



CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDY SOFIA

CAS WORKING PAPER SERIES

Issue 6

ADVANCED ACADEMIA PROGRAMME

2012–2014

Sofia 2014

The following publication presents part of the author's research carried out under the [Advanced Academia Programme](#) of the Centre for Advanced Study Sofia. This programme is supported by the America for Bulgaria Foundation, Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft and the Fritz Thyssen Foundation.



CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDY SOFIA

7B, Stefan Karadja St., Sofia 1000, Bulgaria
phone:+359 2 9803704, fax:+359 2 9803662
cas@cas.bg, www.cas.bg

CAS Working Paper Series No. 6/2014

This publication is available also
in electronic form at www.cas.bg

Copyright © 2014 by the CAS contributors/CAS

Copyright remains with the individual authors/CAS. This publication may be distributed to other individuals for non-commercial use, provided that the text and this note remain intact. This publication may not be reprinted or redistributed for commercial use without prior written permission from the author and CAS. If you have any questions about permissions, please, write to cas@cas.bg. Preferred Citation: Biriukov, Dmitry S., *The Beginning of the Debate on the Universals in Byzantine Philosophy and Its Historical and Philosophical Context*. CAS Working Paper Series No. 6/2014: Sofia 2014. *Advanced Academia programme, a project of the Centre for Advanced Study Sofia*.

DMITRY S. BIRIUKOV

**THE BEGINNING OF THE DEBATE
ON THE UNIVERSALS IN BYZANTINE PHILOSOPHY
AND ITS HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL CONTEXT**

By “Byzantine philosophy” I understand the philosophical tendencies in the Christian intellectual culture of Byzantium. As a rule, these philosophical tendencies in Byzantium were tied with the development of theological thought.

I consider the beginning of Byzantine philosophy to be the first half of 4th century, when, beginning with Constantinople’s foundation, the political background of Byzantine civilization began to be formed and the foundations were laid for the future Byzantine philosophical tradition. For this reason, following Katerina Ierodiakonou¹, I shall consider themes that are tied to Byzantine thought, beginning with authors who lived in 4th century.

In discussing the historical and philosophical context of using the concept of universals, I intend to use the noun “universal” not only as a concept of “common substance” (as implied by some historians of philosophy and theology), but also as a concept of “generality,” understood in the “horizontal” sense, that is, in the sense of the common species or genus. Below I will discuss in detail the early use of universals (understood in the above sense), and the controversy about them in Byzantine philosophy in terms of the influence of non-Christian philosophy in Late Antiquity on the paradigm of understanding universals in early Byzantine philosophy.

Before going into detail, I want to make the following general statements regarding universals in the history of Byzantine philosophy.

It seems to me that if we are to speak about the development of the doctrine of universals in Byzantine thought, three factors are to be distinguished: firstly, the theological factor, secondly, the factor of the influence of popular non-scholarly philosophical views, such as commonplace Aristotelianism, and, thirdly, the factor of the direct influence of the Antique school of philosophy.

In Byzantium the theological factor in the development of the theory of universals

1 See K. Ierodiakonou, “Introduction,” in *Byzantine Philosophy and its Ancient Sources*, ed. K. Ierodiakonou (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3–5.

was by and large connected with theological dogmatic debates. Thus, regarding the theological factor, it is important to distinguish three main stages in the history of theological debates when the problem of universals played a significant role and when it was developed. In the Early Byzantine period, these are 1) the stage of the formation of philosophical tendencies in Byzantium in the 4th century AD during the Arian debates, and 2) the stage of the Chalcedonite/Monophysite debates in the 6th-8th century; in the Late Byzantine period, 3) the stage of the Palamite controversy in the 14th century.

Regarding the influence of non-scholarly philosophical views, it should be noted that during the Arian debates, the commonplace Aristotelian discourse of generality was adopted and established in Byzantine thought, and the discussion on the specifics of understanding of the Aristotelian discourse of generality is relevant both to the Arian and the Chalcedonite/Monophysite debates.

Talking about the factor of scholarly philosophy, to my mind, three lines are to be discussed: 1) Platonic/Stoical discourse of *logoi*, as of creating causes of created beings, which entered Christian thought beginning with Origen and was developed by the Cappadocian fathers, the author of *Corpus Areopagiticum*, Maximus the Confessor, etc.; in addition, there were various influences of 2) Athens and 3) Alexandrian Neo-Platonic schools on Christian philosophizing authors concerning the theme of universals. These schools introduced into Byzantine philosophy two different ways of understanding universals.

The influence of these schools on the Christian authors in Byzantium dates back to VI c., i.e. the Early Byzantine period. The influence of the Athens school is tied up with the discourse of the universals/beginnings of created beings introduced into Byzantine philosophical thought by the author of the so-called *Corpus Areopagiticum* (the beginning of 6th century), who adopted this discourse from the scholar of the *Athenian School of Neo-Platonism* Proclus. The appearance of the topic of the beginnings of created beings relates to the change in the manner of description of participation of an individual in a generality.

The influence of the Alexandrian school is tied to the name of Ammonius of Alexandria, a pupil of Proclus. Within Ammonius' philosophical school, the triple manner of understanding of universals was developed – as existing prior to the things, in the things and after the things – which influenced, basically, philosophical thought in Middle Byzantium, mostly in the *school* at *Constantinople*.

In addition to these main trends, we may detect several local philosophical trends relevant to the problem of universals in Byzantine philosophy. Firstly, it is the development of Aristotle's doctrine on the hierarchy of genera and species, built according to the principle of Porphyry's tree with being or substance at its summit (we will mention about Gregory of Nyssa's treatment of this subject later in the

course of this article; it was also analyzed for example by John of Damascus²). The second issue is the hierarchy of beings (its development by Gregory of Nyssa will also be mentioned in this article). As a consequence of the influx of elements from Proclus' philosophy in Byzantine philosophy by mediation of the *Corpus Areopagiticum*, this subject was later partly replaced by the subject of the principles-universals, which are participated in by the creation to the extent of its natural ability (the tradition associated with the Athenian School of Neoplatonism).

Below I will discuss the controversy on universals in Byzantine philosophy, present the competing views on the problem, and point to various paradigms in the understanding of universals in the context of the non-Christian philosophy of Late Antiquity, revealed in the opposing positions of the debate.

The controversy over universals in Byzantine philosophical and theological thought began when the Neo-Niceans started to interpret the notion of "consubstantial" (ὁμοούσιος) from the Nicene Creed³ proclaimed at the First Ecumenical Council (325). We should remind the readers that the Nicene Creed adopted for the proclamation of the divine status of the Son, named the Son of God, "the only-begotten, born from the Father, that is, from the substance of the Father" (γεννηθέντα ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς μονογενῆ τουτέστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς), and "consubstantial to the Father" (ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρί). Clearly, the consubstantiality of the Son to the Father was understood as his generation from the substance of the Father, that is, in the derivative sense, and this understanding was in line with the intellectual tradition preceding and contemporaneous to the Council of Nicea.

During the third century and the first half of the fourth century, the concept of consubstantiality and in general the concept of common nature or substance implied derivation when it was used in the theological language for describing the commonness between the Father and the Son. The implied unity between God the Father and the Son was explained by the origination of the Son from the Father – the properties that the Son possessed were transmitted to him from the Father. The relationship of the Son to the Father was understood in terms of derivation in virtually all texts written before the middle of the fourth century that deal with the concept of consubstantiality or the common substance of God the Father and the Son, as was the case with both the Nicene party, who justified the divinity of the Son by the generation of the Son "from the substance of the Father", and the anti-Nicene or Arian⁴ party,⁵ which also based its claim on the created nature of the Son on the concept of derivation.

2 John of Damascus, *Elementary Introduction into Dogmas*, 7.26–33 (ed. Kotter).

3 We will not discuss here what influenced the development of the Nicene Creed, and the emergence of the notion of "consubstantiality" in the Creed.

4 After the name of this party's leader, Arius.

5 See J. Zachhuber, "Basil and the Three-Hypostases-Tradition. Reconsidering the Origins of Cappadocian Theology," *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 5 (2001): 80.

In the second half of the fourth century, the Neo-Nicene party, whose main representatives were the members of the so-called Cappadocian circle, began to form around Basil of Caesarea. This party wanted to restore the status of the Nicene doctrine and the Nicene Creed, which were pushed into the background after the Arian reaction following the First Ecumenical Council. The Neo-Niceans accomplished a fundamental theological and philosophical synthesis based on the doctrine of the divinity of all the Persons of the Trinity. In the process, in their polemics with the Arians (or rather, with the so-called Neo-Arians,⁶ who denied the divine status of the Son and the Holy Spirit), the Neo-Niceans used more advanced philosophical language than their Nicaean predecessors.

In particular, there was the rethinking of how the concept of “consubstantiality” might be applied to the Persons of the Trinity. According to this new understanding, “consubstantiality” had to be understood in the “horizontal” sense of commonness between the Persons of the Trinity, which should be considered similar to the species common to its constituent individuals,⁷ while in the pre-Cappadocian theology, as we have mentioned, the normative concept was rather a derivative understanding of the commonness between the Father and the Son.⁸ The Neo-Niceans also referred to the commonness understood in such a way as the “*logos of substance*,”⁹ or the “*logos of being*.”

Indeed, in the Neo-Nicene philosophical and theological system, the horizontal structure of commonness extended beyond the Trinitarian doctrine to all beings. Thus, Gregory of Nyssa, the brother of Basil of Caesarea, developed his doctrine on the fundamental division (διαίρεσις) of the beings into classes. In his earlier works, *On the Making of Man* and *On the Soul and Resurrection*,¹⁰ Gregory of Nyssa developed his doctrine on the order of the created beings according to the ascending ladder of vitality and spoke about the division according to which beings (τῶν ὄντων) were divided into intellectual beings (τό νοητόν) and corporeal beings (τό

6 These were the representatives of the next generation of the Arian movement after Arius and his immediate followers. As the most prominent neo-Arian thinkers we may mention Aetius and Eunomius, who changed Arian theology by eliminating the trend related to apophatic theology.

7 Cf., for example, Basil of Caesaria, *Contra Eunomium*, PG 29b, 637–640; *Letter 236* (228), 6.

8 The predecessors of the Cappadocian Fathers in the anti-Arian polemics, Eustathius of Antioch and Athanasius of Alexandria, might speak about consubstantiality understood in the horizontal sense, but only concerning individual human beings (Eustathius of Antioch in Theodoret of Cyrhus, *Eranistes*, 100.6–12 (ed. Ettliger); Athanasius of Alexandria, *Letter Concerning the Decrees of the Council of Nicaea* (*De Decretis*) 53), but not the Persons of the Trinity. J. Zachhuber thinks that Eustathius of Antioch influenced the emergence of the non-derivative Trinitarian doctrine of the Cappadocians, since in one fragment (R. Lorenz, “Die Eustathius von Antiochien zugeschriebene Schrift gegen Photin,” *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 71 (1980): 122–24) Eustathius deviates from the Nicene derivative language concerning the divinity of the Son, common to the pre-Cappadocian theology, namely, that the name of “God” refers to the divine nature and not to the Persons of the Trinity (see Zachhuber, “Basil and the Three-Hypostases-Tradition...,” 82–83).

9 See, for example, *Contra Eunomium* (PG 29b, 520, 556). The explicit language of the “*logos of substance*” was introduced by Aristotle and developed by his commentators (J. P. Anton, “The Aristotelian Doctrine of Homonymy in the *Categories* and Its Platonic Antecedents,” *The Journal of the History of Philosophy* 6.4, (1968): 315–26; Idem., “Ancient Interpretations of Aristotle’s Doctrine of Homonymy,” *The Journal of the History of Philosophy* 7.1 (1969): 1–18).

10 Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, 8; *On the Soul and Resurrection*, PG 46, 60AB.

σωματικόν). Gregory left the question concerning the division of intellectual beings for another occasion¹¹ and in these treatises spoke only about the division of the corporeal beings. According to him, all corporeal beings were divided into those partaking in life and those devoid of life; the beings partaking in life were divided into beings which possessed sensation and beings which lacked sensation; the beings which had sensation were divided into rational beings and irrational beings. As a result, says Gregory, nature makes the path of ascent from insignificant to the perfect as if up steps consisting of properties.¹²

Later in his fundamental treatise devoted to refuting Eunomius, Gregory of Nyssa also made a distinction within the intelligent realm and spoke of the division of beings into three natures: first, intellectual and uncreated nature (God); second, intellectual created nature (angels and human souls), which participated in the first nature in accordance with the goodness of will expressed by the individuals belonging to that nature; and, thirdly, sensible (τό αισθητικόν) created nature.¹³ In another passage, Gregory of Nyssa spoke about the division of beings into the uncreated and created, and about the division of the created beings into supramundane beings and sensible beings.¹⁴

The opponent of Gregory of Nyssa and the leader of the Neo-Arian party, Eunomius,¹⁵ used the doctrine of universals that in a sense was opposite to that of Gregory's. And it was in opposition to the teaching of Eunomius, directly related to his understanding of universals, that Gregory of Nyssa developed the concept of the horizontal structure of commonness in his treatise *Contra Eunomium*. Specifically, Gregory did this to refute the doctrine, ascribed to Eunomius, that substances (of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) form a hierarchy in such a way that the substance of the Father is "greater" than the substance of the Son, and the substances of the Father and the Son are "greater" than the substance of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶ It is not clear whether Eunomius really taught the concept of "greater-

11 According to his own words in *On the Making of Man*, 8, PG 44, 145.10–11.

12 In more detail, see my article: D. Biriukov, "Ascent of Nature from the Lower to the Perfect": Synthesis of Biblical and Logical-Philosophical Descriptions of the Order of Natural Beings in the *De opificio hominis*, 8 by Gregory of Nyssa (in print).

13 Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium*, 1.1.270–277, 1.1.295 (ed. Jaeger). We should note that in terms of relationship between the created intellectual and sensible natures, Gregory of Nyssa, on the one hand, developed the theory of material bodies as a convergence of the intellectual *logoi* (*In Hexaemeron*, PG 44, 69BC, *On the Soul and Resurrection*, PG 46, 124BD), yet, on the other hand, he claimed that created intellectual and sensible natures had fundamental differences and possessed opposite properties (*Oratio Catechetica*, 6).

14 Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium*, 4.100–101 (ed. Jaeger).

15 Eunomius expounded his teaching in his *Apologia*, written in 359. Eunomius' doctrine implies the opposition of God as the highest principle that has no prior cause for existing, and Christ, God's product – the very fact of Christ being derived and preconditioned excludes regarding his existence as of the same kind as that of his initial cause (*Apologia*, VII). Since Christ was born, he had a cause of his existence; therefore, according to Eunomius, Christ cannot be called God according to his essence; his essence is creation (*Apologia*, XII). Similarly, Christ's essence is expressed with the notion "offspring (γέννημα)" (*Apologia*, XII, 6–7, ed. Vaggione), while God's essence is denoted as "unbegotten (ἀγέννητος)" (*Apologia*, VII, 11, ed. Vaggione).

16 See Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium*, 1.282, 317, 321 (ed. Jaeger).

lesser”¹⁷ as applied to the substances of the Supreme Triad, but, indeed, the Trinitarian doctrine of Eunomius implied the hierarchy of three simple substances, in which the higher substance had a precedence over the lower substance, and each substance was not at the same level with the others; that is, each substance was the only one of its kind and none of them shared commonness with anything else.¹⁸

However, the position of Eunomius concerning the problem of universals was not limited to the doctrine of impossibility of any commonness within the Supreme Triad. It appears that Eunomius had quite a developed and comprehensive theory of universals. This conclusion can be drawn on the basis of the Eunomian arguments from the *Apology of Apology* against the Nicene doctrine of consubstantiality of God the Father and the Son, which was paraphrased by Gregory of Nyssa:

His supposition that whatever things are united in the idea of their essence must needs exist corporeally and be joined to corruption (for this he says in this part of his work), I shall willingly pass by like some cadaverous odour, since I think every reasonable man will perceive how dead and corrupt such an argument is. For who knows not that the multitude of human souls is countless, yet one essence underlies them all, and the consubstantial substratum in them is alien from bodily corruption? so that even children can plainly see the argument that bodies are corrupted and dissolved, not because they have the same essence one with another, but because of their possessing a compound nature. The idea of the compound (τοῦ συνθέτου) nature is one, that of the common (τοῦ κοινοῦ) nature of their essence is another, so that it is true to say, “corruptible bodies are of one essence,” but the converse statement is not true at all, if it be anything like, “this consubstantial nature is also surely corruptible,” as is shown in the case of the souls which have one essence, while yet corruption does not attach to them in virtue of the community of essence. And the account given of the souls might properly be applied to every intellectual existence (περὶ πάσης νοερᾶς ὑποστάσεως) which we contemplate in creation. For the words brought together by Paul do not signify, as Eunomius will have them do, some mutually divergent natures of the supra-mundane powers (τῶν ὑπερκοσμίων δυνάμεων)¹⁹; on the contrary, the sense of the names clearly indicates that he is mentioning in his argument, not diversities of natures (φύσεις), but the varied peculiarities of the operations of the heavenly host.²⁰

17 See D. Biriukov, *Gregorij Nisskij: Polemika s Evnomiem Kizisheskim*, Gregorij Benevitch (sost., red.), Dmitrij Biriukov (red.), *Antologia vostochnochristianskoj bogoslovskoj mysli: Ortodoksia i Geterodoksia*. V 2 tt. T. 1 [*Gregory of Nyssa: Polemic against Eunomius of Cyzicus*, Gregory Benevitch (comp., ed.), Dmitrij Biriukov (ed.). *Anthology of Eastern Christian Theological Thought: Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy*. In 2 vols., V. 1] (Moscow, St. Petersburg: Russian Christian Humanitarian Academy Press, 2009, *Byzantine Philosophy*, 4), 318–320 (in Rus.).

18 Cf. the citation from Eunomius in Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium*, 1.152 (ed. Jaeger).

19 Namely, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers (Col 1:16, Eph 1:21).

20 Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium*, 3.5.61–64 (ed. Jaeger), trans. by B. Moore and H. Wilson, in: *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series II*, vol. 5.

According to Eunomius, consubstantiality and possession of common substance could only happen in the corporeal and therefore corruptible realm. Eunomius identified commonness according to substance, that is, consubstantiality, with complexity: all that is consubstantial with something else is complex. In addition, as shown in the above passage, Eunomius developed an original doctrine on the angelic powers that is related to the problem of commonness. This doctrine assumed that the names of the intellectual powers pointed to individual natures that did not share (generic) commonness; in other words, Eunomius claimed that the angelic world was made of individual species, not united by any common genus.

Thus, the position of Eunomius concerning the universals can be reconstructed as follows: the higher we go up the hierarchy of beings, the less we encounter the opportunity for the horizontal (understood similarly to genus or species) commonness of nature for individual beings. Namely, commonness is possible for corporeal beings in the proper sense; commonness is possible to a much lesser extent for incorporeal beings – intellectual or angelic powers: there is a single species of nature for each angelic name, but there is no general nature regarding the angelic powers as such (this view had its philosophical basis which will be discussed below); commonness is not possible at all for the Supreme Triad, and at this level there are only substances, unique in terms of their species.

Next, I will try to clarify the historical and philosophical background of these different positions from the viewpoint of the theory of universals. First, I will focus on the historical situation.

As I have mentioned, at the first phase of the Arian controversy, in the time preceding the Neo-Nicene movement, the concept of “consubstantiality” (ὁμοούσιος) in respect to the Persons of the Trinity was used in the derivative sense, but not in a “horizontal” sense of common species and individuals. Accordingly, the Arian criticism and refutation of the usage of ὁμοούσιος as applied to the divine was built on the concept of derivation. In the first period of the Arian controversy, the Arians criticized the usage of the concept of “consubstantiality” as applied to the Persons of the Trinity, on the grounds that consubstantiality of the Persons would involve a separation of a part in the generation of the Son from the Father:

We acknowledge One God... who begat an Only-begotten Son before eternal times... nor as Valentinus pronounced that the offspring of the Father was an issue nor as Manichæus (Μανιχαῖος) taught that the offspring was a consubstantial portion (μέρος ὁμοούσιον) of the Father. ... But if the terms ‘from Him,’ (Rom 11:36) and ‘from the womb,’ (Ps 110:3) and ‘I came forth from the Father, and I am come’ (John 16:28), be understood by some to mean as if a part of consubstantial Him (μέρος αὐτοῦ ὁμοουσίου) or as an issue, then the Father is according to them compounded and divisible and alterable and material, and, as far as their belief goes, has the circumstances

of a body, Who is the Incorporeal God²¹.

In the beginning of the second stage of the Arian controversy, Eunomius argued with the concept of “consubstantiality” in his first work *Apology* (359) along the same lines.²² Shortly after Eunomius had written his *Apology*, Basil of Caesarea introduced the concept of the horizontal structure of commonness into the Trinitarian doctrine, insisting that consubstantiality should be understood in this sense. This concept was articulated by Basil for the first time in his treatise *Contra Eunomium*,²³ written to refute Eunomius’ *Apology*. Eunomius replied to this treatise by Basil with a new treatise, *Apology of Apology* (whose text survives only in small fragments and in the paraphrase in Gregory of Nyssa’s *Contra Eunomium*), where Eunomius showed the understanding of universals that we mentioned above. Thus, for refuting the new concept of consubstantiality proposed by Basil, Eunomius needed a different set of philosophical arguments than those his Arian predecessors and he himself had while writing the first *Apology*, when it was possible to rely on the traditional Arian criticism of consubstantiality understood in the sense of derivation. Now it was necessary to develop an argument that Eunomius could use for refuting the horizontal structure of commonness for consubstantial beings. In my opinion, it is for this reason that Eunomius in his *Apology for Apology* changed the nature of his criticism of the horizontal concept of consubstantiality of the Persons of the Trinity proposed by Basil of Caesarea, and, therefore, articulated his specific understanding of universals. For this reason we may see a parallel development in the position of Eunomius and in the opposing position of Gregory of Nyssa, who developed Basil’s ideas both in terms of the Trinitarian doctrine and the doctrine of universals.

In his treatise *Contra Eunomium*, Basil of Caesarea said that the right way to conceive of the commonness between God the Father and the Son was to think of a combination of the general (understood as a species, that is, in a horizontal sense) and of the individual properties of the Persons. Offering an analogy, according to which the common divinity of the Holy Trinity was likened to the commonness of light, and being generated and ungenerated (the hypostatic properties of God the Son and the Father) were likened to the properties in which this commonness subsisted and through which it is contemplated, Basil wrote:

If anyone wants to accept that which is true, namely, that begotten and unbegotten are distinctive features (τινας ιδιότητας) that enable identification and are observed (ἐπιθεωρουμένως) in the substance, which lead to the clear and unconfused notion (ἔννοιαν) of the Father and the Son, then he will escape the danger of impiety and preserve logical coherence in his reasoning. ... The di-

21 Athanasius of Alexandria, *De Synodis*, 16, trans. by J. Newman, revised by Rev. A. Robertson and by me.

22 Eunomius, *Apology*, XXVI, 23 (ed. Vaggione).

23 Basil of Caesarea, *Contra Eunomium*, PG 29b 556; 637.

vinity is common, whereas fatherhood and sonship are distinguishing marks: from the combination (συμπλοκῆς) of both, that is, of the common and the unique (τοῦ τε κοινοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἰδίου), we arrive at comprehension of the truth (ἡ κατάληψις ἡμῖν τῆς ἀληθείας ἐγγίνεται). Consequently, upon hearing 'unbegotten light' we think of the Father, whereas upon hearing 'begotten light'²⁴ we receive the notion of the Son²⁵.

In his *Apology of Apology*, Eunomius objected to Basil's argument in the following way:

Our God also is composite, in that while we suppose the Light to be common, we yet separate the one Light from the other by certain special attributes and various differences. For that is none the less composite (σύνθετον) which, while united by one generality (τὸ κοινότητι μιᾷ), is yet separated by certain differences and conjunctions of peculiarities²⁶.

The position on universals articulated here is the same as in the above paraphrase of the Eunomian position concerning universals by Gregory of Nyssa (in the *Contra Eunomium*, 3.5.61-64). The general assumption for understanding universals in both sources on the Eunomian doctrine is that the concept of division into genera and species (and its subtype, the division into species and individuals) was only possible for complex and composite beings; such a division was not possible for the immaterial realm, that is, for the realm of intellectual beings and divinity. On this assumption, Eunomius arrived at the conclusion that the doctrine of consubstantiality of the Persons of the Trinity in the horizontal sense, that is, in the sense that entailed the concept of species and individuals, implied complexity and corporeity of the Persons, which was absurd.

It seems that this assumption was based on a specific Neo-Platonic understanding of Aristotle's doctrine of categories, common in the philosophy of Late Antiquity, namely, on the understanding of the categories developed by Porphyry and later by Iamblichus, both of whom relied on the Plotinian interpretation of Aristotle's categories and on the Plotinian doctrine concerning a specific undivided manner of the existence of forms in the intellectual world.

In addition to the specific interpretation of the Aristotelian doctrine of composite substance, this interpretation was based on the doctrine of the two kinds of incorporeal beings, existing apart from bodies or together with bodies,²⁷ as well as on

24 Comparing the common divinity of the Father and the Son with light, Basil follows the paradigm which he outlined in his *Letter 361*, 27-35 (ed. Courtonne) to Apollinaris of Laodicea.

25 Basil of Caesarea, *Contra Eunomium*, PG 29b, 637, transl. by M. DelCogliano and A. Radde-Gallwitz in: St. Basil of Caesarea, *Against Eunomius*. (The Catholic University of America Press, 2011; *The fathers of the church*; v. 122).

26 Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium*, 3.10.46.1-7 (ed. Jaeger), trans. by B. Moore and H. Wilson, in: *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series II*, vol. 5, slightly revised by me.

27 Porphyry, *Sententiae*, 19; 42.

the doctrine of the existence of universals in three different ways: prior to things, in things, and posterior to things. According to the understanding of Porphyry, categorical statements (in the Aristotelian sense), and, in particular, statements concerning genera and species, comprised by the Aristotelian categories, referred only to the realm of forms immanent to the things or the universals in the things (depending, in their being, on the universals prior to the things), and therefore such statements might apply only to the corporeal realm.²⁸ The intelligible realm was beyond the grasp of categorical statements and was outside the realm that could be indicated by language,²⁹ since human language applied only to the sensible realm.³⁰ Thus, universals prior to things, being the causes of the universals in the things, were unformalized in human language and could not be predicated to material things. The categorical predicates in relation to things were the universals in the things.

In developing his “intellectual interpretation” of categories, Iamblichus attempted to develop and transform the Porphyrian understanding.³¹ According to Iamblichus, things are formed not by the immanent forms-universals, but by the forms-universals prior to things. Iamblichus solved the problem of how the universals prior to things, being the ontological reasons of things, could be predicated to things as categories in such a way that the intellectual forms, of course, could not be the predicates of sensible things in the proper sense. Therefore, in this case we have a synonymous predication in the improper sense.³² For example, the statement “Socrates is a man” is an improper expression, meaning that material Socrates participates in some transcendental idea of man.

In his treatise *On the Mysteries of the Egyptians*, Iamblichus developed the theory that the higher creation, combining divine and non-divine worlds in itself, was not subject to the hierarchy of genera-species and species-individuals, which implied individuation through genus and individual property, but every genus of the “greater beings” was a simple and distinct state, distinguished from all others by their genus. In doing so, Iamblichus might have had in mind the corollary of the Porphyrian understanding of the categories, according to which the framework of division into genera and species as well as into species and individuals could only be applied to material beings, but not to the intellectual realm.

As for the properties which you enquire about as pertaining to each of the superior classes (τῶν κρείττωνων γενῶν), which distinguish them from each other, if you understand the properties as specific differences (εἰδοποιούσας

28 Porphyry, *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories*, 56.29–32; 58.5–29; 91.5–12 (ed. Busse).

29 Cf. Porphyry, *Sententiae*, 19.

30 Porphyry, *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories*, 91.7–12; 91.19–27 (ed. Busse).

31 Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories*, 79.29–30 (ed. Kalbfleisch).

32 Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories*, 53, 9–18 (ed. Kalbfleisch) = fr. 16 (ed. Larsen); in more detail see J. Dillon, “Iamblichus’ *Noera Theoria* of Aristotle’s *Categories*,” *Syllecta Classica* 8 (1997): 65–77; R. Chiaradonna, “Porphyry and Iamblichus on Universals and Synonymous Predication,” *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 18 (2007): 123–40.

διαφορὰς) distinguished from one another by dichotomy within the same genus, as for example "rational" and "irrational" within the genus "Animal," we will never accept the existence of properties in this sense in the case of beings who have no community of essence (κοινωνίαν οὐσίας μίαν), nor division into sub-species of the same rank, and which do not exhibit the synthesis (σύνθεσιν) of an indefinite (ἀορίστου) element that is common, and a determinative (ὀρίζοντος) element that defines. But if you understand "property," (τὴν ιδιότητα) on the assumption that you are dealing with primary and secondary entities that differ from each other in their whole nature and by entire genus, as a simple (ἀπλᾶ) state delimited in itself, then this concept of property makes some sense; for these will certainly each be separate and simple, as totally transcendent properties of beings which exist eternally³³.

In this case, Iamblichus followed the Aristotelian idea of unmoved movers, giving the motion to the planets.³⁴ Each of the movers was original, had its own species, and was not subject to the common genus with the others.³⁵ Iamblichus denied any possibility of species formation in the "greater genera" on the premise that each of these genera did not have a common substance with other beings but was defined by its own simple genus. Otherwise, according to Iamblichus, these genera would have been not simple but complex, being the combinations of the general and the particular. His argument is likely to be based on the conclusion that in the opposite case we would not have been able to speak about the divine genera, but about the genera of the material world. Indeed, in his "intellectual interpretation" of the Aristotelian categories, Iamblichus spoke of species formation as the principle of distinguishing between beings only with respect to material reality³⁶ – but denied it, as we have seen, with respect to the divine genera.

Thus, Eunomius followed the same line of argumentation as Iamblichus: reasoning in terms of general and particular implied the complexity of what existed through the combination of the two, and therefore could not be applied to the incorporeal realm. The fact that Iamblichus rejected the principle of defining the indefinite general with the determinative properties as leading to complexity – the key principle of the horizontal structure of commonness for the Persons of the Trinity for the Cappadocian Fathers³⁷ – also indicates that it was suitable for Eunomius to

33 Iamblichus, *De mysteriis Aegyptiorum*, I, 4, 10-11, trans. by E.C. Clark, J.M. Dillon, J.P. Hershbell, in: Iamblichus on *the Mysteries*, Brill, 2004, slightly revised by me. On Iamblichus' preference of the particular over the general see Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, I, 426, 3.

34 Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, XII, 8.

35 See G. Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul. The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (Pennsylvania, 1995): 76.

36 Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories*, 218.8-9.

37 Cf., for example, the famous *Letter 38*: "...My statement, then, is this. That which is spoken of in a special and peculiar manner is indicated by the name of the hypostasis. Suppose we say "a man." The indefinite meaning (τῷ ἀορίστῳ τῆς σημασίας) of the word strikes a certain vague sense upon the ears. The nature (τὴν φύσιν) is indicated, but what subsists and is specially and peculiarly indicated by the name is not made plain. ... This then is the hypostasis, or "understanding;" not the indefinite conception of the essence or substance (ἡ ἀόριστος τῆς οὐσίας ἔννοια), which, be-

choose the Iamblichian conceptual structure as a philosophical basis for refuting the use of this principle in the Trinitarian sense. We can assume that in his teaching on the singular natures of the types of the angelic powers, which did not have any commonness with each other, Eunomius directly relied on Iamblichus.³⁸ However, in general, in his doctrine of universals, which allowed for the application of the concept of consubstantiality, understood in a horizontal sense, and in general of the applicability of the division into genera-species and species-individuals only to the material realm, Eunomius followed the Neoplatonic paradigm of understanding the Aristotelian categories, according to which the categories, including the Aristotelian category of the second substance (species and genera), were applicable only to material and physical reality.

Eunomius might have been introduced to the Neoplatonic tradition by his teacher Aetius, who lived and studied,³⁹ and may even have been born⁴⁰ in Syrian Antioch. In the beginning of the fourth century, Daphne, the suburb of Antioch, was a center of Syrian Neoplatonism that had emerged around the School of Iamblichus. Moreover, Aetius was a friend of the Emperor Julian,⁴¹ the follower of Iamblichus, and the disciple of the Pergamum School of Neoplatonism. Orthodox contemporaries of Eunomius traditionally viewed him in the context of Aristotelian doctrine,⁴² and most scholars of the twentieth century followed them in this respect.⁴³ However, there were some attempts to establish a connection between Eunomius and Pla-

cause what is signified is general, finds no “standing,” but the conception which by means of the expressed peculiarities gives standing and circumscription to the general and uncircumscribed (τὸ κοινόν καὶ ἀπερίγραπτον). ... Transfer, then, to the divine dogmas the same standard of difference which you recognise in the case both of essence and of hypostasis in human affairs, and you will not go wrong” (3:1–12, 30–33 (Courtonne), trans. by Rev. B. Jackson, in: *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series II, vol. 8*). This letter is ascribed to Basil of Caesarea, but most likely belongs to Gregory of Nyssa (see R. Hübner, “Gregor von Nyssa als Verfasser der sog. Ep. 38 des Basiliius: Zum unterschiedlichen Verständnis der ousia bei den kappadokischen Brüdern,” in *Epektasis: Mélanges patristiques offerts au cardinal J. Daniélou*, eds. J. Fontaine and Ch. Kannengiesser (Paris, 1972): 463–90; P. Fedwick, “Commentary of Gregory of Nyssa on the 38th Letter of Basil of Caesarea.” *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 44.1 (1978): 31–51).

- 38 We should note that the language used by Gregory of Nyssa in his paraphrase of the Eunomian doctrine that the types of angelic powers cannot be the subjects of the common genus, is somewhat similar to the language used by Origen in the *Peri Archon* (if we consider those few passages that are extant in the original Greek); cf. the paraphrase of Gregory of Nyssa: οὐ γάρ, καθὼς Εὐνόμιος βούλεται, αἱ παρὰ τοῦ Παύλου κατελεγμένα φωναὶ τῶν ὑπερκοσμίων δυνάμεων φύσεις τινὰς ἀλλήλων παρῆλλαγμένας σημαίνουσιν (Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium*, 3.5.63.4–6 (ed. Jaeger)) and Origen’s chapter title Περὶ λογικῶν φύσεων (*Peri Archon*, 1.5), as well as in the extant Latin translation of the Greek text of the *Peri Archon*: Igitur tot et tantis ordinum officiorumque nominibus cognominatis, quibus certum est subesse substantias (*Peri Archon*, 1.5.3.74–75, eds. Crouzel and Simonetti). However, further in the *Peri Archon* 1.8.2, Origen rejected the idea that the angelic powers (as well as human souls) had different spiritual natures.
- 39 Philostorgius, 3.15.
- 40 Socrates Scholasticus, 2.35.
- 41 Philostorgius, 3.27; 6.7; Julian, *Letter 25* (see J. Bidez, *La Vie de l’Empereur Julien* (Paris, 1930): 90–93).
- 42 Basil of Caesarea, *Contra Eunomium*, PG 29b, 516; Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium*, 1.1.55; 2.620 (ed. Jaeger); Epiphanius of Cyprus, *Panarion*, 76.2.2; Socrates Scholasticus, 4.7. See also D. Runia, “Festugiere Revisited: Aristotle in the Greek Patres,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 43 (1989): 9–12, 23–26.
- 43 See, for example, A. Spassky, *Istoriya dogmaticheskikh uchenij v epokhu Vselenskikh soborov (v svyazi s filosofskimi ucheniyamu togo vremeni* [History of dogmas in the age of Ecumenical Councils (in relation to the philosophical doctrines of the time)] (Sergiev Posad, 1914): 355–61 (in Russian).

tonic tradition. Thus, in the middle of the twentieth century, some scholars pointed to the presence of Neoplatonic subordinationism in the Eunomian teaching on the Supreme Triad.⁴⁴ Jean Daniélou tried to connect the teaching of Eunomius with the contemporaneous Neoplatonic thought, demonstrating the influence of the *Cratylus* exegesis of the Iamblichian School on the theory of names of Eunomius.⁴⁵ Pointing to the hierarchical nature of the Eunomian Supreme Triad and the triads of Plotinus, Porphyry, and Iamblichus, P. Mar Gregorius insisted on Eunomius' adherence to theurgic practices,⁴⁶ and even called him a man deeply immersed in theurgy, unfortunately not providing any evidence for his claim.⁴⁷ Not attempting such radical claims of Eunomius' Neoplatonism, in this article I am trying to point out the Neoplatonic background of Eunomius in the sense that Eunomius might have depended on the interpretation of the Aristotelian categories, common in the Neoplatonic philosophical tradition.

Obviously, the Cappadocian Fathers did not accept this interpretation of the Aristotelian categories, and did not limit the framework of division into genera-species and species-individuals to any realm of reality. We may say that one of the mitigating factors for the Cappadocian understanding of the scope of how the Aristotelian categories could be applied, which diverged from the Neoplatonic understanding that was prevalent in their time in philosophical circles and followed by Eunomius, was the epistemological terminology used by the Cappadocians. This terminology combined the language of the general and the particular as applied to the Trinitarian doctrine. Indeed, the Cappadocians tended to describe in epistemological terms those notions that Iamblichus and Eunomius endowed with ontological status, referring to the indefinite general and defining particular as really existing principles and rejecting their applicability to the divine realm. The Cappadocians relegated the description of the general and the particular in the Trinitarian framework mainly to the activity of human thinking – from the general notion of the object that was stored in memory, to its particular features, which the mind identified through the deeper contemplation of the object.⁴⁸ However, the Neo-Niceans did not single out any particular concept for their Trinitarian system. In their works,

44 E. Vandebussche, "La part de la dialectique dans la théologie d'Eunomius le technologue," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 40 (1944–1945): 70; E. von Ivánka, *Hellenisches und Christliches im frühbyzantinischen Geistesleben* (Wien, 1948): 21–22. See also D. Balas, *ΜΕΤΟΥΣΙΑ ΘΕΟΥ...: 25–27*; P. Papageorgiou, "Plotinus and Eunomius: A Parallel Theology of the Three Hypostasis," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 37. 3–4 (1992): 215–31.

45 J. Daniélou, "Eunome l'arien et l'exégèse néoplatonicienne du Cratyle," *Revue des études grecques* 69 (1956): 412–32. The arguments that the philosophical background of the Eunomian theory of language implied the Stoic, and not the Neoplatonic framework are presented in D. Biriukov, "The Strategies of Naming in Polemic between Eunomius and Basil of Caesarea in Context of Antic philosophical Tradition," *Scrinium. Revue de patrologie, d'hagiographie critique et d'histoire ecclésiastique* 4 (2008): 103–21.

46 P. Mar Gregorios, "Theurgic Neo-Platonism and the Eunomius-Gregory Debate: An Examination of the Background," in *Contra Eunomium I' en la produccion literaria de Gregorio de Nisa*, eds. L. Mateo-Seco, and J. Bastero (Pamplona, 1988): 217–35.

47 *Ibid.*, 230.

48 Cf., for example, the passage from Basil of Caesarea, cited above (*Contra Eunomium*, PG 29b, 637) and Letter 38.3:1–12, 41–47 (ed. Courtonne).

we can see the whole range of approaches, including the analogy of the general species and individuals, the principle of *perichoresis* of the Persons, the language of the development of the Monad, etc. – but none of these concepts, apparently, was regarded as exclusive.