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Distinction λόγος - τρόπος and Its Application in the Christology of the Eastern Fathers

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Abstract

In the Trinitarian and Christological teaching of the Eastern Fathers, the λόγος-τρόπος distinction had a special theological significance. The introduction and use of this distinction is due to the Cappadocian Fathers, St. Basil the Great and then St. Gregory of Nyssa. However, the way of interpreting the use of this distinction in modern theology by St. Gregory of Nyssa is a minimizing one. In such a way of understanding we have not yet sufficiently emphasized the fundamental contribution of St. Gregory to the foundation of Eastern Christology. The present study goes to the work *Antirrethicus adversus Apollinarium* of St. Gregory of Nyssa, to show the reality of a clear and correct Christology, present in fact in his other writings, using the distinction λόγος-τρόπος.

Keywords

hypostasis, being, logos-tropos distinction, Christology, the person of Christ, the humanity of Christ, characteristic properties.

I. Modern interpretations of the λόγος - τρόπος distinction in the Christology of the Eastern Fathers.

In modern and current studies of St. Maximus there is a consensus on the central meaning of the terms λόγος-τρόπος in his work, especially in Christology and the teaching of deification. I. H. Dalmais showed their

relevance to anthropology¹. He was followed by P. Sherwood, helping to clarify them². The basic idea from which these studies started and the purpose they pursued in their argumentation were summarized by Le Guillou in the introduction to the work of A. Riou³, but also referring to the work of J. M. Garrigues⁴.

According to Le Guillou, Saint Maximus would have penetrated the conception of the hierarchical participation of Dionysius the Areopagite towards a personal (intentional) vision of deification as a central dimension of his thought:

“After highlighting the logos-tropos distinction, it was to see starting from the last texts - those that reflect the knowledge that took place in him after the monoenergist crisis - how Saint Maximus developed the created-uncreated relationship, participation in the order of creation and grace, in short, in all aspects of economics ... Our two theses reveal that Saint Maximus gradually passed from a conception of hierarchical participation to a conception of Christian intentionality”⁵.

In relation to this orientation, it must be shown that in Saint Maximus the problem of man's participation in the divine life has at its center the participation of man in the deified humanity of Christ. The reality of participation emphasized by Dionysius the Areopagite does not disappear in St. Maximus, but is related to the human nature of the person of Christ.

The distinction λόγος-τρόπος served the Christological analyzes with the outbreak of monoenergetic disputes, the anthropological categories becoming important, because the question of the human nature of Christ moves the reflection on the mystery of the person and His work.

¹ I. H. DALMAIS, “La théorie des «Logoi» des créatures chez saint Maxime le Confesseur”, in: *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 36 (1952), p. 244-249.

² P. SHERWOOD, *The Earlier Ambigua of St. Maximus the Confessor and his refutation of the origenism*, Rome, Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1955, p. 155.

³ A. RIOU, *Le Monde et l'Eglise selon Maxime le Confesseur*, Paris, 1973.

⁴ J. M. GARRIGUES, *Maxime le Confesseur. La charité, avenir divin de l'homme*, Paris, 1976.

⁵ A. RIOU, *Le Monde et l'Eglise selon Maxime le Confesseur*, pp. 9-10.

At the basis of these studies, however, was K. Holl's work on Amphilochus of Iconium⁶. According to Holl, the first to use the expression τρόπος τῆς ὑπάρξεως is Saint Basil the Great, followed by Saint Gregory of Nyssa. In St. Basil it is found as a “formulation of a mystery”, which was expressed through ignorance of the “way of existence of the Spirit”⁷ and to St. Gregory as a “general category by which he was able to summarize the cause of the Son and the Spirit”⁸. Amphilochus used it with regard to the three persons of the Holy Trinity.

Sherwood shows that this development presupposes a certain transformation of the meaning of ὑπόρξις. From the sense of existence, reality, in some places, to St. Irenaeus he would swing to the moment of becoming and birth⁹. Sherwood mainly confirms Holl's thesis on extending the expression to the Father as Amphilochus himself does. It is important for Sherwood to acknowledge that the Cappadocian Fathers crystallized a correlative use of the expressions λόγος τῆς φύσεως - τρόπος τῆς ὑπάρξεως by which a principle is gained for all theology¹⁰.

It should be noted, however, that on this line it becomes possible to deepen with great precision a structure of great significance for Trinitarian Christian theology: the hypostatic distinction in the unity of being or de-being. However, Sherwood does not exactly express the theological elaboration of this structure when he states: “the distinction made in this way makes operative a whole range of Aristotelian doctrines in the service of theology concerning the third, economics and anthropology”¹¹. In reality, however, the Eastern Fathers overcame Aristotelianism and even corrected it in the theological elaboration of this structure.

In Saint Maximus the Confessor, the distinction λόγος τῆς φύσεως - τρόπος τῆς ὑπάρξεως has a special importance in the Christological field.

⁶ K. HOLL, *Amphilochius von Ikonium in seinem Verhältnis zu den grossen Kapadoziern*, Tübingen und Leipzig, 1904, p. 240.

⁷ K. HOLL, *Amphilochius von Ikonium in seinem Verhältnis zu den grossen Kapadoziern*, p. 241.

⁸ K. HOLL, *Amphilochius von Ikonium in seinem Verhältnis zu den grossen Kapadoziern*, p. 241.

⁹ P. SHERWOOD, *The Earlier Ambigua of St. Maximus the Confessor and His Refutation of the Origenism*, p. 155.

¹⁰ P. SHERWOOD, *The Earlier Ambigua of St. Maximus the Confessor and His Refutation of the Origenism*, p. 160.

¹¹ P. SHERWOOD, *The Earlier Ambigua of St. Maximus the Confessor and His Refutation of the Origenism*, p. 161.

Saint Maximus is the first to systematically transfer this distinction from the Trinitarian teaching, in which it was first used, to the Christological one. This does not mean that they have not been a concern for this transfer before. Sherwood refers to the *Second Speech* of Amphilochus of Iconium in which he speaks of the two natures in Christ and which links the two births of the Son of God: the everlasting birth of the Father and that of the Virgin Mary, but using for the second birth the expression γέννησις:

“He is One and the same as a child who cries and as a Giver of wisdom and word: one due to the birth of the Virgin and the other due to the incomprehension of His origin”¹².

II. Saint Gregory of Nyssa, promoter of the transfer of the λόγος-τρόπος distinction from the Trinitarian dogma to the Christological one.

However, Saint Gregory of Nyssa makes this transfer of the expression τρόπος τῆς ὑπάρξεως used in the Trinitarian teaching in the teaching on the birth of the Son of God from the Virgin Mary¹³. This is an excerpt from the work *Antirrethicus adversus Apollinarium* by St. Gregory¹⁴.

The text is related to the dispute over the relationship of the deity with humanity in the person of Christ. St. Gregory’s position on this reality contains a twofold statement: in order to keep the right teaching, he must hold fast to the fact that the deity was present in Christ who suffered, without this uncompromising nature of God being drawn as a suffering nature (ὅτι τὴν θεότητα ἐν τῷ πάσχοντι εἶναι ὁμολογοῦμεν· οὐ μὲν τὴν ἀπαθῆ φύσιν ἐμπαθῆ γενέσθαι)¹⁵.

St. Gregory thus seeks to preserve both the presence of God in suffering and the unchanging and unbearable nature of the divine nature. To the question of how to understand the presence of God in Christ, St. Gregory answers by giving the example of the constitution of man, in which he distinguishes three moments:

¹² AMPHILOCHUS OF ICONIUM, *Oratio II*, PG 39, 53 B.

¹³ F. HEINZER, *Gottes Sohn als Mensch*, Freiburg, 1980, p. 55.

¹⁴ SAINT GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Contra Eunomium Libri, Iteratis Curis. Pars Altera, Liber III*, ed. by W. Jaeger, in: *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, volume I&II, Leiden, 1960, p. 223.

¹⁵ SAINT GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Contra Eunomium Libri, Iteratis Curis. Pars Altera, Liber III*, p. 223.

1. Matter (ὕλική ἀφορμή).
2. The divine power (θεία δύναμις) that penetrates and animates it.
3. She works the constitution (σύστασις) of creation.

Without the creative and life-giving power of God matter would remain inert and motionless, it would not become living and existing man. This argument is followed by the use of Christ, the relationship of His divinity and His humanity, set forth in great points from birth to resurrection.

In the text of *Antirrethicus adversus Apollinarium* about the birth of Christ is the expression τρόπος τῆς ὑπάρξεως for the birth of Christ from the Virgin Mary:

“So at the birth of the Virgin, to whom the power of the Most High through the life-giving Spirit in an immaterial way dwelt in the righteous body and made the virgin harm the matter of the body, and thus received from the Virgin’s body the contribution of the One who was formed, so that in this way the true *neus* man was made, the first and the only one, Who showed such a way of existence (τὸν τοιοῦτον τρόπον τῆς ὑπάρξεως). He was created, as befits God and not man, when the divine power in a proper way penetrated the whole nature of the One united to it”¹⁶.

M. Richard commented on this place in his studies on the meanings of the hypostasis showing that he does not understand the expression τρόπος τῆς ὑπάρξεως, “way of existence” in the sense of an existence as a point event, but as the individuality of an “origin that lasts” constituting the existence¹⁷. This statement of M. Richard is accepted by F. Heinzer who shows that it “has importance as a constitutive meaning of the person, which finds its expression in theology, being passed through transfer to the level of economics”¹⁸.

However, this interpretation of St. Gregory of Nyssa does not correspond to Eastern patristic theology, in which there is an uninterrupted line of teaching about Christ, who as the Son of God incarnate is the

¹⁶ Saint GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Contra Eunomium Libri, Iteratis Curis. Pars Altera, Liber III*, p. 223.

¹⁷ M. RICHARD, *Opera minora, II*, Brepols, 1976, p. 18 and the following.

¹⁸ F. HEINZER, *Gottes Sohn als Mensch*, p. 57.

Possessor and Giver of the Holy Spirit and who does not exclude the teaching of conception as a man by the work of the Holy Spirit. But in His conception as man is the same Holy Spirit which Christ as incarnate God possesses and bestows upon Himself, being His own, not seen as a power foreign to Him which would have been given to him as a mere man.

In St. Gregory of Nyssa we find the first example of the use of the expression *τρόπος τῆς ὑπάρξεως*, passed from the Trinitarian domain to the Christological domain for the name of the secret birth of Christ. Thus, regarding the transfer made by Saint Maximus the Confessor of the distinction *λόγος τῆς φύσεως - τρόπος τῆς ὑπάρξεως* from the Trinitarian to the Christological domain, it can be stated with certainty that Saint Maximus had as his predecessor in this transfer Saint Gregory.

III. The fundamental contribution of the Cappadocian Fathers to the introduction of the *λόγος-τρόπος* distinction in Trinitarian and Christological dogma

Thus the decisive contribution of the Cappadocian Fathers to the deepening of the Trinitarian dogma by introducing the *λόγος-τρόπος* distinction also led to the solution of Christological problems, especially with regard to the question of how the uniqueness of the person of Christ can be understood in His deity with the Father and in His deity with us. Closely related to the *λόγος-τρόπος* distinction is its ontological motif, which is a basic issue that concerned the Cappadocian Fathers first in Trinitarian dogma and then in Christology, i.e. the struggle to differentiate between the natural and personal level, between *φύσις* and *ὑπόστασις*. The Christology of Saint Maximus could not be understood without their effort to clarify this differentiation.

In this effort, however, it was not a simple terminological problem, but a deep objective one. For the Cappadocian Fathers' teaching on hypostasis, a text of *Epistle 38* attributed first to St. Basil the Great and then to St. Gregory of Nyssa, but recognized in later research as belonging to St. Basil the Great, may be indicated, which deals with the distinction between *οὐσία* and *ὑπόστασις*. The hypostasis is understood here not in the general sense of a being that cannot be defined (*ἀόριστος*) and circumscribed (*ἀπερίγραπτος*), according to a mode of being (*οὐσία*),

but with regard to its unmistakable particularity expressed by its own his characteristic qualities (γνωρίσματα) or peculiarities (ιδιώματα) and which distinguishes it from another existence which has the same nature.

An application in Christology is made by St. Gregory of Nazianzus in *Epistle 101*, not bringing the notions of *door* and *hypostasis*, but using the masculine ἄλλος and the neutral ἄλλο. Thus in Christ it is not ἄλλος καὶ ἄλλος, but ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο. In this distinction A. Grillmeier sees an epochal progress: “For the first time in Greek theology, the Trinitarian concepts are applied to the Christological formula”¹⁹.

However, he objected that by differentiating between the general being (κοινόν) and the hypostasis as a particular existence (ἴδιον) - although this is a historically grounded one - the personal moment cannot be traced: “In fact, they (Cappadocians) almost completely neglect the «staff». Only by including moral properties among idioms do they transcend the realm of moral categories. Otherwise, their analysis concerns «work» rather than «person»”²⁰.

In addition, by the definition of the hypostasis, by the characteristic features (ιδιώματα), would result a weight regarding the humanity of Christ in the hypostatic union, which Grillmeier formulates thus:

“If we wanted to keep this conception, great difficulties would result, because according to the Chalcedonian theological formula the human nature of Christ had no hypostasis. But if the latter was conceived as «notae individuantes» as a concrete characteristic feature, then consistently human nature had no size, color, stature, etc”²¹.

IV. Ways of understanding in modern theology the distinction λόγος-τρόπος applied by St. Gregory of Nyssa in Christology

Also on this line is seen in St. Gregory of Nyssa a “deconcretization” of the human nature of Christ. This would tend to eliminate all the traits

¹⁹ A. GRILLMEIER, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, Vol.I, second, revised edition, London/Oxford, 1975, p. 60.

²⁰ A. GRILLMEIER, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, Vol.I, p. 375.

²¹ A. GRILLMEIER, *Mit ihm und in ihm*, Freiburg-Basel-Wien, 1975, p. 377.

that would characterize a human nature and replace them with the traits characteristic of the deity²².

R. Hübner sees in this an influence of Origen's teaching on St. Gregory, which could not be avoided: "As at Origen the danger of annulling the human nature of Christ and volatilizing its ultimate importance for the salvation of man was not removed"²³. The humanity of Christ would appear as a passive instrument, as its garment. In this way, in the relationship between divinity and humanity in Christ, as St. Gregory would have conceived it, a strong asymmetry would be shown in the sense of an overwhelming preponderance of the Logos over His humanity²⁴.

The problem of the theological position of the humanity of Christ is not only a Christological one, but it brings with it decisive consequences on the teaching about deification. Hübner showed that St. Gregory sees the process of salvation or deification of the human race not as a platonic grounded physical mechanical action, but as a spiritual, pneumatic process. According to Hübner, St. Gregory was influenced by Marcel de Ancira, who assigned to Christ's humanity a certain function: the body of Christ is for him the icon of the unseen God, no longer retaining an eternal meaning.

This conception together with the Origenist tendency towards monism would have influenced St. Gregory's teaching on the humanity of Christ. But this interpretation goes too far with the comparison between Origen and St. Gregory of Nyssa in terms of understanding the humanity of Christ. Through dogmatic errors concerning the person of Christ and his saving acts, the understanding of the Incarnation of the Son of God is so weakened by Origen that it becomes only a crossing point: "From the fact that God the Word can unite with the pre-existing soul of Jesus. There is no need for the Incarnation for this union between God and man"²⁵.

At Origen we thus encounter the most difficult crisis regarding the understanding of the full humanity of Christ. The Incarnation is understood by him in the sense that the Word took the man Jesus to the Incarnation. "Here is the smallest space for full humanity"²⁶. Following this line, the Aryan Eudoxius of Constantinople states, on the contrary, that the Only

²² A. GRILLMEIER, *Mit ihm und in ihm*, p. 375.

²³ R. HÜBNER, *Die Einheit des Leibes Christi bei Gregor von Nyssa, Untersuchungen zum Ursprung der physischen Erlösungslehre*, Leiden, 1974, p. 61.

²⁴ F. HEINZER, *Gottes Sohn als Mensch*, p. 61-62.

²⁵ W. ELERT, *Der Ausgang der altkirchlichen Christologie*, Berlin, 1957, p. 273.

²⁶ W. ELERT, *Der Ausgang der altkirchlichen Christologie*, p. 137.

Begotten of God / He became flesh, not man, for he did not take a human soul, for He became flesh, so that through the body as through a veil unite as God with us. Not two natures, for He was not a full man, but in the place of the soul God in the flesh. Arius, in turn, asserted that Christ had a soulless body (σῶμα ἄψυχον). “The whole humanity of Christ was clearly denied”²⁷.

We will see that St. Gregory of Nyssa will combat such misunderstandings of Christ’s humanity by affirming a clear teaching about it, seeing it hypostatically united to the Word, and specifying the whole path of its deification through the saving acts of Christ.

But Grillmeier also sees in St. Gregory of Nyssa a misunderstanding of the human nature of Christ. This would come to St. Gregory in an attempt to transfer to Christology the notional analysis that the Cappadocian Fathers use of the Holy Trinity. The Fathers of the sixth century would have had the same weight. After Grillmeier, St. Gregory began this transfer of the distinction between the common nature and properties in human nature of Christ to reject the Apollinarian reproach that he and all who believe in a soul of Christ and in a full human nature of The Lord would teach a double sonship of the Lord, that is, two sons²⁸.

In the *Epistle to Theophilus of Alexandria*, St. Gregory excludes such a teaching about two sons precisely by revealing in Christ the Exalted a human nature:

“The lever of human nature that was taken by the almighty deity was mixed with the divinity as a drop of vinegar in the high seas, but not in its specific properties (οὐ μὴν ἐν τοῖς ἰδίοις αὐτῆς ἰδιώμασιν). For if the Son had known in the divinity not comprehended in a different way from nature, specified in the attributes which belong to him (ἑτερογενῆς τις φύσις [ἐν] ἰδιάζουσι σημείοις ἐπιγινώσκετο) in the way that one weak or small subject to corruption it would be in time, but the other full of power and authority, incorruptible, eternal, it would claim two sons”²⁹.

²⁷ W. ELERT, *Der Ausgang der altkirchlichen Christologie*, p. 137.

²⁸ A. GRILLMEIER, *Jesus Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, Bd. 2/2, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1989, p. 545.

²⁹ SAINT GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Ad Theophil adv. Apoll.*, PG 45, 127 CD.

Regarding the mixture of divinity and humanity in the person of Christ, of whom St. Gregory speaks, Grillmeier states that it is “a theological language of extraordinary theological wisdom”³⁰. Grillmeier rightly observes that “the humanity of Christ does not simply disappear into divinity. It has its own reality”³¹. At the same time, however, he states that this humanity no longer has earthly properties:

“Everything that makes «human nature in general» «hypostasis» or «individual» human or «person» is annulled and replaced by divine attributes, through wisdom, power, holiness, impatience”³².

Because in Christ, that is, in the humanity of Christ, Grillmeier points out, there are only divine attributes, we can no longer speak of two sons. The human is no longer shown in the properties of nature (*quod humanum est, non in proprietatibus naturae esse ostenditur*)³³. Everything is filled with the glory of God. To show this Grillmeier refers to St. Gregory’s epistle to Theophilus³⁴, emphasizing that difficulties are included in this explanation, for it was first in Christ a suffering state. His glory and power were discovered only after His suffering³⁵. For the state of *chenosis*, St. Gregory’s explanation would not be enough.

St. Gregory would be helped by the idea of changing the name which is possible due to “the close union between the body taken and the deity who takes”:

“Due to the union that takes place between the body taken and the deity who takes, this in the way we speak of divinity in human expressions and of humanity in divine names. Thus Paul calls the crucified Lord of glory (I Corinthians 2, 8) and the One who is glorified by all creation is called down to earth by Jesus”³⁶.

³⁰ A. GRILLMEIER, *Jesus Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, Bd. 1, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1979, pp. 540-541.

³¹ A. GRILLMEIER, *Jesus Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, Bd. 2/2, p. 546.

³² A. GRILLMEIER, *Jesus Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, Bd. 2/2, p. 546.

³³ A. GRILLMEIER, *Jesus Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, Bd. 2/2, p. 546.

³⁴ Saint GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Ad Theophil adv. Apoll.*, PG 45, 1277 CD.

³⁵ Saint Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Theophil adv. Apoll.*, PG 45, 1277 CD.

³⁶ Saint Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Theophil adv. Apoll.*, PG 45, 1278 A.

V. Application and substantiation of the λόγος-τρόπος distinction by St. Gregory of Nyssa in Christology

It should be noted that St. Gregory explained in his works the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ by speaking of the full pneumatization of the body of Christ through these saving acts of His. He speaks of all the power given to Christ as man in heaven and on earth after His resurrection (Matthew 28, 18). In addition, he emphasizes the incorruptibility of the body of Christ after His resurrection, thus showing that by the resurrection affections and death were removed from His human nature, thus following the Holy Apostle Paul who says: “Knowing that Christ is risen from the dead. Death no longer has dominion over Him” (Romans 6, 9). But this is not done by denying the reason of the human nature of Christ, nor its specific qualities which are preserved in it even after His resurrection and ascension. That is why in the text mentioned above from the Epistle to Theophilus of Alexandria, St. Gregory speaking of the mixture of divinity and humanity in the person of the exalted Christ states that this mixture takes place not in its specific properties (οὐ μὴν ἐν τοῖς ἰδίοις αὐτῆς ἰδιώμασιν)³⁷, that is, of the humanity of Christ. That is why the expression “absorption” used by Grillmeier regarding this mixture does not exactly reflect the reality described by St. Gregory. This mixture cannot be reproduced with a term from the material world, in which the own properties of the mixed parts disappear. In the reality of the exalted body of Christ, however, they persist. It is the mystery of the exalted body of Christ, full of the Holy Spirit.

We also note that the modern theologians mentioned above (Hübner and Grillmeier) make statements about the Christology of St. Gregory referring only to certain works of his. But F. Heinzer takes a step further and shows that St. Gregory emphasizes in his homiletical and spiritual works that the Word took through His Incarnation “the whole man”, “all the properties of his nature: birth, education, growth, until the experience of death”³⁸, “for the sick part itself”, that is, our humanity, had to receive healing³⁹. Because the humanity of Christ is taken from our dough (φύραμα), it is the beginning (ἀπαρχή) of our resurrection⁴⁰.

³⁷ Saint Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Theophil adv. Apoll.*, PG 45, 127 CD.

³⁸ Saint GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Oratio catehetica magna*, 27, 3 (Mérédier, p. 121).

³⁹ Saint GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Oratio catehetica magna*, 27, 3 (Mérédier, p. 123).

⁴⁰ Saint GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Oratio catehetica magna*, 16, 6 (Mérédier, pp. 88-90).

However, in order to answer the above statements of modern theologians, we do not stop at these works of St. Gregory, but we will go on to another of his works, where we will see the argument brought by him.

It is about the work already mentioned here of St. Gregory, *Antirrethicus adversus Apollinarium*. This is intended to reject the work of Apollinaris of Laodicea *Demonstrating the Incarnation of God* in the image of man. Apollinarie first engaged in the fight against the Aryans. To him Christ is more than an “anthropos entheos” that is, a man in whom God dwells, he is more than a prophet. The incarnation means that the divine “pneuma” or deity and “body” together form a “substantial unity”. “Becoming a man” is not the same as “assuming a man”. For the union in Jesus Christ to be truly realized, humanity does not have to be complete.

If the deity were to unite with a full humanity it would mean to unite two complete, complete entities. But “two fullnesses cannot become one”. In Christ are the human body and the irrational soul, a vital principle, but not the rational soul, the “nous” which is the principle of control and self-determination. In Christ the rational soul is replaced by the divine Logos. Christ is made up of a full deity and an incomplete humanity. Thus Christ forms a substantial unity. Taking the place of the human soul, the Logos assures the sinlessness of Christ.

Apollinaris comes to speak of the “heavenly man”. The logic of the system will lead Apollinaris to admit one nature into Christ. “Physis” means for Apollinaris the self-determining being (autokinitos, autoenergetos)”. Rufin relates that Apollinaris underwent an evolution that led him from dichotomy to triotomism.

Apollinaris was fought by the Cappadocian Fathers, among whom St. Gregory pledged to continue the struggle of St. Basil, his brother. Among the various Christological aspects addressed by him is that of the death of Christ. According to St. Gregory, “death is nothing but the loosening of the connection between body and soul”⁴¹. This obvious truth is directed against Apollinaris, who also viewed death as a separation: in man between soul and body, in Christ, however, death is the separation between the Logos and the animate body without nous. St. Gregory argues on this point. If, as Apollinaris says, Christ has a soul devoid of nous, how can His death be presented as human death?⁴².

⁴¹ Saint GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Adversus Apollinarem*, PG 45, 1153 D

⁴² Saint GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Adversus Apollinarem*, PG 45, 1189 C.

If the death of Christ is not the separation of soul and body, how can Christ save us through a death that is not ours, how can we say that we die with Christ?⁴³ When Christ dies, the Word is not separated from body and soul, He who took them after the Incarnation: “Being united with one another, the Word is separated from one another”⁴⁴. In *Antirrethicus* St. Gregory explains this basic aspect in Christology:

“Because of His power, He surrenders the body to the heart of the earth, as it is written, and surrenders His soul after He said to the Father, «Into Your hands I entrust My spirit» (Luke 23, 46) and after saying to the thief, «Today you will be with me in heaven» (Luke 23, 43) these two confessions being true: We must believe that this divine dwelling, precisely called heaven, it is nothing but in the rich hand of the Father, as the prophet said, making God speak to Jerusalem above: «Behold, I have marked you out in My palms; your walls are always before My eyes» (Isaiah 49, 16)⁴⁵.

St. Gregory continues to clarify his thinking about Apollinaris. The latter seemed to share the same conviction with St. Gregory, when he stated: “No one has the power to die or to rise from his own will”⁴⁶. But for Christ this statement is not valid, for according to John 10,18 He has the power to give or take His soul. Saint Gregory draws attention to the inconsistent interpretations given by Apollinaris starting from anthropological aspects. These are shattered before the text of Scripture: “It was not My will but yours” (Luke 22, 42). After all, Apollinaris admits only one will in Christ. On the contrary, St. Gregory strongly defends the teaching of the two wills in Christ, a divine will and a human will: “Saying «Not My will», indicates by these words the human will, and adding «But Yours» deities with the Father, deities for whom there is no difference of will (by reference to that of the Father) due to the community of nature”⁴⁷.

⁴³ Saint GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Adversus Apollinarem*, PG 45, 1189 A.

⁴⁴ Saint GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Adversus Apollinarem*, PG 45, 1156 D.

⁴⁵ Saint GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Adversus Apollinarem*, PG 45, 1156 A.

⁴⁶ Saint GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Adversus Apollinarem*, PG 45, 1188 B.

⁴⁷ Saint GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Adversus Apollinarem*, PG 45, 1196 A.

Here we have clear evidence that the root of monothelism and mono-energism lies in the doctrine of Apollinaris, and St. Gregory of Nyssa rejecting this doctrine is one of the promoters of the teaching about the two wills in Christ that St. Maximus would later develop and defend.

Apollinaris' opposite position on this aspect concerns the role of Christ's humanity in relation to divinity. However, Apollinaris' explanatory theory makes assumed humanity a pure instrument, all the more so as this humanity is seen as devoid of the human "nous".