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THEOLOGICAL MANUAL BY GREGORY
OF NAZIANZUS: GENRE, STYLE
AND METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN
OF THE ORATIONS 27, 28

In the present paper I'm going to investigate the form (genre, structure, traditional *topoi* and stylistic features peculiar to the genre) and content (general methodological design and pedagogical strategy) of the 27, 28 orations (the first and second theological orations) of Gregory Nazianzen. By means of philological analysis I am showing: what traditional literary forms (genres) Gregory chose for his theological orations and how he handled the previous genre tradition (peculiar *topoi*, style). Through the philosophical analysis I am exploring the reasons of Gregorian genre preferences and answering the following questions: what was the background of the methodological debate with the Neo-Arians, which gave cause to the composition of the theological orations; how did Gregory argue with his opponents, namely how did he apply the traditional philosophical pedagogical and polemical techniques in order to establish the Christian gnoseological system and oppose it to the Neo-Arians approach towards the theological knowledge. By the Christian gnoseological system I mean the coherent system of the Christian theological knowledge, or, in the words of Origen, – “a kind of organic and connected whole” (“*seriem quondam et corpus*” – *De princ. Praef.* 10), which Gregory endeavoured to perform in his theological orations, and thereby imitated the previous philosophical examples of such systems. Since Gregorian prime goal was pedagogical – to define the Christian gnoseological principles and to teach how to handle them, how to approach the divine knowledge, the polemical objectives were secondary. Hence, regarding Gregorian complex design, I am assuming that formal philological analysis could ease understanding the orations content, therefore in the present paper I am starting with the genre and style, continuing with the comparison of the peculiar *topoi* in Gregorian work and

in the typical genre examples (Alcinous' *Didaskalos* and Origen's *De princ.*), considering how by means of these *topoi* Gregory establishes the Christian gnoseology and argues with the Neo-Arians, and finally, exploring the method of approaching the divine knowledge, which Gregory suggests. Since this method was in fact a traditional one, I am comparing it with the relevant method in Alcinous' and Origen's doctrines in order to show Gregorian contribution to the matter.

PHILOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Genre of the 27 oration

Frederic Norris¹ considered the first theological oration (πρὸς Εὐνομιανούς προδιάληξις) as an invective. Indeed, Gregory decidedly mocked his opponents, but he did not abuse them. Moreover, he confessed to be guilty in letting the part of his flock fall into heresy (27.6). Of course, one may doubt his sincerity, but his intention to set an example of the self-purification, which has nothing to do with the invective *topoi*, is clear.

Another remarkable feature of the 27 oration is the abundance of either textual or indirect references to the *Corpus Platonicum*. Almost every paragraph of the oration has allusions to the so-called school Socratic dialogues of the *Corpus*. The stylistic game in the imitation of the Socratic dialogues goes hand in hand with the call for purification that which Gregory's cultivated metropolitan audience had used to hear since its school-days.

I assume that Gregory uses the style of the Socratic dialogues in order to make a scenic and impressive introduction to the theological practice. As for the polemical zeal, it doesn't lead his work but impart a certain degree of irony and play to it. Gregory employs the genre of *dialexis* which was widely used in the philosophical schools for the introduction to a philosophical discourse.

1. *Faith gives fullness to reasoning: the five theological orations of Gregory Nazianzen I* intr. and comm. by Fr. Norris, transl. by L. Wickham and Fr. Williams. Brill, 1991, p. 34, 61.