Gregory of Nyssa as Philosopher:
De anima et resurrectione and *De hominis opificio*

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Was Gregory of Nyssa a philosopher? According to a modern understanding of philoso-
phy certainly not …. For naturally Gregory could never admit that philosophy was in
any way independent from, let alone superior to theology.

—Heinrich Dörrie[1]

Gregory lacks the essential attributes of the philosopher—the concern for consistency
and the respect for truth in all its forms, even disconcerting truth, even unprofitable
truth. Called to the friendship of Christ, he will not, like Aristotle, sacrifice that friend-
ship to truth; he believes rather that truth is only to be found within that friendship.

—G. Christopher Stead[2]

Gregory … surpassed the other Cappadocians both as a philosopher and a theologian,
and he earned high merits by his philosophical reflection on the doctrines of faith.

—Berthold Altaner[3]

These verdicts on Gregory of Nyssa as a philosopher emphasize a funda-
mental fact which one needs keep in mind when inquiring into the philoso-
phy of a Father of the Church or any ancient author for that matter: Ancient
times did not regard philosophy and theology as two fields distinct from
each another. For them Plato was as much a theologian as he was a philoso-
pher, and the Christian faith was likewise considered a philosophy. Conse-
quently any study of Gregory's philosophy must be aware that the separa-
tion of philosophy and theology is a modern phenomenon and quite inad-

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1. "Gregor III (Gregor von Nyssa)," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 12 (1983):
863–95, esp. 883.
2. "Ontology and Terminology in Gregory of Nyssa," *Gregor von Nyssa und die Philosophie,
Zweites Internationales Kolloquium über Gregor von Nyssa, Freckenhorst bei Münster 18.-23. Sep-
tember 1972*, Herausgegeben von Heinrich Dörrie, Margarete Altenburger, Uta Schramm
(Leiden: Brill, 1976) 107–27, esp. 107.
3. Berthold Altaner/Alfred Stuiber, *Patrologie. Leben, Schriften und Lehre der Kirchenväter*
(Freiburg-Basel-Wien: Herder, 1978) 303.

equate when applied to a classical text. Whoever looks there for "philosophical issues" according to modern standards without expecting them to be inextricably blended to theology, biblical exegesis and faith will go quite wrong. Gregory's philosophy is not one of various fields of his thought but one angle of it from which to approach his complex but otherwise unified system of thinking. On the basis of this methodological approach even the question of the extent to which Gregory was a philosopher or a theologian, a question discussed for nearly a century now, seems questionable in itself.[4] The following inquiry into the philosophy of Gregory of Nyssa will therefore begin from the presupposition that a "philosophical approach" to his thought is helpful for the modern mind, but does not reflect any division in Gregory's mind, because for him philosophy and theology were but two sides of the same coin and thus inseparable.

I PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY: *DE ANIMA ET RESURRECTIONE*

A Date, Setting, and Outline of De anima et resurrectione

There could never be any doubt as to the fact that Gregory of Nyssa purposefully shaped his dialogue *On the Soul and the Resurrection* after Plato's *Phaedo*. There Socrates and his friends, a few days before his appointed execution, take up the theme which naturally comes to their minds as their hearts are filled with sadness, though their reunion should be a joyous one: namely, the death and afterlife of the soul, with special respect to the way a philosopher should approach inescapable death. Here it is Gregory's eldest sister Macrina, who had exerted inestimable influence on all her bishop brothers, who is lying on her death-bed. Since Macrina died in December 379, Gregory's dialogue *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, reporting their last discourse before her death, must have been composed after this date, probably shortly after in the autumn of 380.[5] Gregory in fact goes to visit his sister Macrina to receive some consolation from her as he is still very much sad-

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4. Harold F. Cherniss, *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa* (Berkeley, CA-London: University of California Press, 1930) 62ff.; Jean Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique. Essai sur la doctrine spirituelle de saint Grégoire de Nysse* (= Théologie 2) (Paris: Éditions Montaigne, 1944, 2 èd. 1953); Endré von Ivánka, *Plato christianus. Übernahme und Umgestaltung des Platonismus durch die Väter* (Einsiedeln: Johannes-Verlag, 1964); Doerrie (note 1); Charalambos Apostolopoulos, *Phaedo christianus. Studien zur Verbindung und Abwägung des Verhältnisses zwischen dem platonischen "Phaidon" und dem Dialog Gregors von Nyssa "Über die Seele und die Auferstehung"* (= Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe XX 188) (Frankfurt/M: Verlag Peter Lang, 1986); cf. the reviews by J.C.M. van Winden, *Vigiliae Christianae* 41 (1987): 191–97; Anthony Meredith, *Journal of Theological Studies* 39 (1988): 258–60.

5. Cf. Jean Daniélou, "La chronologie des œuvres de Grégoire de Nysse," *Studia Patristica* 7 (= Texte und Untersuchungen 92) (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1966) 159–69, esp. 163.

dened by the death of their brother Basil who had passed away on 1 January 379.[6]

The dialogue begins with the words:

> Basil, great among the saints, had departed from this life to God; and the impulse to mourn for him was shared by all the churches. But his sister the Teacher was still living; and so I journeyed to her, yearning for an interchange of sympathy over the loss of her brother. My soul was right sorrow-stricken by this grievous blow, and I sought for one who could feel it equally, to mingle my tears with.[7]

Instead of finding consolation, however, Gregory's grief is doubled as he encounters his beloved sister, the "Teacher" from whom he had hoped to receive help, on death-bed herself:

> But when we were in each other's presence the sight of the Teacher awakened all my pain; for she too was lying in a state of prostration even unto death.[8]

Macrina tries to console her brother by quoting St Paul (1 Thess 4.13): "We would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope." This traditional Christian word of consolation, however, quite on the contrary excites Gregory to doubt if any human being in the world could really follow this advice given by St Paul. For:

> There is such an instinctive and deep-seated abhorrence of death in all! Those who look on a death-bed can hardly bear the sight; and those whom death approaches recoil from him all they can ....We see before us the whole course of human life aiming at this one thing, viz. how we may continue in this life ... By what device, then, can we bring ourselves to regard as nothing a departure from life even in the case of a stranger, not to mention that of relations, when so be they cease to live?[9]

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6. I continue to rely on the traditional date, not on the more recent suggestions that Basil already died in August 377 or September 378. Cf. Pierre Maraval, "La date de la mort de Basile de Césarée," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 34 (1988): 25–38; Jean-Robert Pouchet, "La date de l'élection de saint Basile et celle de sa mort," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 87 (1992): 5–33.

7. The Greek text is edited in Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 46 (Paris, 1858) 11–160, esp. 12 A 1–8. Translations are taken from William Moore/Henry Austin Wilson, *Select Writings and Letters of Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa.* Translated, with Prolegomena, Notes, and Indices (= A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series, Volume V) (London, 1892 = Grand Rapids/MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1972) 430–68. Cf. more recently *St Gregory of Nyssa, The Soul and the Resurrection.* Translated from the Greek and introduced by C.P. Roth (Crestwood/NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993).

8. *Patrologia Graeca* 46 (note 7) 12 A 9–12.

9. Ibid., 13 A 5–11.

To this doubt of her brother Macrina reacts in a double manner. She asks Gregory to define the pain he feels more precisely, but reproaches him at the same time that "this common talk of unthinking persons is no sufficient accusation."

Instead, however, of being somewhat subdued by his sister's chiding and instigated to reflect more thoroughly, Gregory continues along the same lines and enlarges on the perfectly understandable reasons for mourning until his sister cuts him short and puts her finger right on the sore: "Surely what alarms and disturbs your mind is the thought that the soul, instead of lasting forever, ceases with the body's dissolution!"[10]

But Gregory refuses to calm down:

> I answered rather audaciously, and without due consideration of what I said, for my passionate grief had not yet given me back my judgment. In fact, I said that the Divine utterances seemed to me mere commands compelling us to believe that the soul lasts for ever; not, however, that we were led by them to this belief by any reasoning .... we do not exactly know whether this vivifying principle is anything by itself; where it is, or how it is; whether, in fact, it exists in any way at all anywhere.[11]

After that Macrina, rather agitated, offers the rejoinder:

> Away, she cried, with that pagan nonsense!... such a view about the soul amounts to nothing less than the abandoning of virtue, and seeking the pleasure of the moment only; the life of eternity, by which alone virtue claims the advantage, must be despaired of.[12]

Finally, Gregory rather reasonably asks: "And pray how are we to get a firm and unmovable belief in the soul's continuance?"[13] Then he and Macrina agree to discuss this question by taking opposite positions: Gregory as advocate of the pagan opinions he had proposed, Macrina as the defender of truth. Yet, before developing the argument, Gregory makes it quite clear that he only assumes such a role for argument's sake, not because he truly believes in it:

> I deprecated the suspicion that I was making the objections in real earnest, instead of my only wishing to get a firm ground for the belief about the soul by calling into court what is aimed against this view.[14]

10. Ibid., 17 A 2–6.
11. Ibid., 17 A 6–B 5.
12. Ibid., 17 B 9–C 1.
13. Ibid., 17 C 2–3.
14. Ibid., 20 A 14–B 3.

With this remark Gregory closes the introduction of his treatise, and begins with the first objection to the afterlife of the soul which non-believers could possibly make, but he introduces it in a way that again makes it quite clear that he is not one of them: "Would not the defenders of the opposite belief say this;…"[15]

Because, according to the rules of ancient rhetoric, this introduction presents the listener or reader with the key for the interpretation of the whole work, this is the point to reflect more deeply and critically on its overall setting.

We know that Plato's dialogues and the literary dialogue in antiquity in general is a literary art form, not the verbatim report of some factual discussion. The same is true for Gregory's dialogue with his sister Macrina *On the Soul and the Resurrection.*[16] It is a historical fact that Gregory visited his sister and met her on the brink of death. It is highly probable that during those days of sharing both grief and faith, they reflected on the Christian hope of resurrection and might have been led to the question how to teach the faith both to unbelievers who want to be convinced by reason, and how to strengthen the faith of believers, when in the case of bereavement they might begin to waver. But the dialogue, as it was composed, only sets forth the occasion and some basic ideas. Otherwise it is a literary work of art, expressing Gregory's thoughts in the most attractive and convincing form possible.

To whom is the treatise addressed? Apparently to two rather different groups.

The first are people who do not believe in an afterlife and resurrection at all and, therefore, cannot be approached by the biblical message, but expect plausible and convincing reasoning. They usually rely on the evident fact that all life, and all human strife, is directed toward nothing else but to survive in this world, not in a future world the strivers know nothing about, not even whether it exists at all.

The second group are Christians, especially those grief-stricken by their loss of a friend or family member, who ask themselves whether the Church expects them to believe in the resurrection all too easily, without providing sufficient reasons for that belief.

The first three paragraphs of the introduction, therefore, are nothing else than the rather systematic display of the two arguments of the non-believers and the doubts of the believer, not because Gregory himself belongs to ei-

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15. Ibid., 20 B 4 ff.

16. Cf. A. Hermann/G. Bardy, "Dialog," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 3 (1957): 928–55; M. Hoffmann, *Der Dialog bei den christlichen Schriftstellern der ersten vier Jahrhunderte* (= Texte und Untersuchungen 96) (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1966); B.R. Voss, *Der Dialog in der frühchristlichen Literatur* (= Studia et Testimonia Antiqua 9) (Munich: W. Fink, 1970).

ther of those groups, but because he is taking up their *personae,* their roles
for argument's sake.

The answer to both groups requires reasoning, not biblical quotations,
and consequently, the literary dialogue with his sister Macrina consists al-
most exclusively of philosophical arguments. Only the very last section talks
about the Christian doctrine of the resurrection,[17] but this does not mean
that this last part was appended without respect for the structure of the
whole as Cherniss wants to make out.[18] There is no other way of argument
conceivable, as the main purpose of the treatise must be the reasoning in
favour of the Christian message of an afterlife, eventually leading up to it as
the point of culmination.

The structure and largely philosophical content of the treatise *De anima
et resurrectione* is explained by its dialectic aimed at the audience it is meant
to reach and the goal it is designed to achieve. In the end the main difference
between the Platonic *Phaedo* and Gregory's *De anima et resurrectione* comes
down to the rather simple fact that the disputing parties are not Socrates and
his friends, but two Christian saints. They are philosophers, too, but they
employ philosophy as a means of serving the faith, not, to be sure, in the
way mediaeval writers did it, "*philosophia ancilla theologiae*," with philoso-
phy subordinate to theology, but as an integral part of the overall design of
the dialogue. That is why *De anima et resurrectione* largely consists of seem-
ingly "unadulterated" philosophy, yet must be recognised as a theological
treatise from the start.

B The spiritual nature of the soul and its permanence after death (20 B 4– 48 C 6) as a key passage to Gregory of Nyssa's philosophy

Understandably Gregory's dialogue, *De anima et resurrectione,* time and
again is called a "Christian *Phaedo*." The analysis of the following key pas-
sage, however, will make it quite clear that this is not to be understood in
terms of "a new *Phaedo* composed by a Christian" or "a new *Phaedo* from a
Christian point of view, or "a new *Phaedo* with some Christian ingredients
added," but a fundamental transformation of it, modeled after Plato's fa-
mous dialogue, dealing with the very same problem which had remained
and remains unchanged over the centuries, taking up its structure and argu-
ments, but at the same time proclaiming by it something inconceivably
unplatonic, uniquely Christian: the resurrection of the body. Christian Gnilka
calls this method of the reception of ancient culture into Christianity

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17. *Patrologia Graeca* 46 (note 7) 129–160.
18. *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa* (note 4) 62ff.

"χρῆσις" (use),[19] and Henriette Meissner in her comprehensive analysis of *De anima et resurrectione* shows quite convincingly that this χρῆσις belongs to Gregory's fundamental principles, that any philosophical speculation is relevant for a Christian, only if it agrees with revelation.[20]

Gregory as the "*advocatus diaboli*" opens the question:

> Would not the defenders of the opposite belief say this: that the body, being composite, must necessarily be resolved into that of which it is composed? And when the coalition of elements in the body ceases, each of those elements naturally gravitates towards its kindred element with the irresistible bias of like to like;... Where, then, will the soul be after that?... the composite is necessarily dissoluble; and dissolution means the destruction of the compound; and the destructible is not immortal, else the flesh itself, resolvable as it is into its constituent elements might so be called immortal .... If, on the other hand, the soul is something other than these elements, where can our reason suggest a place for it to be ...? But, if a thing can be found nowhere, plainly it has no existence.[21]

Macrina, the "Teacher," sighs at this argument, because she knows it only too well. It is the old fashioned teaching of the Stoics and Epicureans, which she is going to repeat rather extensively, but only in order to show its intrinsic logical contradictions. Why, if the soul is not made of the elements of the material world, that is, fire, water, air and earth, and is, therefore, supposed not to have any place after death and, consequently, not to exist any longer, where then was it before? For, if those philosophers maintain that the soul is immaterial and thus does not belong to the material body to which it gives life and movement, it is certainly logical to conclude that it is able to exist independently of the body after its death. Macrina's second argument for the immaterial existence of the human soul draws on the commonly accepted idea of body and soul as a microcosmic image of the universe. Therefore, if the material body is not directed by an immaterial soul, it would be only logical to conclude that the universe as a whole is not directed by any divine being either.[22]

Gregory agrees to these observations, but that raises the very objection "our adversaries" direct against it (note the "our"). They would doubt the very existence of a divine being. In answer to that objection Macrina enlarges an argument which she had already anticipated in the preceding paragraph, namely, the recognition of the creator through his wondrous crea-

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19. Christian Gnilka, *ΧΡΗΣΙΣ. Die Methode der Kirchenväter im Umgang mit der antiken Kultur. I: Der Begriff des "rechten Gebrauchs"* (Basel-Stuttgart: Verlag Schwabe & Co., 1984).

20. Henriette M. Meissner, *Rhetorik und Theologie. Der Dialog Gregors von Nyssa* De anima et resurrectione (= Patrologia 1) (Frankfurt/M: Verlag Peter Lang, 1991) 373 f.

21. *Patrologia Graeca* 46 (note 7) 20 B 4–22 A 8.

22. Ibid., 22 A 9–24 C 5.

tion, as one recognises the weaver through the garment, the shipwright through the ship, and the builder through the building.[23]

One should have thought at this stage that the logical chain of thought would be complete, namely, if the microcosm of body and soul is logically comparable to the macrocosm of God and world, the acceptance of the existence of God would necessarily lead to the acceptance of the existence of the soul as well. But Gregory wants to be certain and therefore requests Macrina to articulate it expressly.[24] Gregory still is far from being content and wants to elucidate the chain of argument right to the end by asking:

> Nay, it may be very possible to infer a wisdom transcending the universe from the skillful and artistic designs observable in this harmonized fabric of physical nature; but, as regards the soul, what knowledge is possible to those who would trace, from any indications the body has to give, the unknown through the known?[25]

Macrina answers by furnishing evidence of the motions and emotions of the body which cease in death.[26]

Thus having concluded the first question regarding the existence of the soul, the dialogue advances to the next inquiry with Gregory's request for a definition of what the soul is,[27] and Macrina responding in this manner:

> The soul is an essence created, and living, and intellectual, transmitting from itself to an organized and sentient body the power of living and of grasping objects of sense, as long as a natural constitution capable of this holds together.[28]

Hereafter Macrina offers three examples of how the soul acts as the seat of understanding and intellect through the bodily senses:

She points to the physician present and explains how he uses all his senses as instruments for his medical diagnosis, but it is not the bodily senses furnish the diagnosis but the soul's comprehension of the information they transmit.[29]

She draws on the apparent form and size of the sun, which to the eye seems to be a little disk; the reasonable conclusions from phenomena like eclipses, however, teach that it must be a heavenly body many times larger than the earth and very far removed from it.[30]

23. Ibid., 24 C 6–28 A 11.
24. Ibid., 28 A 11–C 15.
25. Ibid., 28 D 1–29 A 5.
26. Ibid., 29 A 5–B 4.
27. Ibid., 29 B 4–28 C 6.
28. Ibid., 29 B 7–14.
29. Ibid., 29 B 7–32 A 11.
30. Ibid., 32 A 11–B 5.

Macrina finally derives the scientific conclusions of a thinking mind from the observation of the phases of the moon.[31]

Gregory, however, does not yet accept these examples as sufficient proof for the nature of the soul as different from matter, because there are mechanical devices known that very cleverly imitate nature. In order to illustrate his point Gregory suggests the example of a water organ, which produces both movement and sound. In fact, he describes the process in full detail.[32] Could it then not also be the case that all the characteristics we attribute to the soul are really functions of the material body?[33] (It is quite remarkable, how old those seemingly modern mechanistic theories are: the human body and the whole world as a great clockwork without the need of a creator and without the necessity of a mind, and everything we like to call "understanding" or "feeling" just a chemical reaction or a function of the synapses of the brain.)

Macrina welcomes this objection as helpful for her own argument.[34] If, for example, one takes the construction of the water organ described by Gregory, which is capable of both sound and movement, that construction will never become an animated being, but will always remain a machine. In order to build it the constructor must first have studied and understood the nature of both air and water and then must have drawn up the design accordingly. The process of the construction of a water organ must therefore require something more and quite different from the instrument itself, something which only a human being possesses:

> For if it were possible to ascribe such wonders, as the theory of our opponents does,[35] to the actual constitution of the elements, we should have these mechanisms building themselves spontaneously;... but if none of these results are produced spontaneously by elemental force but, on the contrary, each element is employed at will by artifice; and if artifice is a kind of movement and activity of the mind, will not the very consequences of what has been urged by way of objection show us Mind as something other than the thing perceived?[36]

31. Ibid., 32 B 7–33 C 6.

32. The water organ (*hydraulis*) was invented by Ktesibos of Alexandria, 2nd century BC. It was used in theatres, arenas, and since the early Empire in well-to-do private homes as well. The instrument is fully described by Heron of Alexandria, *Pneumatica* 1.42 and Vitruvius, *De architectura* 10.13. Cf. Carl Richard Tittel, "Hydraulis," *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Alterthumswissenschaften* 9 (1916): 60–77; Werner Walcker-Mayer, *The Roman Organ of Aquincum* (Ludwigsburg: Musikwissenschaftliche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1972).

33. *Patrologia Graeca* 46 (note 7) 33 C 6–36 A 15.

34. Ibid., 36 B 1–4.

35 Note again: "our" opponents!

36. Ibid., 36 B 5–40 A 4.

Once again Gregory is not content with Macrina'a answer, because it does not—as required by the progress of the debate—positively define what the soul is, but only excludes by way of negation what it is not, namely, a material substance:

> That the thing perceived, I replied, is not the same as the thing not perceived, I grant; but I do not discover any answer to our question in such a statement; it is not yet clear to me what we are to think that thing not-perceived to be; all I have been shown by your argument is that it is not anything material; and I do not yet know the fitting name for it. I wanted especially to know what it is, not what it is not.[37]

Macrina on her part does not accept Gregory's objection, because she is convinced that by way of negation one may indeed make a statement about a person or a thing:

> For instance, when we say "guileless," we indicate a good man; when we say "unmanly," we have expressed that a man is a coward;... Now granted that the inquirer has had his doubts set at rest as to the existence of the thing in question, owing to the activities which it displays to us, and only wants to know what it is, he will have adequately discovered it by being told that it is not that which our senses perceive, neither a color, nor a form, nor a hardness, nor a weight, nor a quantity, nor a cubic dimension, nor a point, nor anything else perceptible in matter.[38]

The dialogue now becomes more lively, because Gregory cannot refrain from interrupting Macrina, objecting that the removal of all of those characteristics makes the object in question itself vanish, because the mind has nothing left to cling to.[39]

Both arguments are well known to any philosopher and theologian. The notions of our mind are limited to a three or four-dimensional world and cannot transcend its boundaries in order to give a name to the immaterial and supernatural. So we usually either go the *via negationis* as Macrina does, stating what the immaterial is not, or we use the *via analogiae,* employing a finite term which provides us a with certain idea, which we extend toward the infinite. In both cases, however, one does not arrive at a substantial definition of the object itself. Gregory's objection, therefore, that the thing in question eludes the mind completely, has to be taken very seriously.

Macrina, however, is "indignantly interrupting": "Shame on such absurdity!", because she immediately transfers Gregory's conclusion about the soul to the Godhead. If the impossibility of somehow grasping the soul *via*

37. Ibid., 40 A 5–13.
38. Ibid., 40 A 13–C 11.
39. Ibid., 40 C 11–41 A 6.

negationis were granted, this would be true for God as well, and to say that God does not exist is the greatest blasphemy of all.[40]

Gregory, however, sharply retorts:

> We only exchange one paradox for another by arguing in this way; for our reason will be reduced to the conclusion that the Deity and the Mind of man are identical, if it be true that neither can be thought of, except by the withdrawal of the data of sense.[41]

Macrina answers at length with insights based on Gen. 1.26–27, man created in the image and likeness of God, and concludes—using the comparison of macro- and microcosm again—as God eternally continues to pervade all his creation giving life to it, in the same way the soul is never severed from the elements of its body, not even after death.[42]

Gregory offers a final objection regarding the difficulty of the soul remaining united to so many and widely dispersed atoms into which its body dissolves. This, however, is rather easily answered by Macrina with the convincing argument that, of course, for the immaterial things like space or quantity do not matter.[43]

Here the first part of *De anima et resurrectione* ends, and Gregory returns to the definition of the soul Macrina had proposed, because "her definition had not indicated distinctly enough all the powers of the soul which are a matter of observation."[44]

C Gregorius philosophus Christianus

On the basis of this close reading of the first part of Gregory's *De anima et resurrectione,* what do we intend when we identify Gregory as a "Christian philosopher"?[45] We have already indicated that there can be no doubt as to the fact that Gregory modeled his dialogue *De anima et resurrectione* on Plato's *Phaedo,* both in form and in content. Both treatises are literary dialogues composed by one of their participants, in both cases the one educated (there Phaedo, here Gregory). Both the setting of the dialogues and the overall theme are the same: shortly before his (Socrates') or her (Macrina's) death they discourse with their close friends/brother about the nature and afterlife of the spiritual soul in order to give them consolation in their natural grief. Both dialogues aim to prove the immortality of the soul and a better life for

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40. Ibid., 41 A 7–B 8.
41. Ibid., 41 B 8–13.
42. Ibid., 41 B 13–45 A 2.
43. Ibid., 45 A 3–48 C 6.
44. Ibid., 48 C 6–9.
45. The following conclusions rely strongly on Meissner (note 20) 384–94, and indeed on the whole argumentation of her book.

it after death. The fact that the respective teachers (Socrates/Macrina) possess this knowledge explains why they can expect death in so unperturbed a manner. In both cases the dialogues answer to the widespread human anxiety that in death the soul and with it the existence of the human being could disperse as the body is visibly dissolved in the earth.

With these parallels the similarities between the two dialogues terminate. There are other similar details contained in them, however, as they are imbedded in a quite different framework, they take on a different meaning as well. The differences begin with the kind of answer given. Philosophy knows no definite answer to the question, whether the soul dissolves along with its body or not, and Gregory regards it as important to underline this issue expressly at the beginning of his dialogue:

> We do not exactly know whether this vivifying principle is anything by itself; where it is, or how it is; whether in fact it exists in any way at all anywhere. This uncertainty about the real state of the case balances the opinions on either side; many adopt the one view, many the other; and indeed there are certain persons, of no small philosophical reputation amongst the Greeks, who have held and maintained this which I have just said.[46]

While therefore philosophy cannot provide a definite answer, the Christian faith can and does so, which gives Gregory's dialogue a totally different outlook right from the start. Macrina is not one of many philosophers giving her personal opinion, but the defender of an eternal truth. With that the character of the whole dialogue takes on a totally different meaning. The question treated is the same, the counter arguments are those of philosophy or popular belief as details of the answer given are, but the answer and therefore the whole intention of the dialogue is not. *Phaedo* offers one amongst various convincing and consoling answers, *De anima et resurrectione* wants to teach the one and only true and thus consoling Christian doctrine of eternal life.

It is true, therefore, that the most general division of Gregory's dialogue presents five seemingly exclusively philosophical parts, before finally coming to the Christian message of resurrection, because reasoning is required, not simple statement of doctrine. But the closer one looks the more it becomes evident how much the Christian faith and its (biblical) arguments pervade it right from the start, in accordance with the aim and general character of a Christian dialogue designed after, but no longer similar to Plato's.

The remaining parts of the dialogue further substantiate these conclusions drawn from the beginning. In Part II on the nature and functions of

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46. *Patrologia Graeca* 46 (note 7) 17 B 1–9.

the emotions Macrina introduces Holy Scripture as "rule" and "law" of all philosophical reflections.[47] Nothing could be more unplatonic. And even clearer speaks her refutation of the famous Platonic image of the chariot as guiding principle of the inquiry. Only when it seems justified by Scripture, is it admitted to the argument. And speaking of the emotions of the body Macrina does not adopt the rather negative Platonic view of them as an obstacle to the soul's free ascent towards the divine, because it is likewise created by God and destined for eternal life.

At the beginning of Part III it seems as if Platonism and Scripture are indeed proclaiming the very same doctrine.[48] For Macrina introduces the Platonic definition of Hades as "the soul's migration from the seen to the unseen,"[49] and even states expressly that in this respect Platonism and Christian doctrine agree. Yet she indicates this agreement only in order to prepare for her argument that the Christian doctrine of the identity of the material body with the risen body does not lie outside logical probability—again a conclusion which could not be more unplatonic. Finally, Macrina recalls a series of Platonic images that urge a separation from too close an attachment to the body. She does so, however, in the context of Luke 16.27–31, Christ's parable of the rich man suffering in hell and his five brothers, while the pauper Lazarus, whom he overlooked all his lifetime, reposes in the bosom of Abraham. Again it seems, as if Platonism and Christendom quite agree, but it is Scripture giving the rule, and everything unacceptable to Christian doctrine is thus rejected. Here it is the Platonic conclusion that the "$\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha\sigma\omega\mu\acute{\alpha}\tau\omega\sigma\iota s$," the consecutive transmigration of the souls from one body to another, results from an all too intimate bonding of the soul with its body. This partial acceptance and partial rejection of the Platonic doctrine of the soul is one of the clearest examples of "$\chi\rho\tilde{\eta}\sigma\iota s$," the use Christian doctrine makes of Platonism.

The same is true for Part IV.[50] The doctrine of the "$\acute{o}\mu o\acute{\iota}\omega\sigma\iota s$ $\pi\rho\grave{o}s$ $\tau\grave{o}$ $\theta\epsilon\tilde{\iota}o\nu$," the assimilation of the soul to the divine, is clearly Platonic.[51] Plato, however, limits this process to the souls of the philosophers, while Macrina in accordance with the Christian doctrine of Christ's saving work for each and every human being insists that of course after death every soul will be purged and united to God. The final section takes up quite a number of Platonic elements, but once more using them towards a quite unplatonic doctrine: the resurrection of the body to a more perfect state.

47. Ibid., 48 C 6–68 A 5.
48. Ibid., 68 a 5–88 C 7.
49. Ibid., 68 B 3–4, taken from *Phaedo* 80d5–7 and 81c11.
50. Ibid., 88 c 8–108 A 8.
51. *Theaetetus* 176 A. Cf. Hubert Merki,´OMOIΩΣΙΣ ΘΕΩ. *Von der platonischen Angleichung an Gott zur Gottähnlichkeit bei Gregor von Nyssa* (= Paradosis 7) (Fribourg: Paulusverlag, 1952).

Conclusion

There can hardly be any doubt as to the fact that Gregory of Nyssa was expertly acquainted with ancient philosophies. It is quite clear, too, that he richly incorporated philosophical thought into his Christian theology. But there cannot be any doubt either as to the fact that by doing so he does not simply remain *either* a philosopher *or* a theologian. He accepts from philosophy what seems to him to harmonize with Scripture, but by doing so he interprets Scripture in the light of philosophy. Thus, philosophy and Scripture do not remain any longer two alternatives to choose from, but become a single unity of thought and faith. And that is the meaning of Gregory's title of a "Christian philosopher."

II PHILOSOPHICAL METHOD AND SOURCES: *DE HOMINIS OPIFICIO*

Before embarking on the analysis of Gregory's treatise *De hominis opificio* one introductory remark is needed to be reassured about the exactness and reliability of the terminology we are going to use. Greek is one of those languages which have two totally different, not even etymologically related words for "man" (ἀνήρ) and "human" (ἄνθρωπος). This distinction must not only be noted, but be observed very carefully in order to be true to the original text. The usual English translation of "*De hominis opificio*" as "On the making of man" is both imprecise and creates unnecessary linguistic problems. The Greek title of Gregory's work is quite unambiguously "*Περὶ κατασκευῆς ἀνθρώπου*"—"On the making of humankind," though one has still to keep in mind that both "*κατασκευή*" and "*ἄνθρωπος*" have some variety of meaning." "*Ἄνθρωπος*" has both a generic and an individual meaning: "human being" and "human race" or "humankind"; "*κατασκευή*" can mean "making," or "construction," or "preparation," or "fitting out." All of these meanings will in fact occur in Gregory's text, so that the title "*Περὶ κατασκευῆς ἀνθρώπου*" does not only refer to "The making of humankind," but includes the creation and furnishing of the individual human being as well. For precision's sake and in order to be true to Gregory's text we will therefore observe quite conscientiously his distinctive terminology and translate accordingly throughout the article.

A Date, external circumstances, and general division of De hominis opificio[52]

Right at the beginning of his treatise Gregory clearly explains reason and purpose of it. His elder brother Basil wanted to compose a complete expla-

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52. The Greek text is edited in Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 44 (Paris, 1858) 123–256. Translations are taken from William Moore/Henry Austin Wilson, *Select Writings and Letters of Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa.* Translated, with Prolegomena, Notes, and Indices (= A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series, Volume V) (London, 1892 = Grand Rapids/MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1972) 389–427.

nation of all six days of creation, the "Hexaemeron," but death took the pen out of his hand after the completion of only nine homilies dealing with the first five days of creation.[53] The sixth day, the creation of the human race remained missing. Gregory now intends to try—with all due respect to his brother and "teacher"—to supplement the exposition on the making of human beings, and sends it as an Easter present to his younger brother, Peter. Basil died on 1 January 379.[54] Peter on the other hand does not seem to be a bishop yet. He was elected bishop of the Armenian town of Sebaste before May 381 as successor to Eustathius who had died shortly before. Thus *De hominis opificio* can be dated rather exactly to the narrow margin between January 379 and May 381, i.e., very close to *De anima et resurrectione*.[55]

Jean-Yves Guillaumin and Adalbert Hamman divide the treatise in the introduction to their French translation into three large parts:

1. philosophical "thesis" (ch. 1–15: PG 44, 125–77);
2. biblical "antithesis" (ch. 16–20: col. 177–201);
3. "Synthesis" (ch. 21–30: col. 201–56).

Here again, as in *De anima et resurrectione,* philosophy seems to obtain the larger bulk of the work over against biblical theology; fifteen chapters philosophy compared to only five chapters theology. But even on this purely external level one has to note that the "synthesis," the union of philosophy and theology, covers the same amount of space as philosophy alone.

B Gregory's Method: ἀκολουθία

After the preliminary remarks about his brothers Basil and Peter Gregory gives a brief outline of the method he is going to employ:

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53. Critical editions: Basile de Césarée, *Homélies sur l'Hexaéméron.* Texte grec, introduction et traduction de Stanislas Giet (Paris: Les éditions du CERF, 2 éd. 1968); Mario Naldini (ed), Basilio di Cesarea, *Sulla Genesi (Omelie sull'Esamerone).* Testo critico, traduzione e commento (Milan: Fondazione Valla, 1990); Emmanuel Amand de Mendieta/St. Y. Rudberg (eds), Basilius von Caesarea, *Homilien zum Hexaemeron* (= Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der drei ersten Jahrhunderte, Neue Folge 2) (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1997). English translations: St. Basil, *Letters and Select Works.* Translated with notes by Blomfield Jackson (= A select library of Nicene and post-Nicene fathers of the Christian Church, Second series 8) (New York: Christian Literature Company/Oxford: Parker & Company, 1895) 52–107; Saint Basil, *Exegetic Homilies.* Translated by Agnes Clare Way (= The Fathers of the Church 46) (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1963) 3–150.

54. See note 6 above.

55. Cf. Daniélou (note 5) 162; Gerhard May, "Die Chronologie des Lebens und der Werke des Gregor von Nyssa," *Écriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse. Actes du Colloque de Chevetogne (22-26 septembre 1969),* édités par Marguerite Harl (Leiden: Brill, 1971) 51–67, esp. 57.

> For it is our business, I suppose, to leave nothing unexamined of all that concerns humankind ... moreover, we must fit together those statements derived from Scripture and reasoning, which by a kind of logical necessity seem to contradict each other, so that our whole subject may be consistent in train of thought and in order ... and for clearness' sake I consider it appropriate to present the discourse to you divided into chapters, that you may have a quick overview over the various arguments of the whole work.[56]

It is rare that ancient authors provide chapter headings themselves, but Gregory is rather used to doing so in other works as well, e.g., in *Contra Eunomium*,[57] and they are indeed helpful to the reader. What is, however, much more important for the understanding of his work is the double statement

1. that he wants to unite Scripture and reason, that is, theology and philosophy, which at times seem to contradict each other; and

2. that they seem to contradict each other "by a kind of logical necessity," while Gregory himself aims at presenting his discourse in a manner "consistent in train of thought and in order."

The first part of this article attempted to show that calling Gregory of Nyssa a "Christian philosopher" means that he molds philosophy and theology into a single seamless whole. These conclusions are reconfirmed by the very opening of *De hominis opificio*. Gregory is fully aware of the widespread popular impression that reason and the Biblical message contradict each other, but he cannot support those views, because for him there exists no rift between them, though he concedes that those contradictions seem to be based on a logically necessary sequence of thought (ἀκολουθία).

This term "ἀκολουθία" has a wide range of special technical meanings in Gregory and has to be carefully taken into consideration in order to understand his method of argumentation. Jean Daniélou calls it a "Leitmotiv" of his thought.[58] Gregory himself gives a good explanation of it at the beginning of his treatise *In Hexaemeron*, which is closely related to *De hominis opificio* both in subject and in time. Most probably it was composed in the same year of 379, it follows as well Basil's *In Hexaemeron*, and is addressed as

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56. *Patrologia Graeca* 44 (note 52) 128 A 11–B 12.

57. *Contra Eunomium libri*, iteratis curis edidit Wernerus Jaeger, pars prior (= Gregorii Nysseni Opera I) (Leiden: Brill, 1960) 3–21.

58. Cf. Jean Daniélou, "Akoluthia chez Grégoire de Nysse," *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 27 (1953): 219–49, esp. 221 [reprinted in Jean Daniélou, *L'être et le temps chez Grégoire de Nysse* (Leiden: Brill, 1970) 18–50. Furthermore: Monique Alexandre, "La théorie de l'exégèse dans le *De hominis opificio* et l'*In Hexaemeron*," *Écriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse. Actes du Colloque de Chevetogne (22-26 septembre 1969)*, édités par Marguerite Harl (Leiden: Brill, 1971) 87–110, esp. 95–98.

well to his brother Peter.[59] There Gregory says speaking to the reader: "You required from us to lead you through a certain sequence of reasoning to a logical conclusion."[60] A little later he adds:

> Before beginning I want to make it quite clear that I do not intend to contradict Saint Basil's teaching on the creation in any respect, even if my sequence of reasoning may arrive at a different conclusion. For his teaching remains valid and yields only to the divinely inspired Scripture …. But we may be permitted to explain the text on our part as well as we can, and to pursue our goal with God's help, namely to respect the proper meaning of the text and present it in a logical coherent fashion.[61]

Some pages further Gregory applies the given rule, when he differs from Basil's interpretation of the division of waters above and below the firmament:

> Though to me the powerful voice of our master (that is, Basil) seems to favour this interpretation, I ask the reader for indulgence, if in respect to the sequence of the phenomena I do not follow completely those who have preceded me in interpreting the universe. For the aim of our master was not to impose his own hypotheses on his audience, but to show them through his teaching some way to arrive at the truth. Thus do we search for the correct sequence of the phenomena by way of an exercise, observing the instructions he left us.[62]

At the end of the treatise, Gregory recalls and completes his methodology by saying:

> This is all that we are able to say in response to the questions you put before us. Without altering anything of the literal meaning of the text into an allegorical symbolism, nor leaving anything unexplained of those issues you laid before us, we followed the natural order of reasons as well as we could in order to examine the text more thoroughly, while respecting its literal meaning.[63]

Gregory's method of reasoning and explaining therefore consists of quite a number of elements:

59. The Greek text is edited in Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 44 (Paris, 1858) 11–160; and by Georgius H. Forbesius, *Sancti patris nostri Gregorii Nysseni Basilii Magni fratris quae supersunt omnia*. Tomus primus (Burntisland: e typographeo de Pitsligo, 1855) 4–94. The treatise has not yet been translated into English. For the dating see Daniélou (note 5) 162ff.; May (note 55) 57.

60. *Patrologia Graeca* 44 (note 52) 61 A.

61. Ibid., 68 B–D.

62. Ibid., 89 B 15–C 11.

63. Ibid., 121 D–124 B.

1. He purposely takes up and follows his brother Basil's exposition *In Hexaemeron,* and basically does not want to contradict him or deviate from his opinion. On the other hand, he does not adhere slavishly to Basil, but draws his own conclusions from the text and the natural order of things. He feels himself entitled to do so, because he regards both Basil's explanations and his own as suggestions, as attempts to arrive at the truth in order to help others along on their own way towards the truth, not as the proclamation of the eternal, divine truth about which, of course, there could be no disagreement.

2. Gregory proposes to explain the full biblical text without leaving out anything of it and without leaving anything unexplained. That is, he will neither make any selection from the full text to suit his purposes, nor will he hesitate to tackle each and every problem arising from it, however difficult it might be to explain.

3. Gregory will adhere exclusively to the literal meaning of the given text and not attempt to explain away textual problems by interpreting them in an allegorical or symbolical fashion.

4. Gregory will follow "*ἀκολουθία*" in a double manner: as the naturally given order of the material world, and as the logically coherent sequence of reasoning.

All told, one would characterize this method of Gregory as "philosophical" and "scientific." Reason alone is admissible as an argument, which of course will only take us to more or less convincing propositions of what might be true. This does not mean that Gregory does not intend to speak about a theological subject, but he will not pronounce dogmas. He intends to reason about matters of faith, which are open to discussion and disagreement. At the same time he wants to lead his reader to a point from which the reader himself may continue to reflect and form his own personal opinion. Therefore nothing else is permitted as the basis of reasoning than the pure and complete text, no selection from it, no argument apart from logic (*ἀκολουθία*), and certainly no symbolism or allegory which can more or less be selected at random. Finally, he will compare opinions, in this case above all his own to that of his brother Basil, which represents the usual scholarly approach up to today.

Yet, before proceeding, how does Gregory exactly use this key term "*ἀκολουθία*" in general? Jean Daniélou divided it in five different, though connected contexts and meanings:[64]

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64. See note 58 above.

1. in the sense of a logical sequence of thought, a necessary connection or dependence of two arguments;

2. in cosmology as a term describing the necessary sequence of phenomena determining the order of the universe, often together with the terms "τάξις—order" and "εἱρμός—sequence";

3. in history to describe the inner correlation of historical events;

4. in his trinitarian doctrine as a term to explain the order of the three divine persons: first Father, then Son, then Holy Spirit; and

5. in biblical exegesis as a description of the sequence of texts, order of arguments, or train of thought.

" "Ἀκολουθία" thus is not simply one of many philosophical terms Gregory uses, but rather the core of all his reasoning. For, "ἀκολουθία" is rooted in the very essence of God, it determines all of creation, and therefore is the only intellectual way to achieve understanding of the universe, because only when the human mind applies the ἀκολουθία of logical reasoning, can it enter the ontological ἀκολουθία of creation.

C Gregory's philosophical sources

One more aspect has to be taken into account in order to understand Gregory's method of reasoning fully. One has to determine his philosophical sources. Jean Daniélou puts it the following way:

> We may say now that *akoluthia* is one of the essential categories of Gregory's thought, and that he has given the word a fullness of meaning which it did not have before him. But he achieved this development taking into account earlier data …. Their analysis will permit us to approach the difficult question of Gregory's philosophical sources from a precise point of departure.[65]

Gregory himself grants some insight into his sources, though the indications he gives remain rather scarce. Twice, however, he expressly associates the term "ἀκολουθία" with the name of a classical philosopher, namely Aristotle. In his work *Contra Eunomium* I 46 he says about Eunomius' teacher, Aëtius:

> Aëtius studied the controversy, and, having laid a train of syllogisms from what he remembered of Aristotle, he became notorious for going beyond Arius, the father of the heresy, in the novel character of his speculations; or rather he perceived the consequences (ἀκολουθίαν) of all that Arius had advanced, and so earned his reputation of a shrewd discoverer of truths not obvious.[66]

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65. Ibid., 242.
66. *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* I (note 57) 37.

Another passage from *De anima et resurrectione* makes it even clearer:

> While the philosopher Plato reflects on the soul in a metaphorical fashion (δί
> αἰνίγματος), the philosopher who came after him (i.e., Aristotle) searched for the
> necessary sequence (ἀκολουθῶν) of the phenomena in a scientific way (τεχνικῶς).[67]

This text is fundamental both for the understanding of Gregory's sources
and his method of reasoning. Applying ἀκολουθία he refers back to Aristo-
tle and regards it as the only valid scientific method of thinking, while the
rest, even Plato's philosophy, falls under the category "metaphorical" or per-
haps "symbolical." Ἀκολουθία and τέχνη (science) belong together. On
the whole it is rather surprising to discover that Gregory, who is usually—
like most of the Fathers of the Church—regarded as a Platonic philosopher,
takes his fundamental method of thinking from Aristotle, because he does
not regard Plato as scientific. This counterpoising of the Platonic αἴνιγμα
and the Aristotelian τέχνη has a fundamental effect on Gregory's theology
which sounds very modern: He leaves behind the images, the metaphors,
the myths, and bases his reasoning exclusively on science. We already noted
this tendency, when Gregory admitted reason alone as a valid method, and
here the tendency becomes even clearer through the contraposition of Aris-
totle against Plato.

Gregory's dependence on Aristotle can be proved even more clearly. In
De interpretatione Aristotle often uses the term ἀκολουθία, for instance, 22a14
ff. where he asserts that "the truth of a proposition has as necessary conse-
quence the negation of the counter-proposition." Gregory uses the very same
principle in his argumentation against Eunomius in a trinitarian context: "If
Eunomius does not accept that the nature of the Son is immortal, he must
affirm the contrary by logical necessity."[68]

In *De generatione animarum* 784a27 Aristotle uses ἀκολουθία to describe
the causal connection between two phenomena, a usage which Gregory takes
up time and again in his *Hexaemeron*.[69]

While therefore Gregory derives the bases of his scientific method from
Aristotle, he does not rely on him exclusively, but enlarges his philosophical
knowledge and develops his method further, complementing them by the
ideas of other philosophers, for instance, Plotinus. From Aristotle he learned
the usage of ἀκολουθία in the sense of the consequent connection of two
phenomena and the logical sequence of two thoughts. At various points,
however, Gregory connects these meanings to the first reasons (ἀρχαί), say-

67. *Patrologia Graeca* 46 (note 7) 52 A.
68. *Contra Eunomium* II 609: *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* I (note 57) 404.
69. *Patrologia Graeca* 46 (note 7) 100 B, 108 D, 113 A.

ing that a complete sequence of thoughts must be related to the ἀρχηαί, the basic principles of the universe. Only if a complete connection is established, and no single link is missing in the chain, can it be said that one possesses a truly scientific certainty concerning the validity of a theory.[70]

This thought Gregory derived from Plotinus, *Enneads* I 8,2 and III 2,10. There Plotinus writes:

> Our intelligence reasons and speculates about the connection of propositions, in order to understand truth by way of this connection (*Enn.* I 8,2).

> When the first principle is given, the consequences follow automatically, but on the condition that one observes the sequence of the ensuing arguments (*Enn.* III 2,10).

Thus Gregory adds the element of speculation (θεωρία) to the sequence of thought as a method to arrive at the ἀρχηαί, the first principles of being and thought, and thus at the truth, not only at an internally consequent and consistent reasoning.

Stoicism has to be taken into account as Gregory's third philosophical source. While Aristotle provided him with the logical meaning of ἀκολουθία, and Plotinus with its relation to reality and truth, with the Stoics, Gregory proceeds another step further towards ἀκολουθία as a notion of the order inherent in nature and history, that is, the order given to the universe as a whole. Cicero, in *De natura deorum* II 32(58), reports about Zeno's philosophy:

> For he holds that the special function of an art or craft is to create and generate, and that what in the process of our arts is done by the hand in done with far more skillful craftsmanship by nature, that is, as I said, by that "craftsmanlike" fire which is the teacher of the other arts. And on this theory, while each department of nature is "craftsmanlike," in the sense of having a method or path (*via quaedam et secta*) marked out for it to follow ....[71]

It is quite clear that the Latin term "*secta*" translates the Greek "ἀκολουθία," and it is Gregory himself who proves this, because he uses the very same and complete phrase Cicero quotes from Zeno. In *De mortuis*[72] Gregory defines

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70. *In inscriptiones Psalmorum* 2, 12, ed. Jacobus McDonough, *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* V (Leiden: Brill, 1962) 126; *In Canticum Canticorum* 2, ed. Hermannus Langerbeck, *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* VI (Leiden: Brill, 1960) 54; *De mortuis*, ed. Gunterus Heil, *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* IX (Leiden: Brill, 1967) 29.

71. Translation taken from Loeb classical library, Cicero, vol. 19, with an English translation by H. Rackham (London: W. Heinemann–Cambridge/MA: Harvard University Press, 1933) 179.

72. *De mortuis* (note 70) 51, 27.

the different ages in human life as successive periods (ὁδὸς καὶ ἀκολουθία), corresponding exactly to the Latin "*via et secta*." But it is not only the same wording, it is the same thought which is expressed both in Zeno and Gregory: a consequent progress by stages of growth, which is an expression of a corresponding inner force driving it.

Gregory like Zeno understands the connection ἀκολουθία represents as the effect of a harmonizing, intelligent process. In his sermon *In suam ordinationem* he says:

> It is unreasonable that you trouble yourselves and groan regarding the connection of the necessary sequence of things. You do not know to what end all things in the universe are intended. In fact, everything must be united to the divine nature, according to a progressive order (τάξις καὶ ἀκολουθία), instituted by the artistic wisdom of him who directs the universe.[73]

What Gregory describes here is what the Stoics called "εἱμαρμένη—destiny." The Stoic Alexander has it in exactly the same way in his work *De anima libri mantissa*: "They say that everything which comes into being according to destiny, comes forth in a certain order and sequence (τάξις καὶ ἀκολουθία)."[74] However, the difference between the pure Stoic philosophy and Gregory lies in the fact that he understands that order as rooted not in the universe itself but in the transcendent wisdom that created it, God.

Among the Stoics, next to Zeno it is Poseidonius who influenced Gregory most. In *In inscriptiones Psalmorum* he writes:

> The union and the mutual affinity of all things, which are arranged with order, beauty and sequence constitute the first, archetypal and veritable music, which he who arranged the universe in harmony according to the meaning hidden in his wisdom, makes resound artistically and wisely through the continuity of the phenomena.[75]

The idea of the cosmic lyre and its harmonious music ordering the universe comes from Pythagorean philosophy, the terms "union" and "affinity," however, belong to Poseidonius.

One more philosopher can be named who influenced Gregory's method of *akoluthia*, a man whom Gregory even mentions by name once in *Contra fatum*: Galen.[76] He introduced Gregory to the idea of ἀκολουθία as the main object of philosophical speculation. In a passage of his "Treatise on the forces

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73. *Patrologia Graeca* 46 (note 7) 547 D.
74. *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta*, ed. Iohannes ab Arnim (Lipsiae: Teubner, 1921) II 266.
75. *In inscriptiones Psalmorum* 1, 3 (note 70) 32, 11–16.
76. Ed. Jacobus A. McDonough, *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* III/II (Leiden: Brill, 1987): 49, 20.

of nature" Galen distinguished several categories of people discussing nature. Amongst others he counterpoises:

> those who know what they talk about and who research the sequence of things which present themselves to them, and those who do not even try to understand, but quite inconsiderately talk about everything that comes to their mind.[77]

Galen thus describes exactly what Gregory proposes for himself in distinction to his brother Basil: his scientific method consists in the very research of the ἀκολουθία itself, everything else is regarded as popular belief. One may justly assume that we have in Galen the direct source of Gregory's methodology.

The points of contact between Galen and Gregory go even further. Among those who search for the ἀκολουθία, the consequent connection between phenomena, Galen distinguishes two further groups. One of these consists of the Epicureans, "who think that neither the soul nor nature has any substance, but that everything results from the combination of atoms."[78] They are pure empiricists "who try to prove that the phenomena make the basic principles manifest."[79] The other group consists of the Peripatetics or Stoics, "for whom nature precedes the bodies and constitutes them by way of the forces inherent in them."[80] They attach the phenomena to their basic principles.[81] Galen himself tries to reconcile the two aspects. He rejects both pure empiricism and the pure a priori point of view. He avoids the extreme position of a permanent connection between the phenomena, but accepts in it the expression of the causality of the forces of nature. Ἀκολουθία the object of scientific research is, therefore, for him not the simple sequence of phenomena, but their necessary connection.[82]

Again, Gregory's method follows Galen closely. He criticizes Eunomius for his purely deductive method in the same way that Galen criticized Asclepiades: "He observes well the reduction to the basic principles, but he neglects the facts."[83] One has to start from the facts. The same is true for Gregory, with one distinction: for him the facts are not simply given by bodily experience, but by revelation. Consequently, for Galen the organic

77. I 27 [Scripta minora III, ed. Georgius Helmreich (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1967 = Lipsiae: Teubner, 1884–1893)].

78. Ibid., I 28.

79. Ibid., I 52.

80. Ibid., I 28.

81. Ibid., I 51.

82. Ibid., III 204 f., 249.

83. Ibid., I 52.

connection and causality belong to nature; for Gregory it is the work of God the creator, who expresses himself in the forces of nature.

In conclusion, Gregory's method of ἀκολουθία is based on a new and very personal synthesis of a wide range of different ancient Greek philosophies: Aristotle, Plotinus, Stoicism (Zeno and Poseidonius), Galen. Common to all of them is the fact that they regard and apply ἀκολουθία as a scientific method, that is, reasoning bereft of metaphorical or symbolical concepts. They begin from the visible phenomena of the universe which they experience and ask about the natural, logical and necessary connections (sequence, causality) between these phenomena. In details their understanding of ἀκολουθία and their way of researching it vary, and Gregory does not follow only one of these philosophers mentioned exclusively, but selects the elements that seem appropriate to him and combines them in a new, personal way. For in one respect he distinguishes himself from all of his sources, he presupposes a divine power and guidance behind all natural ἀκολουθία. Thus ἀκολουθία in Gregory does not remain an exclusively natural force, but becomes a mirror of the meaning the creator gave his world. In this way studying ἀκολουθία does not remain a search into the inner functions of nature, but looks through them into God's plan. This is the new contribution Gregory makes to the otherwise time-honoured method of ἀκολουθία. And yet, despite all the new theological overtone it remains basically a philosophical method, though in the sense of a coherent unity of faith and reason.

D De hominis opificio, *chapter 8: The order of souls (Porphyry's tree)*

Gregory himself gave chapter 8 the heading: "Why the human being's form is upright, and that hands were given it because of speech; wherein also is a speculation on the difference of souls." At the point where Gregory is about to explain what he means when in his opinion hands are made for co-operation with reason, he stops and seems to digress to explain the order of creation as reported by the Bible:

> Let us, however, before discussing this point, consider the matter we passed over (for the subject of the order of created things almost escaped our notice), why the growth of things that spring from the earth takes precedence, and the irrational animals come next, and then, after the making of these, comes the human being. For it may be that we learn from these facts not only the obvious thought, that grass appeared to the Creator useful for the sake of animals, while the animals were made because of the human being, and that for this reason, before the animals were made their food was made, and before the human being that which was intended to minister to human life was made.[84]

84. *Patrologia Graeca* 44 (note 52) 144 C 9–D 5.

In fact, Gregory does not digress, but introduces the topic in a rhetorically adequate manner. Of course, he could have ordered his argumentation "systematically," that is, by explaining the order of creation and souls first and then applying it to the appearance of the human being. But then he would not have held the attention of the reader, because the reader would not have known why Gregory was treating the topic at length. So it is a rhetorical technique and at the same time a necessity to embed the theme of the order of creation and souls into the topic of the shape and function of the members of the human body.

But there is more to the method as Gregory introduces the new theme. First of all: in the general introduction to the treatise he promised that he would explain the complete text of Genesis, and that he would exclusively depart from the literal meaning of it without taking refuge in allegory or symbolism. However, in promising this, Gregory does not intend to rely on his own, personal exegetical method; he is rather stating, how a correct exegesis of a text should be carried out. Therefore, the parenthesis "for the subject of the order of created things almost escaped our notice" is not to be understood as a personal remark such as "sorry, I nearly forgot, we have to stop for a moment and backtrack," but as the teaching of the adequate exegetical inquiry into the text: "Explaining the single verses concerning the way in which plants, animals and human beings were created, one can easily forget to inquire after the meaning of the order in which they were created, but one must not. This question, too, belongs to the adequate complete treatment of the text. Having reminded you of this I shall now do it as an example for your own benefit."

Gregory first draws the most obvious literal meaning from the text, that is, the natural order of plants, animals and human beings, because they live on one another in turn. For simple physiological reasons there could not have been another order to their creation. However, and this is part of Gregory's method of thinking as he explained it more fully in *De anima et resurrectione,* the phenomena of the body lead to the understanding of the soul. Therefore, the physiological explanation of the order of the creation of beings is the obvious one and certainly correct, but it is only the outer shell of a deeper inner meaning: it teaches something about souls. Thus Gregory continues:

> But it seems to me that by these facts Moses reveals a hidden doctrine, and secretly delivers that wisdom concerning the soul, of which the learning that is without had indeed some imagination, but no clear comprehension. His discourse teaches us that the power of life and soul may be considered in three divisions. For one is only power of growth and nutrition supplying what is suitable for the bodies that are nourished, which is called the vegetative soul, and is to be seen in plants; for we may perceive in growing plants a certain vital power destitute of sense. Then there is another form of life besides

this, which, while it includes the form above mentioned, possesses in addition the power of management according to sense. This is to be found in the nature of the irrational animals; for they are not only the subjects of nourishment and growth, but also have the activity of sense and perception. But perfect bodily life is seen in the rational (I mean the human) nature, which both is nourished and endowed with sense, and also partakes of reason and is ordered by mind.[85]

Gregory's exposition of the threefold order of souls reports Stoic doctrine. "Soul" is understood as the life-giving force of every animate being—we would say of every biological life form. The inclusive order of souls is based on the observation that apparently the human being comprises all of the characteristics given to plants and animals, and moreover is endowed with particular capacities such as reason and speech. Animals lack this, but still retain the advantage of movement and of the active senses, while plants only nourish themselves, grow and procreate without moving or displaying active senses. The human being as the only one of these creatures that is endowed with an intellect and therefore able to reflect on itself, considers this order as an ascending hierarchy, in which the respective higher grade incorporates the lower one, and regards itself as the "crown of creation":

kind of soul	vital force	characteristics	deficiencies
human	intellect ($\nu o \tilde{u}s$)	nourishment, growth, active senses, and reason	
animal	soul ($\psi v \chi \acute{\eta}$)	nourishment, growth, and active senses	reason
vegetative	nature ($\phi \acute{v} \sigma \iota s$)	nourishment and growth	active senses and reason

Gregory makes it even clearer by taking up the subject a second time with a different model of explanation:
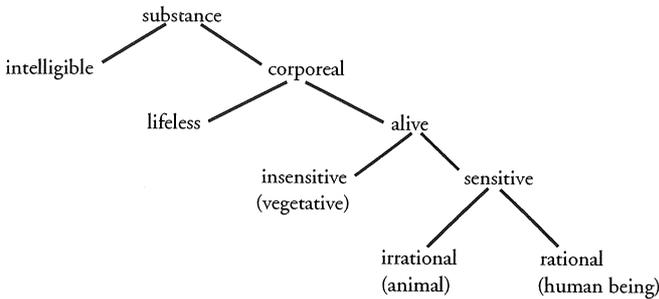
We might make a division of our subject in some such way as this. Of things existing, some are intellectual, some corporeal. Let us leave alone for the present the division of the intellectual according to its properties, for our argument is not concerned with these. Of the corporeal, one part is entirely devoid of life, and the other part shares in vital energy. Of a living body, again, part has sense conjoined with life, and part is without sense: lastly, that which has sense is again divided into rational and irrational ....

For the rational animal, the human being, is blended of every form of soul. He is nourished by the vegetative kind of soul, and to the faculty of growth was added that of sense, which stands midway, if we regard its peculiar nature, between the intellectual and the more material essence ....

85. Ibid., 144 D 5–145 A 9.

There occurs then a certain alliance and commixture of the intellectual essence with the subtle and enlightened element of the sensitive nature, so that the human being consists of these three: as we are taught by the apostle in what he says to the Ephesians,[86] praying for them that the complete grace of their "body and soul and spirit" may be preserved at the coming of the Lord; using the word "body" for the nutritive part, and denoting the sensitive by the word "soul," and the intellectual by "spirit."[87]

This now is a different layout of the same doctrine which since me-diaeval times is called "the Porphyrian Tree," because, if one displays it graphi-cally, it branches out from top to bottom:

```
                    substance
                   /         \
      intelligible            corporeal
                             /        \
                       lifeless        alive
                                      /     \
                          insensitive        sensitive
                          (vegetative)      /         \
                                    irrational         rational
                                    (animal)           (human being)
```

Gregory presents an exact copy of Porphyry's doctrine of the hierarchy of beings as the latter explains it in chapter 2 of his *Isagoge* to Aristotle's *Catego-ries*. This doctrine is more comprehensive than the threefold scheme Gregory first deducted from the biblical text, because it comprises the non-animated substances as well and thus takes every kind of being in the universe into account. There cannot be any doubt as to the fact that Gregory took this philosophical explanation from Porphyry, possibly mediated by Poseidonius, but what is decisive is the fact that he does not only use it in order to explain the biblical text, but at the end inserts a quotation from St Paul. As in *De anima et resurrectione* Gregory thereby introduces the biblical message, rev-elation as the rule for verifying the validity of the philosophical theory. For the quotation from St Paul opens a series of further quotations from Scrip-ture that agree with the Porphyrian hierarchy of souls: Mk. 12.28–34 "love God with all your heart, soul and mind," and 1 Cor 2.14–16 together with 3.1–3 "carnal—natural—spiritual."

Scripture, therefore, is both the foundation and the goal of Gregory's philosophical discourse. Philosophy is embedded in the Bible, and therefore not only acceptable, but outstandingly useful, as long as it stands in agree-

86. All manuscripts have "Ephesians"; the quotation, however, is taken from 1 Thess 5.23.
87. *Patrologia Graeca* 44 (note 52) 145 A 9–D 2.

ment with the biblical word. Scripture teaches, philosophy provides the tools
to explain its teaching:

> If, therefore, Scripture tells us that the human race was made last, after every animate
> being, the lawgiver is doing nothing else than declaring to us the doctrine of the soul,
> considering that what is perfect comes last, according to a certain necessary sequence in
> the order of things. For the other souls are included in the rational soul just as the
> vegetative form surely exists in the sensitive form, and the latter is conceived only in
> connection with what is material. Thus we may suppose that nature makes an ascent as
> it were by steps—I mean the various properties of life—from the lower to the perfect
> form.[88]

The condition of this double reasoning of Gregory always is his fundamen-
tal method of ἀκολουθία. As the *akoluthia* of all the universe, inanimate,
animate, and intellectual is rooted in the reality of its creator, and therefore
by necessity follows his rules, *akoluthia* permits the mind to understand re-
ality of every kind, even God, because all abide by the same rules.

E. De hominis opificio, *chapter 16: The human intellect as God's image*

In *De anima et resurrectione* Gregory drew rather heavily for his argumen-
tation on the traditional philosophical image of human beings as micro-
cosms, because they reunite in themselves the same four elements the uni-
verse is made of: fire, water, earth and air. This imagery presented Gregory
with the strongest argument to prove the existence of an immaterial human
soul. For, if there were no immaterial soul guiding the human body, neither
could there be a spiritual God directing the universe. From there he went on
to show that the phenomena both of the macrocosm of the universe and the
microcosm of the human being point at the presence of a non-material guid-
ing principle.

In chapter 16 of *De hominis opificio,* however, Gregory flatly refuses to
accept this comparison, because it does not say anything special about the
particular dignity and role of the human race.[89] Every animate being on
earth consists of the very same four basic elements of the universe, so that a
plant or an animal may be called a microcosm as well. And beyond that:
What is so great about being compared to a universe, which is going to
decay with each and everything in it, with all its "microcosms"?

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88. Ibid., 148 B 2–C 1.

89. Cf. Eugenio Corsini, "L'harmonie du monde et l'homme microcosme dans le *De hominis
opificio,"Epektasis. Mélanges patristiques offerts au Cardinal Jean Daniélou*, publiées par Jacques
Fontaine et Charles Kannengiesser (Paris, 1972) 455–62.

Let us now resume our consideration of the Divine word, "Let us make the human race in our image, after our likeness" (Gen. 1.26). How mean and how unworthy of the majesty of the human being are the phantasies of some pagan writers, who thought to extol humanity by their comparison of it to this world. For they say that the human being is a microcosm, composed of the same elements as the universe. Those who bestow on human nature such praise as this, forget that they are dignifying the human being with the attributes of the gnat and the mouse. For they too are composed of these four elements—because assuredly about the animated nature of every existing thing we behold a part, greater or less, of those elements without which it is not natural that any sensitive being should exist. What great thing is there, then, in the being of the human accounted a representation and likeness of the world—of the heaven that passes away, of the earth that changes, of all things that they contain, which pass away with the departure of that which encompasses them? [90]

One wonders how Gregory can change his mind so radically in two treatises so closely related both in subject and in time. However, as *De anima et resurrectione* certainly is the earlier, *De hominis opificio* the latter treatise of the two, there is no doubt that Gregory moves from the acceptance to the refusal of the image. But why? The reason seems to be *akoluthia* once again, which plays a much stronger, even a methodically exclusive role in *De hominis opificio*. While Gregory in *De anima et resurrectione* still accepted a metaphorical philosophical argumentation by way of comparisons and images, at the beginning of *De hominis opificio* he had explicitly declared: "Without altering anything of the literal meaning of the text into an allegorical symbolism ... we followed the natural order of reasons."[91]

It is true that already in *De anima et resurrectione* Gregory had remarked on the difference of Plato's metaphorical philosophy over against Aristotle's logic: "While the philosopher Plato reflects on the soul in a metaphorical fashion, the philosopher coming after him (i.e., Aristotle) searched for the necessary sequence of the phenomena in a scientific way."[92] But he did not yet consider Aristotle's approach the only admissible one. In *De hominis opificio* this decision has been taken, and indeed, the image of the human being as a microcosm does not stand up to analytical reasoning, because logical deduction (*akoluthia*) shows that the comparison to the elements of the universe does not express anything special for the human being over against all other non-human animate life forms. It seems therefore as if Gregory's change of mind in so short a time comes from his change of method, or at least of a further refinement and more consequent application of it which now excludes different approaches.

90. Ibid., 178 D 1–179 B 2.
91. Ibid., 121 D–124 B.
92. *Patrologia Graeca* 46 (note 7) 52 A.

What then is a worthy description of the unique dignity of the human race over against all other creatures? Nothing else than the quotation from Gen. 1.26 Gregory opened the chapter with: "Let us make the human race according to our image and likeness." The interpretation of this biblical verse, of course, has a long history right from the dawn of Christian theology, and especially in respect to the Platonic philosophy which even before Christianity spoke of the imitation and likeness of God as the aim of all human beings.[93] One need only recall the famous passage from Plato's *Theaetetes* 176 A: "Flight from the world aims at becoming similar to God as far as possible. Likeness, however, means to be just and holy with consideration."

Speaking of the human likeness to God one notes immediately, of course, the different approaches. Platonism urges humans to become like God, the Christian religion teaches, that from the very beginning all humans are created in the likeness of God. Platonism speaks of moving upwardly from the human towards God, the Bible of a downward movement from God to the human being. Though Gregory does not mention this difference expressly, this inversion of status and directions creates a problem which he has to address immediately. While the Platonic imagery presupposes the difference between the divine and the human, which the human side has to try to overcome, the presupposition of a similarity between God and the human being as a primevally established fact, poses a serious problem:

> What, therefore, you will perhaps say, is the definition of the image? How is the incorporeal likened to the body? How is the temporal like the eternal? That which is mutable by change like to the immutable? That which is subject to passion and corruption to the impassible and corruptible? That which constantly dwells with evil, and grows up with it, to that which is absolutely free from evil? There is a great difference between that which is conceived in the archetype, and a thing which has been made in its image …. How then is the human, this mortal, passible, short-lived being, the image of that nature which is immortal, pure, and everlasting?[94]

93. Cf. Hubert Merki, "Ebenbildlichkeit," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 4 (1959): 459–79; Gerhart B. Ladner, "Eikon," Ibid., 771–86; J. Jervell et al., "Bild Gottes," *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 6 (1980): 491–515; Adalbert Hamman, *L'homme image de Dieu. Essai d'une anthropologie chrétienne dans l'église des cinq premiers siècles* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1987). For Gregory of Nyssa see esp. J. T. Muckle, "The Doctrine of St. Gregory of Nyssa on Man as the Image of God," *Mediaeval Studies* 7 (1945): 175–212; Roger Leys, *L'image de Dieu chez Saint Grégoire de Nysse* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1951); Merki (note 51); C. Militello, "La categoria di "immagine" nel περὶ κατασκευῆς ἀνθρώπου di Gregorio di Nissa. Per una antropologia cristiana," O Theologos, *Cultura cristiana di Sicilia* 1/1–3 (1974): 107–72. For Plato and philosophy in general see Culbert Gerow Rutenber, *The doctrine of the imitation of God in Plato* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1946); Dietrich Roloff, *Gottähnlichkeit, Vergöttlichung und Erhöhung zum seligen Leben. Untersuchungen zur Herkunft der platonischen Angleichung an Gott* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970); Dietrich Roloff, "Angleichung an Gott," *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* 1 (1971): 307–10; D. Schlueter, "Bild I," Ibid., 913–15.

94. *Patrologia Graeca* 44 (note 52) 179 B 6–C 7.

The solution Gregory finds to this problem is highly original. First, he quotes the complete text of Gen. 1.26–27: "Let us make the human race in our image and likeness. And God created the human race; in the image of God he created it; he created it male and female." The first—traditional—conclusion Gregory draws from the text is that *Genesis* expressly repeats the noun "in the image of God" instead of using a personal pronoun "in his own image" in order to indicate that it refers to the Son of God, so that the human race is created in the image of the Son of God who is God in the same way as his Father—thus refuting in passing all those heresies which do not acknowledge the full deity of the Son.

However, God and the Son of God are neither male nor female, a point which Gregory sees proven by St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians 3.28: "in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female." However, this principle leads consequently to a further question: how does humanity divided into two sexes resemble the image of God? Once again—true to his method—Gregory returns to the wording of the text. First the text speaks of the creation of the human race in the image of God, and only afterwards, as if by way of an afterthought, it adds "male and female he created them." This, Gregory says, can mean nothing else but a double creation of humankind, one made like God, one divided into sexes:

> The Divine and incorporeal nature, and the irrational life of beasts are separated from each other as extremes, human nature is the mean between them. For in the compound nature of the human being we may behold a part of each of the natures I have mentioned—of the Divine, the rational and intelligent element, which does not admit the distinction of male and female; of the irrational, our bodily form and structure, divided into male and female.[95]

So it is the human intellect, the rational part, which distinguishes the human being from every other animate being on earth, and which resembles God. If one thinks about it more closely, it is quite obvious: the mind is immortal, unlimited, capable of all that is good, of all virtue and wisdom, in short, it is like God.

Yet, saying this creates a further problem: if the human mind possesses the very same characteristics as God, why do we not say explicitly that it is "divine," but only that it is "like God"? To respond to this question Gregory departs from the logic of the word "image." "Image" by definition denotes a partial, not a full identity with the archetype, resemblance in some part and difference in others, as for instance the Emperor's image on a coin (cf. Mt. 22.20–21: "give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's"). The main difference between God and his image, the human intellect, consists in two respects:

95. Ibid., 182 C 1–6.

1. God is uncreated, the human mind is created. The human mind is immortal, that is, without end, God, however, is eternal, that is, without beginning and end;

2. God is immutable, the human mind undergoes changes. God is and remains forever good, he cannot and will not deviate from his very nature. The human mind, however, is good by nature, but capable and even very much inclined to lapse from it. But there is even more: not only does the capacity and proclivity for change make the human mind different, but also and especially the very fact that it is created means that it once changed from non-being to being, a change which God never underwent and will never undergo.

In the course of these arguments Gregory does not mention philosophy expressly, but there can be no doubt that his theology of an intellectual human image of God is heavily influenced by Platonic philosophy. With it he circumvents many problems other theologians run into, for instance, the claim that men represent the image of God, women, however, the image of men;[96] or that with the fall the image was lost and had to be regained by salvation.[97] And by his literal and consequently logical method of interpretation he avoids another problem—Gregory explains it at length in the subsequent chapter 17—that is, the question of procreation as a consequence of original sin.[98] Gregory's answer is: Gen. 1.27–28 clearly testifies to the fact that sexual procreation was instituted by the very creation of the human race as male and female and the simultaneous command of multiplication—while they dwelt in paradisiacal union with God, long before the fall.

Conclusion

In his treatise *De hominis opificio* Gregory of Nyssa proves himself to be very knowledgeable in ancient philosophy, its branches and authors. He knows Plato, Aristotle, the Neoplatonists Plotinus and Porphyry, the Stoics Zeno, Poseidonius, and Galen. He takes all of them into account, but selects carefully and finally builds his own philosophy from them, in part criticizing his sources, in part taking over what he considers valid and valuable, and finally developing his sources further. In his method, which is concisely described by the word "*akoluthia,*" he relies basically on Aristotle, because he considers

96. Following St Paul, 1 Cor 11, 7: "A man ... is the image of God and reflects God's glory; but woman is the reflection of man's glory."

97. Cf. e.g., Basil, *Asceticon* 1, 1 (PG 31, 869 D); Maximos Aghiorgoussis, "Applications of the theme 'Eikon Theou' (Image of God) according to Saint Basil the Great," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 21 (1976): 265–88, esp. 276ff.

98. Cf. Ernest McClear, "The Fall of Man and Original Sin in the Theology of Gregory of Nyssa," *Theological Studies* 9 (1948): 175–212; Fernand Floëri, "Le sens de la "division des sexes" chez Grégoire de Nysse," *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 27 (1953): 105–11.

his method as "scientific," while he rejects Plato, whose method seems to him too "metaphorical."

Gregory's main, original achievement in this process consists in the subordination of all his thought to the method of "*akoluthia*," much more than any of the philosophers before him did and more than scholars hitherto recognised. This method, exclusively applied, leads him to arrive at new conclusions even over against his much venerated older brother and "teacher," Basil. It permits him to read the biblical text without any prejudices, because only the text and the full text counts, analyzed by logic. This new method, finally, produces totally new insights into longstanding traditional themes like the creation of humankind in the likeness of God, wherein he appears to be a very modern thinker, that is close to the opinions of our own times. The reason for this, however, is exactly as Gregory states it: the timeless principle *akoluthia,* which is present in God, and is given by God to all of his creation, especially to the human mind, created in his image and likeness.