There was definitely a transformation or development in Basil of Caesarea’s theological teaching, especially in the Trinitarian theory. Such a maturing of his thought must naturally be affected by contemporaneous theological factional rivalries and supported by his understanding of ancient Greek philosophy. However, it is not necessarily easy to follow his theological development and clarify some philosophical influences on his Trinitarian theory. In order to untangle such a difficult problem, on the one hand, my article will focus on the Epistle 38 conventionally included in the edition of Basil’s letters, which quite a few scholars now hold to be by Gregory of Nyssa, not Basil.¹ On the

(*) A shorter version of this article was read at the Western Pacific Rim Patristics Society 3rd Annual Conference, Nanzan University, Nagoya, September 30, 2006, and its published version which is faithfully documented from it is Shigeki Tsuchihashi, Some Philosophical Influences on Basil of Caesarea’s Trinitarian Theology — Concerning ‘his’ Epistula 38—, in: K. Demura, N. Kamimura (eds.), Patristica, supplementary vol. 2: Festschrift in Honour of Shinro Kato on His 80th Birthday (Nagoya: Shinseisha, 2006) 57–70. This article is its developed version which is close to and based on the version delivered at the Conference, but which is different from it in title and might be improved and developed in many parts (except a few overlapping in sections 3 and 4). I am grateful to John Cawte for reading and revising the manuscript closely in early drafts.

other hand, in comparing it with his other works and letters, I will come close to his final stage, or limit, in so far as this is possible. So in my article, firstly, some interpretations about the backgrounds of Basil’s Trinitarian teaching are briefly presented. On the basis of this outline, secondly, some arguments concerning various stages of the development of his Trinitarian thought will be specifically outlined and compared. Thirdly, the argument in the main part of Epistle 38 will be analyzed in detail in order to exemplify the philosophical framework and strategy of this Cappadocian author’s Trinitarian theology. Finally, some interpretations about the philosophical background of Basil’s Trinitarian teaching are outlined. This article aims to cast light on some philosophical aspects of his Trinitarian thought.

1. Some Interpretations about the Background of Basil’s Trinitarian Thought

The role which Basil played in fourth-century theology and ecclesiastical politics was prominent and significant, but never easy to clarify. Hence, first of all, we will consider the theological background and the development of Basil’s Trinitarian thought. Needless to say, this article cannot present such an extensive overview of the Trinitarian controversy of the fourth century, and this is not its aim. For the present purpose, I think, focusing on the concept of όμοούσιος is the key to elucidating the development of Basil’s Trinitarian thought in the latter half of the fourth century. In other words, our question is: was Basil the father of the neo-Nicene or pro-Nicene theology? If so, was Basil ever a Homoiousian?

representative defender of Basil is only V. H. Drecoll, Die Entwicklung der Trinitätslehre des Basilius von Cäsarea: Sein Weg vom Homöusianer zum Neunizäner (Göttingen, 1996) 297–331. In the former part of the 20th century, for example, G. L. Prestige, God in Patristic Thought (London—Toronto, 1936) 276, believed Ep. 38 to be Basil’s. In addition, as a third position, P. W. Fedwick, A Commentary of Gregory of Nyssa or the 38th Letter of Basil of Caesarea, OCP 44 (1978) 31–51, concludes that a decision cannot be reached on the basis of external evidence, and J. Zachhuber, Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa — Philosophical Background & Theological Significance (Leiden—Boston—Köln, 2000) 61–93, insists that Ep. 38 corresponds to both Basil’s later works and Gregory’s teaching, so-called a common “Cappadocian” position.