: Its Background and Nature*, in: *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic*, ed. P. Fedwick, Toronto, 1981, pp. 137–220.

inspirations,⁵⁷⁴ and T. Kopecek with his arguments as to Eunomius' links with Medioplatonists, especially Albinus.⁵⁷⁵ As DelCogliano noted, the Anomean theory was not a complete system⁵⁷⁶ and perhaps this is the reason why researchers encounter so many difficulties. It is, in my opinion, due to the fact that the entire theory was only one of the tools to prove that the Son is unequal to the Father as his substance is different rather than the goal in itself.

Following Aetius, Eunomius believed that the names applied to the Father and the Son reveal their substance: "substance is the very same as that which signified by His name, granted that that the designation applies properly to the essence."⁵⁷⁷ As DelCogliano remarks, both Aetius and Eunomius used the words ὑπόστασις and οὐσία in this context. According to them, real knowledge about οὐσία could be acquired through God's names. So, as the consequence, the difference in names means difference in substance.⁵⁷⁸ As a matter of fact, at the beginning, Eunomius claimed that names operate in fundamentally different ways in the divine and mundane context,⁵⁷⁹ but he changed his mind when answering Basil's arguments and started to claim, as Gregory of Nyssa refers, that not only the name of God, but any other name reveals the substance, which means that he based the theory of names on the fact that God Himself had given all names and therefore there is a natural connection between an object and its name.⁵⁸⁰ In opposition to the biblical account, Eunomius claimed that it was impossible for man to name things as this is the role of God Himself to give names according to the nature of beings. So Eunomius finally connected the theory of names with the theory of the origin of names, which is an example of the naturalist theory.

574 For a short resume of the history of interpretation, Cf. D. Birjukov, *Strategies of Naming in the Polemic between Eunomius and Basil of Caesarea in the Context of the Philosophical Tradition of Antiquity*, Scrinum vol. IV (2008), pp. 104–121.

575 T.A. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, *op. cit.*, pp. 321, 328–332.

576 Cf. M. DelCogliano, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

577 LA 12, 7–9. οὐχ ἕτερον μὲν τὴν οὐσίαν νοοῦντες, ἕτερον δὲ τι παρ' αὐτὴν τὸ σημαίνον, ἀλλ' αὐτὴν εἶναι τὴν ὑπόστασιν ἣν σημαίνει τοῦνομα, ἐπαληθεύουσης τῆ οὐσία τῆς προσηγορίας' (Vaggione, p. 49).

578 Cf. M. DelCogliano, *op. cit.*, pp. 34–35.

579 *Ibid.*, p. 43.

580 *Ibid.*, p. 44.

When undermining the value of human cognition, Eunomius wrote that every cognition with human effort is done *κατ' ἐπίνοιαν*, so each act of conceptualization involves a manipulation of an item and some kind of fabrication.⁵⁸¹ “Unbegotten is based neither on invention nor on privation.”⁵⁸² So Eunomius denied that we can know God by conceptualization (*μήτε ἐν ἐπίνοιαν*),⁵⁸³ but still we can know the notion, the concept (*ἐννοία*) of unbegottenness. Eunomius at the same time boasts of the knowledge of the *οὐσία* and denies human competence of cognition.

Basil's answer is systematic as he deals with the heterodox theses point by point. He begins with the disqualification of his opponent's views regarding conceptualization,⁵⁸⁴ the method of creating names, as Eunomius believed that it was not a proper way to think of, speak of, and worship God. In his opinion, “Expressions based on invention have their existence in name and utterance only, and by their nature are dissolved along with the sound [which make them up].”⁵⁸⁵ Eunomius claims that the things that are said by way of conceptualization (*κατ' ἐπίνοιαν*) do not exist only in names and have no link to the nature but are “something completely false and non-existent like the fictional centaurs and Chimaera that appear in the mythologies.”⁵⁸⁶ According to Basil, conceptualization can give us certain knowledge. This is the knowledge based on sensual cognition: “through conceptualization into the things out of which it is constituted: color, shape, solidity, size, and so forth.”⁵⁸⁷ But he admits also that using his imagination, man can create notions that have no connection with reality but

“The term ‘conceptualization’, however, is far from being restricted only to vain and non-existent imaginations. After an initial concept has arisen for us from sense perception, the more subtle and precise reflection on what we have conceived is called conceptualization.”⁵⁸⁸

581 A. Radde-Gallwitz, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

582 LA 8, 10–11 (Vaggione, p. 42).

583 LA 8, 14 (Vaggione, p. 42).

584 Cf. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, Berkeley 1994, pp. 108–116.

585 LA 8, 3–5 (Vaggione pp. 42–43).

586 *Con. Eun.* I, 6, 5–9 (SC 299, p. 184; tr. DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz p. 97).

587 *Con. Eun.* I, 6, 25–29 (SC 299, p. 184; tr. DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz p. 98).

588 *Ibid.*

As A. Radde Gallwitz remarks, each concept devised through ἐπίνοιαν is at least potentially meaningful, but it is not necessary for it to have a referent beyond itself, in the real world. Basil understands that the conditions for meaningfulness are much lesser than the conditions for reference.⁵⁸⁹ Additionally, D. Birjukov noted that the views on the language structure presented in the polemic with Eunomius correspond with Aristotle's three-fold scheme: sound–thought–subject.⁵⁹⁰

For Basil, it is not only an adequate way to talk about the mundane reality, but about the divine one as well.

“When our Lord Jesus Christ spoke about himself to make known both the Divinity's love of humanity and the grace that comes to humanity from the economy, he did so by means of certain distinguishing marks considered in connection with him. He called himself ‘door’, ‘way’, ‘bread’, ‘vine’, ‘shepherd’, and ‘light’, even though he is not a polyonym. All these names do not carry the same meaning as one another. For ‘light’ signifies one thing, ‘vine’ another, ‘way’ another, and ‘shepherd’ yet another. Though our Lord is one in substrate, and one substance, simple and not composite, he calls himself by different names at different times, using designations that differ from one another for the different conceptualizations (ἐπινοίαις διαφερούσας). On the basis of his different activities (ἐνεργειῶν διαφορὰν) and his relation to the objects of his divine benefaction, he employs different names for himself. For instance, when he calls himself ‘the light of the world’, he points out the inaccessibility of the glory in the divinity.”⁵⁹¹

So the conceptualization of Christ describes Christ's activities and his relations with the created world and the humanity. The names are different

589 Cf. A. Radde-Gallwitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 143–144.

590 Cf. D. Birjukov, *op. cit.*, p. 116; Cf. Aristotle, *De interpretatione*, 16 a, 26–29.

591 *Con. Eun.* I, 7, 4–19 (SC 299, pp. 188–190). Ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἐν τοῖς περὶ ἑαυτοῦ λόγοις, τὴν φιλανθρωπίαν τῆς θεότητος καὶ τὴν ἐξ οἰκονομίας χάριν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις παραδηλῶν, ἰδιώμασί τισι τοῖς περὶ αὐτὸν θεωρουμένοις ἀπεσήμαινε αὐτήν, θύραν ἑαυτὸν λέγων, καὶ ὁδὸν, καὶ ἄρτον, καὶ ἄμπελον, καὶ ποιμένα, καὶ φῶς, οὐ πολυώνυμός τις ὧν-οὐ γὰρ πάντα τὰ ὀνόματα εἰς ταυτὸν ἀλλήλοις φέρει. Ἄλλο γὰρ τὸ σημαίνον φῶτος, καὶ ἄλλο ἀμπέλου, καὶ ἄλλο ὁδοῦ, καὶ ἄλλο ποιμένου. Ἀλλ' ἐν ὧν κατὰ τὸ ὑποκείμενον, καὶ μία οὐσία καὶ ἀπλή καὶ ἀσύνθετος, ἄλλοτε ἄλλως ἑαυτὸν ὀνομάζει, ταῖς ἐπινοίαις διαφερούσας ἀλλήλων τὰς προσηγορίας μεθαρμοζόμενος. Κατὰ γὰρ τὴν τῶν ἐνεργειῶν διαφορὰν, καὶ τὴν πρὸς τὰ εὐεργετούμενα σχέσιν, διάφορα ἑαυτῷ καὶ τὰ ὀνόματα τίθεται. Φῶς μὲν γὰρ ἑαυτὸν τοῦ κόσμου λέγει, τὸ τε ἀπρόσιτον τῆς ἐν τῇ θεότητι δόξης τῷ ὀνόματι τούτῳ διασημαίνων (tr. DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz, p. 99).

as different are His activities that can be recognized. Further on, Basil lists some other names of God, such as ‘creator’, ‘wise’, ‘provident’, ‘invisible’, and ‘unchangeable’⁵⁹² that can be derived from certain passages of the Scripture which are treated as encapsulating basic notions about God.⁵⁹³

“For we say that the God of the universe is ‘incorruptible’ and ‘unbegotten’, designating him with these names according to various aspects. Whenever we consider ages past, we find that the life of God transcends every beginning and say that he is ‘unbegotten’. Whenever we stretch our mind forward to the ages to come, we designate the one who is without boundary, infinite, and comprehended by no terminal point as ‘incorruptible’. Therefore, just as ‘incorruptible’ is the name we give him because his life is without an end, so too is ‘unbegotten’ the name given because his life is without a beginning, when we consider each through conceptualization.”⁵⁹⁴

According to Basil, with the help of all available means of cognition, that is, sense perception, common sense, and scriptural tradition, man can, through the process of conceptualization, create notions about the earthly phenomena and spiritual matters.

“And if anyone should examine each of the names one by one, he would find the various conceptualizations, even though for all there is one substrate (οὐσιαν) as far as substance (ὕποκειμένου) is concerned.”⁵⁹⁵

Basil does not agree with Eunomius that we can treat different names as equivalent to the essence and as a consequence, basing on God’s simplicity, to each other. On the contrary, he claims that:

“For if he [Eunomius] does not consider anything at all by way of conceptualization so as to avoid the appearance of honoring God with human designations, then

592 Cf. *Con. Eun.* I, 7, 35 (SC 299, p. 192).

593 Cf. M. DelCogliano, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

594 *Con. Eun.* I, 7 (SC 299, p. 192). Ἄφθαρτον γὰρ καὶ ἀγέννητον εἶναι τὸν Θεὸν τῶν ὄλων λέγομεν, κατὰ διαφόρους ἐπιβολὰς τοῖς ὀνόμασι τούτοις προσ-αγορευόντες. Ὅταν μὲν γὰρ εἰς τοὺς κατόπιν αἰῶνας ἀποβλέψωμεν, ὑπερεκπίπτουσαν πάσης ἀρχῆς εὐρίσκοντες τὴν ζωὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἀγέννητον αὐτὸν λέγομεν· ὅταν δὲ τοῖς ἐπερχομένοις αἰῶσι τὸν νοῦν ἐπεκτείνωμεν, τὸν ἀόριστον καὶ ἄπειρον, καὶ οὐδενὶ τέλει καταληπτὸν προσαγορευόμεν ἄφθαρτον. Ὡς οὖν τὸ ἀτελεύτητον τῆς ζωῆς ἄφθαρτον, οὕτω τὸ ἄναρχον αὐτῆς ἀγέννητον ὀνομάσθη, τῇ ἐπινοίᾳ θεωροῦντων ἡμῶν ἐκάτερα (tr. DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz, p. 100).

595 *Con. Eun.* I, 7, 27–29 (SC 299, p. 190; tr. DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz, p. 100).

he will confess this: that all things attributed to God similarly refer to his substance. But how is it not ridiculous to say that his creative power is his substance? (...) In other words, how is it not ridiculous to regard every activity (πᾶσαν ἐνέργειαν) of his as his substance?”⁵⁹⁶

But as M. DelCogliano comments, Basil viewed conceptualization as an intellectual process that made the accurate and useful knowledge of a thing possible without comprehension of the thing’s essence.⁵⁹⁷ Basil’s theory is a part of larger ‘notionalism’ in which all names signify primarily notions, which in turn provide information about non-essential properties of the objects that bear the names.⁵⁹⁸ But even though they provide much less than Eunomius claimed, they are still useful for human cognition.

“There is not one name which encompasses the entire nature of God and suffices to express it adequately. Rather, there are many diverse names, and each one contributes, in accordance with its own meaning, to a notion that is altogether dim and trifling as regards the whole but that is at least sufficient for us.”⁵⁹⁹

If names created through conceptualization do not give us the knowledge about οὐσία, what is the knowledge that they provide? In order to answer this question, Basil among others distinguishes relational and absolute names.⁶⁰⁰

“Who does not know that some names are expressed absolutely and in respect of themselves, signifying the things which are their referents, but other names are said relative to others, expressing only the relation to the other names relative to which they are said? For example, ‘human being’ and ‘horse’ and ‘ox’ each communicate the very thing that is named. But ‘son’ and ‘slave’ and ‘friend’ reveal only the connection with the associated name.”⁶⁰¹

596 *Con. Eun.* I, 8, 19–35 (SC 299, p. 194; tr. DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz, p. 101).

597 Cf. M. DelCogliano, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

598 Cf. M. DelCogliano, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

599 *Con. Eun.* I, 10, 1–5 (SC 299, p. 204). Ἐν μὲν οὐδὲν ἐστὶν ὄνομα ὃ πᾶσαν ἐξαρκεῖ τὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ φύσιν περιλαβὼν, ἰκανῶς ἐξαγγεῖλαι· πλείω δὲ καὶ ποικίλα κατ’ ἰδίαν ἕκαστον σημασίαν, ἀμυδρὰν μὲν παντελῶς καὶ μικροτάτην, ὡς πρὸς τὸ ὅλον, ἡμῖν γε μὴν ἐξαρκουῶσαν τὴν ἔννοιαν συναθροίζει (tr. DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz, p. 105); Cf. *Ep.* 234, 1 (Courtonne, vol. 3, p. 41).

600 Cf. *Con. Eun.* II, 9, 11–13 (SC 305, p. 36).

601 *Con. Eun.* II, 9, 11–18 (SC 305, p. 36). Ἐπεὶ τίς οὐκ οἶδεν, ὅτι τῶν ὀνομάτων τὰ μὲν ἀπολελυμένως καὶ καθ’ ἑαυτὰ προφερόμενα τῶν ὑποκειμένων αὐτοῖς πραγμάτων ἐστὶ σημαντικά, τὰ δὲ πρὸς ἕτερα λεγόμενα τὴν σχέσιν μόνην ἐμφαίνει

According to D.G. Robertson, this distinction is made to strengthen the argument for the view that names cannot fully express substance; since absolute names cannot adequately express substance, then even less can relative names do so.⁶⁰² But they still give us a kind of knowledge about the relationships in which those beings participate. Those relationships (especially between the Father and the Son) become for Basil the modes of being of those persons. The Father is from the very beginning situated in a relationship with the Son. We can link this way of thinking with Aristotelian inspiration.⁶⁰³ And, as D.G. Robertson remarks, Basil underlines that we should not mistake relative terms with contraries as Eunomius does.⁶⁰⁴

But the most convincing arguments against the close association of names with substance are given by Basil when he discusses the distinction between common and proper names, that is names given to individual beings. This division is inherited from Stoics, whose definitions included two types of names: common names and proper names.⁶⁰⁵

“But what sane person would agree with this logic that there must be a difference of substances for those things whose names are distinct? For the designations of Peter and Paul and of all people in general are different, but there is a single substance for all of them. For this reason, in most respects we are the same as one another, but it is only due to the distinguishing marks considered in connection with each one of us that we are different, each from the other.”⁶⁰⁶

τὴν πρὸς ἃ λέγεται; Οἶον, ἄνθρωπος μὲν, καὶ ἵππος, καὶ βοῦς, αὐτὸ ἕκαστον τῶν ὀνομαζομένων παρίστησιν· υἱὸς δὲ, ἢ δοῦλος, ἢ φίλος, μόνῃς τῆς πρὸς τὸ συνεξευγμένον ὄνομα συναφείας ἐστὶ δηλωτικά (tr. DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz, p. 142).

602 D.G. Robertson, *Relatives in Basil of Caesarea*, SP 37 (2001), p. 279.

603 Cf. B. Sesbüé, *Introduction*, in: Basil de Césarée, *Contre Eunome*, *op. cit.*, SC 299, p. 81.

604 Cf. D.G. Robertson, *Relatives in Basil of Caesarea*, *op. cit.*, p. 286; *Con. Eun.* II, 27, 26–33 (SC 305, p. 114).

605 D.G. Robertson, *A Patristic Theory of Proper Names*, AGPh, vol. 84 (2002), p. 4.

606 *Con. Eun.* 2, 4, 27–31 (SC 305, p. 20). Καίτοι γε, εἴπερ ἀληθὲς ἦν, ὅτι ὧν τὰ ὀνόματα διενήνοχεν, ἐναντιῶς ἔχουσιν αἰ οὐσίαι, ἐχρῆν δὴ πού καὶ Παῦλον καὶ Πέτρον καὶ ἀπαξιαπλῶς ἀνθρώπους ἅπαντας ἑτεροουσίους ἀλλήλοις εἶναι. Ἐπεὶ δὲ τοῦτο οὐδεὶς οὕτως ἀμαθῆς καὶ τῆς κοινῆς φύσεως ἀνεπίσκεπτος ὥστ' ἂν εἰπεῖν προαχθῆναι. (tr. DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz, p. 134).

Individual designations are based on the distinguishing marks which are in an obvious way external to the common substance, and names are not the ‘semantics’ (σημαντικαί) of substance.

Proper names refer to the qualities and features that individual men have, and according to those qualities and features, we are able to distinguish men from each other. It is, then, obvious that different names for objects which have common substance do not all have the same meaning. While analysing this fragment, D.G. Robertson remarks that in contrast to his opponent, Eunomius thinks that names mean substances understood as individuals.⁶⁰⁷ But Basil uses this very important distinction to show that there are properties that mark out distinction (ιδιώματα) between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the simple and undivided divine substance, and such words as ‘Father’ and ‘Son’ which are relational, similar to ‘master’ and ‘slave’.⁶⁰⁸ So proper names are linked with relational names here.

“So, then, what I have said makes it clear that in the case of both ‘Father’ and ‘Son’ the names do not communicate substance (οὐχὶ οὐσίαν παρίστησι) but instead are revelatory of the distinguishing marks (ιδιωμάτων).”⁶⁰⁹

Basil reminds that even the Bible shows us different properties – names of God⁶¹⁰ and on various examples, he explains that combinations of many different names can give us some notions about the divinity.

“If anyone wants to accept that which is true, namely, that begotten and unbegotten are distinctive features that enable identification and are observed in the substance, which lead to the clear and unconfused notion of the Father and the Son, then he will escape the danger of impiety and preserve logical coherence in his reasoning. (...) For example, the divinity is common, whereas fatherhood and sonship are distinguishing marks: from the combination of both, that is, of the common and the unique, we arrive at comprehension of the truth.”⁶¹¹

So in *Contra Eunomium*, Basil discusses four kinds of names in order to refute Eunomius’ theory of names, which are proper names, absolute names, relative names, and finally names that M. DelCogliano calls “derived”

607 Cf. D.G. Robertson, *A Patristic Theory of Proper Names*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

608 D.G. Robertson, *Relatives in Basil of Caesarea*, *op. cit.*, p. 277.

609 *Con. Eun.* II, 5, 1–3 (SC 305, p. 22; tr. DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz, p. 136).

610 Cf. *Con. Eun.* I, 8, 27–45 (SC 299, pp. 194–196).

611 *Con. Eun.* II, 28, 27–37 (SC 305, pp. 118–120; tr. DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz, p. 174).

names, because they name conceptualizations. And in each case, Basil advances a consistent notionalist theory in which a name gives rise to a mental notion whose content is the properties of substance.⁶¹² For Eunomius, terms have immediate access to substance; for Basil, it is the clue to the understanding that the notions are between names and beings. The terms that the humans have devised by reflecting on more basic concepts of God are all that can be known in this life, but still it is not a full and adequate portrait of God.⁶¹³ Each name contributes in its own way to our understanding of God, and owing to this argumentation, Basil's theory of names will support theological epistemology and create the possibility for a more comprehensive knowledge of God than that Eunomius' claimed to possess.⁶¹⁴

It must be also remarked that in his polemic with Eunomius, commenting on his *Apology*, Basil omitted chapters 21–24. When we look at those missing chapters, they are entirely devoted to problems connected with substance and activity. In my opinion, Basil did it deliberately, probably because he could not find counterarguments good enough to reject Eunomius' teaching. We do not know what was the exact text of *Apologia Apologiae*, but we know that the issues presented in the chapters omitted in Basil's *Contra Eunomium* returned and were dealt with in Gregory's interpretation.⁶¹⁵

4.6 Gregory of Nyssa on knowing the activities and the essence of God

Answering Eunomius, Basil of Caesarea focused his criticism on the theory of names. From the fragments of *Apologia Apologiae* quoted by Gregory of Nyssa, we know that Eunomius tried to defend his position once again and, therefore, Gregory also formulated arguments against his theory.⁶¹⁶ However, in *Contra Eunomium*, the Cappadocian turns his attention to

612 Cf. M. DelCogliano, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

613 Cf. A. Radde-Gallwitz, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

614 Cf. M. DelCogliano, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

615 Cf. K. Kochańczyk-Bonińska, *Basil the Great's References to Eunomius*, VP 37 (2017) vol. 68, pp. 125–126.

616 See especially CE II, 414–416 (GNO I, 347–348); 444 (GNO I, 356).

Eunomius' understanding of the distinction between substance and activity, which was only mentioned in Basil's work.

The Anomean's claim on the activities of God was one of the main factors which inspired Gregory of Nyssa to develop the theory of the Divine ἐνέργεια to the extent which is hard to find in the earlier Christian thought.

4.6.1 The ontological status of God's activities

After a long exposition about the historical situation of the controversy and the accusations which Eunomius formulated against Basil's cowardliness, Gregory of Nyssa begins his discussion with a quotation from *Apologia Apologiae*, in which the opponent sustained his claims on the two ways of theology.⁶¹⁷ The discussion on the understanding of activity of God fills a large piece of the central part of the first book of *Contra Eunomium*.

Gregory first turns to the criticism of the names of the Divine Persons which are absent in Eunomius' passage. He recognizes that the absence of the names "Father" and "Son" is deliberate because one can immediately recognize the natural relationship (τῆς φύσεως συγγενές) of the Persons and thus it would undermine Eunomius' reasoning.⁶¹⁸ After a long exposition concerning superiority of the Father and inferiority of the Son, Gregory once again quotes Eunomius: "the activities which accompany the substances and the names appropriate to them being of course treated together"⁶¹⁹ and presents his understanding of this passage:

"He applies the terms activities of substances, I assume, to the powers effective of the Son and the Holy Spirit, by which the first substance produced the second and the second the third, and he says that the names of the works effected are simultaneously applied as belonging to the works."⁶²⁰

617 CE I, 151, 1–154, 13 (GNO I, 71, 28–73, 15).

618 CE I, 159, 1–5 (GNO I, 75, 1–6).

619 CE I, 205, 1–3. συμπεριλαμβανομένων δηλαδή και τῶν ταῖς οὐσίας ἐπομένων ἐνεργειῶν και τῶν ταύταις προσφυῶν ὀνομάτων (GNO I, 86, 17–19; tr. Hall, p. 65).

620 CE I, 206, 1–6. ἐνεργείας οὐσιῶν ὀνομάζει τὰς ἀποτελεσματικὰς, ὡς οἶμαι, τοῦ υἱοῦ και τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος δυνάμεις, δι' ὧν ἡ πρώτη οὐσία τὴν δευτέραν εἰργάσατο και ἡ δευτέρα τὴν τρίτην, και τὰ ὀνόματα τῶν ἀποτελεσθέντων ἔργων προσφυῶς συγκατασκευάσθαι τοῖς ἔργοις φησὶν (GNO I, 86, 22–27; tr. Hall, p. 65).

Gregory suggests that Eunomius mistook activities for powers (*δυνάμεις*), but what is more important he states here that the entire question lies in an examination of the status of the activities, that is:

“how the activities accompany the substances, and what they are in their own nature, whether something other than the substances they accompany, or part of them and of the same nature; and if they are something else, how or whence they originate, and if they are the same thing, how they come to be cut off and, instead of “coexisting” with them, accompany them externally.”⁶²¹

Gregory complains that it is not possible to identify what Eunomius really means when speaking of activities: whether they are the effect of free choice or they follow the substance out of the necessity of nature (*ἀνάγκης τινός φυσικῆς*), as combustion accompanies the nature of fire. However, he rejects the second option because this would mean that activity is a kind of an accident of the subject (*συμβεβηκός ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ*), which in this case could not be understood as a simple one.⁶²² But such conclusion leads to an even greater confusion, because activity which is the effect of the intended choice (*ἐκ πρόνοιας*) of God at the same time accompanies (*ἔπεται*) substance like the external consequence.⁶²³ Gregory notes that normally we do not say that the activity of a worker follows him, but rather:

“one who speaks of the activity comprehends in the word whatever is active in it, and the one who mentions the agent, precisely by what he leaves unsaid, indicates also the activity.”⁶²⁴

It can be shown by the examples of naming “metalworker” and “builder,” where the name denotes both person and the activity which he performs and those two are conceived together.⁶²⁵ So even the activity which does arise

621 CE I, 207, 1–6. πῶς ἔπονται ταῖς οὐσίαις αἱ ἐνέργειαι, τί οὖσαι κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν φύσιν, ἄλλο τι παρὰ τὰς οὐσίας αἷς παρέπονται ἢ μέρος ἐκείνων καὶ τῆς αὐτῆς φύσεως· καὶ εἰ μὲν ἄλλο, πῶς ἢ παρὰ τίνος γενόμεναι, εἰ δὲ τὸ αὐτό, πῶς ἀποτεμνόμεναι καὶ ἀντὶ τοῦ “συνυπάρχειν” αὐταῖς ἐξωθεν παρεπόμεναι (GNO I, 87, 3–8; tr. Hall, p. 65).

622 CE I, 208, 2–11. (GNO I, 87, 10–18).

623 CE I, 209, 1–3. (GNO I, 87, 19–20).

624 CE I, 209, 7–10. ἀλλ’ ὁ τὴν ἐνέργειαν εἰπὼν τὸ κατ’ αὐτὴν κινούμενον τῷ λόγῳ συμπεριέλαβε, καὶ ὁ τοῦ ἐνεργούντος μνησθεὶς καὶ τὴν ἐνέργειαν πάντως κατὰ τὸ σιωπώμενον αὐτῷ συνεσήμηνε (GNO I, 87, 25–88,3; tr. Hall, p. 65).

625 CE I, 210, 1–5 (GNO I, 88, 4–8).

from the necessity of nature cannot exist without substance that performs it. Therefore, activity cannot be treated as subsistent (ψιλήν ἐνεργειαν), since it is the motion of nature (φύσεως κίνησις) and what subsists is active substance (ἐνεργὸν οὐσίαν).⁶²⁶ Understanding the activity as subsistent leads to a contradiction, because on one hand, it must be something dependent on the will of the Father, and on the other, it is also independent. After a discussion on the greater and lesser understanding of substances,⁶²⁷ Gregory returns to the implication of the independence of activity when commenting on Eunomius' words:

“the activities are defined at the same time as their works, and the works match the activities of those who effected them, there is surely every necessity both that the activities accompanying each of the beings are lesser and greater, and that some occupy the first and others the second rank.”⁶²⁸

Using the example of a leatherworker and his tool, Gregory shows that for Eunomius activity is a kind of a tool (ὄργανον) with which the Father creates the Son and the Son creates the Holy Spirit.⁶²⁹ Therefore, it must be: “A kind of quasi-substantial power, which subsists by itself and apparently operates by voluntary motion,”⁶³⁰ and this leads to a conclusion that there are some entities between the Divine Persons. So, in the Trinity, the Holy Spirit must be placed not in the third but in the fifth place.⁶³¹ Such a position leads to absurdity, and, therefore, Eunomius simply must admit that activity is non-hypostatic (ἀνυπόστατον), and for Gregory, this means

626 CE I, 211, 7–9 (GNO I, 87, 15–18). It is worth noting that the definition of activity as the “movement of nature” comes from Aristotle. Cf. *Met.* IX, 8, 1050 b, 29–32; *De gen. anim.*, 734 b, 19–735 a, 2.

627 CE I, 225–241 (GNO I, 92, 12–97, 21).

628 CE I, 242, 4–9. συμπεριγραφόμενων, φησί, τοῖς ἔργοις τῶν ἐνεργειῶν καὶ τῶν ἔργων ταῖς τῶν ἐργασαμένων ἐνεργείαις παραμετρούμενων, ἀνάγκη δὴπου πᾶσα καὶ τὰς ἐκάστη τῶν οὐσιῶν ἐπομένας ἐνεργείας ἐλάττους τε καὶ μείζους εἶναι, καὶ τὰς μὲν πρώτην, τὰς δὲ δευτέραν ἐπέχειν τάξιν (GNO I, 97, 24–98, 1; tr. Hall, p. 70).

629 CE I, 245, 1–246, 4 (GNO I, 98, 20–99, 1).

630 CE I, 247, 1–2. δύναμις τις οὐσιώδης καθ’ ἑαυτὴν ὑφεστῶσα καὶ τὸ δοκοῦν ἐργαζομένη δι’ αὐτεξουσίου κινήματος. (GNO I, 99, 8–9; tr. Hall, p. 71).

631 CE I, 249, 1–3 (GNO I, 99, 20–21).

that the activity of generation is simply non-being (τὸ μὴ ὄν),⁶³² which can produce only another non-being.⁶³³

Gregory summarizes his point in the fragment of *Refutatio confessionis Eunomii*, in which he also gives a definition of activity:

“Every activity is contemplated as exertion in the party who exhibits it, and when it is completed, it has no independent existence. Thus, for example, the activity of the runner is the motion of his feet, and when the motion has stopped there is no longer any activity. So too about every pursuit the same may be said; - when the exertion of him who is busied about anything ceases, the activity ceases also, and has no independent existence, either when a person is actively engaged in the exertion he undertakes, or when he ceases from that exertion. What then does he tell us that the activity is in itself, which is neither substance, nor image, nor person? So he speaks of the Son as the similitude of the impersonal, and that which is like the non-existent surely has itself no existence at all. This is what his juggling with idle opinions comes to, - belief in nonentity (τὸ μὴ ὄν)! for that which is like nonentity surely itself is not.”⁶³⁴

Thus activity exists only as an exertion (σπουδαζόμενον) of someone who performs it and cannot have existence of its own. Since it cannot in itself be a substance, an imprinted image or a person (οὔτε οὐσίαν οὔσαν οὔτε χαρακτῆρα οὔτε ὑπόστασιν), when separated from the one who performs its activity can only be named as non-being (τὸ μὴ ὄν). Eunomius’ understanding of activity leads to a contradiction that it is separate and has its own existence, while simultaneously it is dependent. Therefore, one must accept

632 CE I, 251, 1–3 (GNO I, 100, 6–9).

633 CE I, 253, 1–7 (GNO I, 100, 23–101, 4).

634 *Refutatio confessionis Eunomii* 159, 4–160, 10. πᾶσα γὰρ ἐνέργεια ἐν μὲν τῷ ἐκπονοῦντι τὸ σπουδαζόμενον θεωρεῖται, περαιωθέντος δὲ τοῦ σπουδαζομένου καθ’ ἑαυτὴν οὐχ ὑφέστηκεν· οἷον ἐνέργεια τοῦ δρομέως ἢ διὰ τῶν ποδῶν ἐστὶ κίνησις, παυσασμένης δὲ τῆς κινήσεως οὐκέτι ἔστιν ἐφ’ ἑαυτῆς ἢ ἐνέργεια. οὕτως καὶ ἐπὶ παντὸς ἔστιν ἐπιτηδεύματος τὸ ἴσον εἰπεῖν, τῇ σπουδῇ τοῦ περὶ τι πονοῦντος συναπολήγειν καὶ τὴν ἐνέργειαν * * * ἐφ’ ἑαυτῆς δὲ οὐκ οὔσαν οὔτε ἐνεργοῦντός τινος τὴν προκειμένην ἑαυτῷ σπουδῇ οὔτε εἰ τῆς σπουδῆς ἀπολήξειε. τί οὖν λέγει εἶναι καθ’ ἑαυτὴν τὴν ἐνέργειαν τὴν οὔτε οὐσίαν οὔσαν οὔτε χαρακτῆρα οὔτε ὑπόστασιν; οὐκοῦν τοῦ ἀνυποστάτου αὐτὸν εἶπεν ὁμοίωμα· τὸ δὲ τῷ ἀνυπάρκτῳ ὅμοιον οὐδὲ αὐτὸ πάντως ἔστιν. αὐτῇ τῶν καινῶν δογμάτων ἢ τερατεία, τὸ πιστεύειν εἰς τὸ μὴ ὄν. τὸ γὰρ τῷ μὴ ὄντι ὅμοιον οὐκ ἔστι πάντως. (GNO II, 379, 26–380, 10; tr. NPNF II, vol. 5, p. 124, with my own alterations).

Gregory's position that activity cannot exist apart from the substance that performs it.⁶³⁵

4.6.2 The criticism of the second way of Eunomius

It seems that demonstrating the dependence of activity on the substance could only strengthen the demonstrative power of Eunomius' second way of theology. If activity is so deeply linked with the substance, it would seem that we can indeed know the substance when we know the activity. But Gregory does not think so, and he addresses his criticism against Eunomius' second way.

The activity which is the exertion of a substance cannot give us any knowledge of the substance itself. Gregory considers two possible ways of understanding the relationship between the two. First, when "substance and activity are found to possess the self-same characteristics and properties."⁶³⁶ This position, however, must be refuted because there would be no difference between the divine substance and generation, and this would mean that Eunomius agrees with the Orthodox. That is why, he must sustain the second possibility, that substance and activity have different properties. In this case, it is impossible to recognize the substance on the basis of activity:

"If the definition of substance and activity is not the same, but each means something different, how can conclusions to discussions be reached on the basis of things strange and alien? It is as if in an argument about human nature, discussing whether man is a laughing animal or capable of literacy, someone took as an illustration to prove his point the construction of a house or ship, which the builder or shipwright built, and were then to assert by this clever argument that we know the substances by the activities, and that the activity of a man is the house and the ship. Is this then the way we learn, you silly thing, that man is broad-nailed and able to laugh?"⁶³⁷

635 Cf. G. Maspero, *Energy*, in: *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, ed. L.F. Mateo-Seco, G. Maspero, Leiden, Boston 2010, p. 260.

636 CE I, 419, 6–7. τῆς οὐσίας καὶ ἐνεργείας ἐν τοῖς ἴσοις καὶ τοῖς αὐτοῖς γνωρίσμασι τε καὶ ἰδιώμασιν εὐρισκομένων (GNO I, 149, 1–2; tr. Hall, p. 96).

637 CE I, 420, 1–421, 3. εἰ δὲ οὐχ ὁ αὐτὸς τῆς τε οὐσίας καὶ τῆς ἐνεργείας ὁ λόγος, ἀλλὰ διάφορον ἐφ' ἑκατέρου τὸ σημαϊνόμενον, πῶς διὰ τῶν ξένων καὶ ἀλλοτριῶν αἰ ἀποδείξεις τοῖς ζητούμενοις ἐπάγονται; ὥσπερ ἂν εἴ τις, πολυπραγμονουμένης τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης οὐσίας καὶ ζητουμένου εἰ γελαστικὸν ζῶον ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἢ γραμματικῆς δεκτικόν, εἰς ἀπόδειξιν τοῦ προτεθέντος παραλαμβάνοι οἰκίας ἢ

In this case, the product of the activity by which it has been made cannot give us the knowledge of the substance. A ship or a house built by man does not lead us in any demonstration to conceive what human nature is. The same objection can be made with respect to any activity and movement (τινα κίνησιν καὶ ἐνέργειαν) of man, but also when we consider the activity which is intrinsically linked with nature, or as Gregory puts it: “what the activity by its nature actually is.”⁶³⁸ The example of such activity is the movement of wind, since there is no wind when air does not move. The effects of wind’s activity could be a dune or a scatter of dust, but those things cannot explain the nature of wind.⁶³⁹ As we can see, Gregory does not only question the possibility of knowing substance from activity, but he goes even further arguing that it is not true that the product matches the activity. He uses the example of a smith, who in making a gimlet does not use all of his abilities and skills, but only to such extent which is necessary to make this tool. Therefore: “similarly the one brought into being by the activity reveals the extent of the activity (τὸ μέτρον τῆς ἐνεργείας) in himself.”⁶⁴⁰ But the question in this case does not concern how great the activity is but rather the very substance of the one who acted (τοῦ ἐνεργήσαντος ἢ οὐσίας)⁶⁴¹ and, therefore, Eunomius’ method fails. Gregory gives us yet another argument of why this method cannot be sound. It must be rejected even if we admit that we can have the knowledge of substance, thanks to activity. Since

πλοίου κατασκευήν, ἣν ὁ οἰκοδόμος ἢ ὁ ναυπηγὸς ἐτεκτήνατο, ἔπειτα ἰσχυρίζοιτο τῷ σοφῷ τούτῳ λόγῳ, ὅτι ταῖς ἐνεργείαις τὰς οὐσίας γνωρίζομεν, ἐνέργεια δὲ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἢ οἰκία καὶ τὸ πλοῖον. ἐκ τούτων ἄρα καταλαμβάνομεν τὸ πλατυῶνυον καὶ γελαστικὸν εἶναι τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ἀπλούστατε (GNO I, 149, 3–15; tr. Hall, p. 96).

638 CE I, 421, 5–6. αὐτὸ τὸ ἐνεργοῦν τί ποτε κατὰ τὴν φύσιν ἐστίν· (GNO I, 149, 17–18; tr. Hall, p. 96).

639 CE I, 422, 1–5 (GNO I, 149, 19–23). Gregory makes a similar objection in the third book of *Contra Eunomium*, where he considers God as a judge. Making a judgement is the activity, which allows us to claim that God is a judge, but it does not give us the knowledge of the substance of God. Similarly, the knowledge of generation can lead us to a conclusion that God is ungenerated, but this does not mean that we gained the knowledge of the substance of God (CE III, 5, 57–59; GNO II, p. 181).

640 CE I, 424, 11–12 (GNO I, 150, 14–15).

641 CE I, 425, 1–3 (GNO I, 150, 16–18).

Eunomius cannot name any specific activity of the Holy Spirit, his substance would be incomprehensible and, therefore, also the activity of the Son, the Onlybegotten himself, the activity of generation, and finally the substance of the Father.⁶⁴² Gregory concludes:

“Hence there is a clear proof that on our opponents’ own evidence the substance of the Father is absolutely beyond apprehension.”⁶⁴³

Gregory of Nyssa then not only repudiates Eunomius’ argument concerning the relationship between substance and activity, but also shows that the sequential conception of the Trinity makes it futile. Therefore, neither the product nor the activities can be a starting point for any demonstration which gives us the apprehension of the substance of God.

4.6.3 The activity of generation and other activities of God

In the next paragraphs, which we cannot follow in full because some fragments are missing, Gregory refers to the last part of Eunomius’ exposition on the two ways of theology. He claimed that we can resolve the doubts about activities in reference to the acting substance.⁶⁴⁴ It seems that here Eunomius does not speak directly about his first method, because he does not mention the theory of names, but he proposes rather to make his demonstration even firmer by taking a step back from the recognized substance to activity. In his polemic, Gregory points out that any demonstration must start from the commonly accepted statement (ὁμολογούμενον),⁶⁴⁵ and since the substance of God is unknown, it is not possible to start any reasoning from it. But the Father is not only the one who generated the Son, but is also the Creator of the Universe. Since there are various opinions on the nature of the sky, the earth and the sea it is impossible to claim that the nature of God can be understood. Eunomius himself claimed that God is

642 CE I, 426, 1–427, 10 (GNO I, 150, 25–151, 15).

643 CE I, 428, 8–429, 1. ὡς ἐκ τούτων σαφῶς ἀποδείκνυσθαι καὶ διὰ τῆς τῶν ἐχθρῶν μαρτυρίας τὸ ἀκατάληπτον εἶναι πάντη τοῦ πατρὸς τὴν οὐσίαν (GNO I, 151, 23–25).

644 CE I, 154, 10–11, τὴν δὲ ἐπὶ ταῖς ἐνεργείαις ἀμφοβολίαν διαλύειν ἐκ τῶν οὐσιῶν (GNO I, 73, 12–13).

645 CE, I, 431, 1–9 (GNO I, 152, 7–16).

immaterial, invisible, without shape, unbegotten, immune to decay, etc.,⁶⁴⁶ so Gregory asks:

“How then will one who has accepted such an idea of the one who was active be led on to the knowledge of the nature of the sky? How will he pass from invisible to visible, from incorruptible to what is subject to decay, from unbegotten being to what is constituted in time, from what always abides to what has acquired temporal existence, and frame his notion of the matter in question on the basis of all that is contrary to it?”⁶⁴⁷

This is a very important fragment since Gregory points out that there are other activities of God which we can recognize in the sensual world. This is not only creation, but also providence, about which he speaks in the next passages,⁶⁴⁸ and in the case of those activities, the knowledge of the substance of God from them is even more doubtful. It is not even possible to pass from visible effects to the invisible substance of the cause. As we have seen above, Eunomius was unable to solve the problem of those other activities, and Gregory rightly points out that he avoids speaking of them, as in the case of providence.⁶⁴⁹ Neither can we be certain how Eunomius understood those other activities of God; whether the Father could have other activities of his own, or they were all performed through the Son. Nevertheless, since for Eunomius, no activity was the same with the essence of God, there was no possibility of admitting that there is any “internal” one. Naturally, when the Orthodox claimed that activity is the same with essence, and that the Three Persons have one activity, such ἐνέργεια must be internal. Gregory uses the term in the plural when he wants to describe the various operations of God, and in the singular when he speaks of the single activity of the Divine Persons.⁶⁵⁰

646 CE I, 435, 1–10 (GNO I, 150, 4–14).

647 CE I, 436, 1–7. πῶς οὖν ὁ τοιαύτην περὶ τοῦ ἐνεργήσαντος λαβὼν τὴν διάνοιαν πρὸς τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τῆς τοῦ οὐρανοῦ φύσεως ἐναχθήσεται; πῶς ἐκ τοῦ ἀοράτου τὸ ὀρατόν, ἐκ τοῦ ἀφθάρτου τὸ φθορᾷ ὑποκείμενον, ἐκ τοῦ ἀγεννήτως ὄντος τὸ ἀπὸ χρόνου τὴν σύστασιν ἔχον, ἐκ τοῦ εἰσαεὶ διαμένοντος τὸ πρόσκαιρον κεκτημένον τὴν ὑπαρξιν, καὶ ἐκ πάντων τῶν ἐναντίων τὴν περὶ τοῦ ζητουμένου ποιήσεται κατανόησιν; (GNO I, 153, 14–21; tr. Hall, p. 98).

648 CE I, 439–445 (GNO I, 154–156).

649 CE I, 446–447 (GNO I, 156).

650 J.-C. Larchet, *op. cit.*, pp. 188–189.

It seems that Gregory of Nyssa recognizes fully the consequences of the unity of internal activity of God. In another passage from the second book of *Contra Eunomium*, he refutes Eunomius' opinion that only the Father is incorruptible while the Son merely makes himself indestructible. Therefore, in the case of the Son, indestructibility is the outcome of activity, while for the Father, it belongs to him "not on the basis of activity."⁶⁵¹ Gregory briefly answers: "For my part, if true Life acting is an activity, and if to live for ever, and never to suffer destruction, mean the same thing."⁶⁵² Life is then the activity which acts of itself (ἡ ὄντως ζωὴ ἑαυτὴν ἐνεργοῦσα), and it must be the same life in the Father and in the Son, since both are not susceptible to destruction and there is no more or less in being destructible and indestructible.⁶⁵³ As we can see, Gregory has no objection to speak about multiple activities in the substance of God; there is generation as the activity of the Father, but there is also life as the activity of the Trinity. This Life must be understood as absolutely simple with no addition, variation of quantity and quality, or change.⁶⁵⁴

651 CE II, 367, 1–2. *περὶ τῆς ἀφθαρσίας τοῦ πατρὸς διαλέγεται ὡς οὐκ ἐξ ἐνεργείας προσούσης αὐτῷ* (GNO I, 333, 24–25; tr. Hall, p. 141).

652 CE II, 367, 3–6. *ἐγὼ δὲ εἰ μὲν ἐνεργεία τις ἐστὶν ἡ ὄντως ζωὴ ἑαυτὴν ἐνεργοῦσα καὶ εἰ ταῦτόν ἐστι τῷ σημαινομένῳ τό τε αἰετὴν καὶ τὸ μηδέποτε εἰς φθορὰν διαλύεσθαι οὐπὼ τῷ λόγῳ προστίθημι, ἀλλὰ τοῖς ἰδίῳις ταμιεύσομαι τόποις* (GNO I, 333, 26–29; tr. Hall, p. 141).

653 CE II, 370, 4–6. *εἰ δὲ ἀνεπίδεκτος φθορᾶς ὡσαύτως ἐκάτερος καὶ οὔτε τὸ μᾶλλον οὔτε τὸ ἥττον ἐν τῇ κατὰ φύσιν ἀφθαρσίᾳ καταλαμβάνεται, πῶς δαίκνυσι τοῦ πατρὸς πρὸς τὸν μονογενῆ υἱὸν τὸ ἀσύγκριτον* (GNO I, 334, 17–19).

654 CE II, 489, 4–14. *εἰ οὖν καὶ αὐτὸς μία ζωὴ εἰλικρινῆς πάσης συνθέσεως καὶ διπλῆς κεχωρισμένη καὶ οὐδὲν ὑπόκειται πρᾶγμα παρὰ τὴν τοῦ υἱοῦ ζωὴν (πῶς γὰρ <ἄν> ἐν τῷ ἀπλῷ μίξις ἄλλοτριῦ πρᾶγματος ὑποπτεύοιτο; οὐ γὰρ ἄν ἐτι ἀπλοῦν εἴη τὸ μεθ' ἑτέρου νοούμενον), ἀπλῆ δὲ ζωὴ καὶ ἡ τοῦ πατρὸς οὐσία, ἀπλῆς δὲ ζωῆς κατ' αὐτὸν τὸν τε τῆς ζωῆς καὶ τὸν τῆς ἀπλότητος λόγον οὐδεμία τις ἐστὶ διαφορὰ, οὔτε ἐπιτάσεως οὔτε ὑφέσεως οὔτε τῆς κατὰ τὸ ποσὸν ἢ ποιὸν ἐτερότητος τὴν παραλλαγὴν ἐμποιοῦσης, ἀνάγκη πᾶσα τὰ ταῖς αὐταῖς ἐνοίαις συμβαίνοντα καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν αὐτῶν προσηγοριῶν ὀνομάζεσθαι* (GNO I, 369, 5–15). "If then he too is one absolute Life devoid of all composition and reduplication, and there is no underlying reality beside the life of the Son (for how could any admixture of alien reality be suspected in what is simple? what is perceived as so associated would no longer be simple), and if the being of the Father is also a simple life, and according to the principle of life and simplicity there is no diversity in the simple life, no addition, no subtraction, no variation of

Probably the best example of the unity of activity is the discussion on the will of the Father and the Son. As we have seen Eunomius was consistent in arguing that the Son was generated by the sole act of the will of the Father, and this act was most befitting God. The activity of the will was treated as something in between the two persons and the main basis to discern them. But for Gregory, the activity of the will serves best to explain the unity of the substance of the Father and the Son:

“We are taught that the Only-begotten is begotten; nothing is unbegotten except the Father. Therefore of necessity the word of truth compels us to hold that there is nothing between the Father and the Son. But where no separation is conceived, close conjunction is surely acknowledged; and what is totally conjoined is not mediated by voice and speech. By ‘conjoined’ I mean that which is totally inseparable; for the word ‘conjunction’ does not imply a kind of bodily affinity in what is essentially intelligent, but the union and commingling of wills (διὰ τῆς ταυτότητος τῶν θελημάτων ἔνωσιν) between one intelligent being and another.”⁶⁵⁵

To show the unity of will, Gregory uses the example of a mirror, in which the image only reflects the original object but does not move or bend on its own. Similarly, the will of the Son reflects in every aspect the activity of the will of the Father.⁶⁵⁶ But what is even more important is that in the following passages, he provides the arguments that show how inaccurate was Eunomius’ position on the activity of will which produces external effects. In this part of *Contra Eunomium*, he begins his long exposition of how to understand the act of creation, which is in fact his own explanation of the quotation from the Scripture which Eunomius used to support his

quantity or quality generating change, it must follow that those things which coincide in the same thoughts should also be named with the same appellations” (tr. Hall, p. 169).

655 CE I, 214, 1–12. νεωτέρα γὰρ ἢ κτίσις τοῦ λόγου. γεννητὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἐδιδάχθημεν, ἀγέννητον πλὴν τοῦ πατρὸς ἐστὶν οὐδέν. οὐκοῦν ἐξ ἀνάγκης τὸ μηδὲν εἶναι μέσον τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ νοεῖν ὁ τῆς ἀληθείας λόγος συναναγκάζει. ὅπου δὲ διάστασις οὐκ ἐπινοεῖται, τὸ συνημμένον πάντως ὁμολογεῖται, τὸ δὲ διὰ πάντων συνημμένον φωνῆ καὶ λόγῳ οὐ μεσιτεύεται. συνημμένον δὲ λέγω τὸ ἐν πᾶσιν ἀχώριστον. οὐ γὰρ σωματικὴν τινα συμφυῖαν ἐπὶ τῆς νοεῶς φύσεως τὸ ὄνομα τῆς συναφείας ἐνδείκνυται, ἀλλὰ τὴν τοῦ νοητοῦ πρὸς τὸ νοητὸν διὰ τῆς ταυτότητος τῶν θελημάτων ἔνωσιν τε καὶ ἀνάκρασιν (GNO I, 287, 22–288, 3; tr. Hall, p. 105).

656 CE II, 215, 3–12 (GNO I, 333, 6–17).

view. He wants to support his theory of names by making a reference to the beginning of the Book of Genesis (1: 1–16) “where God is declared to have said something” and to Psalm (18/19: 2–3) where: “The heavens tell God’s glory, and the firmament proclaims his handiwork; day to day brings forth word, and night proclaims knowledge to night.” But explaining the second passage, Gregory says that the heavens and all creations indeed tell the glory of God, but:

“This is not articulate speech, but through the visible things it imparts to our minds the knowledge of the divine power more than if speech proclaimed it in sound. The heaven, then, tells a tale but does not speak, and the firmament announces God’s creation without the need of a voice, the day puts forth a word and there is no speech...”⁶⁵⁷

Creation then can give us the knowledge about the power of God (τῆς γνῶσιν τῆς θείας δυνάμεως), about his wisdom, and the beauty of His design, which for the human mind is more than speech in the literal sense. But much more interesting is what Gregory wants to say about God who creates by telling the words of creation. We cannot understand it in a human way, because in God the verb “say” does not mean speech but is rather an intellectual notion.⁶⁵⁸ There is also no time sequence and passage from potency to act:

“It is not like other beings whose nature includes the power to act, where one observes both the potential and the accomplished action. We say for instance that the one who is skilled in the science of shipbuilding is potentially a shipbuilder, but he is effective only when he displays his science in practice. It is not however like that with the blessed Life: rather, in that Life what is thought is in its entirety action and performance, the will passing instantly to its intended goal.”⁶⁵⁹

657 CE II, 225, 1–5 ταῦτα λόγος μὲν ἔναρθρος οὐκ ἔστιν, ἐντίθησι δὲ διὰ τῶν φαινομένων ταῖς ψυχαῖς τὴν γνῶσιν τῆς θείας δυνάμεως μᾶλλον ἢ εἰ διὰ φωνῆς ὁ λόγος ἐκήρυσεν. ὡς περ τοίνυν διηγεῖται ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ οὐ φθέγγεται, καὶ ἀναγγέλλει τὸ στερέωμα τὴν τοῦ θεοῦποίησιν καὶ φωνῆς οὐ προσδέεται. καὶ ῥῆμα προίεται ἡ ἡμέρα καὶ καλὰ οὐκ ἔστιν (GNO I, 291, 9–14; tr. Hall, p. 108).

658 CE II, 227, 2–5 (GNO I, 292, 3–8).

659 CE II, 230, 1–9. οὐ γὰρ ὡς περ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων, οἷς τις πρακτικὴ δύναμις ἐκ φύσεως ἔνεστι, τὸ μὲν δυνάμει θεωρεῖται τὸ δὲ κατὰ τὴν τῆς ἐνεργείας ἐκπλήρωσιν, ὡς φέρε εἰπεῖν αἰεὶ μὲν εἶναι ναυπηγόν φαμεν τῆ δυνάμει τὸν τὴν ναυπηγικὴν ἔχοντα τέχνην, ἐνεργεῖν δὲ τότε, ὅταν ἐπὶ τῶν ἔργων δείξῃ τὴν ἐπιστήμην, οὐχ οὕτως καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς μακαρίας ζωῆς. ἀλλ’ ὅλον ὅτι περ ἔστιν ἐν ἐκείνῃ νοοῦμενον ἐνεργεῖα καὶ

So, there is no difference in God, his activity is always in the entirety as his Life is his Will, and producing external effects does not cause any sequence and intermediate entity between Him and His effect. Therefore, neither any internal nor external activity does involve any diversity in God. It is worth mentioning here that in the third book, Gregory also discusses the divine will, and he also points out that we cannot comprehend the divine will in a human way. Therefore, the Father could not have changed his mind and decided that he wanted to generate the Son, since his will always stay the same:

“God however, being a single Good with his single and uncompounded nature, looks perpetually to the same goal and never changes in response to impulses of choice (τῆς προαιρέσεως); rather, he always both wills what he is and, of course, is what he wills, so that in both ways he is properly and truly called Son of God: both because his nature has goodness in itself, and because his purpose has never fallen short of the best, so that he might be given this designation by some metaphorical usage.”⁶⁶⁰

The activity of will is always coeternal with the substance of God, and, therefore, the Son cannot become a Son, but must always be. We cannot say that God becomes who He is, but rather “wills what He is and, of course, is what He wills” (βούλεται ὅπερ ἐστὶν καὶ ἐστὶ πάντως ὁ καὶ βούλεται), and this definition of will resembles the one which we have seen in Plotinus, who also understood the activity of will this way, as identical with the essence of the self-establishing One.⁶⁶¹ We can also notice that Gregory’s understanding of the internal and external activity of will resembles Plotinus’ theory of double activity; however, we must remember that in his view, the productive activity of the One was performed as the activity of the intellect not the will.

πρᾶξις ἐστὶν, ἀμέσως τοῦ βουλήματος πρὸς τὸ κατὰ πρόθεσιν τέλος μεθισταμένου (GNO I, 292, 1–9; tr. Hall, p. 109).

660 CE III, 1, 125, 1–9. ὁ δὲ θεὸς ἐν ὧν ἀγαθὸν ἐν ἀπλῇ τε καὶ ἀσυνθέτῳ τῇ φύσει πάντοτε πρὸς τὸ αὐτὸ βλέπει καὶ οὐδέποτε ταῖς τῆς προαιρέσεως ὁρμαῖς μεταβάλλεται, ἀλλ’ αἰεὶ καὶ βούλεται ὅπερ ἐστὶν καὶ ἐστὶ πάντως ὁ καὶ βούλεται, ὥστε δι’ ἀμφοτέρων υἱὸς θεοῦ κυρίως καὶ ἀληθῶς ὀνομάζεσθαι, τῆς τε φύσεως ἐν ἑαυτῇ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἐχούσης τῆς τε προαιρέσεως οὐκ ἀπερραγνίας τοῦ κρείττονος, ὡς μὴ ἂν ἐκ καταχρήσεως αὐτῶ τὴν φωνὴν ταύτην ἐπικληθῆναι (GNO II, 45, 27–46, 7; tr. Hall, p. 67).

661 *Enn.* VI, 8, 13, 5–11. (Henry/Schwyzler, vol. 3, pp. 256–257); VI, 8, 13, 50–59 (vol. 3, p. 349).

Therefore, it seems that in Gregory, we observe a Christian modification of this theory. In the following paragraph, we will see yet another modification of this kind, but to summarize this part, we must conclude that by his discussion with Eunomius, Gregory constructed the conceptual framework which became the basis of his claims on incomprehensibility of God.⁶⁶²

4.6.4 Activities and incomprehensibility of God

The distinction between internal and external activities is so important because Gregory rightly observes that while the activities which are present in creations are comprehensible, the single activity of the Divine Persons stays beyond the abilities of human intellect since it is the same with the Divine substance.⁶⁶³ In *Contra Eunomium*, one of the most interesting places where incomprehensibility of the internal activity of God can be seen is the fragment where Gregory defines eternity:

“The eternity of the divine life, if one were to apply some definition to it, is something like this. It is apprehended as always in being (ἀεὶ μὲν ἐν τῷ εἶναι) but does not allow the thought that it ever was not or will not be.”⁶⁶⁴

The concept of understanding eternity as life which is present in its entirety is a reference to Plotinus, who also defined eternity in the same way as endless life.⁶⁶⁵ But Gregory does not simply quote Plotinus. In the *Enneads*,

662 There is also another very important topic in Gregory’s thought related to the problem of understanding activity. Gregory re-established the understanding of the power of God, and the triad substance, power, and activity also demonstrated the unity of the power and substance of God. This aspect, however, is well shown by: M.R. Barnes, *cf. op. cit.*, pp. 260–307.

663 *Cf.* J.-C. Larchet, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

664 CE I, 666, 1–4. Τὸ αἰδῖον τῆς θείας ζωῆς, ὡς ἂν τις ὄρω τινὶ περιλαβὼν ὑπογράψαι, τοιοῦτόν ἐστιν. ἀεὶ μὲν ἐν τῷ εἶναι καταλαμβάνεται, τοῦ δὲ ποτὲ μὴ εἶναι καὶ ποτὲ μὴ ἔσεσθαι τὸν λόγον οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται (GNO 1, 217, 26–29; tr. Hall, p. 217).

665 *Enn.* III, 7, 5, 25–28. Καὶ εἴ τις οὕτω τὸν αἰῶνα λέγοι ζῶν ἄπειρον ἤδη τῷ πᾶσαν εἶναι καὶ μηδὲν ἀναλίσκεν αὐτῆς τῷ μὴ παρελθῆναι μὴδ’ αὐτῷ μέλλειν - ἤδη γὰρ οὐκ ἂν εἴη πᾶσα- ἐγγὺς ἂν εἴη τοῦ ὀρίζεσθαι (Henry/Schwyzler, vol. 1, p. 343). “and if someone were in their way to speak of eternity as a life which is here and now endless because it is total and expends nothing of itself, since it has not past or future...he would be near to defining it” (McKenna/Page, p. 121). D.L. Balás analyses Gregory’s understanding of eternity in *Contra Eunomium* and his dependence on Plotinus in: *Eternity and Time in Gregory of Nyssa’s*

eternity is identified with second hypostasis – Intellect (νοῦς) and, therefore, just like Intellect, it can be understood.⁶⁶⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, however, defines eternity as the life of God Himself, and therefore it is completely beyond comprehension. He uses the example of a circle which has no beginning. If we extend our intellect from the present, as from the centre of the circle towards the infinity of the divine life:

“...we may well be drawn round in the same sort of circle by what is impossible to apprehend (ὑπὸ τῆς ἀκαταληψίας), as we perceive that the divine life is continuous and unbroken in every direction and can appreciate that there is no limit anywhere.”⁶⁶⁷

Gregory then transforms the thought of Plotinus, and because eternity is the attribute of God, it cannot be comprehended, just as the activity of the life of God is beyond our capability of understanding. Therefore, one can only say that God’s eternity means the fullness of His life which is without priority or posterity, but this does not mean that anyone can understand what this life is in itself. Life which is the same with the substance of God must then be seen as incomprehensible.

As we have seen above, Gregory also insisted that even if we can know the activity, this knowledge cannot give us the understanding of the essence of the one who acts. By the example of the smith who makes the gimlet, Gregory argued that making external product does not involve the full potential of the maker, and therefore also activity is not an actualization of full potency of essence,⁶⁶⁸ so we cannot conceive the essence from activity even in case of man. In another place, he explains that it is infinitely less possible to understand the substance of God if we start reasoning from His external activities.

In *Contra Eunomium II*, Gregory recalls Eunomius’ claims that the word “Unbegotten” measures the infinite nature with a single title while not being

Contra Eunomium, in: *Gregor von Nyssa und die Philosophie*, ed. H. Dörrie, M. Altenburger, U. Schramm, Leiden 1976, pp. 128–155.

666 Cf. A. Smith, *Eternity and Time*, *op. cit.*, pp. 198–203.

667 CE I 668, 7–10. ...καὶ ὁμοίως ὑπὸ τῆς ἀκαταληψίας ἐν κύκλῳ περιελκόμεθα, συνεχῆ καὶ ἀδιάστατον αὐτὴν πρὸς ἑαυτὴν τὴν θεϊαν ζωὴν ἀπανταχόθεν καταλαμβάνοντες καὶ οὐδὲν πέρασ κατ’ οὐδὲν μέρος ἐπιγνώσκειν δυνάμενοι (GNO I, 218, 14–17; tr. Hall, pp. 131–132).

668 CE I, 424, 11–425, 3 (GNO I, 150, 14–18).

said conceptually, but at the same time, expressing the nature of God.⁶⁶⁹ Referring to Basil, he clarifies how to understand the positive and negative names of God:

“Our position therefore – I am adopting my master’s teaching – is that we have a faint and slight apprehension of the divine Nature through reasoning, but we still gather knowledge enough for our slight capacity through the words which are reverently used of it. We claim that the meaning of all these names is not uniform, but some denote things that appertain to God, others those that are absent.”⁶⁷⁰

After this opening, Gregory presents various names which are positively ascribing something to God (eternity, justice, goodness, etc.) and negatively saying on what God is not (indestructible, unbegun, immortal etc.). Some of those names are opposites; they indicate what does or what does not apply to God, but their meaning is the same (such as God is good and God has no evil).⁶⁷¹ Therefore, when we say that God is Unbegotten, we say nothing more than He is the Beginning of all things, but we express it in a different form, and, therefore, there is nothing special in the name “Unbegotten”, which for Eunomius was the most suitable one to express the nature of God.⁶⁷² Gregory concludes that there is no use in multiplying words, since we say nothing new, and because it is only reverence to the sounds without turning attention to their meanings. Referring to the teaching of Basil, Gregory states that the proper reasoning is:

“...to perceive quite clearly that the manner of existence of the essential nature of the Divinity is intangible, inconceivable, and beyond all rational comprehension. Human thought, investigating and searching by such reasoning as is possible, reaches out and touches the unapproachable and sublime Nature, neither seeing

669 CE II, 125,1–129, 3 (GNO I, 262, 16–263, 20).

670 CE II, 130, 1–131, 3. Οὐκοῦν εἴρηται παρ’ ἡμῶν (οἰκειοῦμαι γὰρ τοῦ διδασκάλου τὸν λόγον) ὅτι τῆς θείας φύσεως ἀμυδρὰν μὲν καὶ βραχυτάτην ἔχομεν διὰ τῶν λογισμῶν τὴν ἀντίληψιν, ἀποχρῶσαν δ’ ὅμως τῇ βραχύτητι τῆς δυνάμεως ἡμῶν διὰ τῶν ὀνομάτων τῶν περὶ αὐτὴν λεγομένων εὐσεβῶς τὴν γνῶσιν ἐραυίζομεθα. τούτων δὲ φαμεν τῶν ὀνομάτων οὐ μονοειδῆ πάντων εἶναι τὴν σημασίαν, ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν τῶν προσόντων τῷ θεῷ (GNO I, 263, 21–28; tr. S.G Hall, p. 87).

671 CE II, 134, 1–4 (GNO I, 264, 18–23).

672 CE II, 135, 1–136, 10 (GNO I, 264, 24–265, 10).

so clearly as distinctly to glimpse the Invisible, nor so totally debarred from approaching as to be unable to form any impression of what it seeks.”⁶⁷³

The best way to obtain any knowledge of God is to start with a negative conviction that the Divine nature is beyond our capability of understanding it. Such an approach can give man some kind of a “touch of sublime Nature,” and Gregory explains it further by saying that we can only know that the nature of God is incomprehensible:

“By the reach of reason its goal is to discover what that is which it seeks, and in a sense it does understand it by the very fact that it cannot perceive it, inasmuch as it acquires clear knowledge that what it seeks is beyond all knowledge.”⁶⁷⁴

This kind of “touch” of the incomprehensible Divine nature can make reason truly convinced of what is compatible or incompatible with it, and, therefore, reason can devise true names, but it can never perceive what this nature is in itself. By the very conception of those compatible and incompatible things, reason can know that “that which rests beyond every evil, and is perceived as possessing every good, must surely be such as is unutterable in word and inaccessible to thought.”⁶⁷⁵ The final conviction which awaits man on his way to God is the “apprehension that he exists” (νοουμένων ὅτι ἔστι).⁶⁷⁶

All those explanations do not tell us what exactly we name when we apply names to God. Negative terms simply indicate what does not apply

673 CE II, 138, 2–11. δι’ ἧς ἔνεστι τοὺς μὴ κεκαλυμμένους τῷ αἰρετικῷ προκαλύμματι σαφῶς δι᾿ιδεῖν ὅτι τὸ θεῖον, ὅπως ἂν κατὰ τὴν φύσιν ἔχη, ἀνέπαφόν τε ἐστὶ καὶ ἀκατανόητον καὶ πάσης ἀντιλήψεως τῆς ἐκ τῶν λογισμῶν ὑψηλότερον, ἢ δὲ ἀνθρωπίνη διάνοια πολυπραγμονοῦσα καὶ διερευνωμένη δι’ ὧν ἂν ἦ δυνατόν λογισμῶν ἐπορέγεται καὶ θιγγάνει τῆς ἀπροσπελάστου καὶ ὑψηλῆς φύσεως, οὔτε τοσοῦτον ὀξυωποῦσα ὡς ἐναργῶς ἰδεῖν τὸ ἀόρατον οὔτε καθάπαξ ἀπεσχοινομένη τῆς προσεγγίσεως ὡς μηδεμίαν δύνασθαι τοῦ ζητουμένου λαβεῖν εἰκασίαν (GNO I, 265, 24–266, 2; tr. Hall, p. 89).

674 CE II, 139, 1–4. ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν τι τοῦ ζητουμένου διὰ τῆς τῶν λογισμῶν ἐπαφῆς ἐστοχάσατο, τὸ δὲ αὐτῷ τῷ μὴ δύνασθαι κατιδεῖν τρόπον τινὰ κατενόησεν, οἷόν τινα γνῶσιν ἐναργῆ τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν γνῶσιν τὸ ζητούμενον εἶναι ποιησαμένη (GNO I, 266, 3–6; tr. Hall, p. 89).

675 CE II, 140, 6–9. ὅτι τὸ παντὸς μὲν κακοῦ πόρρωθεν ἰδρυμένον, ἐν παντὶ δὲ νοούμενον ἀγαθῷ πάντως τι τοιοῦτόν ἐστιν οἷον λόγῳ τε ἄρρητον εἶναι καὶ λογισμοῖς ἀνεπίβατον (GNO I, 266, 11–14; tr. Hall, p. 89).

676 CE II, 141, 9 (GNO I, 266, 22).

to Him, so they name rather an absence of an attribute and “the statement does not by the words provide information about what is spoken of. What it is not, we learn from the sounds; what it is, the meaning of the words used does not show.”⁶⁷⁷ Gregory provides a catalogue of negative statements and says that they are true, but they do not tell us what it is (τί δέ ἐστιν) that we speak of. However, this is not only the problem of speaking of God, but it is the very nature of negative statements that does not allow us to identify of what we speak. Similarly, if we multiply negative statements with respect to man (not inanimate, not insensible, not winged, not four-footed, and not aquatic), it would neither describe what man is. Therefore:

“On exactly the same principle, though many such things are said of the divine Nature, by which we learn what we must understand God to be; but what in itself it essentially is, the words do not teach us.”⁶⁷⁸

Due to the weakness of our reason, we are inclined to multiply words to discern the nature of God from what it is not, and that it is also the reason why the “unbegottenness” cannot be counted as one and true name. The very multiplication of negative statements tells us that we still do not have a proper name which denotes the substance. Therefore, although they are true, negative statements cannot name anything in God.

Since negative names can tell us only what God is not without pointing at any real thing, what about positive names? They also cannot name the substance of God, but rather His activities:

“...what is named by those who speak of him is not what he actually is, for the nature of him who is ineffable; but he gets his titles from the actions he is believed to perform for our lives. So in this particular case, the word just used: ‘God’, we say, thinking as we give him the title of one who supervises, observes, and with his vision penetrates hidden things.”⁶⁷⁹

677 CE II, 143, 3–5. οὐ μὴν τι περὶ οὗ λέγεται διὰ τῶν ὀνομάτων ὁ λόγος παρίστησιν. τί μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ἔστι, δι’ ὃν ἠκούσαμεν ἐδιδάχθημεν, τί δέ ἐστιν, ἢ τῶν εἰρημένων οὐκ ἐνεδείξατο δύναμις (GNO I, 267, 6–9).

678 CE II, 144, 6–9. κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον πολλῶν τοιούτων περὶ τὴν θεϊαν φύσιν λεγομένων, ἐν οἷς χρὴ τὸν θεὸν ὑπονοεῖν εἶναι μανθάνομεν, αὐτὸ δὲ ὅ τι ποτέ ἐστι κατ’ οὐσίαν διὰ τῶν εἰρημένων οὐ διδασκόμεθα (GNO I, 267, 14–17).

679 CE II, 149, 1–7. ὀνομάζεται δὲ παρὰ τῶν ἐπικαλουμένων οὐκ αὐτὸ ὃ ἐστιν (ἄφραστος γὰρ ἢ φύσις τοῦ ὄντος), ἀλλ’ ἐξ ὃν ἐνεργεῖν τι περὶ τὴν ζωὴν ἡμῶν πεπίστευται τὰς ἐπωνυμίας ἔχει, οἷον καὶ αὐτὸ τοῦτο τὸ ἐκ τοῦ προχείρου

Even the name “God,” which is the most common one, is presented as describing the activity of vision or seeing, and, as it is explained in another place, using this name we: “have learnt some partial activity of the divine Nature, we have not by this word come to hold in mind the divine Substance itself.”⁶⁸⁰

In the passage presented above, one thing is noticeable. For Gregory of Nyssa, positive names which refer to activities can be recognized primarily by what God does in human life. That is why the activities are so important, because they are the testimony of God who is constantly present on the way of man to Him. This is no longer a theoretical problem of how can we demonstrate the existence or power of God from creation, but rather the explanation of His effective presence in spiritual life of every man. And Gregory strongly claims that these names are applied not to the concepts but to real things. He explains:

“If we cannot first explain what is being said about God before we think it, and if we think it by means of what we learn from his actions, and if before the act there exists the potency, and the potency depends on the divine will, and the will resides in the authority of the divine Nature – does that not make it clear to us that it is a matter of applying to the realities the terms we use to indicate what happens, and the words are a kind of shadow of the realities, matching the movements of things which exist?”⁶⁸¹

The chain of things leads from the name of activity to the divine Nature, through the activity itself, the power of God, and His will. Therefore, naming

λεγόμενον· θεὸν γὰρ αὐτὸν λέγοντες τὸν ἔφορον καὶ ἐπόπτην καὶ διορατικὸν τῶν κεκρυμμένων νοοῦντες ἐπικαλούμεθα (GNO I, 268, 25–269, 2).

680 CE II, 586, 4–6. ὥστε καὶ διὰ τούτου μερικὴν τινα τῆς θείας φύσεως ἐνέργειαν διδαχθέντες τῆς οὐσίας αὐτῆς ἐν περινοίᾳ διὰ τῆς φωνῆς ταύτης οὐκ ἐγενόμεθα· (GNO I, 397, 19–21; tr. Hall, pp. 191–192). In those fragments, Gregory uses the false etymology of name God (θεός) that it comes from the word vision (θεάομαι).

681 CE II, 150, 5–13. εἰ γὰρ μὴ πρότερον ἐρμηνεύομέν τι τῶν περὶ θεοῦ λεγομένων, πρὶν ἂν νοήσωμεν, νοοῦμεν δὲ δι’ ὧν ἐκ τῶν ἐνεργειῶν διδασκόμεθα, προῦφέστηκε δὲ τῆς ἐνεργείας ἡ δύναμις, ἡ δὲ δύναμις ἐξήρηται τοῦ θείου βουλήματος, τὸ δὲ βούλημα ἐν τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ τῆς θείας ἀπόκειται φύσεως, ἄρ’ οὐ σαφῶς διδασκόμεθα ὅτι ἐπιγίνονται τοῖς πράγμασιν αἱ σημαντικαὶ τῶν γινομένων προσηγορίαι καὶ ὡσπερ σκιαὶ τῶν πραγμάτων εἰσὶν αἱ φωναί, πρὸς τὰς κινήσεις τῶν ὑφ’ ἐστῶτων σχηματιζόμεναι; (GNO I, 269, 6–14).

an activity, we can only name what we have understood of the real activity of God, while His substance remains unknown.

Since *Contra Eunomium* was probably one of the earliest works of Gregory of Nyssa, it seems plausible that during the polemic with the Anomean, he constructed a solid conceptual basis for his negative theology. The statement that we can know only the activities of God, not His substance, is the crucial one, because thanks to it Gregory could demonstrate not only the fact of incomprehensibility of the essence of God, but also that our names which we use are the names of real things – His activities, and, therefore, Gregory will rely on this distinction throughout his whole theological career.⁶⁸² We can also notice that by his exposition of the nature of negative names, Gregory of Nyssa proposes probably the strongest formulation of negative theology. He realizes that when we say that God is infinite, incorruptible, unbegotten, etc., our claim is true, but for him, negative statements do not name any reality present in God Himself. Since positive names refer only to activities, and negative ones refer to nothing that we can conceive, our language and comprehension can never reach God in His substance.

682 A full catalogue of passages in which he uses the distinction between energies and substance to demonstrate the incomprehensibility of God was made by J.-C. Larchet, *op. cit.*, pp. 199–203.

