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THE UNITY, POWER AND ENERGY OF THE HOLY TRINITY IN THE THEOLOGY OF GREGORY OF NYSSA

Abstract. The article discusses the problem of the ontological distinction between God's transcendence and immanence in the theological thought of Gregory of Nyssa, a Church Father of the 4th century. The author presents the main conceptual and terminological apparatuses that Gregory used in his antinomic approach to the complex interpretation of apophatic and kataphatic images of God. He analyzes the main characteristics of these two dimensions of the nature of God. Special attention is paid to the analysis of the Trinitarian approach in answering the question: how can God, who is completely ontologically removed from creation, be at the same time actively present in the world and filling it. In this context the author analyzes the key notions, which express the ontological remoteness of the divine essence of the Holy Trinity and God's active nearness in relation to created being.

Keywords: Gregory of Nyssa, apophatic, kataphatic, essence, power, energy, divine work, antinomy

The theological problem of the ontological link between the transcendence and immanence of God the Creator in relation to the world created by Him¹, between the “hiddenness” and “openness” of the omnipresent Trinity, has an exceptional place in Christian thought. Its correct interpretation is of primary importance for substantiating the main truths of the Christian faith, namely: the creation of the world; the nature of God's Revelation and Tradition; the presence of the Triune God in the Church and the creative and saving omnipresence of the Creator in creation. The understanding of this problem is also decisive for the understanding of the sacramentological truth about the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ, in whom the deification of the human being takes place. This is no less important for understanding the anthropological and epistemological foundations of the spiritual path of a Christian, their experience of knowing God, the participation of human person in God's nature (cf. 2 Pe 1: 4) and their adoption (cf. Io 1: 12; Gal 3: 26) by the Heavenly Father. One of the best theological explanations and

¹ Cf. K. ANATOLIOS, *Athanasius. The Coherence of his Thought*, London–New York 1998, p. 17.

conceptual representations of the problem of distinguishing between the simultaneous essential remoteness of the Holy Trinity and the closeness of the Creator to the created world can be found in the works of Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335 – c. 395).

The development of apophatic theology, and the conceptual understanding of creation, animation, and maintenance of the entire universe, as well as the divine omnipresence, is connected in the works of the Cappadocians with their attempts to answer questions that arose in the context of the Trinitarian discussions of that time.

These patristic writers defended the unity of the three hypostases of the Holy Trinity and emphasized the distinction between essence (οὐσία) and persons (ὑπόστασις)². The purpose of this article is to investigate and reveal the main aspects of the theological method of one of the Cappadocian theologians, namely Gregory of Nyssa, who by antinomously combining the apophatic and kataphatic ways of theology, substantiated the essential “bridge” between God who is “hidden” in His essence, and at the same time is a God who is “open” to communion in His various manifestations. To achieve the goal of this study, we will consider Gregory’s apophatic theological approach and the terminology he uses to describe the incomprehensible nature of God. We will also consider the method proposed by Gregory for expressing God’s activity in the world, and we will present his understanding of divine energy and power. Particular attention will be paid to the antinomian method of Gregory of Nyssa and its significance for the interpretation of theognosis.

In his understanding of the Triune nature of God³, Gregory of Nyssa offers a rather original approach, which is based on three defining elements: biblical, philosophical⁴, and theological⁵. Speaking about the transcendence of God’s being⁶, Gregory, on the one hand, follows Platonic thought, in which the Absolute exists in the realm “beyond being”, while on the other hand, his thinking about God’s transcendence is closely related to the classical biblical understanding of God, who “is above all (ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων θεός)” (Rom 9: 5)⁷. Although Gregory was influenced by Neoplatonism, he did not follow classical metaphysics. The divine Absolute surpasses all that exists and cannot be limited by anything in its nature. Nevertheless,

² For a more detailed consideration of the ousia–hypostasis distinction in the theological doctrine of the Cappadocians see J. ZACHUBER, *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa. Philosophical Background and Theological Significance*, Leiden 2014, p. 70–79.

³ For more information on this topic, see B. POTTIER, *Dieu et le Christ selon Grégoire de Nysse. Etude systématique du “Contre Eunome” avec traduction inédite des extraits d’Eunome*, Namur 1994.

⁴ Regarding the philosophical sources of the theology of Gregory of Nyssa, see J. ZACHUBER, *Human Nature...*, p. 8–12.

⁵ Cf. A. MEREDITH, *Gregory of Nyssa*, London–New York 1999, p. 17.

⁶ On divine transcendence, see B.E. DALEY, *Divine Transcendence and Human Transformation: Gregory of Nyssa’s Anti-Apollinarian Christology*, MTh 18, 2002, p. 4.

⁷ Cf. A. MEREDITH, *Gregory of Nyssa...*, p. 17–18.

along with this, Gregory clearly emphasizes the personal dimension of God's life⁸. Yet another difference between his theology and the philosophical concepts of the Neoplatonists and Philo of Alexandria, is the radical ontological opposition of the Triune Creator and creation, which cannot be weakened by any mediation⁹. In the theological thought of Gregory, the distinction between the Creator and His creation is extremely important. Some researchers¹⁰ of Gregory's theological heritage consider the understanding of this problem to be one of his most important theological contributions. Here we have in mind the liaison and intercorrelation between God's infinity, on the one hand, and the variability of human existence, on the other, an intercorrelation that can serve as a kind of key to understanding both the soteriology and the anthropology of Gregory of Nyssa. The changeability of creation and the human being, as its center and summit, placed in contrast to the immutability of God, is a constitutive feature of all created being. The human person is called to boundless progress in perfection and knowledge of God and His infinite goodness¹¹. The radical distinction between the unchanging Creator and the changing creation is one of the most fundamental features of the ontology and Triadology of Gregory of Nyssa¹², but this ontology cannot be fully and systematically understood without an understanding of God's pervasive and providential presence in the world, which saves, creatively renews and transforms every human being and the whole universe.

Creation vs Creator: the way of denial

The problem of the knowledge of God in His transcendence and immanence cannot be understood outside the context of the polemic with Eunomius¹³, who emphasized the possibility of knowing God's essence. Eunomius argued that God reveals himself *ad extra* by His essence, which has only one true and suitable name, expressed by the concept of "unbornness" (ἀγεννησία)¹⁴. This naming of God according to Eunomius is not just human reasoning (κατ' ἐπίνοιαν), but an

⁸ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 17–18, 142.

⁹ H. U. VON BALTHASAR, *Presence and Thought. Essay on the Religious Philosophy of Gregory of Nyssa*, San Francisco 1995, p. 18. Also see S. STRĘKOWSKI, *Sofiologia św. Grzegorza z Nyssy. Elementy teologii trynitarniej i antropologii w Homiliach do Pieśni nad Pieśniami*, Kraków 2006, p. 113–118.

¹⁰ See E. FERGUSON, *God's Infinity and Man's Mutability. Perpetual Progress According to Gregory of Nyssa*, GOTR 18, 1973, p. 59–78.

¹¹ More on the concept of infinite goodness, which derives from God's infinity, see M. PRZYSZYCHOWSKA, *Nauka o łasce w dziełach św. Grzegorza z Nyssy*, Kraków 2010.

¹² See *ibidem*, p. 110–111.

¹³ For details on the polemic of Gregory of Nyssa with Eunomius, see J. ZACHHUBER, *Human Nature...*, p. 93–122.

¹⁴ GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Contra Eunomium*, 2, 15, ed. W. JAEGER, [in:] *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol. I–II, Leiden 1960 (cetera: GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Contra Eunomium*), p. 231.

attempt to express the very essence of God¹⁵. All other concepts by which people call God are only figments of the mind, and they should be rejected as worthless¹⁶. The discussion between Gregory and Eunomius about the essence of God illustrates that the problem of the unknowability of God, the interpretation of revelation, and by extension, the possibility of knowing God, was one of the crucial points in the entire controversy¹⁷.

Gregory of Nyssa scoffs at the approach of Eunomius, for whom God's transcendence consists in a simple detachment and non-interference in human life. In Eunomius' interpretation of the nature of God he adhered to the Neoplatonist emphasis on the inferiority of the effect to the cause. All divine activity *ad extra* is not only strictly separated, but also ontologically inferior to its cause – the essence of Triune God. Eunomius' emphasis on the fact that God's transcendence is primary "regarding" and independent "of" His activity in the world, confronts Gregory's approach of simultaneously maintaining God's transcendence and His immanent activity. According to the soteriological narrative, Gregory defines divine activity as the power of humble love¹⁸. The bishop of Nyssa criticizes the conceptual position of Eunomius, according to which what is inert in philanthropy (φιλανθρωπία) is considered higher than what is active (ἐνεργήσαντος)¹⁹. The main difference between Gregory's and Eunomius' approaches to this issue lies in the denial that *divine activity per se is derived from divine being, and that the simplicity of God's essence denies any activity*²⁰. For Gregory it is an obvious truth that God's being presupposes an effective manifestation of His love²¹ and that whatever the cause is, so is its effect. A perfect cause has a perfect effect²².

Rejecting the arguments of Eunomius, Gregory of Nyssa emphasizes two main theses: God's unknowability by weak and limited human cognitive abilities and God's infinity and limitlessness in view of the inherent inner mystery of God, the Source of the origin of all that exists²³. He depicts the mystery of the divine being,

¹⁵ Cf. GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Contra Eunomium*, 2, 44, p. 238.26–29.

¹⁶ For more details on the linguistic and philosophical aspects of the controversy regarding the problem of naming God, see E. HEINE, *Perfection in the Virtuous Life. A Study in the Relationship between Edification and Polemical Theology in Gregory of Nyssa's De Vita Moysis*, Cambridge 1975, p. 136–142.

¹⁷ For more details see *ibidem*, p. 148–158.

¹⁸ Cf. K. ANATOLIOS, *Retrieving Nicaea. The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine*, Grand Rapids 2011, p. 188.

¹⁹ Cf. GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Contra Eunomium*, 3, 10, p. 36.

²⁰ K. ANATOLIOS, *Retrieving Nicaea...*, p. 190.

²¹ Cf. D.L. BALAS, *Metousia Theou: Man's Participation in God's Perfections according to Saint Gregory of Nyssa*, Rome 1966, p. 84.

²² Cf. K. ANATOLIOS, *Retrieving Nicaea...*, p. 190.

²³ Cf. A. MEREDITH, *Gregory of Nyssa...*, p. 13.

His unrecognizability, and ineffability in his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*²⁴. No name, concept or attempt at understanding, is adequate and in fact hinders the seeker after God, Who is beyond anything that can be named, defined, conceived or expressed in any way²⁵. The unknowability of God's nature is allegorically depicted by the bishop of Nyssa in the image of Abraham, who leaves his homeland, that is, everything earthly, everything that was familiar to him, to enter into the mysterious dialogic process of the knowledge of God. Gregory interprets the exodus from his native land as the need to get rid of earthly thinking, the need to rise, as far as possible, above the limitations of nature. With the help of the allegorical image of Abraham, Gregory emphasizes the impossibility of approaching God. Only faith can be the mediator that leads the God-hungry mind to unity with the immeasurable nature of the divine being. Gregory speaks in a similar way about Moses, who had to leave behind everything external that is perceived by the senses and the mind. God appears to Moses, first of all, in the form of fire, and then in darkness²⁶. The nature of God surpasses all reason (διάνοιαν), but a human being remains within their own limitations. Therefore, it is sager not to investigate the essence of God, since the desire to know the unknowable paves the way to false interpretations and then to the acceptance of these false interpretations as truth²⁷. Therefore in his apophatic approach, Gregory uses allegories to present a defining truth: to know God means to understand the truth about His unknowability²⁸.

The main characteristic of the immanent reality of God's created world is negative: creation is not God²⁹. The comparison of the Creator and creation reveals the ontological polarity between the two forms of being. One of the main features of everything that appeared in the process of creation is spatiality (διάστημα). In contrast, the application of the diastemic characteristic to the extra spatial God-Creator is absolutely impossible³⁰. From the beginning, all creation is limited by its diastemic intervality and otherness. This "otherness" is embedded in the essence of world's reality and is one of its most important constitutive characteristics. The main diastemic characteristic of the world is that *it is all in its integrity, and each creature in it represents a separate ontological diastema – something separated from other things*³¹. The diastemic nature of creation characterizes the inherent dis-

²⁴ For more information about the apophatic theology of Gregory of Nyssa, see S. STRĘKOWSKI, *Sofiologia św. Grzegorza z Nyssy...*, p. 110–143.

²⁵ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 111.

²⁶ Cf. E. HEINE, *Perfection...*, p. 145.

²⁷ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 146–147.

²⁸ Cf. S. STRĘKOWSKI, *Sofiologia św. Grzegorza z Nyssy...*, p. 112.

²⁹ Regarding the teaching of Gregory of Nyssa on the creation of the world, see J. ZACHNIBER, *Human Nature...*, p. 145–186.

³⁰ H. U. VON BALTHASAR, *Presence and Thought...*, p. 27–28.

³¹ Л. КАРФИКОВА, *Святитель Григорий Нисский. Бесконечность Бога и бесконечный путь к Нему человека*, trans. И. БЕЙ, Київ 2012, p. 284.

tance of otherness not only spatially, but also temporally³², and at the same time characterizes the mutual limitation of various dimensions of created being³³.

Apothatic terminology

Gregory of Nyssa uses a rich store of apothatic terminology to illustrate the impossibility for a human being to express who God is. The Divine nature of the Holy Trinity has no ontological kinship with lower created time-space being. Gregory often emphasizes this, using a number of terms indicating the radical ontological separation between the Creator and creation. The nature of God cannot be described (ἀπερίγραφος)³⁴, cannot be depicted by any color (οὐ χροιάν) or any form (οὐ μορφῆς) and size (οὐ μέγετος)³⁵. Divine nature is uniform and indivisible (ἀπλοῦς δὲ ὢν καὶ ἀμερῆς καὶ ἀσύνθετος)³⁶, passionless (ἀπαθὲς)³⁷ and incomprehensible to human thought (ἀπρόσιτος)³⁸. Along with the Eunomian concept of “unborn (ἀγέννητον)”, Gregory uses a number of other negative names, depicting with them the same transcendental reality of the inaccessible essence of the Holy Trinity and its transcendence relating to everything that God is not. They include: incorruptibility (ἀφθαρσία)³⁹, immutability (ἀτρεπτος, ἀναλλοίωτος), immortality (ἀθάνατος), eternity (ἀτελεύτητος) and omnipotence (παντοκράτωρ)⁴⁰. For the bishop of Nyssa, God’s names express what God is not, or indicate the diversity of His energies⁴¹. Positive names, meanings, characteristics that we can use for God, refer to the fact that we can know certain things “around (περὶ)” God⁴². And *we know according to what God’s energies teach us*⁴³.

Gregory of Nyssa relied on the thought of Basil the Great, who denied the possibility of verbal expression of both God and any created essence and rejected the

³² For more information about the concept of being and time in the theological thought of Gregory of Nyssa, see J. DANIELOU, *L'être et le temps chez Grégoire de Nysse*, Leiden 1970.

³³ See Л. КАРФИКОВА, *Святитель Григорий Нисский...*, p. 284–285.

³⁴ GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Ad Graecos ex communibus notionibus*, 27, 23, ed. F. MUELLER, [in:] *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol. III.1, Leiden 1958, p. 27.

³⁵ GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *In Canticum canticorum*, homiliae 12, 1028 M, 5–15, ed. H. LANGERBECK, [in:] *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol. VI, Leiden 1960 (cetera: GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *In Canticum canticorum*), p. 357.

³⁶ GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Antirrheticus adversus Apollinarium*, 3, 1, 30, ed. F. MUELLER, [in:] *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol. III.1... (cetera: GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Antirrheticus adversus Apollinarium*), p. 136.

³⁷ GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Antirrheticus adversus Apollinarium*, 3, 1, 21, p. 136.

³⁸ GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *In Canticum canticorum*, homiliae 1, 773 M, 9, p. 27.

³⁹ GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Contra Eunomium*, 2, 192, 27–29, p. 280.

⁴⁰ GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Contra Eunomium*, 2, 147, 9–12, p. 268.

⁴¹ GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Contra Eunomium*, 2, 149, 25–29, p. 268.

⁴² See E.D. MOUTSOULAS, “Essence” et “Energies” de Dieu selon St. Gregoire de Nysse, [in:] *SP*, vol. XVIII.3, Leuven 1983, p. 521.

⁴³ GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Contra Eunomium*, 2, 150, 7–8, p. 269.

main argument of Eunomius that “unborn” is the most adequate name of God⁴⁴. Gregory continues to develop this approach and especially emphasizes the apophatic categories of the unreachable essence of God for human thought and language. Following this path, he develops the theory of language that can be used to talk about the mystery of the divine being, by deeply understanding the concept of God’s infinity⁴⁵. He criticizes Eunomius, who associated the “unbornness” of God with His very essence, noting that with such an approach Eunomius *wants to limit the unlimited nature to a single expression* (προσηγορία μιᾶ τὴν ἀόριστον φύσιν περιμετροῦσι)⁴⁶. It is impossible that *this word contains all the greatness of the Godhead* (ἅπαν τὸ μεγαλεῖον τῆς θεότητος)⁴⁷.

It is obvious, for Gregory, that if a human being cannot understand and express the essence of created things, then, even more so, God’s unlimited, incomprehensible and uncreated essence is beyond the limits of any knowledge, comprehension and verbal expression. In the treatise *Against Eunomius* he deepens this topic, emphasizing that between the eternal God and the created human mind there is a “huge and insurmountable barrier”⁴⁸ that separates them, and thereby pointing to the radical otherness of the nature of creation in relation to the nature of the Creator. On the one hand, there is the limitlessness, “beginninglessness,” infinity, eternity of the divine being, and on the other hand – the limitation in size, time, space, place, the beginning and end of the created world⁴⁹. The absolute otherness of God’s nature does not define or limit God’s being and His creative activity.

An impassable distance is constitutively embedded in the entire created world⁵⁰. However, this previously mentioned fundamental distinction does not lead Gregory to either of two extremes. On the one hand, he does not develop any radical “technology” of apophatic theology and does not deny any possibility of thinking about God. Words do not have a divine origin, they cannot express either the essence of God or the deep essence of the things created by Him. Neither thought nor words can capture the essence of God, which can only be honored in silence⁵¹. Nevertheless Gregory does not reject the importance of language, words, and concepts, both in the knowledge of the world, man, human culture, and, in the knowledge of God⁵².

⁴⁴ Cf. Л. КАРФИКОВА, *Святитель Григорий Нисский...*, p. 283–284.

⁴⁵ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 284.

⁴⁶ GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Contra Eunomium*, 2, 125, p. 262.

⁴⁷ GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Contra Eunomium*, 2, 62, p. 244.

⁴⁸ GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Contra Eunomium*, 2, 69, p. 246.14.

⁴⁹ GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Contra Eunomium*, 2, 70, 1–18, p. 246.16–26.

⁵⁰ Cf. Л. КАРФИКОВА, *Святитель Григорий Нисский...*, p. 284.

⁵¹ Cf. GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Contra Eunomium*, 3, 1, 104, p. 38.28, 39.

⁵² Cf. Л. КАРФИКОВА, *Святитель Григорий Нисский...*, p. 285.

Obviously, the bishop of Nyssa is not original in the use of rich apophatic language, but the particular merit of Gregory is that he complements the negative doctrine with new and strong arguments. In addition to transcendence, he emphasizes the infinity (ἄπειρος) of God and the infinite ontological difference between Him and created being. All creation is secondary to the creative Source of its origin⁵³. Gregory is not satisfied with the ambiguous term “unborn (ἀγέννητον)” because it is Christologically ambivalent. On the one hand, the Divine Logos, the second hypostasis of the Holy Trinity, is uncreated and primordial, on the other hand, He is born from the Father⁵⁴. According to Gregory, the optimal apophatic terms are “indestructibility”, “infinity (ἀόριστος)”⁵⁵, or “boundlessness, infinity (ἄπειρος)”⁵⁶. These concepts are suitable for defining all persons of the Trinity and express God’s unlimited goodness, immutability, and the infinity in His essence. The infinite is unlimited, and the unlimited is beyond the reach of either thought or word. What is impossible to understand is impossible to express⁵⁷. Two levels of divine infinity can be distinguished in the theological thought of Gregory: ontological and moral⁵⁸, that is, the infinity of God as the Source of all reality concerns not only His ontology, but also the moral dimension. God’s goodness cannot be limited by anything and is not similar to any created form of goodness. The concept of “infinity”, proposed by Gregory of Nyssa, *does not allow distinction in power: therefore all three Hypostases are equal*⁵⁹. Gregory derives the opinion about God’s infinity *from the reflection that perfect good is indestructible and in no sense allows for an opposite (which would limit it, as it always happens in our earthly life), is boundless and, accordingly, infinite good*⁶⁰.

For Gregory, it is the infinity, limitlessness, and unlimitedness of God that is the basis for another apophatic concept – His “immensity”, which means that the only possible way to know God is through the constant rejection of already acquired ideas, views, and concepts about what God is like⁶¹. Starting from his central apophatic concept of the “infinity” or “limitlessness” of God and His goodness, Gregory develops the idea of the endless movement of a human person in search of God and at the same time knowledge of God. Since God is limitless and infinite, then participation in Him will be infinite progress and growth, and an unlimited path without an end. It is in this vein that the Cappadocian develops his spiritual and soteriological approach to the doctrine of the knowledge of God⁶².

⁵³ Cf. S. STRĘKOWSKI, *Sofiologia św. Grzegorza z Nyssy...*, p. 135–136.

⁵⁴ Cf. Л. КАРФИКОВА, *Святитель Григорий Нисский...*, p. 286.

⁵⁵ GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Contra Eunomium*, 2, 105, p. 257.21–25.

⁵⁶ GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Contra Eunomium*, 3, 2, 20, p. 58.22.

⁵⁷ GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Contra Eunomium*, 3, 1, 104, p. 28.38–39.

⁵⁸ Cf. A. MEREDITH, *Gregory of Nyssa...*, p. 18.

⁵⁹ Л. КАРФИКОВА, *Святитель Григорий Нисский...*, p. 287.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 219.

⁶¹ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 288.

⁶² See GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Contra Eunomium*, 1, 290–291, p. 112.9–20.

Addressing the question of the endless dynamism of the search for God, Gregory emphasizes that God can be found only in the constant surpassing of what has already been found, which is in the next step of the search. The search itself is already the understanding of God⁶³. An adequate apophatic approach is presented with great intensity in the doctrine of Gregory. The divine Trinity, who transcends all thought, is best known as the unknowable and contemplated in silence⁶⁴. Any ambitions of a person for the knowledge of God, and a positive understanding of God's nature, are limited only by the vivid personal experiencing of the divine energies (ἐνεργεῖν)⁶⁵, in which the Triune God is revealed to the seeker. However, these aspirations do not claim, in any way, to know the unlimited nature (τὴν ἄοριστον φύσιν) of God's essence itself.

Through the use of the *via negativa*, Gregory confesses his faith, presents a theological argument about the infinity of God's nature, and emphasizes the immensity of God's all-pervading goodness and man's endless journey to God. Negative theology permeates all his treatises, commentaries, homilies, and letters⁶⁶. Gregory of Nyssa clearly indicates that God, Who is absolutely unknowable in essence, reveals himself through the attributes, revealed by divine energy. The distinction between God's essence and energy is important in order to preserve the radical distinction between created and uncreated beings⁶⁷. Texts in which Gregory formulates the doctrine of God's essence and energy occur quite often. This topic is present in his thinking about the Holy Trinity and is at the center of his theology and spirituality⁶⁸. E. Heine, examining the difference between the approaches of Gregory and Eunomius to the interpretation of the essence of God in the context of the wider controversy with the Arians, emphasizes the two main antinomian theses of the bishop of Nyssa: 1) we can know God only through His energies; 2) we can know "that He exists" and not "what He is"⁶⁹. Therefore, because of the world created by God, we know that God exists, but we are in complete ignorance about the nature of His essence⁷⁰.

⁶³ Cf. GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *In Ecclesiasten homiliae*, 7, ed. P.J. ALEXANDER, [in:] *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol. V, Leiden 1962, p. 400.21 – 401. For more information about the path of endless progress in the ascent of a human being to perfection, see E. HEINE, *Perfection...*, p. 27–114.

⁶⁴ Cf. Л. КАРФИКОВА, *Святитель Григорий Нисский...*, p. 278.

⁶⁵ GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Contra Eunomium*, 2, 149, p. 268.

⁶⁶ Cf. M. LUDLOW, *Universal Salvation. Eschatology in the Thought of Gregory of Nyssa and Karl Rahner*, Oxford 2000, p. 22.

⁶⁷ Cf. E.D. MOUTSOULAS, "Essence" et "Energies"..., p. 519. On the problem of the interpretation of this distinction as ontological or epistemological, see J.P. HOUDRET, *Palamas et les Cappadociens*, *Isti* 19, 1974, p. 101–112.

⁶⁸ Cf. E.D. MOUTSOULAS, "Essence" et "Energies"..., p. 517–518.

⁶⁹ Cf. E. HEINE, *Perfection...*, p. 143.

⁷⁰ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 144.

The triad of creative theophany: power – energy – work

In the theological thought of Gregory of Nyssa, divine majesty is revealed, first of all, in God's overcoming of the "limitations" of the divine nature, in a kind of excess of divine power that reveals this nature *ad extra*⁷¹. In the apophatic approach of Gregory, God's essence is immeasurable in the sense that it cannot be revealed passively by human intellectual efforts. The nature of the relationship between the infinite God and limited humanity is such that the knowledge of God can only be in the modality of acceptance, admiration and worship⁷². The fact that the human person cannot directly know the divine essence does not mean that he/she cannot know God. God-knowledge is possible only through immersion in the integrity of the divine self-revelation of the Holy Trinity. The center of this complex integrity of knowledge is the Christological dimension of the Incarnation of the Son of God. The salvation process begins with the revelation of God's glory to human being and the world. The Son of God through the mystery of the Incarnation, His life, the mystery of death and Resurrection, morally and physically transforms weak and fragile humanity. The Word of God, remaining transcendent and immutable, assumed human nature in Jesus and made it His own, so that all that was weak and corrupt in human nature, through union with the divine reality, became what the Deity itself is⁷³.

Along with the soteriological-christological plane of God's entry into the world, Gregory does not neglect its pneumatological character and emphasizes the life-giving power (ἡ ζωοποιός δύναμις) of the Holy Spirit, which a human person receives during baptism. This refers to the life-giving grace (τὴν ζωοποιὸν χάριν) of the Only-begotten Son of God, which as true life perfects those who become worthy through the energy of the Spirit (τῆ ἐνεργείᾳ τοῦ πνεύματος)⁷⁴. The pneumatological dimension of God's entry into the world, in turn, reveals Gregory's triadological vision of the knowledge of God. He professes faith in three Persons, "one Good (ἀγαθότητα), one Power (δύναμιν), one Deity (θεότητα)"⁷⁵. Gregory emphasizes the personal and, at the same time, tri-hypostatic understanding of the mystery of God's inaccessible essence and His creative and saving activity in the world through the energy of the one God in three hypostases⁷⁶. In his confession of faith, one of the central concepts that Gregory uses as an argument

⁷¹ Cf. K. ANATOLIOS, *Retrieving Nicaea...*, p. 178.

⁷² Cf. *ibidem*, p. 182.

⁷³ Cf. B.E. DALEY, *Divine Transcendence and Human Transformation...*, p. 499.

⁷⁴ Cf. GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Adversus Macedonianos de Spiritu Sancto*, 3, 1, ed. F. MUELLER, [in:] *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol. III.1..., p. 105–106.

⁷⁵ GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Ad Eustathium de Sancta Trinitate*, ed. F. MUELLER, [in:] *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol. III.1..., p. 5.

⁷⁶ M. AGHIORGOUSSIS, *Christian Existentialism of the Greek Fathers: Persons, Essence, and Energies in God*, GOTR 23, 1978, p. 21.

in the triadological polemic is the one power of God (δύναμιν). One of the most important, well-known theses of the Cappadocians regarding Trinitarian theology is the well-argued assertion that the unity of God's nature (φύσις) follows from the unity of God's "external" activity. The liaison between the nature of God and His activity, for which Gregory uses two concepts – "power" (δύναμιν) and "energy" (ἐνέργεια), – is extremely important both, for understanding the relationship between the Creator and creation, and the intra-trinitarian relationship between hypostases⁷⁷.

The concept of "power (δύναμις)" has a deep philosophical and biblical origin, and significance, as well as authority in patristic theology, where it was often used. In addition, by the end of the 4th century, this concept already has a rich history of use in Trinitarian theology⁷⁸. For Gregory, it was very important to show the life-giving and creative God-Trinity, who has the natural ability to "produce" a new creation. God is infinite good, which extends *ad extra*, to the created world, spreading his gifts⁷⁹. Gregory often uses the notion of "power (δύναμις)" as a title for the divine nature, emphasizing that the power is transcendent (δύναμις ὑπερκειμένη). Divine power (δύναμις) and nature (φύσις) are one. Gregory uses these two concepts interchangeably. Moreover, he uses apophatic terminology much more often when speaking of the transcendence of God's power than when speaking of His nature (φύσις) or essence (οὐσία)⁸⁰. The main and primary meaning of God's power is that of an activity in the creation and maintenance of the world, that is, creation is not only a property of God's nature, but also His nature since the existence of God is a creative existence that dynamically creates new things and renews old ones. The divine nature is productive in itself, possesses this ability (δύναμις), and is the source of the rising of everything to being⁸¹.

In the polemic with Eunomius, Gregory presented his concept of power in order to explain the source of the origin of God's energy "externally"⁸². He speaks not simply about the energy of God's nature, but also about the energy of the power (ἡ ἐνεργητικὴ αὐτοῦ δύναμις) of God⁸³, which is a joint manifestation of the activity of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity⁸⁴. For the bishop of Nyssa, it is God's power that generates energy (ἐνέργεια), which is the activity of this power (δύναμις)⁸⁵.

⁷⁷ Cf. M.R. BARNES, *The Power of God. Δύναμις in Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology*, Washington 2001, p. 15–17.

⁷⁸ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 1.

⁷⁹ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 15.

⁸⁰ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 223–224.

⁸¹ Cf. *ibidem*.

⁸² Cf. *ibidem*, p. 225.

⁸³ GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *In Canticum canticorum*, homiliae 15, 1012 M, 18–19, p. 336.

⁸⁴ Cf. E.D. MOUTSOULAS, "Essence" et "Energies"..., p. 524.

⁸⁵ Cf. M.R. BARNES, *The Power of God...*, p. 223–224.

Gregory considers three possible interactions between God's power and nature. Power, in its commonly used meaning, represents a kind of contrast between the natural ability to create or be the source of the appearance of something (fire and heat), and also the artificial (volitional) ability to produce something new (the builder and the building). The third type of interaction is a temporary ability to do something. For Gregory power is not something lower, separated from God's nature and, accordingly, something that is not in unity with this nature. Referring to the concept of divine power, Gregory rejects Eunomius' opinion about the dominance of God's nature over power as a separate, lower, derived reality⁸⁶.

In understanding the antinomic nature of the transcendental-immanent being of God, Gregory especially emphasizes that the divine nature always remains dispassionate, even though it manifests itself effectively and philanthropically through God's various interventions in the conditions of human life⁸⁷. Gregory highlights three main factors in the outward activity of the Word of God: power (*δύναμις*) – energy (*ἐνέργεια*) – work (*ἔργον*). The divine Word is alive, has free will, and has the power to act creatively. The Word broadcasts its will through power in His energy. The power of the Word, as well as that of the Father and the Holy Spirit, creatively manifests the divine life through divine energy in the creation of the world and by maintaining it in being⁸⁸.

The transcendence of the power of God

There are two main connotations of the concept of “power (*δύναμις*)” in Gregory's theology. *Δύναμις* means the special power of action possessed by any being in so far as it corresponds to its authenticity. First of all, power is the most inherent internal capability of a being. Secondly, *δύναμις* can also express various abilities of a being to cause various actions depending on its nature. These definitions of power characterize it as an integral and organic component of the nature of every being. An example of the first type is fire and heat, and for the second – drying, movement, and fuel consumption. Often, Gregory uses the concept of power as the ability to act, in contrast to passivity and inability to act, and sometimes he distinguishes different types of such ability⁸⁹. The primary meaning of God's *δύναμις* is the ability to creatively, productively, and dynamically act, that is, to create. This is a characteristic that distinguishes the divine nature. The second meaning reveals the various attributes of God that characterize His activity *ad extra*⁹⁰. Sometimes Gregory compares *δύναμις* to the heat of fire or the cold of

⁸⁶ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 227–229.

⁸⁷ Cf. K. ANATOLIOS, *Retrieving Nicaea...*, p. 179–180.

⁸⁸ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 216–218. See GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Oratio catechetica*, 1, 43–45, 49–60, ed. E. MÜHLENBERG, [in:] *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol. III.4, Leiden 1996 (cetera: GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Oratio catechetica*), p. 136–338.

⁸⁹ Cf. K. ANATOLIOS, *Retrieving Nicaea...*, p. 233.

⁹⁰ Cf. *ibidem*.

ice⁹¹. The concept of God's providence has a much broader meaning than the ability to produce or create. Providence encompasses all of God's activity in the world; this is, creation, care for all and, support of everything in existence, salvation, renewal, and transformation of the world and of humankind. This means, in the broadest sense, that the concept of δύναμις is one of the most important concepts not only for protology and cosmology, but also in the sphere of the Trinitarian, soteriological, and anthropological theology of Gregory of Nyssa⁹².

As we have already mentioned above, the divine power which brings everything into being, is completely transcendent. Gregory speaks about this in various works⁹³ and uses apophatic vocabulary for δύναμις, as well as for φύσις. Mostly, he prefers the first notion to the second as a title for the divine being, when he is describing the transcendence of the Holy Trinity⁹⁴. Most often, among the negative terminology that he uses to denote the transcendence of God's creative power, we find such notions as "ὑπερεκούση (extraordinary)", "ὑπερκειμένη (surpassing)" or, less commonly, "ὑψηλός (exalted above)"⁹⁵.

God is a being that has the power (δύναμις) to act, does act and, thanks to this activity and its fruits, reveals Himself to the human person, who then knows His existence. Conversely, to the degree of God's effectiveness, we can form concepts about His being. It is the divine power (θεία δύναμις) that effectively reveals who God is. The power (δύναμις) as a divine title is a central concept in Gregory's main sequence: essence – power – energy – work (οὐσία – δύναμις – ἐνέργεια – ἔργον)⁹⁶. He often does not even take into account or add to this sequence, essence (οὐσία) or nature (φύσις), leaving only the causal sequence: δύναμις – ἐνέργεια – ἔργον, which expresses his main idea: the energy of force (τῆς δυνάμεως ἐνέργεια) causes the work of creation⁹⁷.

The power of God is not a title for the persons of God, but a definition of what these persons are like, which means that such titles as Word (Λόγον), Power (Δύναμις), Wisdom (Σοφία), God (Θεόν) are equally acceptable, because they express the eternal power that creates all things⁹⁸. Gregory uses the concept of God's power (θεία δύναμις), in the sense of God or deity much more often than the concept of God's nature⁹⁹. Therefore, for him to speak about God as the Creator and the Cause of everything that arose into being, is to speak first of all about God as θεία δύναμις¹⁰⁰.

⁹¹ Cf. *ibidem*.

⁹² Cf. *ibidem*, p. 234.

⁹³ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 240.

⁹⁴ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 236.

⁹⁵ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 240.

⁹⁶ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 237.293–296.

⁹⁷ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 293.

⁹⁸ Cf. GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Oratio catechetica*, 20 M, 16–24 M, 16, p. 15–18.

⁹⁹ Cf. GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *De vita Moysis*, 304 M, 13–14, 316 M, 22, 317 M, 10, 325 M, 3, ed. H. MUSURILLO, [in:] *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol. VII.1, Leiden 1964, p. 7, 19, 23, 31.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. M.R. BARNES, *The Power of God...*, p. 240.

Gregory indicates the unity of God's power, which testifies to the unity of the hypostases of the Trinity. For him, the statement is axiomatic: if God's person did not have this divine power, then it would not belong to God's nature. The Holy Spirit is divine because it has the power of the Holy Trinity. Simultaneously, Gregory, speaking of the unity of power and energy of the Triune God¹⁰¹, points to the diversity of divine energies. Each energy fully and in unison expresses the unified power of the three hypostases¹⁰². From the variety of energies of God's power (*δυνάμειος ἐνεργείας*), which surpasses all and is above all, we derive different titles, where each energy (*ἐνεργεῖαν*) is designated by a name. All of these belong to one power (*δύναμις*), which comes from the one nature of the three Persons of the Trinity¹⁰³.

In the theology of Gregory of Nyssa, a conceptual connection can be traced between the argument of the "power–nature" model and the "energy–nature" model, with an emphasis on the multifaceted energies that are common to the persons of the Holy Trinity. Over time, a change in approach took place in Gregory's theological search. He moved from the analogy of "fire is the power of heat" to the analogy of "fire is the energy of heat". M.R. Barnes associates such a change with the need for an apology for the divinity of the Holy Spirit¹⁰⁴. Gregory uses the concept of *ἐνεργεῖα* to express the common action of the Triune God, although in this activity (*ἐνεργεῖα*) power is also implied.

Thus, the main line of argumentation of Gregory of Nyssa regarding the unity of the Triune nature of God and the divinity of the Spirit, is that if the Son and the Holy Spirit have the same energy and, accordingly, the same power, then they also have the same nature, which is the same for the three persons of God. Gregory formed a step-by-step logic of an increasingly higher level of unity between the Son and the Spirit, and therefore with the Father: common work (*ἔργον*), common activity (*ἐνεργεῖα*), common power (*δύναμις*) and common nature (*φύσις*)¹⁰⁵. The argument of Gregory of Nyssa – from common energy to common nature – depends on the correlation of God's energy and power, which concerns the specifics of the relationship of the Son and the Spirit between themselves, and with the Father in a single nature¹⁰⁶.

The Word of God, through the energy of the divine power that emanates from the nature of God, creatively acts in every single creation. God's will seems to mix this power with the diversity and at the same time the unity of all creation. Gregory draws a clear line of connection between natures and their inner powers,

¹⁰¹ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 297–298.

¹⁰² Cf. *ibidem*, p. 298.

¹⁰³ GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Ad Ablabium quod non sint tres dei*, 121 M, 20–124 M, 20, ed. F. MUELLER, [in:] *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol. III.1... (cetera: GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Ad Ablabium quod non sint tres dei*), p. 43–45.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. M.R. BARNES, *The Power of God...*, p. 299.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 303–304.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 304.

as well as between the indivisibility of nature and God's activity that orders creation. In the unity, integrity and, at the same time, diversity of created entities, we contemplate the single action of God, who is unique in His power¹⁰⁷. God's indivisible nature is productive precisely because of the single, unifying and simple divine power, which, like heat and fire, is ontologically one. It is important not only that power is an internal dimension of nature, but also that it, being "around" nature, is the cause of the activity of divine energy in the world. L. Ayres calls this model of Gregory of Nyssa "transcendent causality"¹⁰⁸. Man can grow in the knowledge of divine power through God's energies, while the divine nature will remain unknowable.

As already noted, Gregory proposes a ternary model of the revelation of God's creative presence in the world, which is "around" (περὶ αὐτὸν) an unknowable nature: power (δύναμις) – energy (ἐνέργεια) – deed (ἔργον). Nature (φύσις) possesses an inner power that contains and expresses the potential possibility for outward activity with its energy. In Gregory, this ternary model has two sides. On the one hand, nature contains an inner potency, on the other hand, various divine energies reveal the transcendent inner power of God's unknowable nature *ad extra*¹⁰⁹. There is a clear linking between the intra-divine relationship and the energetic presence of God in the created reality¹¹⁰. L. Ayres notes that the Capadocian approach, according to which nature can be known through the energy that manifests it, does not fully extend to the opinion of Gregory of Nyssa. As we have mentioned above, the specificity of Gregory's approach is that energy reveals the power of God's immeasurable nature, and not simply the nature¹¹¹. This energy comes from the Father as its source, engaged by the Son and completed by the grace and power of the Spirit¹¹². This is a single energy from a single power, a single and indivisible divine nature of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit¹¹³. Christ, with his power and energy, enters the world and the human being as the Giver of life. This power and energy is the basis for everything that constitutes the life of Christ¹¹⁴.

In the "Beatitudes" discussing those people who are pure in heart, Gregory of Nyssa starts out from the classic patristic antinomian vision of God. On the one hand, those who are pure in heart can see God (cf. Mt 5: 8), and on the other hand, it is impossible to see God (cf. John 1: 18, 1 Tim 6: 16). Gregory clearly distinguishes between these two ontological levels of the possibility and impossibility

¹⁰⁷ Cf. L. AYRES, *On not Three People: the Fundamental Themes of Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology as Seen in to Ablabius: On not Three Gods*, [in:] *Rethinking Gregory of Nyssa*, ed. S. COAKLEY, Malden 2003, p. 24–25.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 27.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 28.

¹¹⁰ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 29.

¹¹¹ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 43.

¹¹² Cf. GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *Ad Ablabium quod non sint tres dei*, 128 M, 5–128 M, 20, p. 49–50.

¹¹³ Cf. L. AYRES, *On not Three People...*, p. 29–32.

¹¹⁴ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 36.

of seeing God. The divine nature in its essence¹¹⁵ cannot be contemplated. God in His nature surpasses any being, He is invisible and ineffable (ὁ ἀόρατός τε καὶ ἀκατάληπτος)¹¹⁶. At the same time, He can be visible and comprehensible “in another sense”¹¹⁷ – in effective creative manifestations of His wisdom and goodness, power and purity¹¹⁸. Thanks to this external appearance, a person can contemplate¹¹⁹ and name God, who is invisible by nature, and who becomes visible in the energies that are “around Him”¹²⁰. This approach is decisive in understanding the nature of the knowledge of God. God is not an inert object, but the subject of relations due to His life-giving, all-pervading “energetic” activity in the created world. Knowledge of God’s self-revelation is full knowledge of God Himself, not the knowing of something lower in the divine nature. It is impossible to penetrate into the knowledge of God’s immanence, but through the economy of the Holy Trinity in the world, the self-revealing dynamic activity of God’s nature, that is His energy (ἐνέργεια), which comes from the Father, through the Son in the Holy Spirit, we are able to discover that God is a subject of dialog and relationship with others. Knowing the energetic, creative, and unified cooperation of the Trinity, we can name God by notions and delineate Him with various concepts (ἐννοίας) in the living process of the knowledge of the personal God¹²¹.

It is incorrect to understand the distinction between God’s unknowable essence and His manifesting energies by building an impenetrable ontological “wall” between these two dimensions of the divine life of the Holy Trinity. Such thinking would be possible if the nature of God’s essence were a static object that does not participate in a divine activity. This vision is consistent with Eunomius’ approach. In contrast, for Gregory of Nyssa, if God’s essence is unknowable in itself and is outside the creative revelatory dynamics, nevertheless it is the divine energies that reveal who God is. The divine energies are the source of given characteristics, designations, and meanings, which serve as notional and conceptual bases for knowing and interpreting the nature of God’s self-revelation. Thus, the Triune God is radically active in His being and inaccessible outside of energetic self-presence. A meeting with Him is an endless journey of relationships and knowledge of God¹²² without any claim to finally grasp and express God’s mystery¹²³.

¹¹⁵ GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *De beatitudinibus*, 6, ed. J.F. CALLAHAN, [in:] *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol. VII.2, Leiden 1992 (cetera: GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *De beatitudinibus*), p. 140.

¹¹⁶ Cf. GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *De beatitudinibus*, 6, p. 140.27 – 141.

¹¹⁷ Cf. GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *De beatitudinibus*, 6, p. 140.27.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Л. КАРФИКОВА, *Святитель Григорий Нисский...*, p. 82.

¹¹⁹ Cf. GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *De beatitudinibus*, 3, p. 104.

¹²⁰ GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, *De beatitudinibus*, 6, p. 141.

¹²¹ Cf. K. ANATOLIOS, *Retrieving Nicaea...*, p. 230–231.

¹²² For a more detailed analysis, see M. PRZYSZYCHOWSKA, *Nauka o łasce...*, p. 110–131.

¹²³ Cf. K. ANATOLIOS, *Retrieving Nicaea...*, p. 239–240.

Summary

The Cappadocian Fathers brought considerable conceptual innovation to the understanding and definition of the nature of the Triune God, His existence “*in Se*” and “*ad extra*”. Their approach to the understanding of the ontological difference between the transcendence and immanence of God is marked by the thoroughness of their familiarity with the patristic tradition and their taking into account the conceptual tool of philosophical methods. Gregory of Nyssa developed a complex approach to the problem of the simultaneous otherworldliness and omnipresence of the Holy Trinity. The personalistic approach to Triadology and knowledge of God is decisive for him. Gregory’s theology is characterized by a radical opposition between the Triune Creator and the multifaceted created world. It is possible to understand God’s providential energetic omnipresence only by accepting the antinomian relationship between the unchanging Creator and the changing creation. Gregory combines both the ontological and epistemological dimensions of the understanding of the unknowable nature of God and emphasizes two main theses: God’s unknowability for weak and limited human cognitive abilities, and His infinity and limitlessness, given the intrinsic mystery inherent in the Trinity. Arguing with Eunomius, Gregory developed a rich apophatic terminology to express what God is not. For him, the absolute otherness of God’s nature does not define or limit His existence and creative activity. The merit of the bishop of Nyssa lies not in the originality of apophatic terminology, but in apophatic argumentation. He proposed the apophatic terms “boundlessness” and “infinity”, which refer to ontology, morality, and are important to his anthropological and ascetic systems. God is limitless; therefore man is called to move endlessly toward perfection. The very existence of the Triune God presupposes an operative manifestation of His love through energy, power, and grace, thanks to which we can know what God is and how He acts, but we cannot know what He is like in His essence.

The theological thought of Gregory of Nyssa is characterized by a special approach to understanding the power of God in comparison with the essence and energy of God. Energy derives from God’s power, so Gregory speaks of the energy of power. The result of the action of energy, which comes from power, is work. Gregory’s triad: God’s power – energy – work expresses his main idea, namely that the energy of power causes the work of creation. He reveals his approach to the interpretation of power as the transcendent, internal, natural ability of God’s essence to act. Nature is revealed outwardly by its inner force. Gregory uses the terms “power” and “nature” interchangeably and is more likely to use apophatic terminology when describing the transcendence of God’s power than His nature (φύσις) or even essence (οὐσία). God’s power is one for the three Hypostases, but the energies are diverse. This power, being “around” nature, is the reason for the creative and supportive activity of the divine energy of the Holy Trinity in the world.

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