

The Soul as Dynamis in Gregory of Nyssa

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1. Ὡσπερ οὖν διὰ τῆς ἀπορρήτου σοφίας τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς τῶ παντὶ ἐμφαινομένης τὴν θείαν φύσιν τε καὶ δύναμιν ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς οὐσίαις εἶναι οὐκ ἀμφιβάλλομεν, ὡς ἂν ἐν τῶ εἶναι τὰ πάντα μένοι· καὶ τοί γε τοῦ τῆς φύσεως εἶ τις ἀπαιτοῖ λόγῳ, παμπληθὲς ἀπέχει οὐσία θεοῦ πρὸς τὰ καθ' ἕκαστον ἐν τῇ κτίσει δεικνύμενά τε καὶ νοούμενα· ἀλλ' ὅμως ἐν τούτοις εἶναι τὸ διεστὸς κατὰ τὴν φύσιν ὁμολογεῖται· οὕτως οὐδὲν ἄπιστον καὶ τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς οὐσίαν, ἄλλο τι καθ' ἑαυτὴν οὔσαν, ὅ τί ποτε καὶ εἶναι εἰκάζεται, μὴ ἐμποδίζεσθαι πρὸς τὸ εἶναι ...

Just, then, as we have no doubts, owing to the display of a Divine mysterious wisdom in the universe, about a Divine Being and a Divine Power existing in it all which secures its continuance (though if you required a definition of that Being you would therein find the Deity completely sundered from every object in creation, whether of sense or thought, while in these last, too, natural distinctions are admitted), so, too, there is nothing strange in the soul's separate existence as a substance (whatever we may think that substance to be) being no hindrance to her actual existence, in spite of the elemental atoms of the world not harmonizing with her in the definition of her being. (PG 46, 44B-C)

2. Ψυχὴ ἐστὶν οὐσία γενετή, οὐσία ζῶσα, νοερά, σώματι ὀργανικῶ καὶ αἰσθητικῶ δύναμιν ζωτικὴν καὶ τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἀντιληπτικὴν δι' ἐνείεσα, ἕως ἂν ἡ δεκτικὴ τούτων συνέστηκε φύσις.

The soul is an essence created, and living, and intellectual, transmitting from itself to an organized and sentient body the power of living and of grasping objects of sense, as long as a natural constitution capable of this holds together. (29C).

3. Ἡ γὰρ ὀργανικὴ τοῦ σώματος αὕτη διασκευὴ ἔστιν μὲν οὐδὲν ἥττον καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀποναρκωθέντων διὰ θανάτου, ἀλλ' ἀκίνητός τε μένει καὶ ἀνεγέργητος, τῆς ψυχικῆς δυνάμεως ἐν αὐτῇ μὴ οὔσης.

For this bodily organization exists the same even in those who have just been reduced by death to the state of corpses, but it remains without motion or action because the force of the soul is no longer in it. (29B).