

SUPPLEMENTS TO  
VIGILIAE CHRISTIANAE

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# Origen: Cosmology and Ontology of Time



P. TZAMALIKOS

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# Origen: Cosmology and Ontology of Time

*by*

P. Tzamalikos



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Vigiliae Christianae  
*Formerly Philosophia Patrum*

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D.T. Runia, C. Scholten, J.C.M. van Winden

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## PREFACE

Having studied Origen for the last twenty-five years, I have come to believe that he is the most tragic character of all Christian scholarship, if not of all Christian history. I mean the epithet 'tragic' in its original sense, referring to a noble person engaging in a morally momentous struggle ending in ruin, essentially as a consequence of some extreme quality, which is both the source of his greatness and the cause of his downfall. Perhaps celebrity and adulation came too early in his life; perhaps it was his stormy character and his audacity to furnish tentative theological conjectures, which were received (not always in good faith) as definitive doctrines, although he himself proposed them as possible exegeses of thorny portions of the veiled Scripture, not as mandatory dicta.

It seems to me that for an approach to Origen to be indisputable, it is necessary to determine in the first place tenets such as his concept of Time, which necessarily involves his Cosmology. Once cardinal notions such as this are firmly established, one can go ahead with illustrating other aspects of his theology, being considerably intact from the current endless and chaotic controversy over the authenticity of what has been left behind.

This is why I present this monograph on his Cosmology and Ontology of Time. Not only because this is the spine of his thought (indeed of *any* philosophical or theological thought), but also because it is hard to dispute tenets which are latent, and yet decisively permeate all of this theology. My intention is to go ahead with his Philosophy of History and Eschatology (yes, I am aware of many scholars still denying that such a thing even exists in Origen), whereas disputed doctrines such as his Trinitarian theology will follow, drawing heavily on this and the forthcoming monograph on history.

One of my aims in this book was to contribute to realization that extensive revision of ingrained claims about Origen is called for, although I am aware of how hard it is for certain assumptions to be disconfirmed. Origen must be credited with having pioneered the principal ideas of the Christian concept of Time, while his Cosmology stood in harmony with this theory. He must also be given the credit that, *pace* Paul, he made these ideas palatable, since they imbued his

homilies, commentaries, discourses. These ideas were in fact prevalent among those which determined his entire theology, and yet they went unnoticed because they were never expounded in any *ad hoc* treatise.

I cherish the hope that it will come out that his Cosmology and Ontology of Time throw a flood of light on other subjects, so that a more unclouded view of Origen will emerge before the reader.

P. T.

## ABBREVIATIONS

### 1. *Origen's works*

|                  |                                        |
|------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <i>Cels</i>      | Contra Celsum                          |
| <i>Dial</i>      | Dialogus cum Heraclide                 |
| <i>Eng</i>       | De Engastrimytho                       |
| <i>epAfr</i>     | Epistula ad Africanum                  |
| <i>epGr</i>      | Epistula ad Gregorium Thaumaturgum     |
| <i>homGen</i>    | Homiliae 1–16 in Genesim               |
| <i>commGen</i>   | Fragmenta ex Commentariis in Genesim   |
| <i>selGen</i>    | Selecta in Genesim                     |
| <i>adnotGen</i>  | Adnotationes in Genesim                |
| <i>homEx</i>     | Homiliae in Exodum                     |
| <i>commEx</i>    | Fragmentum ex Commentariis in Exodum   |
| <i>selEx</i>     | Selecta in Exodum                      |
| <i>adnotEx</i>   | Adnotationes in Exodum                 |
| <i>homLev</i>    | Homiliae in Leviticum                  |
| <i>selLev</i>    | Selecta in Leviticum                   |
| <i>homNum</i>    | Homiliae in Numeris                    |
| <i>selNum</i>    | Selecta in Numeris                     |
| <i>selDeut</i>   | Selecta in Deuteronomium               |
| <i>adnotDeut</i> | Adnotationes in Deuteronomium          |
| <i>homJos</i>    | Homiliae in Josuam                     |
| <i>selJos</i>    | Selecta in Josuam                      |
| <i>adnotJos</i>  | Adnotationes in Josuam                 |
| <i>selJud</i>    | Selecta in Iudices                     |
| <i>adnotJud</i>  | Adnotationes in Iudices                |
| <i>frRuth</i>    | Fragmentum in Ruth                     |
| <i>frReg</i>     | Fragmenta 1–22 in Reges                |
| <i>selJob</i>    | Selecta in Job                         |
| <i>enarrJob</i>  | Enarrationes in Job                    |
| <i>selPs</i>     | Selecta in Psalmi                      |
| <i>excPs</i>     | Excerpta in Psalmi                     |
| <i>frPs</i>      | Fragmenta in Psalmos 1–150             |
| <i>commProv</i>  | Fragmenta ex commentariis in Proverbia |
| <i>expProv</i>   | Exposita in Proverbia                  |

|                   |                                                         |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>frProv</i>     | Fragmenta in Proverbia                                  |
| <i>Cant</i>       | Commentarius in Canticum Canticorum                     |
| <i>minCan</i>     | Fragmentum ex commentario minore in Canticum Canticorum |
| <i>homJer</i>     | Homiliae 1–20 in Jeremiam                               |
| <i>fr21Jer</i>    | Fragmentum ex Homiliac 21 in Jeremiam                   |
| <i>fr39Jer</i>    | Fragmentum ex Homiliac 39 in Jeremiam                   |
| <i>fr1-71Jer</i>  | Fragmenta 1–71 ex homiliis in Jeremiam                  |
| <i>fr1-118Lam</i> | Fragmenta 1–118 in Lamentationes                        |
| <i>frLam</i>      | Fragmentum in Lamentationes                             |
| <i>frEz</i>       | Fragmenta in Ezechielem                                 |
| <i>selEz</i>      | Selecta in Ezechielem                                   |
| <i>frOs</i>       | Fragmentum ex Commentariis in Oseam                     |
| <i>fr1,2Matt</i>  | Fragmenta ex Commentariis in Matthaeum 1,2              |
| <i>commMatt</i>   | Commentariorum in Matthaeum libri 10–17                 |
| <i>frMatt</i>     | Commentariorum series 1–145 in Matthaeum                |
| <i>homLuc</i>     | Homiliae 1–39 in Lucam                                  |
| <i>frLuc</i>      | Fragmenta 1–112 in Lucam                                |
| <i>commJohn</i>   | Commentarii in Joannim                                  |
| <i>frJohn</i>     | Fragmenta 1–140 in Joannim                              |
| <i>homAct</i>     | Fragmentum ex homiliis in Acta Apostolorum              |
| <i>commRom</i>    | Commentarii in Romanos                                  |
| <i>comm1Cor</i>   | Fragmenta ex commentariis in 1 Cor.                     |
| <i>commEph</i>    | Fragmenta ex commentariis in Ephesios                   |
| <i>frHeb</i>      | Fragmenta in Hebraeos                                   |
| <i>exhMar</i>     | Exhortatio ad Martyrium                                 |
| <i>deOr</i>       | De Oratione                                             |
| <i>Princ</i>      | De Principiis (P. Koetschau)                            |
| <i>frRes</i>      | Ex Libro Secundo Origenis de Resurrectione              |
| <i>Res</i>        | Fragmenta de Resurrectione                              |

## 2. Other works

|             |                                                                           |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ACO         | Schwartz, E. <i>Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum</i>                        |
| BGF         | Bibliotheca of the Greek Fathers (volume, page)                           |
| <i>epAv</i> | Jerome, <i>Epistula ad Avitum</i>                                         |
| FP          | G.W. Butterworth (tr.), <i>Origen on First Principles</i>                 |
| GCS         | Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte |



|           |                                                                                                             |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| L. and S. | Liddell, H.G. — Scott, R., <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i>                                                   |
| libOr     | Justinianus Imperator, <i>Liber adversus Origenem</i> (or, <i>Epistula ad Mennam Constantinopolitanum</i> ) |
| PG        | J.P. Migne, <i>Patrologia Graeca</i>                                                                        |
| Mansi     | J.D. Mansi, <i>Sacrorum Conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio</i>                                        |
| SVF       | <i>Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta</i> , (volume, page, verse).                                                 |
| TU        | Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur                                       |

## INTRODUCTION

There is a remarkable difference in how space, on the one hand, and time, on the other, has been treated. At the dawn of Greek philosophy (the onset of philosophy itself) the Presocratic philosophers regarded the spatial aspect of the *φύσις* as an unquestionable datum. They sought to discover the permanent principles behind the *φαινόμενα*, but no one put the very existence of space proper in question. Thus the Euclidean conception of space encountered virtually no controversy throughout its historical life. In fact this conception of space remained uncontested for more than two thousand years.

By contrast, the question of time has received a vast variety of considerations and has been a matter of controversy since Antiquity, in a debate which is still going on. Parmenides' denial of succession as *real* established the first radical doubt about the very existence of time. This problem never ceased to tantalize philosophers ever since until our day. This is quite understandable even through common experience. Space constitutes a concrete sensory tangible reality. In spite of the fact that the world is an obviously *temporal* reality, time proper is an evasive conception. Meditation upon it demands introspective experience and recollection; in short, it demands abstractions far more elusive than the notion of space does. Space is available to the most immediate experience namely, *sight*, or so it was thought to be. Time appears as a reality apprehended *subsequently* to space and thus it is grasped as an abstruse conception. This led to reflection on time through non-temporal features and mainly to the 'spatialization of time', an illustration established and embedded in intellectual tradition, which is nonetheless responsible for many of the misconceptions of time proper and its nature. This tendency began with the observation of the periodicity of motions of heavenly bodies; it went on with the correlation of time to spatial motion; eventually time in itself came to be virtually spatialized and thus altogether eliminated. Quite aptly Bergson, more than a hundred years ago, pointed out that if we try to conceive of time as a static geometrical line, we are really thinking of space.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> H. Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (Paris, 1889), translated into English by C. Bogson as *Time and Free Will*, London, 1910; pp. 90-1, 98-110.

The conceptualization of space proved to be far more steadfast than that of time. As the concept of space went effectively unchallenged right through the centuries, it provided a sufficient philosophical base, which played a decisive role in the growth of natural science. On the other hand, the non-commensurate development (or, at least, a non-comprehensive acceptance) of a sound philosophical ground for the ontology of time played its part in a disproportionate development of understanding human nature and society. Great thinkers, especially religious ones, offered their accounts on the nature and meaning of time. The historical failure, however, lies either in the fact that these thinkers were neglected, even by their immediate addressees, or that they were not understood. Yet it is primarily the conception of time which profoundly affects a certain philosophy of history and, in the final analysis, all aspects and manifestations of human being in its temporal course. Even the most elementary manifestations of life involve the notion of time. The very notion of *experience* involves the distinction between past, present and future. Even the sense of *to be* as an individual, as well as the personal view of it, is based upon a certain understanding and evaluation of the historical process.

It was not meant to be so, it was not even realized that the problem of time was directed to such a spatialized perception, yet the fact is that this evolution lasted since Parmenides and Zeno until the present time. Certainly this was not accidental. For no philosopher devoted his entire reflection to the question of time exclusively: to the extent that this actually happened, this was just a part of his grasp of reality as a whole. Hence, how time was regarded became an infallible indicator of cardinal orientations of a certain philosophy. For such a view is not just a fortuitous by-product of a physical or metaphysical system or doctrine, proposed by a philosopher or a school of thought. It is an essential component, an expressive and meaningful factor manifesting the gist of a perception of reality as a whole, and forming the attitude towards this reality.

This is the reason why it is reasonable to expect that a certain conception of time can provide significant conclusions about the overall philosophical attitude respective to this. As the concept of time is pivotal into a general existential attitude, such a study may further enlighten other facets of a philosophy. Crucial conceptions, such as cosmology, anthropology, eschatology, the attitude to death, moral ideas—all are directly involved and interwoven with how time is per-

ceived and what its meaning is felt (if not always consciously *known*) to be. For indeed time constitutes an essential element of an entire philosophy and thoroughly imbues all the vital premises of an existential attitude.

How thinkers conceive of time then, as well as the manner in which they portray their perception of it, is consonant with their overall view of reality. The ontology of time stands in harmony with their fundamental philosophical premises, their understanding of being as a whole, as well as with their methods and dialectics of investigation of philosophical problems.

In view of this, the attitude of thinkers towards the notion of time is highly indicative of their general philosophical orientation. For it is not only their general philosophical tendency that determines the conception of time; but also, a certain view of time plays a critical role in the formation of a general philosophical and existential attitude. How to live, what, if any, is the purpose of individual existence, how death is faced, what might constitute the content of a possible hope: all those questions are bound by time. Furthermore, how, if at all, God is conceived; the perception of the world, its destination and purpose, if any; whether the world was created, or not, as well as all the temporal implications that the notion of creation entails—all these are bound by the very conception of time, too. This close connection of one's general view of reality to his conception of time decisively forms his ideas of the future, namely, expectations, anticipation and the overall visualization of things in the time to come. For it is mainly the concern for the future that affects an existential attitude. No one, for example, feels fear at thinking that he did not exist *before* he was born; on the contrary; this thought rather brings about a feeling of inexplicable safety. But the awe at the idea of *future* non-existence is not unusual. As a matter of fact, such a horror is only one facet of the fear of death, which shows that death is very much bound up with considerations about time.

Beyond these general considerations, there are special reasons, which render the study of Origen's ontology of time necessary. The Alexandrian's thought has been a point of intense, and frequently tempestuous, controversy<sup>2</sup> since the fourth century until our day. It

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<sup>2</sup> In the period around the years 300–500 A.D. occurred what is known as 'Origenistic controversies'. The main ancient sources providing an account of this

should be expected then that a definition and elucidation of his conception of time might provide clarifications, as well as elimination of miscomprehension, of other crucial facets of his highly controversial theology,<sup>3</sup> especially with respect to his cosmology.

The criticism levelled against Origen varies. At best he is regarded as the thinker who brought Greek thought and the emerging religion of Christianity too close to each other.<sup>4</sup> A midway stance is the assertion that he was restricted by the church tradition and the Bible—but only to the extent that they did not contradict his own ideas.<sup>5</sup> A more extreme opinion is that he was but a Platonist, who did nothing more than composing an amalgam, a *sui generis* hybrid of Platonic and Plotinian thought in biblical terms.<sup>6</sup> At any rate, it is a commonplace to charge him with the responsibility for the

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dispute are the following: Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, VI.3–18; Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, V.27ff. Epiphanius, *Panarion seu adversus lxxx haereses*, 6.63–4; PG 41.173ff. Rufinus, *De Adulteratione librorum Origenis*, PG 17.616–32. A modern account of these controversies is given by G.W. Butterworth in the introduction of *FP*, pp. ix–xxiv; s. also, by Philip Schaff in his *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. III, pp. 698–705. Also s. M. Villain 'Rufin d'Aquileia, la querelle autour d'Origène', *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, 27 (1937), pp. 5–37, 165–95. In the Fourth Century Origen's chief adversaries were Methodius and Peter of Alexandria. Later, Origen's views were attacked by Epiphanius of Salamis and Theophilus of Alexandria. According to Socrates (*Ecclesiastical History*, VI.13), Methodius, Eustathius and Apollinaris also wrote treatises against Origen. Chief defenders of Origen were Rufinus, Eusebius of Caesarea, Didymus of Alexandria, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa and Hilary of Poitiers. Pamphilus (and Eusebius) wrote an *Apologia pro Origene*, of which only the first book is extant in a Latin translation by Rufinus (PG 17.521ff). Also s. Gregory Thaumaturgus, in *Origenem oratio panegyrica*, PG 10.1052. Also s. Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, III.7; Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VI.33.

<sup>3</sup> For discussion on the condemnation of Origen's views, s. P. Schaff, *op. cit.*, pp. 770–1; Butterworth, *op. cit.*, pp. xxvi–xxvii; C.C. Richardson, 'The condemnation of Origen', *Church History*, 6 (1937), pp. 50–64. Gustave Bardy asserts that the fifteen anathemas secured by Justinian in the Fifth Century are directed not so much against Origen himself but against the 'Origenists' who were contemporaries of Justinian; Cf. *Recherches sur l'histoire du texte et des versions latines du Prince d'Origène*, Paris, 1923; pp. 205–6. The text of the fifteen anathemas is preserved in J.D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, Vol. IX, pp. 396–400.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. R. Sorabji, *Time, Creation and the Continuum*, London, 1983, pp. 151, 316, etc. My occasional disagreement with R. Sorabji should not obscure my great respect for his excellent exposition as a whole, as well as my respect for his heavy undertaking brilliantly carried out in that book.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. R. Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, London, 1959, pp. 369ff.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. C. Bigg, *The Christian Platonists of Alexandria*, Oxford, 1913, throughout. These references are only mere examples of attitudes towards the thought of Origen. The relevant assertions, both in these works, as well as in a large number of others, will be discussed in detail in due course.



'Hellenization' of Christianity. In this context he is considered as a kind of Christian 'Gnostic', in as much as Gnosticism is regarded as an 'extreme Hellenization' of Christianity. To deal with this question in general is beyond my scope, since my aim here is to ponder upon Origen's conception of creation and time. This criticism, however, in its various degrees of moderation or extremity, will be considered in as much as it is related to aspects of his thought pertaining to my topic.

The birthplace of Origen, Alexandria, was where a number of different streams of thought converged. Greek-Hellenistic schools, Hebrews, Christians and exponents of various oriental cults encountered each other, all this at a time when the Roman Empire was in a powerful period of its history. Controversies, disputes, syncretism, eclecticism, allowed the flourishing of schools of thought such as the Judaeo-Hellenistic thought and Gnosticism in a Christian garment.

Origen found himself in the midst of this variety of religious, philosophical and existential attitudes. It is therefore significant to consider this famous 'Greek' background which allegedly influenced him profoundly to a degree regarded as an unforgivable deviation from the Christian orthodoxy. A survey then of the various conceptions of time preceding Origen should by all means be carried out. Following this, one might be able to judge whether he formed his conception of time under the influence of, or in contrast to, his background or contemporary environment. Such a survey becomes all the more necessary since his writings show that he was well aware of the various streams of thought converging in Alexandria. Despite the controversy surrounding his thought, his erudition has never been questioned. On the contrary, this has often been regarded as his crime, since it is sustained that his philosophical background was the cause for him to 'Hellenize' Christianity.

Most certainly Origen was an erudite man. We know though that his purpose was not to show off his erudition, but to edify his readers or his audience. Certainly he was a copious writer, ranking among the most prolific writers of the Church ever to appear. The question, however, is this: was it a matter of *knowledge*? This is the critical question, which brings to the core of his presuppositions of conception of time. In order to answer this question it will be of utmost significance to consider not only the evolution of a particular philosophical notion (be it time, creation, or whatever), but also to take into account the profound changes which were taking place at the time.

The epoch in which Origen was born (185 A.D.) is a period in which radical transformation was under way. It was not a question of employing this or that philosophical opinion. It was something more thorough, more urgent, and more dramatic: a profound, and nonetheless painful, *change of existential attitude* is the main characteristic of the era. The more people were coming in contact with the various philosophical systems, the more they realized that philosophy was unable to fulfil its own self-imposed task: that is, to offer people the deeper knowledge of truth, through which they would reach virtue and bliss. Scientific knowledge (already largely undermined by Scepticism) no longer believed that it possessed the truth. In the Stoic assemblies there was an idea which was constantly gaining ground: they realized and admitted that it was impossible for any human being to materialize their ideal of the wise man, which the Stoic philosophy had clearly and persistently portrayed. From all the quarters, in all streams of thought, it had become evident that a human being cannot *know* the reality of things through his own endowment. Subsequently, no man could attain to virtue and happiness if he relied exclusively on his own ability. People were living under the Roman Empire in which social inequalities were an everyday experience; they were seeing all the goods of earth around them and yet not belonging to them. Having to cope with the exigencies of daily life, they were faced with the inclemency of both political reality and philosophy. They felt ensnared in a world where neither the institutional framework of the Roman Empire (animated by real people in everyday life), nor science, nor philosophy could provide the solace so earnestly longed for. There was therefore an increasing change of interest from this world towards a better one. After the elapse of many centuries, people found themselves again filled with a passionate desire for the supernatural, a hunger for religion, a profound need for *salvation* rather than mere *knowledge* and its confirmed quandary.<sup>7</sup>

Civilization, which had already given its fruits of Art and Science and had exhausted itself, was turning to Religion again. The quest for discovering the reality of things in a supernatural non-sensible world was already posited by Plato and the Aristotelian monotheism.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. W. Windelband – H. Heimsoeth, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 1, p. 246ff.

Besides, the Stoic ethics had already established its own tradition. All those were elements of a past still echoing, at a period when people were orienting themselves towards *redemption* beyond the sensible world: a redemption regarded as attainable not through the process of intellectual activity, but by means of *revelation* offered to people in one way or another.

So the requirements of science and life converged. Science sought to find in religion the solution to the problems, which had been tantalizing it for so long a time. Life, on the other hand, was seeking to base the hunger for religious faith on a scientific foundation or form.

Alexandria was the center of this radical historical procedure and transformation of the entire civilization. In the Library (Museum) of this cosmopolitan commercial city all fruits of the Greek erudition were treasured. People of every tribe and origin were gathered there in order to find answers no longer to scientific questions, but to the feelings and existential requirements which were overwhelmingly pressing them. There were of course differences among cultures, stemming from diverse options for certain values. Still the quest for salvation seemed to prevail as the common pursuit of these different people.

Such was the environment in which early Christianity was developing. It has been suggested that Christianity built the system of its own doctrines by coming to terms with the old philosophy.<sup>3</sup> Origen found himself in a period in which the history of philosophy was increasingly interwoven with the history of dogma. The Apologists (even St Paul himself) had already established some relation between Christianity and philosophy; this phenomenon was to proceed for a very long time. Still the question was not one of two different intellectual worlds coming to terms with each other. Rather, it was a pressing question of how everyday life was to be conceived of. The rearrangement of values which was introduced with Christianity would be felt even by people who had hardly been initiated in the new dogma. In the *Homilies on Luke*, for instance, we find Origen addressing his audience of catechumens and exalting 'humility' as a virtue. The social values of the time, however, did not regard humility as a virtue; indeed the Greeks never considered humility to be a virtue at all; the word for it used in Luke 1,48, always had a

<sup>3</sup> W. Windelband - H. Heimsoeth, *op. cit.* p. 247.



negative connotation in secular Greek: in terms of morality it meant 'baseness' or 'vileness', socially the word indicated 'lowness of position'. And yet Origen strove to present humility as a virtue to an audience of catechumens who were not used to thinking of it as such.<sup>9</sup>

The task facing Origen, therefore, was not to compose a theory of time and add one more account to the long series of scientific or philosophical tradition which reached him. It was the urgent need of the period to *form* a view of time, which should be in tune with the Christian perception of the world and would serve to the exposition of the new religion. For indeed there were serious reasons rendering this demand urgent.

My scope in this book is to explore Origen's conception of time in itself, which of necessity involves study of his doctrine of creation. I shall argue that the concept of time is present in Origen's entire theology as a fundamental element, which was formed in full accordance with his general perception of the world from a Christian point of view. This concept reflects the entirety of his theological views and thoroughly imbues them. Thus, although it was not my purpose to expound the whole of Origen's theology, I regarded the study of several aspects of it as an indispensable presupposition for understanding and expounding of this crucial facet of his thought. For, as I pointed out, how a thinker conceives of time is an expressive manifestation of his entire thought. This conception stands in close relation to one's entire perception of reality, in natural, philosophical and theological terms. The notions comprising a certain view of time make the quintessence of a philosophy actually buttress up its cardinal tenets. This concept, therefore, cannot be determined unless every aspect of this thought is perused. For the notion of time both *determines* and *is determined* by all the facets of a certain philosophy or theology or existential attitude in general.

The scientific benefit of the study of Origen's conception of time lies in the fact that this may elucidate other crucial aspects or particular points of his theology. I shall argue that his view of time is the decisive means through which long-standing miscomprehension of his thought can be eliminated.

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<sup>9</sup> *Homilies on Luke*, 8.5; Origen, *Homilies on Luke*, tr. Joseph Lienhard, Washington, 1996, p. 35.

In studying this, I have followed certain principles drawn from the experience of how his work has been studied or treated hitherto. As a matter of fact, the state of the art in Origen-studies is peculiar, since there is no universal consensus on the grounds of epistemology. There is no unanimity in what should be accepted as a reliable source: either his Greek writings or the Latin translations are upheld as trustworthy by some scholars, while either Greek or Latin remnants are disputed to all possible degrees by others. What is uncommon in scholarship is to find particular facets of Origen's theology considered as having *developed* in due course, as *evolving* with age and experience, which is in fact the most common thing to happen in any intellectual activity, all the more so in the thought of a pioneer, at a time when Christian doctrine was in the making.

A large part of Origen's writings is preserved in the Greek original text; another is extant only in Latin versions; there are also sections preserved both in the Greek original and in Latin translation. Latin versions should be read with caution, but caution within reason. Rufinus himself has no hesitation to explicate that he has taken some liberties in rendering Origen's thought, but the degree of his initiative varies from work to work. I regard his prologues a reliable source for determining the degree of confidence which should be given to each Latin translation of his. Certainly, a comparison between Greek original texts and their respective one in Latin show that the difference is not always just linguistic: it is considerable, yet not in the sense of fidelity, but because of abridgements which had to take place for mostly practical reasons.

In the 1980's, finding myself in the midst of the controversy about the reliability of sources about Origen, I had resolved to rely on his Greek extant works, rather than the defamed Latin translations. An early version of this topic was produced on that account. I realized though that by following this principle in methodology, I relinquish valuable evidence, which after all is supportive of significant corollaries. Besides, the whole question should be considered not simply in the context of philological analysis (which anyway is a difficult task to carry out; it provides unreliable conclusions, since Greek and Latin parallels are too few to be able to support firm resolutions), but on more general considerations, some of which I shall only sketch: a more attentive study of Rufinus's prefaces and perorations; assessment of the historical setting of Justinian's era and, specifically, his mentality as an emperor and his theological aspirations; reflection

on Jerome *ad hominem*, on his overall disposition vis-à-vis Origen and his attitude towards the controversy over him; attention to be paid to testimonies such as that of Pamphilus (which is contested), of Photius, of Procopius of Gaza, of John of Damascus; also of testimony scarcely taken as seriously as it should in scholarship, such as that of Socrates the historian.

I am now satisfied that Latin translations should be studied attentively, bearing in mind, however, that there is no such thing such as the blanket notion 'Latin translations': Each Latin rendering apiece is a different case and should be studied and relied upon on its own merits. In any event, they make up too important a stock to be left out of consideration.

I still believe, however, that *Princ* is a exceptional case of its own and should be studied and used on grounds quite different from all other extant works. It is not just a question of Rufinus striving to avoid misunderstandings, or to comply with what was regarded as 'orthodoxy' at his time; neither is it his being rather loquacious, in his endeavour to produce an interpretation or commentary rather than a mere translation in a language less polished and less technical and indeed less sophisticated. The most critical point is that Rufinus himself had not comprehended principal facets of this thought, such as Origen's conception of time, let alone his eschatology. Thus he *a priori* regarded the task of translation as too intricate, while the requisite was simply a plain verbatim rendering of the Greek text in Latin. Thus he did not abstain from interpolating what he saw as his own emendations of the Greek text.

It is regrettable that, although this is declared as a free rendering, claims about Origen's thought were made based mainly on this text. The Latin rendering of *Princ* is indeed an outstanding monument of such an unfortunate approach.

In this text there are points crucially involving the conception of time; yet they appear to be treated with utter unawareness of their momentous significance. Some examples frequently appearing in this respect are the notion of God's being in relation to time; the relation of the persons of Trinity between themselves; and God's relation to the world. Terms such as 'before', 'after', 'earlier', 'later', 'younger', 'older', applied to these subjects, seem to be used with no attentiveness to their significance. For example, there are portions such as this: "... to prevent anyone from thinking that the title of Almighty belonged to God *before* the birth of wisdom, through which

he is called Father; . . ." or: ". . . the title of Almighty cannot be *older* in God than that of Father, for it is through the Son that the Father is Almighty . . .".<sup>10</sup>

It is obvious that the terms 'before' and 'older' imply a kind of temporal sequence or temporal priority. Further, there are expressions such as 'the world . . . began to exist *at a definite time*,'<sup>11</sup> God did not exist 'even *for a single moment*' without begetting his wisdom.<sup>12</sup> There is also reference to 'certain ages or periods of time . . . during which the world' might not exist, in order to reject the idea that there were 'ages or periods' when God was not almighty and a 'time when he began to have creatures'.<sup>13</sup> Also, 'wisdom is *everlasting*',<sup>14</sup> whereas the author wonders whether 'there will ever be a time when there will be no world anywhere, or if there ever was a time when there was no world at all'.<sup>15</sup>

Expressions of this kind seem to imply that time itself is something taken for granted; as a matter of fact they suggest that time is not *taken into account* at all. This simplistic manner in which the question of time seems to be treated in the Latin rendering of *Princ* indicates that time is applied to God thoughtlessly, without any serious consideration of the whole question.

The same happens with the notion of eternity. It is stated that "the term *everlasting* or *eternal* properly denotes this which had no beginning of existence and can never cease to be what it is . . . His wisdom therefore is an *everlasting* brightness *enduring* eternally . . .".<sup>16</sup> Although there is the additional clause 'yet not in time', the phrase suggests that the Son's co-eternity to the Father is understood by placing the Son's birth back to the infinite temporal past.

Points such as these seem to indicate that temporal notions are treated with unawareness of their crucial implications, even when they are attributed to the divine being. It is not difficult to find quite a number of similar passages in *Princ* where temporal notions are used in an awkward manner. The frequency of such terms is striking,

<sup>10</sup> *Princ*, I.2.9.

<sup>11</sup> *Princ*, I.Pref. 7; III.5.1.

<sup>12</sup> *Princ*, I.2.2.

<sup>13</sup> *Princ*, I.2.10.

<sup>14</sup> *Princ*, I.2.11.

<sup>15</sup> *Princ*, II.3.1.

<sup>16</sup> *Princ*, I.2.11.



particularly for someone who approaches this work with the intention to study the concept of time.

It would be not unexpected then if someone concluded that Origen considers time as an unquestionable datum attributed also to God's life. However, I intend to argue that such a claim can be justified and grounded, to a certain extent, only in the event of the study being concentrated in the Latin rendering of *Princ.* Expressions such as 'yet not in time' are actually Origen's; yet they are almost lost and neglected into the flood of Rufinus's arbitrary and unthoughtful use of unfit temporal notions and terminology.

This notwithstanding Rufinus could not help not translating one or two passages where God's transcendence in respect of time is clearly enunciated.<sup>17</sup> It is true that in view of the length and the importance of a work such as *Princ.*, the point where God's transcendence to time is explicated would be rather untrustworthy, something like one more interpolation by Rufinus. On the face of it, such a suspicion would be not unjustified once the study is confined mainly into *Princ.* For these statements are too scarce in a voluminous work of four books, compared to the extensive inattentive use of temporal notions, where time appears to be unquestionably ascribed even to the divine life. If there is a mistake, this is not the incredibility, which could be attributed to the one or two passages of *Princ.*, which prove that it is not quite the case. The mistake lies simply in the fact that the study of this question focuses in this work, as my discussion in this book shall show. For this text contains contradictions, which have led to averments such as that "everything contained in his *Princ.* has also its antithesis in the same work".<sup>18</sup> Some of these contradictions will be pointed out in as much as they are related to my topic. As a matter of fact, it will be mainly points such as these, contrasted with Origen's consistency throughout his writings in Greek, which will reveal the damaging entries of Rufinus and the untrustworthiness of his Latin translation of *Princ.*

The best way to ground my assertions therefore is to corroborate them through writings preserved in the Greek original text confirming them by appeal to Latin texts. Thus I do not compare simply *texts*,

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Princ.*, II.2.1.; IV.4.1.

<sup>18</sup> H. Crouzel, 'L'Hadès et la Géhenne selon Origène', *Gregorianum Commentariū de Re Theologica et Philosophica*, 79 (1978); p. 331.

which is not all too easy, since there are not so many parallels in both Greek and Latin; rather, I compare *ideas* found here and there.

Although authentic views of Origen can be found in the original Greek text, the same may well happen in the Latin version. Hence the Latin version should be taken into account, with reasonable (but not exaggerated) caution. An opinion in Latin should be regarded as absolutely authentic not only once this can be corroborated by a Greek text, but also when this fits neatly with Origen's overall ideas. This procedure has proved particularly useful in interpreting points of Latin versions, since in some of them (par excellence in *Princ*) the perspicuity of the Greek text has been deleteriously obscured.

Subsequently, it is evident that this kind of research presupposes the study of the entirety of Origen's writings. The reason is that since he did not compose an *ad hoc* treatise on time, but *formed* a conception of it which underlies and imbues his entire theology, it would be unacceptable to overlook any part of his work. Besides, this is a way of expressing in practice my objection to the practice of making claims on the basis of two or three treatises—not to mention scholars of old times who studied *Princ* almost exclusively.

It is my view (which will be discussed and proven again and again presently) that what we have is a compilation which should be taken as an ancillary source *interpreted* in the light of all Origenistic corpus (Greek and Latin) rather than being put into use in order to *interpret* Origen, or provide sound conclusions about his theology. *Princ* should not be regarded as a cornerstone for determining Origen's ideas. Since the evidence to be collected from *Princ* is meagre and tantalizingly inconclusive, we should not concern ourselves overmuch with criticism based on this untrustworthy rendering, with its gaps filled with biased statements hostile to the Alexandrian. Such an interpretation is a task which still waits to be fulfilled.

I have taken into account a number of editions of this *Princ*: P. Koetschau's edition, the English translation of it, as well the French edition by H. Crouzel and M. Simonetti. Koetschau quite arbitrarily interpolated texts of authors subsequent to Origen—most of them hostile to him. This editor has shown an excessive facility in employing any kind of irresponsible (and probably malicious) criticism against Origen, incorporating it into the text of *Princ*, presenting it as 'views of Origen', which are allegedly 'filling gaps' of the Latin translation of Rufinus. This edition (as well as claims of the English translator G.W. Butterworth, who not only promptly consents to Koetschau's

tactics, but also makes his own contribution to similar allegations) is open to severe criticism, which I did not fail to entertain. This has been done, to a certain extent, with points of the French edition, which contains some points which should not be left without comment. But I touched upon this problem only in as much as this is related to my topic. I leave for the future a more detailed account of my comments on this edition. At any rate, an edition of *Princ* elucidated and commented in the light of the *entirety* of Origen's authentic views would be welcome in the English-speaking world. As regards *Princ* in general, I have used it only as an ancillary source, as a text highly precarious, full of contradictions (due to Rufinus's interpolations) and, at any rate, as a source of confusion rather than elucidation of any aspect of Origen's thought, unless this is compared with relevant Greek, and nonetheless Latin, portions. It will in any case be unwise to put too great a stress on the words which Rufinus uses on time and temporal notions.

As regards other writings of Origen, I am apt to accept the authenticity of the *Scholia in Apocalypsis*. Although it has been argued that there is no testimony that he ever wrote any comment in the Apocalypsis,<sup>19</sup> certain philological and linguistic considerations seem to me to suggest the opposite. I postpone elaboration on this point until a next work of mine, since in this treatise this point plays no decisive role. As far as my topic is concerned, of what is stated in that work there is nothing to appeal to, or to dispute. However, the fact that in all his writings, (from the early *commJohn* written in Alexandria in 218 to *Cels* written in Cesarea in 248)<sup>20</sup> there is no reference to that work is no real evidence of non-authenticity, in view of the vast bulk of lost Greek writings.

There are particular reasons, which render the study of Origen's own words useful. He had a very good command of Greek and was very scrupulous in the use of every word. As regards language, he subjected scriptural passages to meticulous scrutiny, very often appealing to the etymology of a word and offering lucid analytical exegeses. In using a word, he was always aware of its grammatical,

<sup>19</sup> Cf. BGF, 9, p. 20, n. 2.

<sup>20</sup> For dating of Origen's works s. Marguerite Harl, *Origène et la fonction révélatrice du Verbe Incarné*, Paris, 1958, pp. 70-1; also in Adolf von Harnack, *Die Chronologie der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius*, Leipzig, 1904, pp. 27-54.

philosophical and theological implications. In his Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul, he often goes as far as to do what he calls ἀποκαταστήσαι τὴν φράσιν (to restore the phrase). That is, to render the text in correct Greek, although he certainly finds the Epistles consonant in all their parts and providing an unerring grasp of the purport of revelation. That Origen is scrupulous in treating language is not just an assumption drawn from the study of his texts. It is he himself who argues for the significance of the correct interpretation as well as the proper use of the Greek language, which he highly respected for its elegance and expressional potential<sup>21</sup> even in its slightest details and nuances; that is, pondering upon every single word in order to wring its deeper significance. To understand Origen's method on this point, we should recall the practice of ancient rhetoric: those who studied rhetoric in the ancient world were educated and trained to analyse a text word by word, until every possible allusion and every conceivable relationship of every word had been drawn out of it. Here then is a sample of his strenuous advocacy for felicitous precision:

And let anyone know that it is impossible to treat properly any problem, be it moral or natural or theological, unless he uses terms with their accurate meaning and depicts the logical signification in due way. It is not futile to follow the accuracy of the signification and to ponder upon it painstakingly; for there are cases where we commit serious mistakes because of failing to clear up homonyms (μὴ καθάριοντες τὰς ὁμωνυμίας), doubts, misuses of the terms, literal meanings and contradistinctions. . . . We have said all these, in order to show that we, who wish not to be mistaken in understanding the divine Scriptures, believe that it is utterly necessary to be attentive to and aware of the logic of the terms used.<sup>22</sup>

Explicit statements such as this, as well as his use and explanation of nuances of the Greek language, convince that he knows this language in depth. Origen approaches the biblical text in a way markedly different from modern exegesis: modern readers focus on the sentence or the pericope as the unit of understanding; Origen, by contrast, takes every single word as the unit of understanding the purport of the divine text. He assumes that no word in the Scriptures is idle.

<sup>21</sup> *commJohn*, 20, XXII; s. also *commJohn*, 2, II.

<sup>22</sup> *commGen*, 3 (comm. on Gen. 1,16ff), PG.12.89; the same in *Philocalia*, 14, 2.



He is always alive to the fact that the manner in which he treats language should serve to an accurate exposition and he is highly perspicacious in his remarks. Given his statements about the significance of linguistic scrutiny and accuracy, it is reasonable to expect that the study of his writings preserved in Greek can provide his real theological views authoritatively. We also may focus our analysis on certain crucial terms he uses; for when he uses terms, especially those loaded with special significance, he is alert to their philosophical or theological implications. As my discussion shall show, following Origen's own practice on a thorough study not only of notions but also of their phraseology itself, is a principle of research which provides fruitful conclusions.

A subsequent point of major importance is the significance attached to the 'homonyms'. In the foregoing passage, he points out that it is a task 'to clear up the homonyms' (καθαίροντες τὰς ὁμωνυμίας). This notion is frequently used in order to indicate a term under which there are more than one conceptions to be understood. In the Prologue of the *Commentary on the Song of Songs* there is an account of the meaning of homonyms:

The Divine Scriptures make use of homonyms; that is to say, they use identical terms for describing different things . . .; and not only are the same terms employed, but also the things themselves are compared with one another.<sup>23</sup>

This definition is also found in Greek texts: "homonyms are those which have only their name in common, but their essential content is different" (ὁμώνυμα δὲ ἐστὶν, ὧν ὄνομα μόνον κοινόν, ὃ δὲ κατὰ τοῦνομα τῆς οὐσίας λόγος ἕτερος).<sup>24</sup>

In expounding his own exegeses of the Scripture, his constant concern is to carry out what he sets forth as a task of the biblical interpreter, that is, to 'clear up the homonyms'. It was a substantial means towards his aim to probe into the deeper truths and unveil the treasures of wisdom which, as he was convinced, lie hid in every word spoken by the Spirit. It was part of his objective to elicit the moral,

<sup>23</sup> R.P. Lawson, *Origen: The Song of Songs, Commentary and Homilies*, London, 1957, p. 26.

<sup>24</sup> *homJer*, 20, 1; Cf. Aristotle, *Categoriae*, I. As G. Bardy points out, "la citation est textuelle, mais Aristotle n'est pas nommé par Origène"; Cf. G. Bardy, "Origène et l'Aristotelisme", *Mélanges Gustave Glotz*, tome I, Paris, 1932, p. 78, n. 4.

theological or mystical meaning that the biblical text is presumed to contain. More significant though is that he uses homonyms himself in order to couch his own conceptions. This fact, although highly determining the comprehension of his thought, has not heretofore been adequately noticed, nor due attention has been paid to it. This has not been utilized as a means for unraveling critical aspects of his theology. To clarify the homonyms used by Origen, that is, to determine the variegated imports ascribed to the same term, is a task which I have meticulously pursued during my research.

Finally, in discussing Origen's views, I was conscious of the fact that I am dealing with a thinker whose thought (or *alleged* thought) has been highly and tempestuously controversial for more than seventeen centuries: from shortly after his death until our day the dispute has never really ceased to rage. Nevertheless, it is frustrating to study extended scholarship about him and being faced with so much distortion and miscomprehension—already since the era of Jerome, later Justinian, until today. For there are allegations, which come to stark contrast with what Origen really held and himself explicitly enunciated. There are assertions, which are supposed to be an 'answer' to him—and yet they are nothing more than a mere repetition of Origen's own words.<sup>25</sup> There are citations of points of his writings, which are adduced in order to prove exactly the opposite of what the passages themselves show—and they could *show* the real views of Origen if they were *quoted*, not just cited as references. Perhaps it is the barrier of language; perhaps it is because the study was not extended over the whole of his work, or because the reference is considered out of context. Be that as it may, the fact does not change. For if texts and ideas of Origen's are extant, it is not acceptable to adduce them in order to prove different (indeed the opposite) points. This is why the voluminous bulk of his work should not be overlooked. For, once this task is carried out, the reader will have amassed a formidable array of texts and ideas in support of a certain view of time and the notions which determine this.

<sup>25</sup> It is tragically ironical that the word '*answer*' (in italics) was used in cases of this sort, as it happened with R. Sorabji (*op. cit.*, p. 151). G. Florovski, on the other hand, (*Aspects of Church History*, Greek tr. by P. Pallis, Thessaloniki, 1983, pp. 69–70) speaks of Athanasius' 'step beyond Origen' at a point where Athanasius simply echoes Origen's views. I discuss these claims in due course.

I have, therefore, followed it as a principle that the views of Origen should not be cited as references but, whenever necessary, be *quoted*—even if the quotation could be somewhat lengthy. In view of the scholarship referring to his thought, it has been my practice to bolster my views not only by means of reference to titles and chapters, but to let Origen speak for himself. This method of dealing with this thought may lead to a treatise lengthier than what was desirable. Yet the scientific benefit of this procedure seems considerable to me. It is only a by-product that I have taken the opportunity of rendering into English, for the first time, a number of Greek passages, which elucidate determining tenets of the Alexandrian. What is important is that this way of expounding this thought leaves no room for controversy. For it is Origen himself who speaks and it is his own words which elucidate crucial aspects of his authentic views. I am satisfied that only through such a methodology what Origen really believed can after all be resolved conclusively.

The upshots with respect to my topic prove that this procedure was worth the effort. For the conclusions pertain to crucial facets of Origen's thought, which are now seen under an entirely new light against current misapprehension. At any rate, my conviction that the conception of time constitutes an essential element of a thinker's thought has become stronger than it was in the beginning of this research. For the conclusions eliminate fundamental misunderstandings and prove that Origen's influence is far more extensive and decisive than it has been reckoned so far.



## CHAPTER ONE

### GOD AND TIME

On the question of the being of God with respect to time, Origen's concern to be accurate in couching his views is evident. On this specific topic though there is a particular difficulty facing him: he knows that, in order to treat this question, language is inadequate to express the reality of the being of God; hence his constant concern for accuracy cannot be fulfilled. The main reason is that the tenses of verbs are always placed in a certain 'time';<sup>1</sup> a verb will be in a χρόνος, either Present or Present Perfect tense or Past tense etc. It is impossible to use a verb apart from any implication of time. In contrast to a noun or adjective, a verb not only expresses an action or a passion or a state of the subject, but also indicates the time which this action or passion or state is referred to. On this point he follows Aristotle's statements verbatim; for indeed it was the Stagirite who had said that 'a verb is a sound which not only conveys a particular meaning but has a time-reference also'<sup>2</sup> in contrast with a 'noun' which 'is a sound assigned with an import established by convention alone, but no reference whatsoever to time'.<sup>3</sup>

Origen regards the divine reality as a timeless state radically transcendent to time. In the portrayal of God's being then any verb is *a priori* inappropriate, there is a linguistic predicament, since no verb can be used apart from a certain concomitant temporal implication. Had he employed another perception of God's being (for example, everlasting duration or perpetual present), there could be no difficulty: he could use Present tense. But it is he himself who emphasizes that God's being cannot be expressed by any of the forms of verbs, because this being is atemporal as God radically transcends all time.

In *fr John*, quoting John 1,1 'In the beginning was the Logos', Origen is quick to address himself to this stumbling block, by means of a comment which reads as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> In Greek the word for 'tense' is the same to that of 'time', namely, χρόνος is used either for 'tense' or 'time'.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, II.16b6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, II.16a20.

Speaking about the Logos of God it would be more accurate to say 'is' (ἐστίν); but he [sc. John] used 'was' (ἦν) instead of 'is' (ἐστίν) in order to relate the being of the Logos to his incarnation, which took place in a certain time; one should bear in mind that, in reference to the atemporal things, the accurate meaning of verbs such as 'was' (ἦν)<sup>4</sup> and 'is' (ἐστίν) and 'will be' (ἔσται) should not be taken literally. For Logos the God, being the Son of the Father, is himself timeless God. Therefore, the verbs applied to him should not be considered together with the time which they imply, since the Son is not under time (ὑπὸ χρόνον); for a *verb* is what indicates time (τὸ προσημαινὸν χρόνον), as Aristotle says.<sup>5</sup>

In *frJohn* the same assertion is found, in the exegesis of the same passage, namely, John 1,1:

Since there are some who have fallen from the right faith thinking that it is only him who was born from the virgin that exists, very ably the theologos writes for them that 'In the beginning was the Logos' (ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος); using the verbs properly, he applied the term 'became' (ἐγένετο) to the flesh and the term 'was' (ἦν) to the divinity.<sup>6</sup> Speaking of the Logos of God it would be more accurate to say 'is' (ἐστίν); but he used 'was' (ἦν) instead of 'is' (ἐστίν) in order to relate the being of the Logos to his incarnation, which took place at a certain time; anyone nevertheless should know that, in referring to atemporal things, he should not take the meaning of verbs literally; for that which is signified by a verb implies co-existence of time together with it: for example, when we say 'was' (ἦν) we mean that which does not exist any more but existed only in the past; accordingly, 'is' (ἐστίν) denotes what exists now and 'will be' (ἔσται) points to what will exist in the future. But no one should think that the time implied by a certain verb can be applied to the Logos of God, since he is timeless (ἄιδιος).<sup>7</sup>

In the passages here Origen is explicit that ἄιδιος means *timeless*. So, here at least, there can be no room for the usual dispute as to whether ἄιδιος has a meaning of 'timelessness' or 'everlasting duration'. R. Sorabji asserts that Plato made no conscientious attempt to distinguish between the terms ἄιδιος and αἰώνιος.<sup>8</sup> As I will note later, it is not clear whether Plato holds the eternity of the Ideas

<sup>4</sup> Cf. John 1, 1.

<sup>5</sup> *frJohn*, CX; italics mine.

<sup>6</sup> This opinion is also found in *frJohn*, CXI.

<sup>7</sup> *frJohn*, I.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. R. Sorabji, *op. cit.*, p. 116.



to be in everlasting duration or timelessness. As regards Philo, H. Wolfson points out that he, too, did not make a clear distinction between αἰδιος and αἰώνιος.<sup>9</sup> At any rate, I do not maintain that Origen always used αἰδιος in the sense of timeless; he used it also in order to suggest perpetual duration. In these cases, however, this is used as a manner of speaking rather than as a literal suggestion of endless time.<sup>10</sup>

There is good reason then for banning the use of 'was', or 'will be', or even 'is', when referring to the divine being. Whenever Origen strives to adumbrate the abstruse conception of the divine subsistence, he constantly bears in mind the fundamental premise: he refers to a reality transcending all time. He also is aware of the incapability of language to express this reality adequately or at least with some accuracy.

In *expProv* he refers to the portion, 'It was me who was his delight' (Ἐγὼ ἦμην ἣ προσέχαιρε)<sup>11</sup> and explains: 'The 'was' (ἦμην) referring to God does not indicate any existence of time as it does when it refers to those that are under time, such as in the case of one saying, 'I was in a market place'. And since she [sc. Sophia] 'was befitting (ἦν ἀρμόζουσα)' God who is without beginning (τῷ ἀνάρχῳ), then she is timeless (αἰδιος), too'.<sup>12</sup>

God's being is an atemporal reality which transcends all time. Although the use of language for the portrayal of this reality is deemed inevitably inadequate, he is very cautious of how he couches his statements. The inadequacy of expressions is taken for granted, still there is constant vigilance and endeavour to reduce this inaccuracy to the bare minimum:

I use all these terms, not because they actually apply to God himself, but because I find myself in an impasse as I stand before, to call them so, ineffable words (ἀρρήτων ῥημάτων)<sup>13</sup> which only God himself and, after, him his only-begotten Son is able either to say or to think properly about himself.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Cf. H.A. Wolfson, *Philo*, vol. I, pp. 234-5.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *selDeut*, where αἰδιος is used to indicate the same meaning with that of the expression εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. PG 12.813.

<sup>11</sup> Prov. 8, 30.

<sup>12</sup> *expProv*, 8 PG 13.32.

<sup>13</sup> The term used here for 'words' is ῥήματα, which literally means 'verbs' both in the technical grammatical sense and in the that of 'words'.

<sup>14</sup> *commJohn*, 32, XXVIII. P. Plass asserts erroneously that Origen held a notion

In the light of these analyses, we can assess the assertion of R. Sorabji<sup>15</sup> that Origen did not always have a very firm grasp of the idea of timelessness. Origen's own texts do not allow for the possibility that he was groping for the idea of timelessness. The points where he seems to speak as if God had foreknowledge, not timeless knowledge, are only loose and inaccurate expressions used inevitably, yet consciously, because of the limited potential of language to express what is beyond language. This is exactly the point made here.<sup>16</sup> The very being of godhead with respect to time is perceived not in terms of everlastingness or sempiternity (that is, being at *all* times), but in unambiguous terms of atemporality. In reference to the divine ontology, God's being is timeless, not omnitemporal.

It is then quite plain that Origen did have an unwavering grasp of the idea of timelessness and the above passages show that he does not fall short of this conception. It is also clear that by the term *αἰδιος* he again denotes what is timeless and applies to the reality which, as he puts it, is not 'under' time.<sup>17</sup>

In view of these statements in Greek, similar ones in the Latin version of *Princ* can be taken as authentic:

Of course, these terms that we use, such as 'always' or 'has been', or any similar ones that bear a temporal significance, must be interpreted with reservations and not pressed since they relate to time. But the matters of which we are now speaking, although described in temporal language for the purpose of discussion, in their essential nature transcend all idea of time.<sup>18</sup>

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of 'sacred time' of God; he further claims that Origen took this notion from the Jewish and Christian Gnosticism; s. P. Plass, "The Concept of Eternity in Patristic Theology", *Studia Theologica*, 36 (1982), p. 13. A similar view has been taken by J. Daniélou in *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, tr. J.A. Baker (London, 1973), pp. 458ff, 469ff. The folly of the claim that Origen had anything to do with Gnosticism is discussed presently. Here I point out this contradictory fact: Origen has been particularly criticized for holding the notion of timelessness. To scholars such as O. Cullmann this seemed a kind of contamination by the 'danger' of Greek thought (s. *infra*). It is then quite strange that the notion of 'sacred time' is attributed to Origen. Such an assertion would delight the scholars who deny any notion of timelessness, yet it is wrong.

<sup>15</sup> R. Sorabji, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

<sup>16</sup> Even so, however, when Origen speaks of the 'knowledge' of God, he uses Present tense (which implies timeless knowledge), not Past tense (which implies foreknowledge). I discuss the question of foreknowledge later on.

<sup>17</sup> *expProv*, 8; s. also *selPs*, 101; 102; *expProv*, 23.

<sup>18</sup> *Princ*, I.3.4.



By the end of the Fourth Book a similar remark is made:

This phrase that we use, however, that there never was a time when he did not exist, must be accepted with a reservation. For the very words, when or never, have a temporal connotation, whereas the statements we make about the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit must be understood as transcending all time and all ages and all eternity. The rest of things, however, which are external to the Trinity, must be measured by ages and periods of time.<sup>19</sup>

There is also an implicit reference<sup>20</sup> to time according to which 'no thought of before or after can be entertained' in respect of 'the persons of the Trinity'. However, the notion really suggested at this point is not so much the relation of the Trinity to time, but the relation between the Three Persons themselves as hypostases equally coeternal. The idea is that there was no state in which the Son and the Holy Spirit did not exist together with the Father, since the very being of the Trinity is timeless.<sup>21</sup>

It is important for the further development of my topic to make clear a point that I regard as fundamental for a proper understanding of Origen's thought. It has to be emphasized that he holds a conception of God as radically transcending time not only *with respect to* time, but also *before* all time. Although the term 'before' is inevitably used in a loose sense (for 'before' makes no sense in the absence of time), the notion indicated is that God *is* being regardless of existence or non-existence of time. This comes to mean a conception of God in Himself, that is, God who is being in the absence of creation or even any *thought* of creation. To think of God in Himself does not necessarily entail to think of him as Creator. Hence when one perceives God as Creator, through observation of the outcome of his creative act, this by no means could mean that this perception applies to Himself.

This view constitutes a significant contrast with Platonism and Neoplatonism. This is also a facet of Origen's thought that has been widely misunderstood. I shall then dwell on this point in order to make it clear through words of his own. In *Cels* it is affirmed that

<sup>19</sup> *Princ.* IV.4.1.

<sup>20</sup> *Princ.* II.2.1.

<sup>21</sup> The term *also* suggests that this fundamental theological view of Origen is grounded not only on the notion of divine timelessness, but also on other facets of his theology.

'it is not absurd that we also should accept the view that the characteristics of God which we know do not apply to *God Himself*. For the attributes of God are superior to any of those which are known not only to human nature, but even by the natures of the beings which have ascended to the higher ranks of life.'<sup>22</sup>

God Himself is 'beyond what can be perceived through the mind' (ἐπέκεινα τῶν νοητῶν).<sup>23</sup> So 'everything we know about God is inferior to God Himself' (πάντα ἃ ἴσμεν ἐλάττωνα ἐστὶ Θεοῦ).<sup>24</sup>

According to *selPs* God is 'known as Creator, Wise, Provident and Judge'. In point of the first of these conceptions of God, 'he is Creator because he brought creatures into being out of non-being' (καὶ δημιουργός μὲν διὰ τὰ γεγονότα ἀπὸ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ εἶναι).<sup>25</sup>

The knowledge of God as Creator is based on (and derived from) a certain *because*. This means that God as Creator is known through an *act of his will*. But God in Himself cannot be known at all. There is not any 'because', there is not any 'act', there is no creature through which God could be known in Himself. It is only through Christ and God's self-manifestation that men may figure a notion of God in Himself.

Thus the fundamental distinction between God known *in Himself* (γινωσκόμενος) and God as *creator* (δημιουργός) is clearly made.<sup>26</sup> In observing creation one does not see anything of God in Himself; all he may see is the wisdom according to which everything was created; for 'In the corporeal heavens God dwells as creator through his multi-embroidered wisdom.'<sup>27</sup>

God in Himself 'is unattainable by reason',<sup>28</sup> and 'no one knows the accurate knowledge which Trinity has of herself.'<sup>29</sup>

On this point there are penetrating analyses, which are worth following verbatim, in order to see how the distinction between God in Himself and God as Creator is made:

No one can see God through a process of his own mind, as it happens with visible things which are said to be seen through an act of

<sup>22</sup> *Cels*, VI, 62; italics mine.

<sup>23</sup> *exhMar*, XLVII.

<sup>24</sup> *Cels*, VI, 62.

<sup>25</sup> *selPs*, 138; PG 12.1661.

<sup>26</sup> *frPs*, 118, 91; *selPs*, 118; PG 12.1604; *expProc*, 6; PG 17.177.

<sup>27</sup> *selPs*, 122.

<sup>28</sup> *Cels*, VI, 64.

<sup>29</sup> *frMatt*, 244.

seeing. But God is seen to those whom he might judge that He should be seen by revealing Himself. For if one were seeing God, then he would see Him, so to speak, in His quality proper and His magnitude proper (οἶος καὶ ὅσος ἐστίν). But it is not man who sees, it is God who shows what is seen; this is why God presents Himself in a way that might be comprehended by creatures. As the Saviour says 'I will present myself';<sup>30</sup> he did not say 'he will see me', but he said 'I will present myself'.<sup>31</sup>

There is particular emphasis on the notion that 'the divine things cannot be seen without an action of their own', namely through God's 'grace'.<sup>32</sup> Subsequently, creaturely mind

cannot see God through an intellectual act of its own. So we conceive of God, to the extent that it is possible to us, through the theological notions about him—at least those which we have; even so, however, we conceive of Him obscurely. But *God in Himself* (αὐτός δὲ ὁ Θεός) has knowledge of Himself not through any means of this kind, but He has a knowledge that is appropriate to Him. For it is Himself who is both the subject and the object of comprehension. This is why it is only the Son who knows Him; it is the Son who is comprehended by the Father and it is he who comprehends the Father.<sup>33</sup>

Origen knows that 'there are many people who have a conception of *God as Creator*, yet they do not profess Him as Father of the Son'. (Καὶ πολλοὶ γοῦν ἔχουσιν ἔννοιαν Θεοῦ δημιουργοῦ, οὐ μὴν ὁμολογοῦσιν αὐτόν υἱοῦ πατέρα). But to speak of 'knowledge' of God means in fact to know Him 'in as much as He is God and in as much as He is the Father' (καθό Θεός ἐστι καὶ καθό πατήρ ἐστι).<sup>34</sup>

In view of this, 'even if we be found worthy of seeing God now by means of mind and heart, we see him not "as he is",<sup>35</sup> but as he appears according to his dispensation towards us'.<sup>36</sup> However, *there is* the objective reality of what God is in Himself, albeit creatures cannot know it; and this objective reality is singled out in the same passage by means of the expression ὅ ἐστιν (*that which God is*).<sup>37</sup>

<sup>30</sup> John, 14, 21.

<sup>31</sup> *fr* John, XIV.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *homLuc*, 3; Cf. also *commMatt*, 12, 10; 14, 24.

<sup>33</sup> *fr* John, XIII.

<sup>34</sup> *fr* Luc, 34.

<sup>35</sup> 1 John, 3, 2.

<sup>36</sup> *commMatt*, 17, 19.

<sup>37</sup> *commMatt*, 17, 19.

Therefore, by reason of the radical chasm between God and the world then, any knowledge of God in Himself is impossible.<sup>38</sup> God is the 'creator and God of the prophets and Father and God of Christ and our father'.<sup>39</sup> But from a worldly point of view, one can see not God in Himself, but God as he represents Himself to us.<sup>40</sup> In observing the world we have just 'conceptions' of God; we do not know Him Himself; we can only form a 'conception' of God as Creator.<sup>41</sup> Therefore,

neither can anyone worthily know the uncreated and firstborn of all created nature<sup>42</sup> in the way that the Father who begot him knows him; nor can anyone know the Father in the same way as the living Logos who is God's wisdom and truth.<sup>43</sup>

Even when God will be seen by creatures 'as he is',<sup>44</sup> this will happen in the way which is possible for God to be known by creatures (καθώς ἐστὶ δυνατόν τοῖς γενητοῖς γινῶναι τὸν Θεόν). It is not possible to take the [expression] 'as he is' as denoting God Himself (οὐ γὰρ οἶόν τε ἐκλαμβάνειν τὸ καθὼς ἐστὶν ὁ Θεός αὐτός).<sup>45</sup> This is the sense in which 'the prophets or patriarchs or angels have seen God'.<sup>46</sup> Once again, the notion of *God Himself* (ὁ Θεός αὐτός) is evidently enunciated.

The radical divine transcendence is tellingly expressed in the ontological relation of God to the world. Origen refers to the world through the term *whole* (ὅλον)<sup>47</sup> which is a Stoic term.<sup>48</sup> Still he rejects the Stoic doctrine that God is immanent in the world;<sup>49</sup> he also explicitly opposes both 'the Stoics and the followers of Plato' who held that the 'whole' world is 'god'.<sup>50</sup> His view is that God is neither 'part' nor 'whole'. This statement is one of those which underline the radical divine transcendence:

<sup>38</sup> *frMatt*, 244.

<sup>39</sup> *commJohn*, 19, V, *comm.* on Rom. 1, 1-7.

<sup>40</sup> *commMatt*, 17, 19.

<sup>41</sup> *frMatt*, 243.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Col. 1, 15.

<sup>43</sup> *Cels*, VI, 17.

<sup>44</sup> 1 John, 3, 2.

<sup>45</sup> *frJohn*, X.

<sup>46</sup> *frJohn*, XIV.

<sup>47</sup> *Cels*, VII, 44.

<sup>48</sup> *SVF*, II, 167, 8.

<sup>49</sup> *Cels*, VI, 71.

<sup>50</sup> *Cels*, V, 7.

All things are parts of the world yet God is not part of the whole (πάντα γὰρ μέρη κόσμου, οὐδέν δὲ μέρος ὅλου ὁ Θεός); for God must be regarded as not incomplete as the part is incomplete. And probably a deeper consideration could show that strictly speaking, just as God is not a part, so also he is not the whole (Θεός ὡςπερ οὐκ ἐστὶ μέρος οὕτως οὐδέ ὅλον), since the whole comprises parts (ἐπεὶ τὸ ὅλον ἐκ μερῶν ἐστὶ).<sup>51</sup> And reason does not demand that we should allow for the supreme God comprising parts, each one of which cannot do what the other parts can.<sup>52</sup>

That the world is the 'whole' was a Stoic doctrine. However, Origen's affirmation of the 'world' which as the 'whole' is similar to the Stoic one only in letter. His premise for holding this view is sheerly different: this is the *transcendence* of God—a notion which has no room in Stoicism where God is regarded as immanent in the world. Origen's conception is different: God is incomposite; for if the 'whole' was the reality of both God and world, then, God would be regarded as 'part' of the 'whole': "the whole is the composite of the parts. For 'all' cannot be predicated where there is no diversity in quantity and quality".<sup>53</sup>

God is not 'part' of the 'whole'. He is *beyond* the 'whole'. Beside the conception of the radical transcendence of God, this suggests a fundamental conception of his which has been underestimated, and sometimes denied by scholars who overstressed and miscomprehended his allegorical exegesis: for what Origen does here is to strongly affirm the *full reality* of the world.

We know that there is an actual reality of God in Himself, yet this knowledge is not drawn from the observation of the creation, but from the self-revelation of God recorded in the Scripture. This knowledge is obtained from 'the testimonies given' to us (τὰ μαρτύρια τὰ παραδεδομένα).<sup>54</sup> These 'testimonies' (μαρτύρια) are the message of the divine scriptures,<sup>55</sup> both the Old Testament ('... the testimonies having been said many times...'), and the New Testament ('... I find new testimonies... the testimonies of Jesus Christ...').<sup>56</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Cf. *SVF*, II, 167, 35ff; also in Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos*, IX.338–49, 352; II.264; *Pyrronia*, III.98–101; Cf. Athanasius, *Contra Gentes*, 28; M.25.4ff.

<sup>52</sup> *Cels*, I, 23.

<sup>53</sup> *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 4.1.11.

<sup>54</sup> *selPs*, 118, PG 12.1621; *frPs*, 118, 118–9, 138.

<sup>55</sup> *selPs*, 118.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*



The only way to know of God being more than the Creator is through His own revelation in God the Logos throughout the biblical history. It is through historical events, culminated in the event of 'incarnation' (διὰ τῆς σαρκώσεως), that the transcendent God became 'approachable' (προσιτός) to men.<sup>57</sup> So using 'truth and the testimony of events and all sorts of working of wonders as a kind of voice, God suggested His own sublimity to humans.'<sup>58</sup>

Even so, divine instruction is necessary for 'the law can be known only by revelation' and no intellectual ability alone is adequate for that.<sup>59</sup> Which means that the 'parables and obscure words' which were uttered by the Holy Spirit through the prophets need to be 'readable' and they become readable to those who are 'participants' of the Holy Spirit and taught by him. For no one can comprehend the divine Scriptures unless through illumination by the Holy Spirit.<sup>60</sup>

God through his 'great providence for the sake of man' guides and enlightens man toward ways that 'human nature itself does not know.'<sup>61</sup>

These passages demonstrate that it is not the world, but it is God's self-revelation that provides a hint of the divine being. In the final analysis, this means that Origen holds a Theological, not a Cosmological conception of God. His theology springs from the self-revelation of God throughout history, not from observation of nature. To expound Origen's theology in detail, that is, his concept of God in Himself, is beyond the scope of this book. I shall only refer to his conception of Wisdom and Logos; and this only to the extent that this bears upon the conception of time. For an important point that needs to be made is not only that there is a conception of *God in Himself* far beyond the notion of *God as Creator*; there is also a visualization of a reality preceding creation, that is, a reality in which only God *is* and there is no creation at all. This will lead to the conclusion that the current opinion that Origen cannot think of God without necessarily thinking of him as Creator is erroneous.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>57</sup> *JrMatt*, 54.

<sup>58</sup> *selPs*, 45, PG 12.1433.

<sup>59</sup> *selPs*, 118, PG 12.1592.

<sup>60</sup> *expPnw*, 24; PG.17.233.

<sup>61</sup> *excPs*, 77, PG 17.144.

<sup>62</sup> That God is Creator *of necessity* is the Platonic and Neoplatonic conception—which lead to the allegation that Origen held a doctrine of eternal creation. This is a current (yet entirely erroneous) opinion. The whole question will be canvassed anon.



Despite the fact that God's being is regarded as 'above' time, that is, as a radically transcendent reality, Origen does go ahead with a portrayal of God's being in Himself. This is made at the point where he interprets the portion of John 1,1 'In the beginning (ἐν ἀρχῇ) was the Logos'.<sup>63</sup>

In trying to interpret this passage, he is faced with a challenge to his conception of the divine being as a timeless reality. For the term ἀρχή is one of those, which par excellence have a temporal implication, namely, beginning. How is it possible to speak of the divine Being as an atemporal state while at the same time speaking of a certain 'In the beginning' (ἐν ἀρχῇ)? This is the challenge, which he has to cope with, in order to sustain his conception of the divine life as a timeless reality.

Before any discussion about the actual meaning of the foregoing portion of John, he points out that there are many meanings of the word ἀρχή. This 'multi-signification' (τὸ πολύσημον) of the term can be found not only among the Greeks but also into the Holy Scripture.<sup>64</sup> Thus he expounds all the different purports of the term ἀρχή found in the Scripture. It is only after this extensive exposition that he comes to the portion of John 1,1 in order to offer his own exegesis:

Having seen that the term ἀρχή means so many things, we now examine which of them should be employed in the [portion] 'In ἀρχή was the Logos' (Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος). It is clear that this does not allude to any moving over or to any road or length; it is also obvious that it does not refer to any generation. It is nevertheless possible to take it that it refers to him, who is the maker, whom 'God ordered and everything has been made'.<sup>65</sup> For in a sense it is Christ himself who is the creator, to whom the Father says 'let there be light'<sup>66</sup> and 'let there be a firmament'.<sup>67</sup> Christ then is creator as an ἀρχή, for he is wisdom, called ἀρχή just because he is wisdom. For it is wisdom who, according to Solomon, says 'The Lord created me at the beginning of his ways towards his works' (Ὁ Θεὸς ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ),<sup>68</sup> so that 'the Logos is in the ἀρχή', that is, in the wisdom.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>63</sup> *commJohn*, 1, XVI

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* Speaking of 'Greeks', Origen obviously has in mind Aristotle and his analyses on ἀρχή, especially in *Metaphysica*, 983a, 1033a, 1049a, 1075b.

<sup>65</sup> Psalms, 142, 5.

<sup>66</sup> Gen. 1, 3.

<sup>67</sup> Gen. 1, 6.

<sup>68</sup> Prov. 8, 22.

<sup>69</sup> *commJohn*, 1, XIX.

Further in the same work, he explains: 'In interpreting the 'In ἀρχή was the Logos' it is clear (for it is found in many passages of the Proverbs) that it is the wisdom who is meant by the term ἀρχή.<sup>70</sup> Thus 'one should understand that the Logos has always been in the ἀρχή, that is, in the wisdom'.<sup>71</sup>

Hence Origen's answer is virtually this: The opening of John 1,1, 'In ἀρχή was the Logos' is a sort of answer not to the hypothetical question 'when was the Logos?', but to the question 'in what was the Logos?' This assessment is clearly stated later, when it is pointed out that what we have learned from the passage of John 1,1 is the answer to the question 'in what' (ἐν τίνι) was the Logos, and the answer to this was that the Logos was 'in the wisdom' (ἐν ἀρχῇ).<sup>72</sup> Later in the same work he reiterates his affirmation that by ἀρχή it is the wisdom herself that should be understood, and the passage of John means that the Logos was 'in' the wisdom.<sup>73</sup> If a 'temporal' meaning should be applied to the 'ἐν ἀρχῇ' this should be only a sense of atemporality, indicated by the fact that the Logos was 'in' the wisdom. In that case the hypothetical question 'when was the Logos?' could be the same as the question 'In what was the Logos?' As a matter of fact, there is a point in the same work where it is stated that what we learn by this passage of John is 'when or in what' the Logos was.<sup>74</sup>

After the analyses of the subject (before as well as after this point of *commJohn*) it is obvious that the term 'when' has been put in such a context that the only purport remaining for it is that of atemporality. This is obviously why Origen has no hesitation (when he says 'when or in what', twice in that section) to suggest that, in this case, he takes the terms 'when' as well as 'in what' as virtually synonymous. This sounds paradoxical, yet when one deals with a problem such as a timeless reality one should be prepared to face some statements which sound paradoxical in their current use. It is possible, however, to explain how this synonymity is understood. To the question 'when was the Logos?' the answer is 'timelessly'. This answer is obvious identical to the answer 'In timelessness'. But this expression

<sup>70</sup> *commJohn*, 1, XXXIX.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *commJohn*, 2, IV.

<sup>73</sup> *commJohn*, XXXVII.

<sup>74</sup> *commJohn*, 2, IX; italics mine.

is virtually an answer to the question 'In *what* was the Logos?'. Thus *when* and *in what* are regarded as apparently synonyms on account of both providing one single answer referring to the being of the Logos in the divine timelessness.

It is then quite plain that God's being is held to be an atemporal reality. He feels so strongly about it, that he interprets terms such as *ἀρχή* (which currently has a temporal import) in a manner abolishing the notion of temporality altogether.

Within this reality, Wisdom is a living personal hypostasis who is identified with the Son of God.<sup>75</sup> This is the person whom God spoke to when he created the world, according to the narration in Genesis. Nevertheless, this wisdom exists as a timeless subsistence before the creation of the world: she lives *in* God before time, as a personal subject, as a living personal hypostasis.<sup>76</sup> For wisdom 'is herself a subsistent being, who was begotten before the aeons and existed as a timeless one even before creation'.<sup>77</sup>

The Logos is also identified with the Son of God and has timelessly been in the divine being regardless of any perception of creation.

But Logos becomes (*γίνεται*) only with respect to men who formerly were unable to conceive the advent of the Son of God, who is the Logos; yet the Logos does not *become* 'with God'<sup>78</sup> as if he formerly were not there, but he is said to be always in the Father (*παρά δὲ τῷ αἰεὶ συνεῖναι τῷ πατρὶ λέγεται*): 'And the Logos was (*ἦν*) in God' since 'he did not *become* with God' (*οὐ γὰρ ἐγένετο πρὸς τὸν Θεόν*). And the same verb, namely 'was' (*ἦν*), predicates the Logos both when he 'was in *ἀρχή*' and when he 'was with God'; this means that neither is the Logos separated from the *ἀρχή* nor is he left over (*ἀπολειπόμενος*) by the Father; and again this means that neither the Logos 'became' in the *ἀρχή*, as if he were not in the *ἀρχή*, nor did he 'become' 'in God' as if he were not 'with God' before. For before any existence of time or aeon 'in *ἀρχή* was the Logos' and 'the Logos was with God'.<sup>79</sup>

It is accordingly pointed out that 'John did not say that the Logos *became* or that he *was made* in the *ἀρχή*, but he said that 'In the

<sup>75</sup> *commJohn*, 1, IX; 1, XIX; 1, XXXI; 1, XXXIV; 1, XXXIX; 6, XXXVIII; *frJohn*, I; *commProv*, 1; *Cels*, III, 81; V, 39; *frMatt*, 237; *expProv*, 1; *expProv*, 16; *expPs*, 50; *adnotDeut*, 16; *Princ*, I.2.2., III.3.1.

<sup>76</sup> *expProv*, 8.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>78</sup> *John* 1, 1.

<sup>79</sup> *commJohn*, 2, I; italics mine.

beginning *was* the Logos'. For he was in the beginning creating the heaven and the earth<sup>80</sup> yet he existed 'before them, being their beginning in the sense that it was him who caused them to be'.<sup>81</sup>

It is further reiterated that the Logos who 'was in ἀρχή' was 'always' (ἀεὶ) 'with God', being himself God; 'he did not obtain this state as if he previously was not with God', but he has always been in the 'perpetual view of the paternal depth' (τῇ ἀδιαλείπτῳ θεᾷ τοῦ πατρικοῦ βάθους).<sup>82</sup>

So the Logos is he 'who lives in himself, yet not separated from the Father (καὶ λόγον τοιοῦτον καθ' ἑαυτὸν ζῶντα). The Logos is not someone other than Christ, Logos the God, who is in the Father, through whom everything has been created'.<sup>83</sup>

In the First Book of *commJohn* it is averred that 'it is necessary to examine the conceptions of the Son painstakingly<sup>84</sup> in order to see which of them have always been in God before creation (ἐν μακαριότητι) without any beginning. Is it only Wisdom which existed without beginning, or it is also the Logos, and even life and truth?'<sup>85</sup> At that point though Origen goes only as far as to set forth the question.

A systematic account of this issue is given in the Second Book of the same work. This involves some determining points of his view of time. The exposition is composed by means of a meticulous philological analysis of scriptural portions, with Origen pondering upon two portions of John: 'In the beginning was the Logos' (ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος),<sup>86</sup> and 'life became in the Logos' (ἐν λόγῳ).<sup>87</sup> Referring to this opening of John's gospel, he states:

Let us regard these two instances of *In* (ἐν) and examine their difference: First, let us see this as it appears in [sc. the expression] 'Logos in the beginning' and secondly in [sc. the expression] 'life in the Logos'. The Logos did not *become* 'in the beginning'; this is why it is said 'in the beginning *was* the Logos'; for there was not when the ἀρχή was irrational (ἄλογος); but life *became* and this is why 'life is the light of men'.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>80</sup> *frJohn*, I; italics mine.

<sup>81</sup> *frJohn*, I.

<sup>82</sup> *commJohn*, 2, II.

<sup>83</sup> *commJohn*, 1, XIX.

<sup>84</sup> s. *infra*.

<sup>85</sup> *commJohn*, 1, XX.

<sup>86</sup> John 1, 1.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. John 1, 4.

<sup>88</sup> John 1, 4.

This means that when there was no man at all, there also was not any 'light of men'; for the light of men is understood only in its relation to men. And let no one accuse us, thinking that we are considering all those questions in a sense of temporal sequence; for time cannot be found at all when the third and fourth conceptions of the Logos did not exist yet. In the same way then that it is said that 'everything *became* through him'<sup>89</sup> (not everything *was* through him), and 'there was nothing that *became* without him'<sup>90</sup> (not there was nothing that *was* without him), life is what *became* in him, not what *was* in him. Again, the Logos was not what *became* in the beginning, but what *was* in the beginning.<sup>91</sup>

An excellent portion in his Homilies on Exodus leaves no room for ambiguity:

'To become as stone' is, by nature, not to be stone, for one becomes only what was not originally.<sup>92</sup>

This argument was aptly upheld by Gregory of Nyssa against the argument of Eunomius: if the Logos is put within limits, then God himself is put within limits. But God is infinite and by the same token the Logos should be regarded as infinite. For 'infinite is extended alongside with the infinite' (συνπαράτείνει τῷ ἀπείρῳ τὸ ἄπειρον).<sup>93</sup>

E. de Faye makes a serious mistake in asserting that 'it is in the nature of the Son to be multiple and diverse', appealing to Origen's analyses of the conceptions of the Son in *commJohn*. What he did not comprehend is that the conceptions of the Son, after Wisdom and Logos, *became* and they could in no way be regarded as being 'in the nature' of the Son. They are simply economic functions of the Logos within the world, once this world came into existence. Henceforth, the assertions about a 'Gnostic influence' on Origen on this subject are wrong. For the essential notion of Origen's about a certain 'when the third and fourth conceptions of Logos did not exist yet' eluded E. de Faye,<sup>94</sup> as the statement 'there was not yet time before the world existed'<sup>95</sup> eluded him too. Nevertheless Origen's

<sup>89</sup> John 1, 3.

<sup>90</sup> John 1, 30.

<sup>91</sup> *commJohn*, 2, XIX; italics mine.

<sup>92</sup> Referring to Exodus 15, 16; *Homilies on Exodus*, VI.9.

<sup>93</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomion*, 3, 2, 20.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. E. de Faye, "De l'influence du Gnosticisme chez Origène", *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, Paris, 87 (1923), p. 211.

<sup>95</sup> *Homilies on Genesis*, I.1.



statements are clear-cut: "the Saviour too, under different aspects, has many names, since he may be one in substance but varied in powers," still "there is one substance in my Lord Jesus Christ", while at the same time there are "many perspectives for diverse names for him".<sup>96</sup>

Christ is indeed one in essence but may be designated in many ways according to his virtues and operations, for example he is understood to be grace itself, as well as righteousness, peace, life, truth, the Word . . .<sup>97</sup>

Therefore, "The Logos is one" (*λόγος γὰρ εἷς*), he is a 'unit' (*μονάς*) and 'one' (*εἷς*). Thus even if someone refers to the Logos through a multitude of conceptions, in fact 'he always refers to the one Logos' (*εἷς αἰεὶ λέγει λόγον*).<sup>98</sup> The perceptions of the Son pertain to his action, indeed to his 'salvation-bringing' action, such as that by which he appears as "peace, righteousness, truth, the door through which one enters to the Father, the shepherd, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the lion's whelp who rises from sleep, sanctification, redemption, and whatever else of this kind that seems to agree with his dignity."<sup>99</sup>

The preceding quoted portion points out the sense in which Christ (regarded as Creator) is stated to be the 'source' and 'origin' of all virtues.<sup>100</sup>

The phrase used at that point is *ὅστις ὡς πηγή πῦρ καὶ ἀρχὴ τῶν τοιούτων τυγχάνει*. Similar kind of expression appears in Plato,<sup>101</sup> whereas Philo uses a similar expression stating God as 'the source and origin of all graces'.<sup>102</sup> It would be misleading, however, to regard this expression as 'Platonism'. This is but a figure (undoubtedly from Origen's own background) and this is why he introduces it through the word *ὡς πηγή* (as it were). Beyond that, however, what under-

<sup>96</sup> *Homilies on Jeremiah*, 27.4.

<sup>97</sup> *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 5.7.7.

<sup>98</sup> *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 5.V.1. Cf. "Christ is indeed one in essence but may be designated

in many ways according to his virtues and operations, for example he is understood to be grace itself, as well as righteousness, peace, life, truth, the Word" (Cf.

1 Cor. 1, 30; Eph. 2, 14; John 1, 1); *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 5.7.7.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. *peace*, Eph. 2, 14; *righteousness*, 1 Cor. 1, 30; *truth*, John 14, 6; *door*, John,

10, 7; *shepherd*, John 10, 9 and 11; *lion*, Rev. 5, 5; *lion's whelp*, Hos. 5, 14; Gen. 49,

9; *sanctification, redemption*, 1 Cor. 1, 30. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 7.19.8.

<sup>100</sup> *Cds*, 1, 57.

<sup>101</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus*, 245C.

<sup>102</sup> Philo, *de Mutatione Nominum*, 58; Cf. *De Spectantibus Legibus*, II, 156.



lies this expression is the fundamental view that the conceptions of the Son *became*, which implies the creative act of God. This is the context in which similar expressions should be considered.<sup>103</sup>

Of all the conceptions of the Son, it is only Wisdom and Logos that *were* with the Father beginninglessly. The rest of them *became*, which means they had a beginning and are the product of the creative act of God. Since this point is central for understanding the relation of God to creation, I discuss it presently.

R. Norris is one more scholar among those who used *Princ* as a main source. Consequently, serious mistakes were inevitable: he asserts that 'the Logos appears in Origen's system as the first step 'down' from the One in the stream of existence. . . . As such, he is, of course, 'generated'—but not (as Justin and Tertullian seem to have taught) at some point prior to the creation of the world.'<sup>104</sup>

In the light of the abundance of texts where Origen explicates his view of the Logos, assertions such as this seem astonishing. This is why I have regarded it as an indispensable part of my method to quote Origen's own words. For distorting allegations such as these of Norris' appear as views of the mainstream scholarship, which appears to be determined to find Plotinus' world-picture and perception of Being into Origen's thought. Thus he thinks that Origen's God must be the Plotinian One. The Plotinian Mind (which is immediately down from the One) must be the Logos, and so on.

In view of the vast number of scholars who made similar allegations about Origen, the case of Norris is only an example, yet a paradigmatic one. To avoid an unnecessarily excessive length of this work, I have to consider *views* rather than individual scholars. Similar allegations (namely, postulating either a Platonic or Neoplatonic perception in Origen's thought) were made by others, such as C. Bigg, H. Crouzel, M. Simonetti, E. Molland, J. Daniélou, G. Florovski (to mention some of those supposed to be prominent exponents of Origen's thought); the views of them, as well as of others, like T. Torrance, P. Plass, M. Werner, and others mentioned in due course. While C. Bigg put the term 'Platonist' in the title of his work including Origen's thought, M. Werner had no hesitation: he asserts that Origen found a secure position 'in the religious philosophy of

<sup>103</sup> Cf. *Cels.* IV, 53; IV, 44; VIII, 17; *de Or.* XXII

<sup>104</sup> R.A. Norris, *God and World in Early Christian Theology*, New York, 1965, p. 154.

Neoplatonism'.<sup>105</sup> There are others who provide accounts of Origen's thought through assertions which are misleading generalizations, such as this: 'Philosophically the doctrine of Origen is a synthesis of Platonic, Aristotelian, and Stoic elements, with the conception of divine providence and of divine law being Platonic and Stoic.'<sup>106</sup>

Subsequent to his decision to brand Origen as a Platonist and tar him with the brush of Neoplatonism, Norris claims that Origen 'insists . . . that one cannot think of God without thinking at the same time of the world in which God's creative goodness is manifested.'<sup>107</sup>

This is the typical expression describing Plato's thought. Indeed, this expression is the stock motto used by the scholars who regard Origen as a 'Platonist'. However, Origen holds a conception of God in Himself apart from any conception of creation. In his view, the Son of God (conceived as Wisdom and Logos) is in the divine reality as a person who is related to no one but God. In this state there is no creation; the sole reality is the divine one, namely, the being of God Himself.

<sup>105</sup> M. Werner, *The Formation of Christian Dogma*, tr. S. Brandon, New York, 1957, p. 118.

<sup>106</sup> W.A. Banner, "Origen and the Tradition of Natural Law Concepts", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 8 (1954), p. 70.

<sup>107</sup> R.A. Norris, *op. cit.*, p. 154. Cf. G. Florovski, *op. cit.* p. 49. It is already clear, however, that Origen holds a conception of *God Himself* without necessarily thinking of the world at the same time. This is a telling point to which I shall return later.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE PROVIDENTIAL CREATION

The important element in my analysis hitherto is that Origen holds a conception of a reality 'when'<sup>1</sup> there is neither time nor the world; a reality where there is nothing apart from God himself. This is why he states that it is God who is the original 'place, as it were' (οἰοεὶ τόπος) of the Logos.<sup>2</sup> Certainly it is utterly hard to adumbrate this reality, since this is the divine life itself. It is significant, nevertheless, that there is a perception of a *state before creation* (τὰ πρὸ γενέσεως).<sup>3</sup> It is out of this reality that God *decides* to create and the notion of 'coming into being out of non-being' *begins* to make sense.

This is a critical point of the conception of God as Creator. The question though is this: what did God create in the beginning? Only once the answer to this question is comprehended, the doctrine of creation will be approached properly. The Wisdom of God is portrayed as a

'subsistent being' (οὐσία) who exists 'before the aeons' (πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων) and existed before creation as a timeless (αἰδίος) being; when *she established a relation to creatures* (τὰ γεννητά), then *she became* the 'beginning' (ἀρχή) of God's ways, both of the *constructional* and *providential* (τῶν ποιητικῶν καὶ προνοητικῶν); so this beginning (ἀρχή) has been yoked together with the creatures, as *she became their beginning, relating herself to them by creating them*; yet this wisdom is timeless and exists as a substantial subject with God before all aeons (ἡ δὲ σοφία αἰδίος, οὐσιωδῶς πρὸ αἰώνων παρὰ τῷ Θεῷ ὑπάρχουσα).<sup>4</sup>

The determining element introduced is the distinction between what is called *providential* creation from the *constructional* one, which came into existence as the material world.

<sup>1</sup> *commJohn*, 2, XIX.

<sup>2</sup> *commJohn*, 20, XVIII.

<sup>3</sup> *commJohn*, 20, II.

<sup>4</sup> *expProv.* 8; PG.17.185. P. Plass asserts that in Origen Wisdom is one 'level' (as he calls it) below God, which is erroneous. P. Plass, "The Concept of Eternity in Patristic Theology", *op. cit.*, p. 13.

There are two different portions of Genesis which suggest that the very creative act of God consists in bringing certain *reasons* (λόγοι) into being out of non-being. What God 'uttered' was not just 'words'; it was a sheer *creative act* in itself.<sup>5</sup> The divine 'words' (λόγοι) are the 'reasons' (λόγοι) according to which creation is functioning and provided for.

The first passage is the saying 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them'.<sup>6</sup>

The second passage is, 'And the Lord formed man of the dust of the ground'.<sup>7</sup>

The inference drawn from these scriptural portions is that God 'created' human nature and it is only later that the material element enters into the narration. This means that what was made 'in the image' of God had nothing to do with 'matter', since 'the first man' who was made 'in the image of God' was 'immaterial and superior to any corporeal nature'.<sup>8</sup>

The same notion is expressed in the Latin translation of the *Homilies on Luke*:

There are two images in man.<sup>9</sup> One he received from God when he was made, in the beginning, as Scripture says in the book of Genesis, 'according to the image and likeness of God'.<sup>10</sup> The other image is earthly.<sup>11</sup> Man received this second image later. He was expelled from Paradise on account of disobedience and sin, after the 'prince of this world'<sup>12</sup> had tempted him with his allurements. For, just as the coin, or *denarius*, has an image of the emperor of this world, so he who does the works of the 'ruler of the darkness'<sup>13</sup> bears the image of him whose works he does. Jesus commanded that that image should be handed over and cast away from our face. He wills us to take on that image

<sup>5</sup> This point, as well as the ensuing discussion, show that creation came into being out of non-being by a deliberate *creative act* of God. The contention of Nygren who strives to show that Origen really held a doctrine of *emanation* rather than *creation* is not correct. (A. Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, tr. by Phillip Watson, Philadelphia, 1953; p. 382.)

<sup>6</sup> Gen. 1, 26-27.

<sup>7</sup> Gen. 1, 26-27.

<sup>8</sup> *Dial.* BGF, v. 16, p. 374.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Commentary on the Canticle*, Prologue 2.4-5.

<sup>10</sup> Gen. 1, 27.

<sup>11</sup> 1 Cor. 15, 49.

<sup>12</sup> John 12, 31.

<sup>13</sup> Eph. 6, 12.

according to which we were made from the beginning, according to God's likeness.<sup>14</sup>

The idea is expounded also in the *Commentary on the Canticle*:

Paul the Apostle knew this well; and being possessed of a very clear understanding of the matter, he wrote in his letters more plainly and with greater lucidity that there are in fact two men in every single man. He says, for instance: 'For if our outward man is corrupted, yet the inward man is renewed day by day'; and again, 'For I am delighted with the law of God according to the inward man';<sup>15</sup> and he makes some other statements of a similar kind. I think, therefore, no one ought any longer to doubt what Moses wrote in the beginning of Genesis about the making and fashioning of two men, since he sees Paul, who understood what Moses wrote much better than we do, saying that there are two men in every one of us. Of these two men he tells us that the one, namely, the inner man is renewed from day to day; but the other, that is, the outer, he declares to be corrupted and weakened in all the saints and in such as he was himself. If anything in regard to this matter still seems doubtful to anyone, it will be better explained in the appropriate places. But let us now follow up what we mentioned before about the inner and the outer man.<sup>16</sup>

What kind of 'creation' was this man of 'the beginning'? Is this a Platonic perception of an 'incorporeal world' made in the beginning - a notion that so many scholars have promptly ascribed to Origen? The answer to this can be traced at a number of points of Greek portions, which evince that his perception of the outcome of the creative act of God is far from being what is currently alleged to be. When he speaks of the 'incorporeal' that came into being out of non-being, he actually refers but to these *λόγοι*, which means (both in its literal sense and essential purport) 'utterances' of God, as well as 'reasons'. This is the 'incorporeal' that came into being out of non-being. Particular care is taken to make this point clear-cut: when it is said that God made Adam, it should be taken into account that the term 'Adam' in Greek means just 'man'. Thus the narration of Moses does not refer to 'any individual' (οὐχ οὕτως περί ενός τινος), but simply points to the creation of 'the human nature' itself (περί τῆς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου φύσεως).<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Homilies on Luke*, 39.5.

<sup>15</sup> 2 Cor. 4, 16 and Rom. 7, 22; Cf. Eph. 3, 16.

<sup>16</sup> *Commentary on the Canticle*, Prologue 2.4-5.

<sup>17</sup> *Cels*, IV, 40; the same in *Cels*, VII, 50.



In *commMatt* it is pointed out that the first of these portions of Genesis refers to 'male and female', not to 'man and woman'; also, the same phraseology is used in the Hebrew original text, which is adduced at that point of *commMatt*. The difference is regarded as substantial; for the expression 'male and female' points to what was created 'in the image', whereas either 'man' or 'woman' can never pertain to what is perceived as 'in image' of God (οὐδέποτε γὰρ γυνή τὸ κατ' εἰκόνα οὐδέ ἄνθρωπος).<sup>18</sup> Again Origen reiterates his fundamental opinion that *the incorporeal creation does not refer to the creation of any individual person*, but only to the creation of these logoi.

In *commJohn* Origen focuses on the saying 'and God saw that it was good'.<sup>19</sup> He points out that this reference to what was created can pertain only to the 'reasons' of things, not to the actual material things themselves. This 'creation' is the coming into being of the *reasons* of all those which were to come into existence. At that point there is an extensive argument appealing to instances from Genesis. Speaking about 'sea beasts'<sup>20</sup> and 'cattle, and creeping things, and beasts',<sup>21</sup> how is it possible to say that it was the actual creatures that God saw as being 'good'? Are these beasts 'good' themselves? Certainly not, Origen avers. Therefore, it was not these creatures themselves that God saw as 'good': "what was good was the *reasons* about them".<sup>22</sup> Referring to John 4, 45, 'Behold I say to you, Lift up your eyes and see the fields, for they are already white for harvest', he comments thus:<sup>23</sup>

The expression 'lift up your eyes' occurs in many places in Scripture when the divine Logos admonishes us to exalt and lift up our thoughts, and to elevate the insight that lies below in rather sickly condition, and is stooped and completely incapable of looking up,<sup>24</sup> as is written for instance in Isaiah, 'Lift up your eyes and see. Who has made all these things known?'<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, no one who experiences passions and who has clung to the flesh and been concerned with material things, has

<sup>18</sup> *commMatt*, 14, 16.

<sup>19</sup> Gen. 1, 10.

<sup>20</sup> Gen. 1, 20.

<sup>21</sup> Gen. 1, 24.

<sup>22</sup> *commJohn*, 13, XLII.

<sup>23</sup> *commJohn*, 13, XLII.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Luke 13, 11.

<sup>25</sup> Isa. 40, 26.



observed the command that says, 'Lift up your eyes'. As a result, such a person will not see the fields, even if they be 'already white for harvest'. Likewise, no one has lifted up his eyes if he continues to perform the works of the flesh.<sup>26</sup>

But 'the fields are already white for harvest' when the Logos of God is present clarifying and illuminating all the fields of Scripture that are being fulfilled by his sojourn. But perhaps, too, the white fields that are ready for harvest to those who lift up their eyes are all the beings that are perceptible to the senses, including heaven itself and the beings in it. This would be true because the reason (λόγου) of each one of them is clear to those who, by being 'transformed into the same image from glory to glory',<sup>27</sup> have assumed a likeness of those eyes that have seen how each of the things that have been made was good. For the declaration concerning each of the created things, 'God saw that it was good'<sup>28</sup> means this: God looked deeply (ἐνεῖδεν) into the *reasons* (λόγοις) of each creature and saw how each of the creatures is good regarding the *reasons* according to which it had come to be (καθ' οὓς γέγονεν ἕκαστον λόγους ἐστὶν καλόν).

If anyone does not take the saying, 'God saw that it was good'<sup>29</sup> in this way, let him explain how the statement 'God saw that it was good' holds true in the verse, 'Let the waters bring forth the creeping creatures having life, and birds flying above the earth under the firmament of heaven'<sup>30</sup> and even more to the point, 'God made the great sea-monsters'.<sup>31</sup> But the *reason of each of these*, (ὁ λόγος ὁ περὶ ἐκάστου) which God saw, is 'good'. We must say the same things also about the words 'Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to the kind, four-footed creatures, and creeping creatures, and beasts of the earth according to their kind',<sup>32</sup> to which also is added, 'God saw that it was good'.<sup>33</sup> For how are beasts and creeping creatures good, unless the *reason concerning them* (ὁ λόγος ὁ περὶ αὐτῶν) is good?<sup>34</sup>

Those *reasons* (λόγοι) are the object of creation. This means that we do not have creation of individual personal beings, far less of

<sup>26</sup> *commJohn*, 13, XLII.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. 2 Cor. 3, 18.

<sup>28</sup> Gen. 1, 10.

<sup>29</sup> Gen. 1, 10.

<sup>30</sup> Gen. 1, 20.

<sup>31</sup> Gen. 1, 21.

<sup>32</sup> Gen. 1, 24.

<sup>33</sup> Gen. 1, 25.

<sup>34</sup> *commJohn*, 13, XLII; italics mine.

incorporeal personal beings. We have creation of logoi, that is, of relations, of possibilities, of principles and constitutive and cohesive causes, of laws and casualities of all kinds. We have creation of the principles according to which the world not only will come into being, but also will be held and sustained. We have the *sine qua non* framework for the emergence of the world to be possible. We have an evolutionary conception of creation, yet the world is not regarded as an automaton, or a self-regulated system concerning its own evolution. Creation is constantly dependent on the Logos, because all these created principles and logoi are being in the Logos. In the final analysis creation is sustained and kept in being only because the Logos wills so.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, this means that the incessant presence and action of the Logos makes creation to be incessantly created. The reasons, the constitutive causes make this universe to evolve and to be transformed ceaselessly.

The actual material creation exists on account of the Providential creation, the latter is the 'cause' for the existence of the former, a sustaining system of logoi. "It is because of this creation that the entire world has been able to have come into existence" (δι' ἣν κτίσιν δεδύνηται καὶ πάντα κτίσις ὑφεστάναι),<sup>36</sup> yet this is not understood in terms of temporal succession: the Providential creation is present and incessantly at work and it is because of this continuous action that the material world is being held in existence. Matter functions on account of its being ruled by this set of 'reasons', laws, possibilities and causes, according to which the world exists and moves forward.

This fundamental conception of Origen was in fact taken up by subsequent major theologians, such as Gregory of Nyssa and his brother Basil of Caesarea. It seems to me that they must have discussed and reflected on this view of Origen, since I find similar approaches in the writings of both. Gregory, for instance, says that creation is constantly orientated towards its 'first cause' (πρῶτον αἷτιον), it is sustained in existence by 'participating in this' (μετουσίᾳ), and the world is 'ceaselessly being created' (πάντοτε κτίζεται).<sup>37</sup>

Basil moved along the same vein. What he calls 'beginning of creation' (ἀρχὴ τῆς κοσμογονίας) he understands as an instantaneous act

<sup>35</sup> *Cels.* VI, 65.

<sup>36</sup> *comm John*, I, XXXIV.

<sup>37</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum canticorum*, PG 44, 885D.

of God, according to which He introduced 'the causes and impulses and forces at one go' (ἐν ἀκαπεί) into the universe.<sup>38</sup> It was not difficult for him to grasp this real import of Origen's concept of creation. For instance, what did Origen really mean when he referred to everything created 'in the beginning', certainly including the earth, and stated that this was 'invisible', and the 'earth' was 'invisible and unbuilt' (τὸ τῆς γῆς ἀόρατον καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστον), too?<sup>39</sup> He meant that the reasons were already a constitutive element of the world, yet their interaction had not yet brought into existence what is called 'earth'. In fact Origen did not say anything different from modern cosmology.

Holding this conception of creation, which is ceaselessly evolving according to the principles created in the beginning, he sustains a similar view for the creation of man: the human genus came forth in like manner as an individual man comes from the human sperm. An embryo has in itself all the potential to be developed to a human being. This potential is latent in early stages, but it is not dormant. The principles of its own development are there and they are ceaselessly working, so that the embryo evolves into a human being. So the principles for human growth are within and do not come 'from outside'.<sup>40</sup> This *dynamic* and *evolutionary* conception of creation applies to human beings as well as to the entire world. The two conceptions resemble each other in this: what precedes them is the existence of the *reasons*, the principles, according to which their actual existence comes to pass. The object of creation then is the causative and constitutive principles according to which everything that was to come forth emerged; those are the principles according to which this world and everything in it, from start to finish, will exist and act and react to each other, being animate or inanimate, being a senseless object or a person. Before anything visible appeared, God created the setting for this to emerge and to make sense and to develop, be that planets, things, persons or phenomena. The organizing principles, the potentiality and sustainability and workability of the setting—this was the primal object of creation.

This conception of creation is further illuminated by a passage in the *Homilies on Genesis*. Referring to Genesis, 1, 21–23, Origen reasons:

<sup>38</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *Homiliae in hexaemeron*, PG 44, 72AB.

<sup>39</sup> *Cels*, VI, 49.

<sup>40</sup> *comm 1 Cor*, 84.

But someone asks how the great whales and creeping creatures are interpreted as evil and the birds as good when Scripture said about them all, 'And God saw that they were good'.<sup>41</sup> Those things which are opposed to the saints are good for them, because they can defeat them and, when they have overpowered them, they become more glorious with God. Indeed when the devil requested that power be given to him against Job, the adversary, by attacking him, was the cause of double glory for Job after his victory. What is shown from the fact that he received double those things which he lost in the first place, is that he will no doubt also receive similarly in the heavenly realm. And the apostle says that 'No one is crowned except for the one who has striven lawfully'.<sup>42</sup> And indeed, how will be there a struggle if there not be one who resists? How great the beauty and brightness is of light would not be made out unless the darkness of night intervened. Why are some praised for purity unless because others are condemned for arrogance? Why are strong men magnified unless weak and coward men exist? If you use what is bitter then what is sweet is rendered more praiseworthy. If you consider what is dark, the things which are bright will appear more delightful to you. And, in short, from the consideration of evil things the glory of good things is indicated more brilliantly. For this reason, therefore, the Scripture says this about everything: 'And God saw that they were good'.<sup>43</sup>

Why, nevertheless, is it not written, 'And God said that they were good', instead of, 'God saw that they were good'? That is, God saw the usefulness of those things and that way by which, although in themselves they are as they are, nevertheless, they could make good men perfect. For this reason, therefore, he said, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds be multiplied upon the earth',<sup>44</sup> that is, that the great whales and the creeping creatures be in the sea, as we explained above, and the birds upon the earth.<sup>45</sup>

Hence the goodness of the object of creation is derived from the usefulness of the *relations* which come to being. This evolutionary conception of creation suggests that the object which emerged out of nothing was, in the first place, *relations*, indeed potential relations. There is neither determinism nor predestination. There are only potentialities and possible outcomes. What the aftermath of a historical uncertainty will be is known to God, it is foreknown, yet not as

<sup>41</sup> Gen. 1, 21.

<sup>42</sup> 2 Tim. 2, 5.

<sup>43</sup> Gen. 1, 21.

<sup>44</sup> Gen. 1, 22.

<sup>45</sup> *Homilies on Genesis*, I.10.

divine experience but only as a foresight of God, understood from the point of view of the world. This is presumably why Origen makes the point above: God *saw* that the object of creation was good, it is not written that God *said* that this object was good. The juxtaposition which Origen invents at this point is pretty telling: 'God *saw*' means God had foreknowledge of what was to come to pass in due historical course; to say that God *said* that the object he created was good, would suggest that this was already a fact full of potentialities, which had not produced the spatio-temporal consequences from the interplay between the logoi.

Hence, the 'creation' of the divine wisdom and providence, by virtue of which these beasts came into being—this was what God saw as a 'good' creature. This is a delicate point of this concept of creation: Wisdom of God is called both his beginningless Son and the product of his creative act, which came into being and 'embroidered' the 'body' of his Son, as I discuss presently.

Why (that is, the 'reasons' why) these beasts should come into being is known to God alone. For God does nothing in vain or without reason: even the falling of a small sparrow does not take place without God's providence.<sup>46</sup> There is a 'reason' for everything, and this reason is known to God alone, a 'reason' dwelling in his wisdom.

So the theory is about the creation of 'reasons' which make up the Providential Creation. This notion is suggested also in *Cels*:

If anyone wants to see the reasons that persuade us to believe the Mosaic story of the creation of the world, which are supported by the arguments that seemed right to us, let him take our studies in Genesis from the beginning of the book down to the words 'This is the book of the generation of men'.<sup>47</sup> In them we have tried to argue from the divine scriptures themselves what was the heaven that was made 'in the beginning', and the earth, and the notion of *the invisibility and shapelessness of the earth* (τὸ τῆς γῆς ἀόρατον καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστον), and what was the abyss, and the darkness upon it, and what was the water, and the Spirit of God that was borne upon it, and what was the light which was created, and what was the firmament as distinct from the heaven made in the beginning, and so on.<sup>48</sup>

Consequently, when Origen speaks about an 'incorporeal' that was made in the beginning, he does not refer to anything that might be

<sup>46</sup> *frMatt*, 212; *frLuc*, 57; *Homilies on Luke*, 32.3.

<sup>47</sup> Gen. 5, 1.

<sup>48</sup> *Cels*, VI, 49; italics mine.



taken as a *personal individual* being. It was the *reasons* of the world that constitute what was created. It was precisely those *reasons* which came into being out of non-being.

In the light of this perception we can understand the meaning of portions such as this:

The Son of God is also called wisdom, made as a beginning of his ways towards his works, according to the Proverbs;<sup>49</sup> which means that wisdom *existed only in relation to him, of whom she was wisdom, having no relation to anyone else at all* (ἡ τοῦ Θεοῦ σοφία, πρὸς τὸν οὐ ἐστὶ σοφία ὑπάρχουσα, οὐδεμίαν σχέσιν πρὸς ἕτερόν τινα εἶχεν); but the Son of God himself became God's benevolent *decision* (εὐδοκία Θεοῦ γενόμενος) and *willed* (ἡβουλήθη) to bring creatures into being. This wisdom then *willed* (ἡθέλησεν) to *establish a creative relation* (σχέσιν δημιουργικὴν) to the *future creatures* (πρὸς τὰ ἐσόμενα); this is precisely the meaning of the saying that she was made the beginning of God's ways.<sup>50</sup>

According to this perception of the providential creation, Wisdom is an incorporeal (ἀσώματος) living (ζῶσα) hypostasis (ὑπόστασις) comprising various objects of contemplation (θεωρήματα). These objects of contemplation contain the reasons of all existing things (περιεχόντων τοὺς τῶν ὅλων λόγους). This wisdom is a living personal being, 'having a soul as it were' (καὶ οἶονεῖ ἔμψυχον).<sup>51</sup>

This definition of wisdom points to both the Son of God and the created wisdom, which came into being and 'embroidered' the body of the Son. The Son of God is regarded not only as living in the same way as God lives, but also as an individual personal hypostasis of his own, notably a subsistent personal being. However, this point should not detain us here, for what it takes is nothing short of a full exposition of Origen's Trinitarian Theology.

<sup>49</sup> Prov. 8, 22.

<sup>50</sup> *fr* John, I; italics mine.

<sup>51</sup> *comm* John, I, XXXIV; Cf. *ech* Mar, XLVII. It could be a mistake to translate *θεωρήματα* as 'ideas', since it takes for granted a Platonic conception. Should Origen wished to imply 'ideas' he would simply have employed the term for this, namely, *ιδέα*. What he has in mind though is not 'ideas', but the 'logoi' of creation, which are comprehended by the wise. In fact he uses the term *λόγοι* for this. The term *θεωρήματα* is rather of Aristotelian resonance. Cf. *de Memoria* 450b25, *de Divinatione per Somnia*, 463b19. It suggests speculative propositions formed as a result of mystical contemplation. In general, he refers to the term 'ideas' with some derision, calling this a 'phantasy' of Plato (*Cels*, VI, 4), or, 'imaginary forms, which the Greeks call ideas' (*Princ*, II.3.6.) and quotes Aristotle who calls ideas 'twitterings' (*τεπετίσματα*) in *Analytica Posteriora* 83a33. Cf. *Cels*, I, 13; II, 12.



In view of this conception, there is reference to the wisdom of God as 'containing the reasons of everything which has been created'<sup>52</sup>; and 'one by one the reasons of those ruled are in God's Logos and in his Wisdom' (οἱ καθ' ἓνα λόγοι τῶν διοικουμένων εἰσὶν ἐν τῷ τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγῳ καὶ τῇ Σοφίᾳ αὐτοῦ).<sup>53</sup> This is the sense in which the distinction between two states is made: first, the 'concepts of God' (τὰ ἐννοήματα τοῦ Θεοῦ) which (second) later 'were somehow substantified and came into actuality' (οὐσιωμένων πῶς καὶ εἰς ἔργον ἐρχομένων).<sup>54</sup>

This means that although wisdom is the Son of God, there is also a notion of *multitude* attributed to this wisdom: 'in' Wisdom there are the 'reasons, according to which everything has been made by God in wisdom.'<sup>55</sup> This initial creative act of God, the providential creation, is not a creation of individual personal beings. This is a crucial point of the perception of God as creator. Moreover, the outcome of the divine creative act is perceived to be *in* God, and more specifically, in his wisdom, namely, *in the Son*. This is why Origen, although regarding wisdom as a personal living being, also appears to hold a notion of 'multitude' in her. This multitude is what was created by God in the beginning, namely the 'reasons' and the 'system of objects of contemplation' which 'embroidered the body' of Wisdom (the Son) and have been in this Wisdom ever since.

Providential creation, therefore, is the 'reasons' of the material world, caused-into-being out of non-being. This is the sense in which this 'creation' is said to be incorporeal, since the 'reasons' and 'objects of contemplation' are obviously incorporeal.

What was 'created' out of the providential creation was not a 'man' or a 'woman', it was 'male and female'. This means that it was just 'human nature' in anticipation of the real interplay between the reasons that came into being out of non-being. This is the sense in which 'the beginning of human beings was in paradise',<sup>56</sup> and this is also why the 'rational creature, which was placed in paradise' was 'perfect', since the created reasons anticipating the future emergence of human nature 'in the image' of God were perfect.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>52</sup> *Cels.* V, 39.

<sup>53</sup> *commEph.* Fr. VI, p. 241.

<sup>54</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 240-1.

<sup>55</sup> *commJohn*, 19, XXII, quoting Psalm 103, 24.

<sup>56</sup> *commJohn*, 13, XXXVII.

<sup>57</sup> *Loc. cit.*

This is the sense in which human kind was 'first' (πρότερον)<sup>58</sup> made 'incorporeal', whereas what is known as 'man and woman' was created 'at some later stage' (ὕστερόν γάρ ποτε).<sup>59</sup> The saying 'Let us make man in our image after our likeness'<sup>60</sup> pertains to all men'; and what *hoi polloi* understand by the expression 'in image' is 'older' (πρεσβύτερον) than that which Adam became when he assumed 'the image of the earthly' 'because of sin'.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, the statement in *homLuc* 39, "As it is written in Genesis, in the beginning man was made 'in the image of God', then he assumed an earthly image also" epitomizes the doctrine of creation of man. This 'first' creation of God then is only the 'clear utterances' of God which were 'uttered first', or 'uttered in advance' (προτρανωθέντας). The actual material creation came into existence according to these 'clearly pre-uttered words (or, reasons) which were in wisdom' (κατά τοὺς ἐν τῇ σοφίᾳ προτρανωθέντας ὑπὸ Θεοῦ τῶν ἐσομένων λόγους). This is why, whenever treating this issue, Origen always uses the Future tense.<sup>62</sup> It is characteristic indeed that he refers to the actual beings as 'those who will exist' (τὰ ἐσόμενα), representing God to 'call' them into being out of non-being.<sup>63</sup>

In view of this exposition, it is not difficult to see how Origen can use such an expression. In the primal state of a universe which had a long way of evolution to go, there was no actual human kind. However, the principles, the *logoi*, according to which a human kind could appear at a certain moment of time, in a certain planet called earth, were there. In the eyes of God this being is obviously not a *future* being, it is already present in the mind of its Creator. This is the background against which this strange relation of God to the 'future beings' should be grasped.

This notion of God addressing 'things that are not' and calling them into being is found also in Athanasius,<sup>64</sup> who seems to follow Origen almost to the letter.<sup>65</sup> This is the sense in which 'there are

<sup>58</sup> *Dial.* BGF, vol. 16, p. 374.

<sup>59</sup> *commMatt*, 14, 16.

<sup>60</sup> Gen. 1, 26.

<sup>61</sup> 1 Cor. 15, 49. *homJer*, 2, 1.

<sup>62</sup> τῶν ἐσομένων: s. *commJohn*, 1, XIX; τὰ ἐσόμενα: s. *frJohn*, I.

<sup>63</sup> s. *infra*.

<sup>64</sup> *Contra Arianos*, 2.22; *De Decretis Nicaenae Synodi*, 11, 2.

<sup>65</sup> *commRom*, 25.

certain creatures which are invisible',<sup>66</sup> namely incorporeal.<sup>67</sup> Those 'incorporeal' are simply the 'reasons' which were created in the Wisdom and are called 'wisdom', too. These reasons are perceived as decorating the 'body' of Wisdom and are likened to a 'book'. It is indeed manifestly marked out that the content of this wisdom is 'the reasons of providence and judgement'.<sup>68</sup>

Besides, it is stated that it is possible to 'see' this wisdom and to comprehend these 'reasons'. This happens when a rational creature attains to eternal life. There is a crucial notion here, which should be emphasized: even when this 'wisdom' is seen and clearly comprehended, this does not mean that it is *God in Himself* who is seen. Through this wisdom *God* may be seen only *as Creator*. This, because God manifested himself as Creator through his Logos. God as Creator is related to what he *decided* and *willed* to do. God in Himself is radically transcendent and beyond all comprehension.

What is seen, therefore, is only the upshot of the creative *act of volition*. It is clearly enunciated that all that can be seen through this wisdom is God 'as creator and wise and provident and judge'.<sup>69</sup> And when it is said that contemplation of the incorporeals is contemplation of God as Creator, this follows from the fact that God is the creator not only of what is corporeal but also of what is incorporeal,<sup>70</sup> namely, of the 'reasons' of providence and judgement. This is the 'system of objects of contemplation' (τοῦ συστήματος τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ νοημάτων)<sup>71</sup> which make up the providential creation. The 'creatures' in this creation are the 'reasons of providence and judgement'.<sup>72</sup> They constitute the object of 'moral and natural and theological' knowledge,<sup>73</sup> that is, the object of all kinds of knowledge. This is the context in which 'objects of contemplation' (θεωρήματα) are understood to have been created and placed into the Wisdom of God and they are called wisdom, too.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>66</sup> *Cels*, VII, 37. Origen relates this conception to the saying 'The invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made' (Rom. 1, 20).

<sup>67</sup> s. *infra*, my discussion on the 'not seen' and 'invisible' notions.

<sup>68</sup> *frPs*, 138, 14.16; *selPs*, 138, PG 12.1660.

<sup>69</sup> *loc. cit.*

<sup>70</sup> *selPs*, 2, PG 12.1108; Cf. *expProv*, PG 17.161; 196; 249.

<sup>71</sup> *commJohn*, 1, XIX.

<sup>72</sup> *expProv*, 1; *selPs*, 138.

<sup>73</sup> *selPs*, 138.

<sup>74</sup> *expPs*, 36; *Cant*, 3; *Cels*, V, 39; *commJohn*, 2, XVIII; 2, XXVIII.

In portraying God as Creator then Origen makes a further step and sets forth his notion of 'conceptions' (or, ideas: ἐπίνοιαι) of Wisdom. By this term he refers to certain predicates attributed to the Son, such as logos, light, truth, Christ, king, real vineyard, first and last, beginning and end, paraclete, propitiatory, consecration, good, great arch-priest etc. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, all these appellations are called 'conceptions' which are 'in' Wisdom; they are also called 'names of the Son'.<sup>75</sup> They by no means pertain to the ontology of the Son; they only signify his economic function within the world.

Although our Lord Jesus Christ is one in his substance and is nothing other than the Son of God, nevertheless he is represented as various and diverse in the figures and images of the Scripture. . . . . therefore, the Lord himself accommodates his form in correspondence to the place and time and certain individual conditions. . . .<sup>76</sup>

He also speaks of the 'objects of contemplation' (θεωρήματα) of the truth' in order to indicate that 'the Father does not want to confine and keep them from dispersing (οὐ συνέχων ὁ πατήρ); this is why he makes the figure of these objects of contemplation in the Logos in a form of 'belching out' (ἐρεύγεται) and this is why the Logos is called 'image of the invisible God'.<sup>77</sup> It is remarkable that he ponders upon the use of the word 'belch out', or 'disgorge' (ἐρεύγεται), which is found in Scripture.<sup>78</sup> He avers that other words, such as 'my heart has projected' or 'my heart has uttered' might seem more appropriate; yet it says, 'disgorged'. What he actually suggests is that the 'prefiguration'<sup>79</sup> of these 'objects of contemplation' in the Logos is an act of God. It is through the contemplation of these 'objects of contemplation' that one would 'see' the Father when he sees the Son.

This is the sense in which Origen refers to the 'objects of contemplation of the Logos' (τῶν τοῦ λόγου θεωρημάτων).<sup>80</sup> Therefore,

<sup>75</sup> 'in' the wisdom; s. *commJohn*, 1, XIX; 'names of the Son'; s. *commJohn*, 1, XX.

<sup>76</sup> *Homilies on Genesis*, XIV, 1. Cf. the same notion in *Homilies on Exodus*, VII.3. This cardinal idea of Origen's Christology is fully developed in *commJohn*, 1, IX-X.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Col. 1, 15; *commJohn*, 1, XXXVIII.

<sup>78</sup> Quoting Psalm, 44, 2-3: 'My heart has disgorged an utterance which is good'.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. *Princ.* I.2.2. 'these created things that had been as it were outlined and prefigured in herself (sc. wisdom).'

<sup>80</sup> *Cant.* 3. It is not accidental that the term 'theorematata' (visions, θεωρήματα) is used in the foregoing passage, namely *Cant.* 3, at the point where an exegesis is provided about the mystical communion of the soul with Christ. Origen regarded

what came into being out of non-being was a 'multitude' of 'wisdom' (σοφίαν), 'reasons' (λόγους), 'forms' (τύπων), and a 'system of conceptions' (συστήματος νοημάτων)<sup>81</sup> and 'objects of contemplation' (θεωρήματα), which were made 'in wisdom', they were called 'wisdom', too, and placed, as it were, in the Wisdom of God, the Body of the Son, and they 'embroidered' this Body. It is according to this latter conception that in the Proverbs Wisdom is said to be 'created'.

Hence Origen's conception of 'coming into being out of non-being' pertains to the *providential creation* which is in the divine life. This is the sense in which the Son is stated as 'creature', although most certainly Origen's teaching is the outstanding counter-point of what later became known as Arianism.<sup>82</sup> On that account he refers to 'the firstborn of all creation' (as in Col. 1, 15) who 'is the oldest of all created beings and . . . it was to him that God said of the creation of man: 'Let us make man in our image and likeness'<sup>83</sup> for 'wisdom' is regarded as 'created' in the 'body' of Christ.

Therefore, it becomes plain what Origen means when he regards wisdom not only as the person of the Son, but also as the contemplation and apprehension of the divine things. It is impossible to apprehend God unless through his wisdom, by reason of the fact that the Father has formed and placed the apprehension of truth there. This is the meaning of the scriptural saying that it is only through 'seeing' the Son that one might 'see' the Father,<sup>84</sup> since the Son is related to the world as the Logos revealing God and it is he who was present in all the *theophaniae* recorded in the Old Testament.

Those 'objects of contemplation' (θεωρήματα) were formed and placed in the divine Wisdom out of an *act* of the Father. This is why at some points the Son is stated as 'creature'<sup>85</sup> although it is also clearly enunciated that the Son is not a creature. The 'objects of contemplation' constitute the 'decoration' of Wisdom (the Son),

the Song of Songs as the book which contains the divine mysteries in a mystical way; s. *expProv*, 22.

<sup>81</sup> *commJohn*, 1, XIX.

<sup>82</sup> Origen is regarded as the one who first couched the phrase οὐκ ἔστιν ὅτε οὐκ ἦν (there is no when he was not) (Athanasius, *De decretis Nicaenae synodi*, PG 25.465) which afterwards became famous as the pivotal phrase of the defenders of Christian orthodoxy against the Arians.

<sup>83</sup> Gen. 1, 26. *Cels*, V, 37.

<sup>84</sup> *commJohn*, 19, VI. Cf. John, 14, 9; 12, 44.

<sup>85</sup> *Cels*, V, 37.



who is quite often predicated by the scriptural adjective 'multi-embroidered' (πολυποίκιλος).<sup>86</sup> In the objects of contemplation (θεωρήματα) and in the 'reasons' (λόγοι),<sup>87</sup> the explanation of everything in the world can be found. This is the sense in which the name 'wisdom' is applied not only the Son of God, as a person, but also the *knowledge* of the 'reasons' according to which everything can be explained and thus clearly known.

Those 'reasons' is what God created in the beginning. Taking into account that the term λόγοι means both 'words' and 'reasons', Origen's view is that these λόγοι are the words uttered by God when he was speaking to his Son at the moment of the creation of the world according to Genesis. The λόγοι of God arise from the creative γεννηθήτω, out of which the notion of 'coming into being out of non-being' began to make sense. It is certainly God who brought them into being, but the *act* of this 'creation' is portrayed as an 'utterance' of the Father to the Son. These 'utterances' (in Greek, λόγοι means 'utterances', 'words', as well as 'reasons') is what actually came into being out of non-being.

The 'objects of contemplation' and 'reasons' decorate the 'body' of wisdom and are assimilated to 'precious stones' (λίδοι τίμιοι), yet living ones.<sup>88</sup> It should be emphasized that although these 'stones' are regarded as living, this life is not the life of anyone other than God: this is the divine life of the Wisdom herself, that is, the life of the Son of God, as a living personal substantial incorporeal hypostasis. Speaking of 'stones', in the plural, no notion of 'distinction' or 'division' is implied: the expression is a reference to incorporeal nature, in which the notion of 'division' makes no sense.

Accordingly, the reality portrayed here is the divine one. There is no corporeal nature and there is no world at all. It is God who lives; for 'life without a body is found in the Trinity alone'.<sup>89</sup> There is only God who is without parts, since he 'is entirely one and simple' (ὁ θεός μὲν οὖν πάντα ἓν ἐστὶν καὶ ἀπλοῦν).<sup>90</sup> Even the Logos (who exists in timelessness) is 'one although he comprises many objects of contemplation, each of them understood as part of the Logos'.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Eph. 3, 10.

<sup>87</sup> *commJohn*, 19, XXII.

<sup>88</sup> *Cels*, VI, 77. Cf. 1 Cor. 3, 12; Rev. 17, 4; 18, 12; Ps. 18, 11; 20, 4; etc.

<sup>89</sup> *Princ*, II.2.2.

<sup>90</sup> *commJohn*, 1, XX.

<sup>91</sup> *commJohn*, 5, V.



This is the state which Origen calls 'bliss' (μακαριότης),<sup>92</sup> by this pointing to the reality of the divine life, at the state where the notion of 'being out of non-being' had begun to make sense.<sup>93</sup> The terms 'the heavenly' (τῶν οὐρανίων) or 'up' (ἄνω) are used also.<sup>94</sup> In this context he refers to "the holy ones (τῶν ἁγίων) who live a completely immaterial and incorporeal life in bliss".<sup>95</sup> It should be added here that the term 'the holy ones' (τῶν ἁγίων) points to the reality of the divine holiness. In the same vein, there is reference to becoming 'a citizen of the holy (place) of God', the term 'holy' being a neuter, not a masculine adjective. It is also in this sense that statements about 'invisible creatures'<sup>96</sup> should be understood. This is why he has no hesitation in calling these creatures 'the invisible things of God' (τοῖς ἀοράτοις τοῦ θεοῦ) and 'eternal ones', which are 'eternal' (αἰωνίοις), by virtue of the fact that they are 'invisible' (ἀοράτοις),<sup>97</sup> that is, because these 'creatures' are in the divine reality. Since, at this stage, any temporal notion is excluded, it is obvious that 'eternal' indicates the quality of being in the divine life which is 'eternal'. The term 'eternal' in this case suggests a *quality* of being -not any quantity of time (that is, not everlasting or beginningless duration), since *duration* itself is excluded from that state.

The fundamental characteristic of this divine reality is 'unity' and 'agreement'. This is actually the kind of unity that applies to the relation of the Son to the Father. To depict this unity was a task regarded by Origen significant enough as to devote extensive analyses to it.<sup>98</sup>

In the light of this unity (and although the radical difference of wisdom from what was created has been clearly pointed out), passages such as the following could not raise doubts or questions:

Wisdom is a sister of ours; for the Father who made incorporeal nature, made her too; but here it is not the Son of God who is meant; it is the contemplation of the corporeals and incorporeals, as well as whatever exists in wisdom, whether it is has to do with judgement or providence.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>92</sup> *commJohn*, 1, XVII; 1, XX; 32, XVIII; *Cels*, VI, 44.

<sup>93</sup> *commJohn*, 32, XVIII.

<sup>94</sup> *commJohn*, 19, XXII.

<sup>95</sup> *commJohn*, 1, XVII.

<sup>96</sup> *Cels*, VII, 37.

<sup>97</sup> *Cels*, VII, 7. also *commJohn*, 2, XVII.

<sup>98</sup> *selGen* (in Gen. 11, 1); *Dial*, BGF, v. 16, pp. 367-8; *frOs*.

<sup>99</sup> *expProv*, 7.

This is one more answer to those who ascribe to Origen a notion of 'eternity of the world,' even in the mode of existing in wisdom. Origen stresses that the 'objects of contemplation' and 'reasons' existing in wisdom are 'made,' they are not beginningless. Thus this 'made' wisdom is distinguished from the person of the Son who is timelessly and beginninglessly with the Father. I will discuss this question later.

It is accordingly pointed out that it is possible to speak of wisdom in two ways: first, the term may refer to the Son of God, who is a personal hypostasis (ἐνσωματούς); secondly, it may denote the wisdom given to the faithful, as either oral or written speech<sup>100</sup> (τὸ γένος τῆς παιδείας καὶ τῆς γνῶσεως), since "education and knowledge are included in the wisdom, which is bestowed by the Holy Spirit and this is why education and knowledge are called speech of wisdom".<sup>101</sup> Elsewhere he says that wisdom is a deep knowledge of the divine things (ἐπιστήμη θεῶν), as well as comprehension of human things (ἀνθρώπων σοφισμῶν καὶ ἀνθρώπων), stating further that wisdom is Christ himself.<sup>102</sup>

This does not imply that there are two notions held about the actual meaning of wisdom. The concept remains consistent: wisdom is a person, identified as the Son of God, bestowing the knowledge of the divine mysteries (elsewhere called 'mystic teaching and contemplation of the truth'),<sup>103</sup> which are called wisdom, too. The term, therefore, indicates the person of the Son, as well as what is bestowed by this person to certain rational creatures.

In the vein of this conception, in *selfDeut* Origen refers to the 'kingdom of heavens,' saying that 'it is Christ who irrigates this good earth providing the streams of wisdom'.<sup>104</sup> In *selfP* he refers to those who "reach the end" and find "a table of rational foods prepared by the Lord. For the Lord's Wisdom will have prepared her own table of luncheon on which she is going to offer her own sacrifices".<sup>105</sup> It is quite characteristic that, within one and the same passage, he

<sup>100</sup> *expProv*, *commProv*, 1; *selfP*, 22; *selfDeut* (*comm*, on Deut. 8, 3); *commJohn* 1, XIX; 1, XX; 1, XXIV; 1, XVIII; 1, XXXI; 1, XXXIV; 2, XVIII; *John*, II.  
<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*.  
<sup>102</sup> *commProv*, 1, PG 13.17. This is the Stoic definition of wisdom; [Aetius, *SF*, II, 13, 4]. Cf. *cell*, 111, 72; homily, 8, 2; *commMatt*, 17, 2; *commProv*, 1, PG 13.90.  
<sup>103</sup> *selfP*, 22, PG 12.1264.  
<sup>104</sup> *selfDeut*, (*comm*, on Deut. 8, 3), PG 12.809; Cf. *selfP*, 109, 7.  
<sup>105</sup> *commJohn*, 1, XXXIV; 2, XVIII.

speaks of wisdom at the same time in both meanings assigned to this term. Here is how the actual purport of wisdom is elaborated in the same work:

And wisdom has prepared not only a table of foods; but also she offers plenty of wine, which is made from her own self who is the real vineyard; she offers this wine having mixed the divine mind with human words; and she distributes the wine taking it from this vessel and offering a glass to each one.<sup>106</sup>

It is precisely the notion of the plenitude of the divine mysteries existing in wisdom, which allow Origen to regard Wisdom as a 'hypostasis of various objects of contemplation'.<sup>107</sup>

This idea of conceptions of wisdom does not imply any notion of distinction or division in wisdom herself. It certainly does not impair the oneness of the Son, nor does it impugn his unique subsistent personhood.

Attention is called to the fact that "no one should suppose that these conceptions attributed to the saviour imply any distinction in substance".<sup>108</sup> This means that the various predicates applied to wisdom do not introduce any actual division in the substance of wisdom herself. If there seems to be a notion of distinction, it only stems from the different ways in which human intellect comprehends the Son of God.

Once Origen has made this point, he spends a large part of the First Book of *commentary* in order to inquire into the appellations of Christ found in the Scripture. He deems it "useful to ponder upon the meanings (Χρησίων ἔσται τὸ βασανίσαι τὰς ἐννοίας) which stand behind those names".<sup>109</sup>

He is clear both in portraying the full presence of the Logos in the atemporal being of God, and in pointing out the relation of the Logos to Wisdom.

Although all the conceptions of Wisdom virtually pertain to the same person, namely the Son, it is not possible to interchange his names. For example, one does not do the same thing by applying to Christ either the conception of 'beginning' or that of the 'end'; he certainly speaks of the same subject, but alludes to different perceptions

<sup>106</sup> *selPs*, 22, PG 12.1264; CE *JP*, 77, 19-25; *extPs*, 77, PG 17.145.  
<sup>107</sup> *commentary*, 1, XXXIV.  
<sup>108</sup> *commentary*, 1, XXVIII.  
<sup>109</sup> *commentary*, 1, XXIV.

of him. This is why Christ 'is not the same when he is named by conceptions of him' (οὐ κατὰ τὰς ἐπινοίας ὁ αὐτός).<sup>110</sup> This non-sameness stems from the different functions of the Logos in relation to the world and this difference of functions produces different conceptions of the Son. Origen is clear that beyond the first two conceptions of the Son which pertain exclusively to himself (that is, Wisdom and Logos), the "third and fourth" conceptions of the Son are in fact "imposed upon creatures by the Logos"<sup>111</sup> since they stem from the function of the Logos in respect of the world.

Likewise, the Son is ἀρχή only when he is conceived as Wisdom: he is not ἀρχή when he is conceived as Logos. So "no one should be surprised, that the Saviour, as we said before, is many goods (πολλὰ ἀγαθὰ) and there are many conceptions of him, one first, one second, one third",<sup>112</sup> for "if anyone is capable of scrutinizing the hidden truth of the Scripture, he might find the full range of the conceptions which are found there; yet I do not think he will find them all".<sup>113</sup>

The conclusion is that "if one examines painstakingly all the conceptions of the Son, he will find that he is regarded as ἀρχή only in as much as he is thought of as wisdom: he cannot be regarded as ἀρχή even if he is conceived as Logos."<sup>114</sup>

What Origen wishes to denote here is this: the scriptural 'conceptions' (ἐπινοίαι) of the Son should be placed in a classified range. They stand in an 'order',<sup>115</sup> such as Wisdom—Logos—Life—Truth—Justice—... etc.<sup>116</sup> This succession is long and his conviction is that however well may one study the Scripture he will not eventually be able to say that he has found all the conceptions of the Son. In this 'order' each conception is what it is 'on account' (καθ' ὃ) of what the previous conception in the succession indicates.<sup>117</sup> This means that each conception in the order is understood to be 'broader' in relation to that next to it. Thus, 'wisdom' is a conception of the Son

<sup>110</sup> *comm. John*, 1, XXXI.

<sup>111</sup> *comm. John*, 2, XVIV.

<sup>112</sup> *comm. John*, 1, XIX.

<sup>113</sup> *comm. John*, 1, XXXI.

<sup>114</sup> *comm. John*, 1, XIX.

<sup>115</sup> *comm. John*, 1, XXXI.

<sup>116</sup> *comm. John*, 1, XX; 1, XXXI.

<sup>117</sup> *comm. John*, 1, XXXI.

which is, as it were, 'broader' than that of Logos, which comes next. For Logos 'was in ἀρχή', which means, the Logos was 'in Wisdom', since it is only Wisdom who can be conceived as ἀρχή. Once Wisdom contains, so to speak, the Logos, it follows that Wisdom is a conception broader than that of Logos. So the Logos cannot be regarded as ἀρχή, since ἀρχή is a conception 'broader' than the Logos.

Wisdom is ἀρχή because she is God's wisdom herself and in full, while Logos alone cannot be considered as a full manifestation of God's wisdom. Wisdom is ἀρχή because she can be manifested as Logos and to be comprehended by the creation that was made 'in wisdom'. She is ἀρχή because she contains the Logos, she can be manifested as Logos. She contains the Logos yet she is not contained in him.

This is the sense in which the Logos cannot be thought of as ἀρχή. Logos is a particular, so to speak, manifestation of wisdom, because (as stated in John 1, 1) the Logos was in ἀρχή, namely he was in the Wisdom. It was not the wisdom who was in the Logos; it was the Logos who was in Wisdom.

In like manner the Logos is broader than the next conception, namely, 'life'. For life 'was made in the Logos'.<sup>118</sup>

So the Logos is the Wisdom of God manifested in such a way that she can be perceived by rational creatures. Creation contains rationality, and it is through this rationality that creation manifests God's wisdom. Again, the Logos is God's wisdom that creates life and rationality.<sup>119</sup> Logos is the divine manifestation, through which rational creatures receive a hint of God's wisdom, because the Logos is Wisdom herself manifested in the world.

There is, therefore, no difference in essence between Wisdom and Logos; neither is there any ontological classification of them, simply because there is no substantial distinction between them at all. Their distinction is only an intellectual one. This is why the issue is about conceptions of the Son. Moreover, it goes without saying that there is no notion of temporal distinction between them, since both these conceptions exist in the atemporal life of God.

<sup>118</sup> *contra* John, 1, XIX, quoting John 1, 4; s. also, *contra* John, 1, XIX; *fr* John, II.

<sup>119</sup> *fr* John, II. It is quite characteristic that the term 'rationality' (λογικότης) in Greek has the same root with the term 'Logos' (λόγος). This expresses better Origen's notion that 'rational creatures' (λογικά) are called so because of their 'participation' in the Logos of God; s. *infra*.



Concerning the notion of providential creation, the question, which arises is this: do all the conceptions of Christ make sense when God is conceived in Himself without any notion of his creative action? When God is perceived in Himself, and not as creator, when God is perceived, so to speak, *before* he decided to create, does it make sense to speak of conceptions of the Son at all? And, if it does, which of them make sense in the divine timelessness in the absence of any decision to create and in the absence of any creative act of his?<sup>120</sup> As a matter of fact, Origen himself poses this question at a certain point.<sup>121</sup> Although he leaves this question without further examination at that moment, he does face it later in the same work.

In view of the real meaning of the succession of the Son's conceptions, Origen raises the question of their relation to the world and to time. His answer is that, among all these conceptions, it is only Wisdom and Logos that have always existed in the atemporal being of God, even in the reality that God had not yet decided to create. The Logos was present in God's wisdom beginninglessly, in the reality where there was no creation at all. The Logos is he 'through whom' the world was made. But the Logos was not himself made *ad hoc*; he was not 'made' at all: he 'was with God' always.<sup>122</sup>

The rest of the Son's conceptions, however, had a beginning. They make sense only in as much as God is regarded as Creator. They appear providentially when God brought providential creation into being, into the 'system of objects of contemplation that was created'; still they make actual sense only when the actual creation came into existence. This, because, in order to speak of 'conceptions', there must be individuals who 'conceive' of Christ in one way or another and come in a certain relation to him. Thus, in order to conceive of Christ as a 'shepherd', there should be an actual 'flock', otherwise this conception makes no sense.

The above analyses allow now a proper inquiry into the assertion that the Son 'is many goods' (πολλὰ ἀγαθά).<sup>123</sup> Those 'goods' are but the 'conceptions' of the Son. Therefore, these 'goods' do not imply

<sup>120</sup> Obviously the term 'before' is used in a loose sense, just for the sake of couching a certain notion. For strictly speaking 'before' makes no sense in a reality which is timeless. This is an expressional problem which Origen himself faced and described; s. *supra*.

<sup>121</sup> *comm John*, 1, XX.

<sup>122</sup> *John* 1, 1.

<sup>123</sup> *comm John*, 1, XIX.



any kind of Platonic notion of 'existing in themselves': they exist only 'in mind' (κατ' ἐπίνοιαν),<sup>124</sup> not in themselves as individual and distinct beings.

This point is significant, because it actually constitutes an essential difference of Origen's notion of 'conceptions' of Christ from any Platonic notion of 'ideas'. In Plato, Ideas have a real and undisputable existence as beings in themselves. This means that Ideas have an essential being—in fact it is in the Ideas that the essence of things is to be found.

By contrast, in Origen the 'conceptions' have no being of their own, as ideas. As he explains "the fact that we discern conceptions in the saviour should not embarrass anyone; for no one should think that we do the same thing in essence" (μηδεὶς δὲ προσκοπέτω διακρινόντων ἡμῶν τὰς ἐν τῷ σωτῆρι ἐπινοίας, οἰόμενος καὶ τῇ οὐσίᾳ ταύτων ἡμᾶς ποιεῖν).<sup>125</sup> Thus, the 'conceptions' do not have any essential existence in themselves, neither do they introduce any essential distinction in the Son of God.

Therefore, the conceptions which stand after Wisdom and Logos can make sense only in the existence of time, that is, in the existence of the actual material creation.<sup>126</sup> This means that the rest of the Son's conceptions, from the third downward, may exist only in the presence of time.<sup>127</sup> It is then obvious that there can be no similarity of these 'goods' to any Platonic notion of atemporal 'ideas' existing, as distinct subsistent individuals. In respect of this, there is a significant classification of the conceptions of Christ in a threefold scheme:

Firstly, conceptions which do not pertain to Christ himself, but only 'to others' (οὐχ αὐτῷ, ἀλλ' ἑτέροις):<sup>128</sup> such are the predications of him as 'shepherd', 'way', 'gate', 'rod'.

Secondly, conceptions which pertain both to Christ himself and to others (αὐτῷ καὶ ἑτέροις)<sup>129</sup> alike: such is the conception of Christ as Logos; also as Wisdom, to the extent that creatures can comprehend the divine wisdom.

<sup>124</sup> *comm John*, 1, IX.

<sup>125</sup> *comm John*, 1, XXVIII.

<sup>126</sup> *s. infra*.

<sup>127</sup> *comm John*, 2, XIX.

<sup>128</sup> *comm John*, 2, XVIII.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

Thirdly, conceptions which pertain only to Christ himself and to no one else (ἑαυτῷ καὶ οὐδενί).<sup>130</sup> In this category there is the conception of Christ as Wisdom, in as much as a certain 'system of objects of contemplation in him' (συστήματος θεωρημάτων ὄντος ἐν αὐτῷ) cannot be comprehended by any created nature.

In view of this third category of conceptions, Origen speaks of Christ stating that "there is a system of objects of contemplation in him, in as much as he is wisdom, some of which are incomprehensible by the rest of the created nature" (τῇ λοιπῇ παρ' αὐτόν γεννητῇ φύσει).<sup>131</sup> Accordingly, the 'multitude of objects of contemplation' (τὸ πλῆθος τῶν θεωρημάτων) about Christ is incomprehensible not only by human beings, but also by any creature, since it is only Christ and the Holy Spirit who can comprehend them.<sup>132</sup>

In reference to the conception of 'life' (which is the focal notion of the spatio-temporal reality), he maintains that this conception belongs to the first category: the conception of 'life' pertains not to Christ himself, but to others (οὐχ αὐτῷ ἀλλὰ ἑτέροις).<sup>133</sup>

My conclusion, therefore, is that there can be no notion of 'life' of rational creatures 'before' the creation of bodily nature itself. If one speaks about life 'before' the existence of bodily nature, he cannot speak of anything else but of the life of God. Life referred to rational creatures 'before' the creation of bodily nature is unthinkable and makes no sense. In the setting of Origen's thought, to apply the notion of 'life' to rational creatures 'before' time is an nonsensical philosophical premise.<sup>134</sup>

This is why Origen states that 'life', as a conception of the Son, did not exist in timelessness, but 'became' with creation.<sup>135</sup> Particular attention should be paid to a point which is delicate: Recalling my previous remarks, it should be pointed out that the affirmation that life became pertains to creaturely life, as Origen himself explains.<sup>136</sup> The conception of Christ as 'life' is not beginningless on account of the fact that creaturely life is not beginningless.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *contra Iohann.*, 2, XXVIII.

<sup>133</sup> *contra Iohann.*, 2, XVIII.

<sup>134</sup> *contra Iohann.*, 2, XIX.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> *contra Iohann.*, 2, XIX.

Therefore, one can speak of 'creaturely life' only in the context of the actual creation. It is only then that the notion of 'others' (together with that of 'diversification') starts to make sense. This occurred when creatures came into existence. 'Before' the actual creation, the notion of 'life' applies to the divine life only. For 'the Father is life and, being life, he sets forth life' and God, as life, 'established a relation to rational creatures, as he willed to benefit them'<sup>137</sup> and so 'he brought them into existence'.<sup>138</sup>

At this point it is important to consider a doctrine of creation, which seems to stand close to that of Origen. This is the doctrine of Valentinus, a Gnostic whom Origen attacks by name many times.<sup>139</sup>

The doctrine of creation of Valentinus is now available in the *Tractatus Tripartitus* from Nag Hammadi. God's being is conceived as developing out of a primal mysterious unity into a series of powers or 'aeons', collectively called 'the πλήρωμα' or 'fullness'. The starting point is a process by which the mysterious Godhead arrived at a conception of himself, which has to be in some degree incomplete. The process is then repeated and produces a series of powers, which are not mere aspects or functions of the Godhead, but are, endowed with personalities and will of their own. But as these moved away from the original unity and acquired a distinct individual form, the divine perfection was progressively limited or diluted to the point at which actual error or sin could arise; all this in some eternal pre-temporal state before this lower world was mistakenly created. According to Valentinus, God has all the attributes that make for perfection. God's attributes, however, can only mirror the divine life if they themselves acquire life and consciousness. But then they fall into error by forgetting their own limitations and their need of each other to represent the whole divine fullness.

The Nag Hammadi *Tractatus Tripartitus* provides a valuable and suggestive version of Valentinus' doctrine, which now can be contrasted with that of Origen.

First, Origen allows for no development in the divine being. There is no process through which God changes in his very being, in any

<sup>137</sup> *frJohn*, II.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> *Cels*, II, 27; *commJohn*, 2, XIV; *homJer*, 10, 17; *homLuc*, 20; *frLuc*, 78; 166; 247; *commMatt*, 12, 12; 12, 23; *frEph*, 17; *selJob*, 41; *enantiJob*, 21, 41; *homLuc*, 20; 34; 39.

way. Thus the created reality affects him in no way. Origen sheerly opposed the emanation theory, on the grounds that there can be no continuity between the perfect God and fallible sinful creatures. If the Aeons are in any sense divine and part of God's own being, it is blasphemous to represent any of them as involved in error and sin.

On the other hand, Origen argued that the created world is not evil in itself. The origins of evil are to be found rather in the gift of creaturely free will, and the misuse of it. Nevertheless free will is a condition of moral life and moral progress; in the long process of history the mistakes arising from man's immaturity and weakness of will can be corrected, so that humanity is fit to share in the wonders of the age to come. Furthermore, the divine act of creation was not only deliberate, but also wise and benevolent. In no case is this act regarded as a 'mistake' of God—according to Valentinus a malevolent and imperfect God. Origen repeatedly argues against Valentinus, Basilides and Marcion, that there is no warrant in the Bible for postulating another God beyond the Creator. Had there been any similarity between Origen's doctrine and that of Valentinus', the attacks by the former against the latter would not be so vigorous. Origen attacks what he calls the 'misguided wisdom of the followers of Valentinus'<sup>140</sup> not only on general grounds, but also when he articulates his own view of creation in his symbolic and thoughtful manner. It is then to be assumed that this theory is sheerly opposite to that of Origen's. I pointed out this contrast, since sometimes Origen was victimized just because of linguistic similarities with streams of thought not only alien to him, but also fiercely attacked by himself, such as that of Valentinus. As a matter of fact, I have in mind a testimony of Clement of Alexandria, about 'the followers of Valentinus' who 'allow for the Only-Begotten to be called the *arche* or beginning' ('Αρχήν μὲν γὰρ τὸν Μονογενῆ λέγουσιν),<sup>141</sup> which has to be stressed as being of no significance and could on no account diminish Origen's sheer difference from the Gnostics, as this will be canvassed presently.

This creatures' coming into existence marks the actual creation of the world and is directly related to a notion of 'diversification', which stems from the fall out of the divine life. This concept of Fall is what I shall examine next.

<sup>140</sup> *Cels.*, VI, 35.

<sup>141</sup> Clement of Alexandria *Excerpta ex Theodoto*, 1.6.1.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### THE FALL AND CREATION OF THE WORLD

In order to expound the concept of the Fall, we should take into account the reality called the state before creation (τὰ πρὸ γενέσεως).<sup>1</sup> There is only one actual meaning which the term 'life' can have when applied to that reality: this is the divine life. For in that state there is no actual world; subsequently, there is no corporeality and time, which are interwoven with the actual existence of the world.<sup>2</sup>

What therefore 'lives' is the Trinity, since 'life without a body can be found in the Trinity alone'.<sup>3</sup> I have pointed out, nevertheless, that Origen holds a notion about the wisdom of God as a 'multi-embroidered' one (πολυποίκιλος, as in Eph. 3, 10). This implies a notion of 'multitude'. This multitude, however, does not allude to any distinction: 'for it is impossible to speak of a part of what is incorporeal or to make any division in it'.<sup>4</sup> Still wisdom is a 'living incorporeal hypostasis of various objects of contemplation',<sup>5</sup> which are held to 'contain the reasons of everything'.<sup>6</sup>

In *commEph* there is a telling comment on the phrase of Paul 'we, like everyone else, were in our nature children of wrath':<sup>7</sup>

We do not know what those who introduce the theory about spiritual natures existing in the beginning could answer to the [saying] 'We, like everyone else, were in our nature children of wrath'. For how is it possible for someone who is by nature Son of God to be called Son 'of wrath'? To this they owe a reply. But, on account of our 'body of humiliation',<sup>8</sup> we think we have become 'children of wrath in our nature', when our mind 'had since our youth been inclined toward evil things'<sup>9</sup> (εἰς δὲ τὸ ἡμεῖθα φύσει τέκνα ὀργῆς ὥς καὶ οἱ λοιποί, οὐκ

<sup>1</sup> *commJohn*, 20, II.

<sup>2</sup> *frJohn*, XIII; s. *infra*.

<sup>3</sup> *Princ*, II.2.2.

<sup>4</sup> *Princ*, IV.4.4.

<sup>5</sup> *commJohn*, I, XXXIV.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>7</sup> Eph. 2, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Phil. 3, 21.

<sup>9</sup> Gen. 8, 21.



οἶδαμεν ὅ, τι ποτέ ἐροῦσιν οἱ τὰς πνευματικὰς ἀρχῆθεν φύσεις εἰσάγοντες, πῶς γὰρ ὁ φύσει υἱὸς θεοῦ φύσει εἶναι λέγεται υἱὸς 'ὀργῆς' ἀποκρινέσθωσαν. ἡμεῖς δὲ οἰόμεθα διὰ τὸ 'σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως' γεγονέναι 'τέκνα φύσει ὀργῆς' ὅτε 'ἐνέκειτο' ἡμῶν 'ἡ διάνοια ἐπὶ τὰ πονηρά ἐκ νεότητος').<sup>10</sup>

The notion implied in this passage is that the world is a product of wrath. Origen alludes to his notion of the Fall referring both to corporeal nature (from Phil. 3, 21) and to God's wrath because of man's disobedience, as implied in the quoted passage from Genesis. This is certainly not accidental. Both those notions point, to a certain extent, to his conception of the Fall, which is regarded as the 'cause' for this world, as it stands, to come into existence.

Origen's conception of the Fall is the most delicate tenet of his entire theology. I certainly refer to his written thought; for although he held a certain conception of the Fall, he deliberately eschewed to expound it explicitly in writing. I shall argue that many of the miscomprehensions surrounding his thought are due to failure to grasp this particular facet of his thought.

No systematic exposition of the conception of the Fall can be found in the works in Greek. Orderly analyses of the various meanings of *ἀρχή* are preserved; exegeses on the notion of *world* are extant, too; but the conception of the Fall was never explicated. I shall argue that this is not unintentional at all.

Many things have been said about Origen's mysticism;<sup>11</sup> yet these analyses are actually drawn from what he expressed himself. Origen was haunted by the fear that he might enunciate mystical perceptions which he was not allowed to. He was always bearing in mind that there are certain mystical truths, which God granted some people; yet he forbade those people to utter these truths aloud. He was always thinking of what Paul says in 2 Cor. 12, 4 about 'ineffable words, that man is prohibited from uttering'.

As a preacher, he always felt himself on the horns of a dilemma: on the one hand, he felt that it was not his right to deprive people from the wisdom which God granted him. On the other, his fear was that he might explicate more than what he was allowed to do. This agony is expressed in his *Dial.* Intending to speak about the

<sup>10</sup> *commEph.*, p. 404.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. H. Crouzel: *Origène et la connaissance mystique*, Paris, 1961; also R.P. Lawson, *op. cit.*, Introduction.

soul (a topic directly related to the concept of Fall) he makes a long introduction, emphasizing that 'the ideas are delicate' and, therefore, they demand listeners who are able to apprehend the deeper truths;<sup>12</sup> for 'we have reached a mystical doctrine' (ἐπὶ λόγον ἤλθομεν μυστικόν).<sup>13</sup> Here is how he feels on saying a few words about this mystical truth:

I feel agony when intending to speak; I feel agony when intending not to speak (ἀγωνιῶ εἰπεῖν, ἀγωνιῶ καὶ μὴ εἰπεῖν). I want to speak for the sake of those who are worthy, lest I be accused of depriving of the word those able to understand it. Because of the unworthy I shrink from speaking for the reasons I have given, lest I should be flinging holy things to dogs and casting pearls before swine. It was the work of Jesus only to know how to distinguish among his hearers between those without and those within, so that he spoke to those without in parables, but explained the parables to those who entered into his house.<sup>14</sup> To remain without and to enter into the house have a mystical meaning (μυστικόν ἐστίν). 'Why should I judge those that are without?'<sup>15</sup> Every sinner is without. That is why those without are addressed in parables in case they should be able to leave the things without and enter the things within. To enter the house has a mystical meaning (μυστικόν ἐστίν); he who enters Jesus' house is his true disciple. He enters by holding the doctrine of the Church, by living a life according to the teaching of the Church. 'Within' and 'without' have a spiritual sense.<sup>16</sup>

Here is then the reason for being anxious:

If I display before the common crowd what the Holy Spirit has revealed and entrusted to me, I sell it for a price and do not teach without payment, what else am I doing except selling doves, that is, the Holy Spirit? When I sell the Spirit, I am cast out of God's temple.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, he regards the concept of Fall as a mystical truth, which should be not enunciated or couched at all. For to inquire deeply in and speak about 'the creation of the Lucifer, is beyond our ability. For the doctrine about this question is great and difficult to speculate' (πολύς γὰρ ὁ περὶ τούτου λόγος καὶ δυσθεώρητος).<sup>18</sup> This doctrine is

<sup>12</sup> *Dial.* BGF, v. 16, p. 373.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Mark 4, 11; Matt. 13, 36; similarly, *Cels.* III, 21.

<sup>15</sup> 1 Cor. 5, 12.

<sup>16</sup> *Dial.* BGF, v. 16, pp. 373-4.

<sup>17</sup> He refers to Luke 19, 45 'He went into the temple and . . . he cast out those who were selling doves.' *homLuc.* 38, 5.

<sup>18</sup> *selPs.* 109.

about the 'mystery of creation.'<sup>19</sup> and, as such, it cannot be easily grasped, 'even by those who are trained in philosophy, unless by means of divine inspiration'<sup>20</sup> The actual creation itself was made according to 'a secret reason',<sup>21</sup> and thus 'the doctrine of the creation of the world' is mystical; this is one of the mysteries hidden in the scripture (τὰ περί κοσμοποιίας καὶ ἄλλα μυστήρια)<sup>22</sup> and to refrain from explicating mystical doctrines is an attitude rigorously advocated:

The doctrines about these questions are great and mystical. To this teaching the saying 'it is good to hide the mystery of the king'<sup>23</sup> is befitting. For we do not want the teaching about souls (which do not assume a body according to a doctrine of transmigration) to be cast before just any audience, nor that holy things should be given to the dogs, nor that pearls be cast before swine.<sup>24</sup> For that would be impious, as it constitutes a betrayal of the secret mysteries of the wisdom of God (προδοσίαν περιέχον τῶν ἀπορρήτων τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ σοφίας λογίων), of which it is well written: 'Wisdom will not enter into a soul that practices evil neither will it dwell in a body involved in sin' (εἰς κακότεχνον ψυχὴν οὐκ εἰσελεύσεται σοφία οὐδέ κατοικήσει ἐν σώματι κατὰ χρεὼ ἁμαρτίας).<sup>25</sup> It is then enough to give an account of the doctrines which are said in a mystical way, under the guise of a story, by just following the course of that story, in order that those who have the ability may work out the meaning of the passages for themselves.<sup>26</sup>

If someone is 'supported by the spirit of wisdom' he should be cautious not to 'thoughtlessly enunciate the divine mysteries of the Holy Scripture.'<sup>27</sup>

This is the background against which this doctrine of creation should be considered. It is plain that had he held any sort of Platonic

<sup>19</sup> *commMatt*, 15, 23.

<sup>20</sup> *Cels*, IV, 65.

<sup>21</sup> *frMatt*, 166.

<sup>22</sup> *commGen*, 3; BGF, 15, 121; PG, 12.84; *Philocalia*, 23, 20.

<sup>23</sup> Tobit 12, 7.

<sup>24</sup> Matt. 7, 6.

<sup>25</sup> Wis. 1, 4. Origen makes full and unqualified use of the *Septuagint*. There are no 'apocrypha' for him. The version of the *Septuagint* he uses is the same as the text used by the Eastern Orthodox Church today. The same holds for the numbering of the Psalms.

<sup>26</sup> *Cels*, V, 29.

<sup>27</sup> *frPs*, 111, 5; also s. the section in *commMatt*, 14, 12, which strangely enough is not extant in the Latin rendering, since there is a lacuna in the Latin translation at that point.

conception, he could have no difficulty in expounding this. Quite significantly though he persistently kept refraining from explicating his doctrine. It could be certainly absurd to assume that Origen held a Platonic conception and yet he eschewed enunciating what was available to the layman of his day. Instead, he constantly sustained that he does not wish to explicate the doctrine about the soul, which is 'mystical'<sup>28</sup> and 'secret'.<sup>29</sup> In the same vein, he states that

only few people are able to comprehend those who expound the doctrines about *the state before creation* (τὰ πρὸ γενέσεως) and the deeper meaning of creation (καὶ τὰ ἐν γενέσει) of everything that exists more systematically; these doctrines might embarrass one (ταράξαι ἂν τινα τὰ τοιαῦτα) who will hear but will not accurately understand them (συνέντα μὲν ταῦτα, μὴ ἀκριβοῦντα δέ); this is why, in relation to these [doctrines], we imperil ourselves; for to speak about and elaborate on them is precarious (ἐπισηφαλές) even though the doctrines are true (τὸ λέγειν καὶ ἀναπτύσσειν τὰ τοιαῦτα ἐστὶν ἐπισηφαλές καὶ ἀληθεύεται).<sup>30</sup>

Even in case one preaches a true doctrine (λόγος ἀληθής), this could cause undesirable effects to a soul 'which is sick and does not need this kind of food'. Therefore, 'to explicate the true doctrines is dangerous' (καὶ οὕτως καὶ τὰληθῆ λέγειν κινδυνώδές ἐστι).<sup>31</sup> It is dangerous not only to enunciate untrue doctrines, but also (to enunciate) true ones, once they should not be enunciated.<sup>32</sup> For it is necessary 'not to divulge' (δημοσιεύειν) doctrines which are 'mystical and deeper'.<sup>33</sup> Even the evangelists (as Matthew, in this case) kept themselves 'far from the danger of exposing the mysteries'.<sup>34</sup>

To Origen this was an attitude of piety. As he explains in *Cels*, "we practice a pure piety towards the creator and praise the beautiful things that he has created, without defiling the divine things even by naming them".<sup>35</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *selEc*, 4, PG 13.781.

<sup>29</sup> *commMatt*, 15, 34.

<sup>30</sup> *commJohn*, 20, II. What Origen means by 'mystery' is stated in *Cels*, 5, XIX. He refers to 'secret truths . . . which are not appropriate for the simple-minded and for the ears of the common crowd'. Thus a 'mystery' (quoting 1 Cor. 15, 51) is a "word usually applied to the deeper and more mystical doctrines which are rightly concealed from the multitude".

<sup>31</sup> *commJohn*, 32, XXIV.

<sup>32</sup> *expProv*, 23, PG 17.224.

<sup>33</sup> *expProv*, 22, PG 17.217.

<sup>34</sup> *commMatt*, 30.

<sup>35</sup> *Cels*, IV, 48.

The concern that his thought might be misunderstood haunted him throughout his life.<sup>36</sup> And yet, despite his cautiousness and reticence on doctrines that were liable to being misunderstood, history shows that he did not avoid what he was afraid of: he eventually was miscomprehended and ascribed views which were never sustained by him.

This is the personal background against which, in *Cels*, he refers to the conception of Fall; yet all he says on this subject is this: "And the man who is evicted from the paradise together with his wife . . . has a meaning which is ineffable and mystical".<sup>37</sup> In view of what he held about those truths that are 'ineffable and mystical' it is not surprising that he deliberately avoided setting forth a systematic exposition of his doctrine of the Fall.

We can, nevertheless, find some reference to this subject at some points of his work in Greek and thus identify some vital elements of this concept. We can also use the Latin rendering of *Princ*; but in this case we should use this work with much more caution than usually. In the Introduction I have argued that this work should not be used (as it usually is) in order to interpret Origen's thought; rather it should be used only as an ancillary source. In point of the conception of the Fall, *Princ* should be cleared from many of the misinterpretations of Rufinus, as well as from views falsely ascribed to Origen by others and embodied in Koetchau's edition. It is most unfortunate that these fragments have been dignified with the word evidence. At any rate, this work will be taken into account where statements preserved in Greek corroborate portions preserved only in Latin.

Considering Origen's perception of God and creation there are two realities which have been distinguished thus far:

First, the reality of God, the divine life, in which there is God only.

Secondly, the divine reality in which God 'decorated' the 'body' of the 'multi-embroidered' wisdom: the providential creation came into being out of nothingness. This marks the creation of incorporeal nature. Speaking of *existential* reality in this state, it should be clear that it is only the person of Christ who lives as Wisdom, whereas

<sup>36</sup> *homJer*, 16, 1; *Cels*, VII, 38.

<sup>37</sup> *Cels*, IV, 40.



the created 'reasons' and 'objects of contemplation' are also called 'wisdom'<sup>38</sup> and are regarded as decorating the 'body' of Christ.

A third reality, subsequent to the second one, is the Fall out of the 'body' of Christ. It is only then that the actual creation comes into existence out of non-existence; it is then that space-time comes into existence and rational creatures, as individual personalities, start to exist.<sup>39</sup>

This explicit exposition, once enunciated in words, seems paradoxical already. For how can the second reality be said to be 'after' the first one once there was no time yet? We see, therefore, that the explicit illustration requires the compromise to discuss what *appears as a paradox only once couched in words*. For there is no doubt that any one can figure a reality 'before' creation, which cannot be stated as 'before' all the same. In any event, the paradox of expressions does not end here.

The second reality is that in which incorporeal nature was made. Origen has already asserted that what in Genesis is stated as having been made 'in the image' of God has nothing to do with 'matter': 'the first man' who was made 'in the image of God' was 'immaterial and superior to any corporeal nature'.<sup>40</sup> The question at this point is: was this creaturely *life*? The answer to this is unqualifiedly negative. For *life* pertains *only* to what is related to *time*, since the notion of creaturely life is closely associated with the actual creation of the world.<sup>41</sup> Considering the Pauline portion, 'Because all things are from him and through him and in him',<sup>42</sup> and applying his usual scrutiny on the meaning of the prepositions, he observes that 'from him' suggests 'something originaive'.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>38</sup> *expProv*, 7, PG 17.180; Cf. *commJohn*, 1, xxxiv; 2, xviii; *Cant*, PG 17.260.

<sup>39</sup> P. Plass gives an erroneous account of Origen's views on this subject: he thinks, there are "no less than four different levels: God, Wisdom, minds before the fall, minds fallen into time/space/matter" (*op. cit.*, p. 13). Accordingly, he is inclined to see here as God the Plotinian One, and Wisdom as the Plotinian Mind etc. and thinks that it is only the names which change. On the assertion about the relation of God to Wisdom I have already commented. With regard to the implied world 'before the fall', this is wrong, too, as I argue presently.

<sup>40</sup> *Dial*; BGF, v. 16, p. 374.

<sup>41</sup> *commJohn*, 2, XIX.

<sup>42</sup> Rom. 11, 36.

<sup>43</sup> John 1, 3-4; *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 3.10.3.

But Paul is not the only apostle who maintains distinctions in the use of prepositions, for indeed John does this as well. When, for example, he says of the Logos of God that 'all things were made through him', he testifies that life was not made *through* him but *in* him. For he says, 'What was made is life in him'.<sup>44</sup>

Hence, when Origen speaks of 'first' creation he points to an 'act' of God *in* his wisdom. Speaking of *life* in that reality, it is the divine life that should be understood. There is a reality then which appears obscure: on the one hand *there is a created reality*, and yet, on the other, *there is no creaturely life*. For, at that state, it is only the Son of God to whom the predication of *life* pertains. When, therefore, Origen speaks of 'first' creation, which was 'incorporeal', he does not refer to any 'incorporeal world' whatsoever. For strictly speaking there is no *world* at all. The reality is the 'body' of Christ, which was decorated, 'embroidered' by those reasons (called 'precious stones') which were 'created' and were seen by God as 'good'. As a reply to those who ascribe a Platonic conception to Origen,<sup>45</sup> he makes a significant distinction:

Although God is incorporeal and what was made is incorporeal too, there is a profound difference between them: The 'made' incorporeal is explicitly said to be not *ὁμοούσιον* (consubstantial) with God.<sup>46</sup> The difference lies precisely in that the latter incorporeal nature is *created*, whereas God himself is *uncreated*. This conception is then essentially different from any Platonic one. For Plato never made such a radical distinction.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup> John 1, 3-4; *op. cit.*, 3.10.2, p. 231.

<sup>45</sup> This is what G. Butterworth does in *FP*, p. 253, n. 4, where he thinks that Origen's conception that God created two universal natures, namely, the incorporeal and the corporeal one, might be compared with what is stated in Plato's *Phaedo*, 79A. One, however, does not have to study too hard that point of Plato's work in order to see that Origen's affirmations have nothing to do with it.

<sup>46</sup> *comm. John*, 13, XXV. The same notion is suggested in *Cels*, VI, 44. It is characteristic that Augustine, who was prompt to condemn Origen by name, (Augustine, *De haeresibus*, XLIII; Migne, PL, XLII.) espoused, for quite some time, the Manichaean view that the soul was of the same substance as God. As he himself states, he struggled to free himself from this doctrine (*de Ordine*, 2.46).

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *Johanneskommentar*, GCS, 4, p. 249; also C. Blanc, *Commentaire sur S. Jean*, III, p. 112. I think that the text at this point could be restored thus: 'Ἄλλ' οὐχ ὁρῶσιν (οἱ τοιαῦτα λέγοντες) ὅτι παντός (τοῦ ὁμοουσίου) συγγενές τὸ εἶναι τὸ αὐτό) καὶ τῶν αὐτῶν δεκτικόν· εἰ δὲ ἐδέξατο τὸ πορνεῦσαι ἢ πνευματικὴ φύσις, ὁμοούσιος οὐσα (τῇ ἀγεννήτῳ θεῷ φύσει ὅσα) ἀνόσια καὶ ἀσεβῆ ἀκολουθεῖ τῷ λόγῳ τῷ κατ' αὐτοῦς περὶ θεοῦ οὐδὲ φαντασιωθῆναι ἀκίνδυνόν ἐστιν. The word *συγγενές* which

When G. Florovski<sup>48</sup> argues that the 'difference' between God and the world lies in the fact that they are not 'consubstantial', he is unaware that this is only a faint echo of the views of Origen (whom he so often decried for what he had taken to be his conception of the world).<sup>49</sup> This is why Florovski feels it necessary to appeal to Augustine who said; "non de Dei natura, sed a Deo sit facta de nihilo . . . quapropter creaturam universam neque *consubstantialem* Deo, neque coaeternam fas est dicere, aut credere" (Nature was not created from God but by God . . . Hence we should not say or believe that universe is consubstantial or co-eternal with God).<sup>50</sup> What Florovski ascribes to Augustine is in fact Origen's conception about the 'non-consubstantiality' of God and creation. He also speaks about a distance between God and the world, yet 'not a spatial one but pertaining to nature' (οὐ τόπῳ ἀλλὰ φύσει) appealing to John of Damascus.<sup>51</sup> But this quotation is a word-for-word portion from Origen's *commJohn* (οὐ τόπῳ)<sup>52</sup> employed by John of Damascus.

What was 'made' as incorporeal was not a world of living individual persons, as we have seen. On the other hand, this is not so simple as to say that this was *not living*, namely, that it was just a bundle of 'ideas' or 'forms' in God's mind, as Philo might have said. If those 'made' incorporeal were just that, then the conception of the Fall could hardly make sense. This, because, another substantial difference between the 'made' incorporeal and the divine essence lies in the fact that the created incorporeal is susceptible of a kind of 'change'. As Origen argues alluding to the notion of Fall, those which are 'consubstantial are also susceptible of the same properties'.<sup>53</sup> But he does not elaborate on this remark any further.

I propound here, as well as the syntax of συγγενές with Genitive, is familiar to Origen and it is found in the same work more than once; Cf. *commJohn*, 10, XXXIX, the expressions συγγενοῦς ἐβδομάδος and συγγενοῦς διαστήματος.

<sup>48</sup> G. Florovski, *Creation and Redemption*, Greek tr. by P. Pallis, Thessaloniki, 1979; p. 52.

<sup>49</sup> G. Florovski, *Aspects of Church History*, pp. 45ff.

<sup>50</sup> *De Genesi ad Litteram*, I, PL XXXIV, p. 221. G. Florovski wrote an entire work (*Studia Patristica*, VI, 1962, 36-57, repr. in *Aspects of Church History*, pp. 45-73.) in order to prove that Athanasius' conception of creation is the counter-point of Origen's views. What he actually did, however, was to expound Origen's theory of creation (being himself unconscious of this fact) attributing them to Athanasius, thinking that they are contrasted with what he had misunderstood as views of Origen.

<sup>51</sup> G. Florovski, *Creation and Redemption*, pp. 53 and 310.

<sup>52</sup> *commJohn*, 19, XX.

<sup>53</sup> *commJohn*, 13, XXV.

This is a delicate point of the entire doctrine. One could take it that these incorporeals were *living yet not a life of their own*, but the life of Christ. This is what seems to be a paradox and which Origen did not wish to elaborate on. A figure of this perception might be traced in Paul's saying 'I live; yet not I but Christ lives in me',<sup>54</sup> which is a statement, to which Origen appeals quite often. Another useful figure of Origen's perception at this point is the scriptural instance where Paul speaks of being 'one flesh' and of marriage as 'a great mystery', which points to 'Christ and the Church'.<sup>55</sup>

It is out of this state that the Fall occurs. This is a fall *from God*.<sup>56</sup> In the light of this, Origen criticizes Heracleon who wrote that the Logos in his relation to creation is not he 'from whom' or 'by whom', but only 'through whom' creation was made.<sup>57</sup> He takes exception to this view, but again he does not elaborate further. He only says that he himself has also treated the notion of 'through whom', but Heracleon, as it seems from his opinion, seems not to have been instructed properly by the divine writings.<sup>58</sup>

Elsewhere, however, it is stated clearer that the world is in a status 'out' of God. For it is Paul who, in Rom. 11, 36, portrayed the beginning of everything by the expression 'out of him' (ἐξ αὐτοῦ).<sup>59</sup> In general, the scriptural passages supporting the view that the world came *out* of God, are the following: 'yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist',<sup>60</sup> 'For from him and through him and to him are all things',<sup>61</sup> and the saying about Jesus who 'has come out of God'.<sup>62</sup>

Origen is very cautious in adumbrating<sup>63</sup> how this fall occurred. The step towards this direction is to introduce the idea that a 'moulting' (πτεροπορύησις) is possible from the body of wisdom.<sup>64</sup> Here is

<sup>54</sup> Gal. 2, 20.

<sup>55</sup> Eph. 5, 31-32.

<sup>56</sup> *Cels*, VII, 69.

<sup>57</sup> *commJohn*, 2, XIV.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Cels*, VI, 65.

<sup>60</sup> 1 Cor. 8, 6.

<sup>61</sup> Rom. 11, 36.

<sup>62</sup> John 13, 3. S. *commJohn*, 32, III; 20, XIX.

<sup>63</sup> I say 'adumbrating' instead of 'portraying', since nowhere does Origen attempt to explicate his doctrine of the Fall.

<sup>64</sup> *Cels*, VI, 43. In his translation of *Cels* (p. 360, n. 11) H. Chadwick takes this affirmation as an allusion to Plato, *Phaedrus* 246B, C. It is Origen himself though

the most mystical point of his doctrine. This is why he endeavours to express this in a manner appropriate to the case, that is, not by a wording of his own, but through a scriptural quotation from Ezekiel:

But let us now see what the actual words of prophecy teach us. 'The word of the Lord', it says, 'came unto me, saying, Son of man, take up a lamentation for the prince of Tyre, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God: Thou wert a signet of likeness and a crown of honour in the delights of the paradise of God. Thou wast adorned with every fine stone and gem, and wast clothed with sardius and topaz and emerald and carbuncle and sapphire and jasper, set in gold and silver, and with agate and amethyst and chrysolite and beryl and onyx; with gold also didst thou fill thy treasures and thy store-houses in thy midst. From the day thou wast created with the cherubim, I placed you in the holy mount of God. Thou wast in the midst of the fiery stones, thou wast stainless in thy days, from the day thou wast created until the time that iniquities were found in thee; from the multitude of thy commerce thou didst fill thy storehouses with iniquity, and thou didst sin and wast cast wounded out of the mount of God. A cherub drove thee forth from the midst of the fiery stones. Thy heart was lifted up at thine honour; thy knowledge was corrupted with thy beauty; for the multitude of thy sins I have cast thee down to the earth in the presence of kings.'<sup>65</sup>

This passage of Ezekiel is taken to point to 'an adverse power' which 'was formerly holy and blessed' and 'fell from this state of blessedness and was cast down into the earth . . . from the time that iniquity was found in him, while his fallen condition was not due to his nature.'<sup>66</sup>

The Fall is a fall of 'one'. In the foregoing passage, it is Rufinus rather than Origen who feels it necessary to fill the expression by saying 'an adverse power'. For Origen himself eschews any elaboration of this and simply speaks of 'one': he leaves this numerical just like that, refraining from any account as to 'who' or 'what' this 'one' is. He just speaks of 'one, who fell from the bliss';<sup>67</sup> further he

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who refers to Plato explicitly, indeed to the same point of *Phaedrus*, in order to declare that his conception of the fall has nothing to do with the Platonic views in general and particularly as stated at that point of *Phaedrus*.

<sup>65</sup> Ezek. 28, 11-19. *Princ.* I.4.4.

<sup>66</sup> *Princ.* I.4.4. Here I am reminded again the awkward treatment of temporal notions by Rufinus. He speaks of the 'one's' fall 'at some later time' (*ibid.*, italics mine). Although the fundamental conception is undoubtedly Origen's, there is nothing of his caution and meticulousness in treating this crucial point, as it appears in his writings in Greek.

<sup>67</sup> *comm. John*, 32, XVIII.



speaks of 'one', applying the adjective 'ruler' without stating any noun again; 'while there were many rulers (ἀρχόντων) who were made (γενομένων), it was one who fell'.<sup>68</sup>

It is significant that no noun is applied to the 'one' who fell. This directly stems from the tenet, which sustains unity in the primeval reality of providential creation.<sup>69</sup> It should also be noted that the adjective ἀρχόντων ('rulers') is derived from the word ἀρχή.<sup>70</sup> Whenever Origen speaks of the Fall, he refers to it as a fall of 'one'<sup>71</sup> that has 'moulted' (περορρησας) and, therefore, fell from the 'bliss'.<sup>72</sup> Formerly this 'one' was in the paradise of God, but became satiated, as it were, and was lost, according to the scriptural writer<sup>73</sup> who said mystically: 'you have come to a dreadful end and shall be no more for ever'.<sup>74</sup> This 'one' is also called 'the first' (ὁ πρῶτος).<sup>75</sup> For "after the moulting of the first (τῷ πρώτῳ περορρησάντι) others moulted also (καὶ ὅτι ἀπὸ τινων περορρησάντων) and followed this first one down (καὶ κατακολουθησάντων τῷ πρώτῳ)".<sup>76</sup> This 'one' is also described as 'evil' (πονηροῦ); it is quite characteristic that the term ἐκπεσόντος at that point is the Past participle of the verb ἐκπίπτω, which means, 'fall down out of a place'. This is how both notions about the Fall (a fall *out* of the divine being, as well as a fall *down*.)<sup>77</sup> are denoted. Certainly when Origen refers to the aftermath of the Fall (and not the occurrence itself), he attributes a number of names to this 'one' who fell 'first'. He calls it a 'dragon', or a 'big sea-monster' (as in Job 3, 8); also, he uses other names, mostly drawn from allegorical

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* It is significant to notice again that Origen says that this 'one' like the others, was 'made'; he also says that 'while he was in divine reality, he fell'. *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Cf. *commJohn*, 10, XXXV.

<sup>70</sup> ἀρχόντων means 'of those who hold the ἀρχή', that is 'the power'; but as here ἀρχή means the wisdom itself, the term ἀρχόντων means 'those who are in arche', namely 'in wisdom'. From this follows that the term ἀρχόντων is not any particular definition of this 'one'; it simply indicates that, 'before' the fall, this 'one' was *in* the wisdom.

<sup>71</sup> *commJohn*, 20, XXII.

<sup>72</sup> *Cels.*, VI, 44.

<sup>73</sup> He means Ezekiel, alluding to the passage in Ez. 28, 19, which follows.

<sup>74</sup> *Cels.*, VI, 44.

<sup>75</sup> *Cels.*, VI, 44.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. *Cels.*, VI, 43; also VI, 44. Quite tellingly Origen uses the verb κατακολουθῶ which is the Past participle of the verb κατακολουθῶ and means 'follow down'; in this way the notion that the world is 'down' with respect to God's timeless eternity is denoted again; s. also, *commJohn*, 19, XXII.

<sup>77</sup> *Cels.*, VI, 43. I will discuss this notion about the world later.

interpretations of the Scripture.<sup>76</sup> Again, however, any explicit statement is eschewed.

He says that sin entered this world through one man, and it is certain that he designates this place in which men live as the earthly world. Because of this you will ask, of course, whether sin entered no other place<sup>79</sup> or whether it is not also found in those places where 'the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places'<sup>80</sup> are named? A further question you should consider for yourself is: From where did sin enter this world?<sup>81</sup> Where was it prior to its entrance here? Did it even exist at all? Or was it prior to him to whom it is said, 'Up to the time when iniquities were found in you'; and, also, 'for this reason I cast you to the earth.'<sup>82</sup> But it is not safe to discuss these things further, because we may observe that the Apostle has scarcely touched these matters in individual discourses.<sup>83</sup>

Once Origen articulated this fundamental notion about the fall of the 'one', he refers to 'some others' who 'moulded' also and 'folded' the 'first' 'down'.<sup>84</sup>

There is a characteristic point made in *conunJohn*, referring to the devil that fell and is stated as 'man-killer' (ἀνθρωποκτόνος) in the gospel of John.<sup>85</sup> It is pointed out that the devil, who killed the man who was made 'in image' of God, did not perpetrate this 'killing' to any particular *individual* creature: John's expression refers to human nature in general (ὅν οὐδὲ τίς εἶπα ἰδίως ποῖον, ἀλλὰ δι' ὅλον τὸ γένος ὁ ἀνέκτεινεν).<sup>86</sup> In this way Origen maintains his view that providential creation does not refer to any *individual* creature, but bears upon the *reasons* which interact and converge to the emergence of human nature. In the same passage, however, it is pointed out that

<sup>76</sup> *conunJohn*, 1, XVII; also *Cels*, VI, 43.  
<sup>77</sup> *Cf. ibid.*, 3.6.6; *commMatt*, 13, 20.  
<sup>78</sup> *Eph*, 6, 12.

<sup>79</sup> *Cf. conunJohn*, 2, XV; *Princ*, 1.5.2-5.

<sup>80</sup> *Ezek*, 28, 15-17; for interpretation of this portion as referring to the 'one' who

fell 'first', cf. *ibid.*, 3.10.13; *Princ*, 1.5.4; *Hom in Ezek*, 1, 3; apud *ibid.*, p. 313, n. 91.

<sup>81</sup> Origen's *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 5.1.17, p. 312; the translator P.

Schreck at this point (n. 91) thinks that "Erasmus reasonably conjectures that Rufinus

has omitted material at this point." Erasmus is not correct: Origen himself at numer-

ous instances alludes to 'mystical doctrines' refraining from any elaboration on them.

This tactic recurs in *Cels*, and even more in *Dial*.

<sup>82</sup> *Cels*, VI, 43; also, VII, 23.

<sup>83</sup> *John* 8, 44; *conunJohn*, XXVI; XXVII.

<sup>84</sup> *conunJohn*, 20, XXV.

this creature (that is, human nature) was not just an 'idea' in God's mind, but it was living. The fall of Adam is 'death' and it is argued that 'strictly speaking, no one can be said to be *dead* unless he *lived* before'.<sup>87</sup> Yet this was the divine life, not a personal creaturely life of their own.

Since Adam means man, by Adam's fall one should understand the doctrine 'about man and his former life and the descending because of disobedience'.<sup>88</sup> At any rate, it was the devil that fell first, once he took himself 'to be self-sufficient and not needing the help of Jesus'.<sup>89</sup> Thus

everyone who wishes to do the desires of the devil . . . has become a child of the devil, and has been formed from wishing to do the desires of the worse one, and is in the image of the wicked father [sc. the devil], from whom the images of that earthly man come and receive their imprint.<sup>90</sup>

For 'that first was earthly'<sup>91</sup> and "since he fell away from the superior reality and desired a life different from the superior life, he deserved to be a beginning neither of something created nor made, but of 'something molded by the Lord, made to be mocked by his angles'.<sup>92</sup> As far as we [sc. humans] are concerned, our true substance, too, is in our being according to the image of the Creator,<sup>93</sup> but the substance resulting from guilt is in the thing molded, which was received from the dust of the earth.<sup>94</sup> Thus "the abuse (of the devil) is directed against us; this abuse, nevertheless, does not originate in his capricious dealing with us, but in his enmity against God".<sup>95</sup>

The immediate result of the Fall is the actual creation, which comes into existence according to the created reasons. More specifically, this marks the emergence of bodily nature, creation of matter itself for those who 'needed a material life' in the 'world' which 'was cre-

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *homLuc*, 34.

<sup>89</sup> *homLuc*, 31.

<sup>90</sup> *commJohn*, 20, XXII.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. 15, 47–49. *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Job 40, 19. *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Col. 3, 10.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Gen. 2, 7.

<sup>95</sup> *frMatt*, 298.

ated as a material one'.<sup>96</sup> Also, 'once the dragon fell down from the clear life', which was 'immaterial and absolutely incorporeal', 'before anything else, he has been bound with matter and body'.<sup>97</sup>

A main result of the fall is the destruction of the original unity. Hence, what comes forth is 'multitude of number' (πλῆθος ἀριθμοῦ), 'schism' (σχίσμα), 'division' (διαίρεσις) and 'disagreement' (διαφωνία). All these are regarded as 'signs of wickedness'. This conviction is so strong that these characteristics are established as a guideline for exegesis: whenever these notions are found in the Scripture, they should be interpreted as denotations of evil and the relevant passages should be interpreted accordingly.<sup>98</sup> There is a critical question which is a fundamental prerequisite for comprehending this conception of the Fall: what was that which fell?; and a subsequent question: what is that which constitutes the personal identity of the rational creatures? This question is directly related to the notion of 'moulting' (πτερορρύησις) which is the most mystical point of this doctrine of the Fall; yet it has to be answered, at least to the extent that it could be possible, since this is the crucial point of the entire conception.

It is a fundamental tenet of Origen that the 'end' will be like the 'beginning'.<sup>99</sup> Although he does not elaborate on the essence of this 'one' who fell, he does so when he expounds his conception of the end. I have quoted above a significant passage from *Princ.*, according to which this 'one' had been placed by God 'in the midst' of precious stones.<sup>100</sup> But there is no allusion pointing to what this 'one' was: we learn 'where' this was (in the divine reality), we understand that this was incorporeal (since that reality is entirely incorporeal);<sup>101</sup> we also learn 'in the midst' of what this 'one' was—it was in the midst of precious stones. But we can pick up nothing about this 'one' itself.

From *Cels* we learn something more about this 'one' and its original and impeccable state: this was a 'precious stone' among other

<sup>96</sup> *commJohn*, 19, XX.

<sup>97</sup> *commJohn*, 1, XVII.

<sup>98</sup> *selGen* (comm. on Gen. 11, 7); also *commJohn*, 5, V.

<sup>99</sup> *Princ.*, VI.6.2, II.1.3., III.5.4, III.6.3, III.6.8. Cf. *selPs.*, 117.

<sup>100</sup> *Princ.*, I.4.4.

<sup>101</sup> s. also, *Dial.*, where Origen speaks of the state before the fall as an "immaterial and superior to any bodily hypostasis" (ἄϋλον καὶ κρείττον πάσης σωματικῆς ὑποστάσεως). BGF, 16,374,16.

precious stones in the divine reality; it was placed as an 'ornament' in the 'body' of the 'multi-embroidered' Wisdom; it was a 'living stone',<sup>102</sup> yet this life was not *its* own life: this was the divine life of Wisdom herself. It is pointed out that the scriptural reference to 'precious stones' has a 'mystical meaning' and 'the just are themselves every species of select and precious stones'.<sup>103</sup> After all,

the divine words teach about resurrection in a mystical manner, which can be apprehended by those who are able to listen to the voice of God by means of a more divine hearing and they say that . . . the body of Christ . . . will be rebuilt with stones which are living, as well as precious.<sup>104</sup>

What fell, therefore, was an 'ornament' from the 'body' of Wisdom. What lived until that moment is pretty clear: it was Wisdom herself, living her divine life. On no account can we say that this 'ornament', this 'precious' 'living stone', was living as an *individual hypostasis* in the divine life, in the sense that it was conducting a life of its own; for in that reality (which is incorporeal) there can be neither 'distinction' nor 'division'. Besides, what was created in the providential creation was not any *individual* creature and, in any event, 'we cannot speak of parts of what is incorporeal'.<sup>105</sup>

It should be emphasized that it is mainly this point which Origen eschewed to enunciate. Although he says certain things about his doctrine of the Fall, here is how he goes on:

We have exposed a few of our views according to our faith in Scripture; we did so having committed a bold venture upon the subject (*ἀποτετολμημένως*), and having made a risky venture (*παρακεκινδυνευμένως*); in fact, however, we have said nothing.<sup>106</sup>

It is out of this 'said nothing' that one should endeavour to portray this conception of the Fall. There is no other way, since he deliberately does not state anything about this tenet explicitly. But to

<sup>102</sup> Cf. 1 Pet. 2, 5. *Cels*, VIII, 19 and 20.

<sup>103</sup> *Cels*, VIII, 20.

<sup>104</sup> *Cels*, VIII, 19.

<sup>105</sup> *s. supra*.

<sup>106</sup> *Cels*, VI, 44. The following question might be posed: How is it possible to speak at the same time of both, namely, of 'distinction' non-existent and of 'one' who committed sin and fell? How the notion of 'non-distinction' is compatible with that of 'one'? On this question Origen eschewed to elaborate, seeking to preserve the mystical character of the doctrine.



ascribe to Origen a Platonic notion about pre-existing personal incorporeal rational creatures, which received a body, is just a simplistic and misleading solution, which garbles his real doctrine.

Origen himself was aware of the Platonic theory about the issue. Yet he says that

the man who is evicted from paradise together with his wife 'clothed in garments of skins',<sup>107</sup> which were made by God because of the human offence, has an ineffable and mystical sense, which is higher than the notion of Plato who holds that soul comes down and moults 'until it finds something solid'.<sup>108</sup>

In *selGen* he comments once more on the same passage of Genesis and rejects the exegesis that the 'garments of skins' suggest assumption of material bodies. Here is how he argues: "if the garments of skins signify flesh and bones, how is it possible for Adam to say before that: 'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh'?"<sup>109</sup>

Again, however, he does not explicate his own opinion. He deems it enough to contrast his own conception from the Platonic tenet, referring to this by name; all he says is that one "should inquire into the hidden treasure of the scriptural letter."<sup>110</sup> The same stance is taken in *frMatt*, 431, where it is stated that mind has been joined together with flesh "according to reasons known to God alone" (καθ' οὗς οἶδε λόγους).<sup>111</sup>

Therefore, it is Origen himself who quotes Plato and contrasts his own views with Platonism. To attribute Platonism to him on this doctrine is then only a simplistic way out of the puzzle of his doctrine, for which the only thing for sure is that it is *not* the Platonic one, according to Origen's own statements. Besides, it could be ludicrous to assert that he strove to disguise his own tenet so as to contrast it to Platonism, doing so by saying nothing about it and making only some hints; and this, when the Platonic basics were known to every fairly educated man of Origen's era.

Thus personal creaturely life starts only with the existence of the actual creation. For only then do personal beings begin to exist as

<sup>107</sup> Gen. 3, 21.

<sup>108</sup> *Cels*, IV, 40. Quoting Plato, *Phaedrus*, 246B, C; s.also *Cels*, VIII, 53.

<sup>109</sup> Gen. 2, 23.

<sup>110</sup> *selGen*, (comm. on Gen. 3, 21), PG 12.101; Cf. *commJohn*, 10, VI.

<sup>111</sup> *frMatt*, 431.

individuals; it is only then that they acquire a life of their own. It is only then that it makes sense to speak about 'the first moment of their creation by God',<sup>112</sup> or about 'the time their personality first emerged'.<sup>113</sup> These are certainly expressions from the Latin rendering of *Princ*, where temporal terms are used too frequently and too awkwardly; still we can discern this essential facet of this doctrine behind expressions of this kind.

There is something at this point, which might appear as a paradox: while *coming into being out of non-being* refers to an occurrence *into* the divine life, *creaturely life* pertains to space-time. This is a nuance, which should be taken into account. The former notion refers to the second of the realities stated above (the Wisdom which *became*, embroidered with the 'precious-stones'-reasons), whereas the latter refers to the third reality (actual creation of the material world). The former refers to the unity *in* the 'body' of Christ, the latter refers to the emergence of diversity and individuality (namely, to the world), which is *external* to the divine reality. When Origen avers that *life* is one of the conceptions that does not pertain to Christ himself, but only 'to others' (οὐχ αὐτῷ, ἀλλ' ἑτέροις),<sup>114</sup> it is obvious that a fundamental premise has been established: the predication 'others' itself implies a notion of *distinction*—a notion which by no means can be applied to the divine life. This 'others'—clause is significant and has to be borne in mind together with the phrase that there was no "time, when the third and fourth conceptions [of the Son] were not existing at all". The conception of 'life' starts to make sense only when this is life of 'others', that is, when 'otherness' makes its mark in ontology. Which means that 'otherness' begins to make sense when 'multitude of number' (πλῆθος ἀριθμοῦ), 'schism' (σχίσμα), 'division' (διαίρεσις) and 'disagreement' (διαφωνία) make their mark as 'signs of wickedness', as noted earlier. Beyond Wisdom and Logos, all other conceptions make sense only in the context of the relation between the Logos and the world, indeed the "third and fourth" conceptions are 'imposed by the Logos, and time cannot be found in the state where the third and the fourth conceptions did not exist at all'.<sup>115</sup> Before

<sup>112</sup> *Princ*, 1.5.3.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> *comm John*, 2, XVIII.

<sup>115</sup> *comm John*, 2, XVIV.

the Fall, therefore, the 'precious stones'<sup>116</sup> which 'embroider' the body of Wisdom are not actually 'others' and their life is not a life of 'others'. Time appears as an element of the world when the notion of 'life of others' starts to make sense, that is, upon the Fall.

*Distinction* virtually denotes existence of the material world.<sup>117</sup> This is why the predicate of *creaturely life* cannot be applied to the reality 'before' creation of the world. It is then worth pondering on the conception of that reality further. Referring to the actual creation of the world Origen portrays this as follows:

Accordingly, just as life came to be in the Logos, so the Logos was in the beginning. And consider if it is possible also for us to take the statement, 'In the beginning was the Logos' in accordance with this meaning, so that all things came to be in accordance with the wisdom and the forms of the system of concepts which exist in him [sc. the Logos] (ἵνα κατὰ τὴν σοφίαν καὶ τοὺς τύπους τοῦ συστήματος τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ νοημάτων τὰ πάντα γίνηται); for I think that, just as a house or ship are built or constructed according to the architectural forms, having as their beginning the plans and reasons (λόγους) in the artificer, in like manner all things have come to be according to the reasons (λόγους) of what will be, which reasons were distinctly articulated by God in wisdom (οὕτω τὰ σύμπαντα γεγονέναι κατὰ τοὺς ἐν τῇ σοφίᾳ προτρανωθέντας ὑπὸ Θεοῦ τῶν ἐσομένων λόγους); for 'he made all things in wisdom'.<sup>118</sup> And we should say that once God had created the living wisdom, so to speak, (κτίσας, ἢν' οὕτως εἶπω, ἔμψυχον σοφίαν ὁ Θεός), he allowed from the forms which were in her to present to the things which exist and to matter [both] their actual creation (πλάσιν)<sup>119</sup> and the species, and I focus my reflection on whether this holds true also for individual existence.<sup>120</sup>

This is the context in which Origen's statement that the 'reason' of this world (τὸν περὶ τοῦ κόσμου λόγον), regarded from a worldly point of view, is the 'last of the corporeals and the beginning of the incorporeals' (ὅς λόγος μὲν ἐστὶ τελευταῖος τῶν σωματικῶν, ἀρχὴ δὲ τῶν ἀσωμάτων).<sup>121</sup> This 'reason' (λόγος), according to which the world

<sup>116</sup> *commJohn*, 10, XLII; *Cels*, VIII, 19 & 20.

<sup>117</sup> s. *infra*.

<sup>118</sup> Ps. 103, 24.

<sup>119</sup> The meaning of *πλάσις* as 'actual creation' is a central theme in Origen's theology, and is contrasted with *ποίησις*, which points to providential creation; s. *infra*, the juxtaposition of the terms *ποίησις* (as in Genesis 1, 26) and *πλάσις* (Genesis 2, 7): *homJer*, 1, 10.

<sup>120</sup> *commJohn*, 1, XIX.

<sup>121</sup> *Cant*, 2, PG 17.265 (and Boehrens, p. 233).

came into existence out of the Fall, is itself a creature, by virtue of which the *providential* incorporeal creation comes into the closest relation to the *actual* creation which came into existence as a spatio-temporal reality. Thus, it is through the contemplation of this particular 'reason' that the transitional point from the providential incorporeal to corporeality could be visualized.

Hence, whereas God's former creative act was a creative 'utterance' to his wisdom, an utterance which 'embodied' his Wisdom (that is, his Son), the actual world comes into existence after God allowed the Logos to bring the material creation and indeed matter itself into existence. This creation was made according to 'reasons' which were distinctly articulated by God in wisdom (σοφία) which came into being with the providential creation.

This wisdom, however, cannot be regarded in analogy to human mind, which is, so to say, 'enriched' out of a creative plan formed into this same mind. The divine Wisdom is a personal hypostasis, the Son of God. Still, providential creation is the indispensable prerequisite for the actual creation to come to be. The latter came into existence *because* the former was already made:

If one is able to comprehend an incorporeal hypostasis comprising the various objects of contemplation (θεωρημάτων) which contain the reasons of everything, a hypostasis, which is living and animate, as it were, he will understand the Wisdom of God who precedes all creation and who appropriately says of herself: 'God made me the beginning of his ways towards his works.'<sup>122</sup> It is *because of this creation that all creation has also been able to subsist*, since it has a share in the divine wisdom, according to which it has been created.<sup>123</sup>

Thus a distinction is drawn between the 'former', namely providential creation, and the latter, which is the actual world as a tangible spatio-temporal reality.

In the same vein, he distinguishes between σοφία and λόγος. The former is used in Genesis 1,26, where God says, 'Let us make (ποιήσωμεν) man in our image and likeness'. The latter is found in Genesis 2,7, where it is said that God 'made (ἐποίησεν) man'.<sup>124</sup> This

<sup>122</sup> Prov. 8, 22.

<sup>123</sup> *Commentary*, 1, XXXIV; italics mine.

<sup>124</sup> *homilies*, 1, 10.

is why in the previous passage reference to the actual creation's coming into existence is made through the term *πλάσις*. Particular attention should be paid to an expression used in a mature portion of *commJohn*, where the adversary who fell is described as something 'neither created, nor image, but something 'molded by the Lord, made to be mocked by his angels'.<sup>125</sup> What is important in this portion is that this adversary is excluded from both the terms *κτίσις* and *πλάσις*, which suggests Origen's fundamental tenet that the devil *as such* is not a creature made by God. This is not part of the providential creation, it is negation of creation rather than a part of it. This adversary is the tendency and unceasing effort to lead being into non-being, it is the persistent denial of the creative act of God and activity towards nothingness; this denial has its origin in the Fall (which means it *followed* original creation) and accordingly any Manichaen point of view is explicitly rejected, indeed by name.<sup>126</sup>

Accordingly, a distinction is drawn between *γένεσις* and *γέννησις*. The former pertains to the initial creation, whereas the latter suggests existence out of the Fall.<sup>127</sup> At another point, a similar distinction is made between *γένεσις* and *κτίσις*, the latter denoting the creation of space-time.<sup>128</sup>

In all three cases Origen alludes to his view that the former creative act of God pertains to a reality which is the divine one. Since there is no corporeality and time, there can be no notion of independent *life* applied to creatures. As he points out, the first creation pertains to the 'making of the substance' (*οὐσίωσιν*)<sup>129</sup> of 'rational creatures', yet this 'making' was 'in Wisdom'.<sup>130</sup> This is the sense in

<sup>125</sup> Job, 40, 19; *commJohn*, 20, XXII.

<sup>126</sup> s. repudiation of the 'paranoia of Manichaens': *frLuc*, 78; *frLuc*, 226; also *commI Cor*, 81; *frJohn*, 28.

<sup>127</sup> *frMatt*, 11.

<sup>128</sup> *selPs*, 32. The terms, as distinguished here, do not have this meaning universally throughout Origen's work. What is important is the distinction itself which he makes. These terms are involved and contrasted just because they are found in the scriptural passages. At another point he might use the term *γένεσις* suggesting the spatio-temporal reality of the world; in fact he does so in *frJohn*, XIII. The main point, however, is the *distinction* between the two creations, namely the *providential* and the *actual* one.

<sup>129</sup> *selPs*, 32, PG 12.1305.

<sup>130</sup> Ps. 103, 24; *commJohn*, 1, XIX. This point should not be misunderstood: this 'substance' suggests the 'nature' of rational creatures, such as human nature -and not the individual substance. Origen is explicit that the substances of *individuals* came into existence only with the actual creation.



which God created wisdom as a beginning towards his works.<sup>131</sup> What was actually created in the former creation was a 'wisdom' perceived as a 'system of objects of contemplation . . . and forms and reasons' according to which 'future beings'<sup>132</sup> were made. So 'matter and creation and the species . . . and the substances' were made 'out of the forms, which were in wisdom' and those forms were made, too.

Thus *ποίησις* and *γένεσις* point to the providential creation whereas *πλάσις*, *γέννησις*, and *κτίσις* refer to the actual creation of the world. The actual purport of the distinction between the two categories is this: *ποίησις* and *γένεσις* refer to 'coming into being out of non-being';<sup>133</sup> this is the creation of the 'essence', which Origen calls 'substantification' (*οὐσίωσις*)<sup>134</sup> of rational *natures* (not of individual rational creatures). This means that what was created was the *nature* of rational natures starting to make sense as a potentiality under a certain concurrence of reasons and causes; it was not any individual hypostases or persons that were made at that stage. Thus the words of Job, as well as of David, 'your hands have *made* me and *fashioned* me' (*αἱ χεῖρες σου ἐποίησά με καὶ ἔπλασάν με*)<sup>135</sup> allude to a 'great doctrine'.<sup>136</sup>

The core of this doctrine is implied through the notions of *ποίησις* and *πλάσις*, yet this is as far as Origen is prepared to go: he explicitly states that he does not wish to elaborate any further.<sup>137</sup> This however does not prevent him from highlighting the notion of 'coming into being out of non-being' throughout his writings. Creatures appeared 'from non-being' (*ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων*)<sup>138</sup> and from 'non-existence' (*ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος*)<sup>139</sup> and they 'received being from God' (*ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ τὸ εἶναι δεξάμενοι*).<sup>140</sup>

A significant point is how he treats the question of *essence* proper. When he comes to explain this, all he does is to expound the views

<sup>131</sup> Prov. 8, 22. *commJohn*, 1, IX; XVII; XIX; 6, VI; 19, IX; 20, XVI; XXXIX.

<sup>132</sup> *commJohn*, 1, XIX.

<sup>133</sup> *frMatt*, 11.

<sup>134</sup> *selPs*, 32.

<sup>135</sup> Job 10, 8; Ps. 118, 73.

<sup>136</sup> Quoting Heb. 5, 11. Cf. *Cels*, V, 59; VII, 32; *commJohn*, 6, XIV; *commMatt*, 17, 2.

<sup>137</sup> *Cels*, IV, 37. *commJohn*, 13, 50; *frPs*, 118, 73; *homJob* (codd. Vat.), p. 363.

<sup>138</sup> *expProv*, 16; *expProv*, 18; *commJohn*, I, XVII; *selPs*, 9; *selPs*, 115; *Philocalia*, 24, 2.

<sup>139</sup> *frMatt*, 3; *commJohn*, XXXII, 16; *expProv*, *selPs*, 54; *selPs*, 138.

<sup>140</sup> *selPs*, 21, PG 12.1260.

of philosophers of different schools of thought. He offers an account of 'what essence is' according to either of those who maintain that the reality of incorporeal things is primary,<sup>141</sup> or according to 'those who hold that the reality of incorporeal things is secondary and that of corporeal things is primary'.<sup>142</sup> He subsequently affords a quite detailed account of both those definitions of essence.

It is characteristic though that he does not suggest any view of his own on this question—which is certainly not incidental. On the contrary, it is indicative of his perception of rational creatures as only conceptually (not actually) consisting of a corporeal and an incorporeal element. When he speaks of providential creation, his perception of it has nothing to do with any Platonic view of some pre-existing spiritual world. Were this his opinion, he could have no difficulty to enunciate this. Subsequently, he could have employed that definition of essence, which stems from a virtually Platonic perception of the world and its origin. The fact is, however, that he employed neither an idealistic nor a materialistic (Stoic) or an Aristotelian view<sup>143</sup> of what essence proper is. It is obvious that he opts for remaining impartial in respect of these definitions of essence. The reason is that a certain definition of essence is directly related to (actually it stems from) a certain conception of the world and its origin, be it created or uncreated. That Origen wishes to hold aloof and not endorse any one of these views, denotes that his conception of creation had nothing to do with the pagan ones. To explicate his own definition of essence, he knew that he should first provide a detailed account of his 'mystical' doctrine of the soul. This is exactly what he wished to avoid and in fact he did not do. This is why he states that "the doctrine about essence is a doctrine which is great and difficult to contemplate" (πολύς δ' ὁ περί τῆς οὐσίας λόγος καὶ δυσθεώρητος).<sup>144</sup>

What is for sure is that to him essence was brought into being out of nothingness, since God 'found essence uncreated' (τὸν Θεὸν ἀγέννητον εὐρόντα τὴν οὐσίαν).<sup>145</sup> God himself is 'beyond essence'

<sup>141</sup> *de Or.*, XXVII, 3.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> Although no explicit reference to any philosophical sect is made, the definitions of 'essence' which are propounded here actually pertain to those schools of thought.

<sup>144</sup> *Cels.*, VI, 64.

<sup>145</sup> *commGen.*, 1; PG 12.48.

(ὑπερέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας);<sup>146</sup> he is 'beyond mind and essence' (ἐπέκεινα νοῦ καὶ οὐσίας)<sup>147</sup> and 'God does not participate in essence at all' (ἀλλ' οὐδ' οὐσίας μετέχει ὁ Θεός).<sup>148</sup>

So when he speaks of the essence of God, he just uses this term in a conventional, if loose, sense. For whereas the essence of a thing determines this thing in principle and attributes to it its individual ontological authority, God is beyond any notion of essence. It is God who attributes to *essence* its ontological significance, if any. There is no 'oscillation', as H. Crouzel and M. Simonetti claim,<sup>149</sup> assigning to Origen a Platonic view and taking his attitude as similar to that of Philo and Clement. Origen is unequivocal on this issue and has enunciated his view in many parts of his work. This is not the instance where he employs a current philosophical notion in a loose sense—but only after he has explicated his own views on a question. This is what he does with the notion of 'eternal death', or 'infinite time' or 'infinite souls', or even when he speaks of the Logos as 'having soul', although he is explicit in his view that the term 'soul' applies only to human beings. These figures are not rare in his works; this is why expressions like 'as it were' (οἶοι) or 'so to say' (ὡς εἰπὼν) are used frequently.

Thus when he expounds the radical transcendence of God to any created nature, he says that "the essence of God is distinguished from any created nature"—yet this affirmation (as usually in such cases) starts once again with the expression 'as it were' (οἶοι ἀφιστάντι τὴν οὐσίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν γεννητῶν).<sup>150</sup> In any case, the claim that Origen 'oscillates' about the relation of God to 'essence' is not correct. Even at the point where he states that the doctrine about essence is 'great and difficult to contemplate', the phrase starts with the affirmation that 'God does not participate in essence'.<sup>151</sup>

What eluded H. Crouzel and M. Simonetti is not simply this statement of Origen's: the main issue in this context is his conception of God with respect to *essence*, when referring to the created things or

<sup>146</sup> *comm* John, 19, VI. The vocabulary is obviously Platonic (*Republica*, 509b9), but the import is not.

<sup>147</sup> *Cels*, VII, 38.

<sup>148</sup> *Cels*, VI, 64.

<sup>149</sup> *Origène, Traité des Principes*, II, 25, n. 23.

<sup>150</sup> *de Or*, XXIII, 5.

<sup>151</sup> *Cels*, VI, 64.

ideas. So far as essence suggests the very being, the ontological status, it can be attributed only to a created reality. Speaking of God, Origen does not inquire into his essence (least of all does he 'oscillate' about it). He simply wonders about the question of *what* God himself *is*. This question constitutes the heart of *theology*. But there is no evidence that Origen ever accepted the view that the question 'what is this?' (τὶ ἐστίν) should be taken with its Aristotelian connotations, that is, as indicating the 'essence' of a thing.

In fact, he finds the question 'about the essence of God' (περί οὐσίας τοῦ θεοῦ) inaccurate. This is why he uses the word 'as it were' (οἷονεῖ) and wonders whether it is possible 'to say anything' (εἰπεῖν τι) about it. He does not push the question too far, but clearly suggests that, speaking of God, the question is not simply choosing between corporeality and incorporeality. God is beyond them both 'by virtue of his seniority and power' (πρεσβεία καὶ δυνάμει). If one wishes to know what God *is*, the answer can be found in John 4, 24, 'God is Spirit'. Therefore "his essence, as it were, is his spirit" (οἷονεῖ οὐσία εἶναι αὐτοῦ τὸ πνεῦμα).<sup>152</sup> Obviously the spirit of God cannot in any respect be figured simply through incorporeality. For both incorporeality and corporeality belong to the creaturely reality; therefore, they are ontologically posterior to the being of God.

The point which eluded H. Crouzel and M. Simonetti is this: It is one thing to speak of *substance of human nature*, but to speak of *substance of an individual human being* is quite another. The former came into being out of nothingness with the providential creation. The latter (namely, the substance of individual persons) appears *only* with the actual material creation. Origen is explicit that what was created in the actual creation was not only 'matter' (ὕλη) and 'species' (εἶδη) but also 'individual beings' (οὐσίαι)—in fact, he is at pains to emphasize this point through the expression 'and I focus my reflection on whether this holds true also for individual existence' (ἐγὼ δὲ ἐπίστημι εἰ καὶ τὰς οὐσίας).<sup>153</sup>

The critical conclusion out of this statement is this: The substance of *human nature* (which involves no individuality) was created in the providential creation. *This* is why the providential creation is stated as incorporeal. For, even today, speaking of 'human nature', who

<sup>152</sup> *commJohn*, 13, XXI. The same account for God as 'fire' (Deut. 4, 24; Heb. 12, 29), *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> *s. supra; commJohn*, 1, XIX.

could possibly take it as something *personal* or *corporeal*? On the other hand, the actual subsistence of individual rational creatures came into being only with the actual creation. This is why, in Origen, what is *personal* is always also *corporeal*, as I shall argue presently.

This analysis makes clear why Origen does not uphold the Platonic view of 'essence'—despite the fact that *created* 'incorporeality' is affirmed as prior to the created corporeality. To him the substance of an individual person is not *prior* to this, as a Platonist would maintain, according to the doctrine of a pre-existing spiritual world. The personal substance comes into being *simultaneously* with the actual creation of a personal spatio-temporal creature. There is 'substance of human nature'<sup>154</sup> since the very beginning of creation, but it is only with the material creation that the notion of 'substance of an individual person' starts to make sense. This is the critical point that eluded all those who criticize this doctrine of creation.

On the other hand, Origen seems to be at one with secular philosophy as regards 'unchangeability' as a fundamental characteristic of essence<sup>155</sup>. But 'unchangeability' is exactly what does not pertain to rational creatures. They have something of their primordial origin, that is, an incorporeal element. On no account, however, is this element any kind of pre-existing subsistent individual personality. The notion of *individuality* means that the material and immaterial element are interwoven inseparably. If either of them is taken away, what remains is by no means an individual, *a person*. There is no personality apart from the material element. This is why a human being, like any rational creature, possesses a material body not only during his lifetime, but also both before and after it. Matter in itself is not regarded as evil;<sup>156</sup> rather it is a symptom of the existence of evil and it came into being once evil appeared. On the other hand, the 'incorporeal' element of rational creatures does constitute a kind of affinity with God, since there is a substantial difference: this incorporeal is *created* whereas God is uncreated.

<sup>154</sup> I speak of 'human nature' as an example, simply because Origen himself provides an account of the meaning of the creation of man according to Genesis. The same statements can be made about the rest of rational creatures. (Cf. *commJohn*, I, XIX). As I discuss anon, Origen's world comprises a number of ranks of life, of which 'human' is only one among many.

<sup>155</sup> *deOr*, XXVII, 8.

<sup>156</sup> *Cels*, IV, 66.



The difference between Origen's conception of *essence* and the secular ones lies exactly in the distinction drawn above. If a rational creature were simply a 'soul' clothed with a body (in a merely Platonic sense) then the question of essence could be simple: essence would be the existing 'personal incorporeal hypostasis', or (which many scholars erroneously ascribe to Origen) the personal 'spirit'. The case, however, is not that at all. A rational creature is an *inseparable* entity, not an incorporeal spirit (least of all is it a pre-existing one) clothed with a body. The essence of its existence does not lie in any unchangeable incorporeal personality (there is no room for such a notion in Origen's thought), but in the *relation* of the rational creature to God, as I shall argue shortly below. In *Princ* there is a telling passage which is worth following:

God has created two universal natures, a visible, that is a bodily one, and an invisible one, which is incorporeal. These two natures each undergo their own different changes. The invisible, which is also the rational nature, is changed through the action of the mind and will, by reason of the fact that it has been endowed with freedom of choice; and as a result of this it is found existing sometimes in the good and sometimes in its opposite. The bodily nature, however, admits of a change in substance, so that God the Artificer of all things, in whatever work of design or construction or restoration he may wish to engage, has at hand the service of this material for all purposes, and can transform and transfer it into whatever forms and species he desires, as the merits of things demand. It is to this, clearly, that the prophet points when he says, 'God who makes and transforms all things'.<sup>157</sup>

This passage can be taken as authentic since a similar one is found in Greek: "God created a nature which is indestructible and akin to him" (ἀφθαρτον γὰρ φύσιν πεποίηκε καὶ ἑαυτῷ συγγενή).<sup>158</sup>

This is also a point where this thought is radically different from the Gnostic one. The incorporeal of rational creatures is 'akin' to God, but not 'consubstantial' with him. Such a distinction would be inconceivable by a Gnostic. Besides, this incorporeal undergoes 'changes' within the world; it does not remain 'intact' throughout the 'episode' of its mixture with matter—which is also unacceptable to the Gnostics. Finally, this incorporeal was 'made'. There is no

<sup>157</sup> Amos 5, 8; *Princ*, III.6.7.

<sup>158</sup> *Princ*, III.1.13.

question about the 'reality' of the material world, which is regarded as fully true, just as the state before the Fall was. In Gnosticism, on the other hand, 'true being' is only that of the transcendent world.

On these three points, Origen's thought is sheerly different from Gnosticism. H. Puech regards these three topics as the fundamental characteristics of Gnostic thought.<sup>159</sup> Irenaeus<sup>160</sup> states that, to the Valentinians, the 'pneumatic generation' (τὸ κύημα πνευματικόν) is and remains *consubstantial* with the 'Mother', the feminine entity that is an Aeon of the pleroma (ὁμοούσιον ὑπάρχον τῇ μητρὶ). Clement of Alexandria deals with the Gnostic views of consubstantiality between God and man in his *Stromateis*.<sup>161</sup>

Origen does affirm that 'incorporeal nature' was 'made' by God,<sup>162</sup> stressing that not only the 'corporeal', but also the 'incorporeals' are 'made' (γεγονότων).<sup>163</sup> He also holds that both incorporeal and corporeal nature are susceptible of change. The former changes in mind (in terms of moral quality), whereas the latter changes in quality of matter. Besides, creatures are susceptible of change on account of creatureliness. 'Creation of essence' proper then does not suggest making of any personal individual. The latter took place only when the actual creation came into existence.

Thus *πλάσις*, *γέννησις*, and *κτίσις* point to the actual creation of the world: that is, to the creation of rational creatures, which have a *personal identity* and a *life of their own*; they are in a fallen status, belonging to a reality completely distinguished from the divine life. According to the Valentinian doctrine of creation, which I sketched above, the 'first' who 'fell' had already a life 'of his own'. In the primordial state, this 'first' mirrored the divine life, but he had his own life as well as consciousness. He fell only once he forgot his own limitations and the need of each other to represent the whole divine fullness.

In sheer contrast to this, according to Origen, there was no individual creaturely life in the primeval state. Life was the divine life

<sup>159</sup> H.C. Puech, "Gnosis and Time", From *Man and Time*. Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks, vol. 3, p. 75.

<sup>160</sup> Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, I,5,6.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, II,16.74.1.

<sup>162</sup> *selPs*, 38, PG 12.1389.

<sup>163</sup> *selPs*, 117, PG 12.1581. The term *γεγονότα* (or, *γινόμενα*) is always used to refer to what has been created by God; Cf. *flLuc*, 58; *flMatt*, 212; s. also Part II.

only. The created things were 'decorations' of the divine Wisdom; they were living yet not a life of their own. In any case, God did not need to create out of the need to arrive at a conception of himself, which has to be in some degree incomplete. Neither was divine perfection progressively limited or diluted to the point at which actual error or sin could arise. This was a state of perfection, where the creatures were 'divine' by the grace and benevolence of their Creator. This is not an accidental or isolated facet of Origen's theology. Rather, it is vital to his doctrine of 'deification' (θεοποίησις), which is central to his theology; also, this has much to do with the doctrine of restoration and ultimate end: these, however, are beyond the scope of this book, and I have to postpone them until they be treated on their own.

Therefore, what lives before the actual creation is God's Wisdom herself: her body was 'multi-embroidered' with living 'precious stones', since they are in the living body of Christ. What lives after the actual creation are the fallen 'stones' having acquired corporeal bodies and having been 'substantified' as *individual personalities*.

There is nothing in common between these two lives. The former is the life of God, namely life *in* Wisdom, while the latter is the fallen status of creatures, a life *outside* of God. The chasm between divinity and creation is a radical one. The world is absolutely 'outside' of the divinity<sup>164</sup> and there is no ring of the Plotinian notion about the world as an 'effluence' of divinity.

The point that creaturely 'spiritual nature' is not 'homousios to the uncreated nature' of God<sup>165</sup> is a decisive one. For this is the ground on which Origen rejects the Platonic and Neoplatonic notion, that incorporeal nature is *one* and, therefore, there is a sort of continuity from the highest down to the lowest modes of being. As a matter of fact, Origen here reiterates the radical chasm between God and creaturely nature. His conception of the Fall is not as simplistic as a notion of pre-existing spirits, which 'fell' and were clothed with material bodies.

<sup>164</sup> *Princ.* IV.4.1. also *commJohn*, 20, XVIII. The notion of the world as being *outside* of God is significant for this conception of time and particularly for the *raison d'être* of time.

<sup>165</sup> *commJohn*, 13, XXV. Here Origen rebukes Heracleon who asserted that creaturely incorporeal nature is homousios with God.

If there is a notion of Platonic dualism here (namely, dualism of spirit-matter) this is merely an intellectual, not an actual, one. Origen was aware of the Platonic views on the subject and does not fail to contrast his own tenet to them. Although he does not elaborate on his own conception of the Fall, he highlights its difference from the Greek views:

Our Lord and Saviour indeed alludes to yet another world, which is difficult to describe and depict in actual truth, beyond this visible one. For he says, 'I am not of this world';<sup>166</sup> and the words 'I am not of this world', suggest that he was of some other world. I have already said that it is difficult for us to explain this other world; and for this reason, that if we did so, there would be a risk of giving some men the impression that we are affirming the existence of certain imaginary forms which the Greeks call 'ideas'. For it is certainly foreign to our mode of reasoning to speak of an incorporeal world that exists solely in the mind's fancy or the substantial region of mind; and how men could affirm that the Saviour came from thence or that the saints will go thither<sup>167</sup> I do not see.<sup>168</sup>

Platonic dualism is then explicitly rejected. Rational beings, as individual personalities, are conceived as entities having a corporeal body as well as something incorporeal in them; yet this distinction is but an intellectual depiction of their nature. It is stressed that "it is only in idea and thought that a material substance is separable from them, and that although this substance seems to have been produced for them or after them, yet they have never lived or do they live without it;" for "life without a body is found in the Trinity alone".<sup>169</sup>

Statements about rational creatures in *Princ*, such as "All these are incorporeal in respect of their proper nature, but though incorporeal were nevertheless made",<sup>170</sup> should be understood in the light of the foregoing analysis. G. Butterworth, in his translation of *Princ*, considers this passage out of context in order to conclude that Origen

<sup>166</sup> John, 17, 14-16.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. John, 17, 24.

<sup>168</sup> *Princ*, II.3.6.

<sup>169</sup> *Princ*, II.2.2. The expression 'to have been produced from them or after them' shows that Rufinus had not grasped the precise views of Origen on the question of the substance of individual rational creatures. It is also obvious that the (non-extant) original Greek text at this point had excluded the notion of this substance existing without beginning.

<sup>170</sup> *Princ*, I.7.1.

held a notion of an original spiritual world of rational creatures. As for the foregoing passage, in which such a view is explicitly rejected, he considers this as modified by Rufinus.<sup>171</sup> It is obvious that Butterworth is unaware that these 'precious stones', being 'ornaments' in the body of the 'multi-decorated' Wisdom, are also called 'creatures'. For it is Origen himself who says that "God is invisible and there are some creatures invisible, that is to say intelligible (νοητά)"<sup>172</sup> employing the term which Paul uses in Rom. 1,20, namely, 'the invisible things of God'. It is in the same sense that Origen refers to 'God and the invisible things of God',<sup>173</sup> explaining that "what is signified by the term 'invisible' is incorporeal".<sup>174</sup>

Again his authentic views can be traced into *Princ*:

It is proved by many declarations throughout the whole of Scripture that the universe was created by God and that there is no substance which has not received its existence from him; which refutes and dismisses the doctrines falsely taught by some, that there is a matter which is co-eternal with God or that there are unbegotten souls, in whom they would have it that God implanted not so much the principle of existence as the quality and rank of their life.<sup>175</sup>

Despite the distinction between corporeality and incorporeality, it is sustained that the very nature of rational beings has an existential unity and no notion of dualism can be applied to their existence *per se*. There is only an intellectual grasp of incorporeality applied to rational creatures; and this stems from the conception of the Fall. Not infrequently is it stated or suggested that this incorporeality, applied to rational creatures in the foregoing sense, is an element of a certain 'affinity' between God and the world.<sup>176</sup>

All rational creatures then, regardless of their rank of life, have the same origin: they are originated in the divine reality.

Once actually created as individuals, they were dispersed in the various ranks of life, yet all of them have something in common.

<sup>171</sup> *FP*, p. 81, n. 1.

<sup>172</sup> *Cels*, VII, 37.

<sup>173</sup> *Cels*, VII, 7.

<sup>174</sup> *Cels*, VI, 64. On the significant distinction between the notions of 'not seen' and 'invisible' I discuss presently.

<sup>175</sup> *Princ*, I.3.3.

<sup>176</sup> *Cels*, IV, 25; III, 75; I, 8; III, 39; IV, 40; IV, 83. *exhMar*, XLVII; *commJohn*, 13, XLII; 19, IV; *frJohn*, XLV. *expProv*, 7.



This common is the 'rational essence' (ἡ λογικὴ οὐσία), part of which is the human one, which is called 'soul'.<sup>177</sup> A rational being is 'an existence which is rationally capable of feeling and movement'.<sup>178</sup> Rational creatures are living beings, receiving commands from God, since, quite plausibly, commands can be given only to living beings.<sup>179</sup> Moreover, 'rational creatures are of one nature',<sup>180</sup> as 'things which have one definition have also undoubtedly the same substance'.<sup>181</sup>

This incorporeal in rational beings is what allows them a kind of *communication* with God through the Logos.<sup>182</sup> In the final analysis, the element which constitutes the personal identity of rational creatures lies exactly in this relation with God. Their bodies change, since 'it is possible for matter, which underlies all qualities, to change quality' (δυνατόν ἀμείβειν ποιότητας τὴν ὑποκειμένην πάσαις ποιότησιν ὕλην).<sup>183</sup> The quality of bodies of rational creatures changes according to their merits; what remains unchangeable is their faculty to communicate with God through the Logos, since they are endowed with rationality. It is through their 'incorporeal' dimension that they communicate with God.

This conception of the personal identity of rational creatures does not really suggest any actual existence of the dualism (matter/spirit) in the rational creature itself in any sort of Platonic sense. The personality of rational creatures is not compound, it is single. The quality of their body reflects the quality of their incorporeal, and vice versa. This means that the body has a certain quality, on account of the quality of the incorporeal element. If a rational creature is a daemon, this state corresponds to the quality of the body and mind, which dictates the kind of the respective actions. It is not the incorporeal itself (understood abstractly, as if it were an independent individual subsistence—which it is not), but it is the *faculty* of the creature in his relation to God that constitutes his personal identity. The quality of mind changes, the quality of body changes, too—indeed it

<sup>177</sup> *commMatt*, 17, 34.

<sup>178</sup> *Princ*, VIII.8.2.

<sup>179</sup> *Princ*, 1.7.3.

<sup>180</sup> *Princ*, III.5.4.

<sup>181</sup> *Princ*, VIII.8.2.

<sup>182</sup> *s. infra*.

<sup>183</sup> *Cels*, III, 42.

changes accordingly. What remains unchangeable is the capacity of this 'mind-body' entity to come in a dialectical relation to God, to be distinct in the eyes of God as an individual personality, and to be free to obey or disobey God's will. There can be no notion of personal incorporeal mind existing in this fallen state. Mind existing in itself into the world is an intellectual abstraction, not an independent reality. Mind does not live in itself either 'before' or after the Fall. For after the Fall it is the rational creature, as an inseparable being, who lives; on the other hand, 'before' the Fall it is God's Wisdom who lives.<sup>184</sup> In either case mind is regarded as participating, as it were, in life—still in no case does it live itself as an independent personal incorporeal being.

Speaking of 'soul', Origen points out that this is the state of mind applying to human being only: a 'man' is 'a soul using a body'.<sup>185</sup> Yet it is himself who emphasizes that this is only a figure of speech irrelevant to any Platonic notion; this is just a 'metaphor'.<sup>186</sup> In *commJohn* he states that a human being is an inseparable entity. Although 'soul' and 'body' are regarded as 'contrary by nature' (φύσει ἐναντία), human being is actually 'one unity' (κρᾶσιν μίαν).<sup>187</sup>

So we can see Origen censuring Gnostics such as Marcion and Valentinus by name, for holding that humans are but 'souls', thus reducing the human existence to the incorporeal and neglecting the body. Against this, Origen pronounces human existence as being 'one' (ἓν) comprising the two in unity (τὸ συναμφοτέρον). The 'life' of soul and body is 'common' (ζωή κοινή) to them both and resurrection makes sense only as one of both soul and body.<sup>188</sup> By the same token, that 'the incorporeal soul is not punished without a body' (ὅτι ἀσώματος ἡ ψυχὴ, καὶ ὅτι ἄνευ σώματος οὐ κολάζεται).<sup>189</sup> This 'unity' of human nature applies even to Christ himself who is he who 'assumed human nature altogether' (πάντη ἄνθρωπον ἀνειληφέναι).<sup>190</sup>

<sup>184</sup> *commJohn*, 2, XVII.

<sup>185</sup> *Cels*, VI, 71; VII, 38; s. also *Princ*, IV.2.7. Also in Latin translations: *Homilies on Luke*, 14.4 (translated by Jerome) and *Homilies on Leviticus*, 9.6.4. (translated by Rufinus).

<sup>186</sup> "we should use the metaphor of bodily clothing . . ."; *Princ*, II.3.2.

<sup>187</sup> *commJohn*, 13, L.

<sup>188</sup> *frLuc*, 242.

<sup>189</sup> *frMatt*, 209; the same in *selPs*, I.

<sup>190</sup> *Princ*, IV.2.7.

What constitutes the personal identity of a rational creature is to be found in his *relation* to God rather than in the creature itself regarded as an isolated and independent subsistence. This is why Origen states thoughts such as the following:

Moreover when the scripture says that God created all things 'by number and measure',<sup>191</sup> we shall be right in applying the term 'number' to rational creatures or minds for this very reason that they are so many as can be provided for and ruled and controlled by the providence of God;<sup>192</sup> God 'made all things by number and measure; for to God there is nothing either without end or without measure';<sup>193</sup> 'every created thing, therefore, is distinguished in God's sight by its being confined within a certain number and measure, that is, either number in the case of rational beings or measure in the case of bodily matter'.<sup>194</sup>

Rational creatures are distinguished in the sight of God and this happens 'from the time their personality first emerged'.<sup>195</sup>

Thus the sheer fact of the individual *personal relation* to God constitutes the personal identity of a rational creature. This is why 'to receive commands from God'<sup>196</sup> is considered as a fundamental characteristic of a rational being. This personal and concrete dialectical relation to God, as a fact, is what actually remains constant and unchangeable throughout the alterations of rational creatures (both in their incorporeal and corporeal nature) from one 'acon' to another.

In *selEz* this conception is enunciated thus:

Regarding our birth in flesh, we have a father and a mother. But such a father or mother is the soul's [father or mother]; for it is God alone who is the creator and father of the soul. This is what God teaches by saying that 'All souls are mine';<sup>197</sup> and each soul has its own hypostasis and stands for reasons of its own and not [for reasons] of anyone else (καὶ ἐκάστη ψυχὴ ἰδίαν ὑπόστασιν ἔχει, ἐν τῷ ἰδίῳ λόγῳ ἰσταμένη, καὶ οὐκ ἐν ἄλλῳ).<sup>198</sup>

The very fact that God has established a personal relation with each rational being endows it with its individual personality, which is

<sup>191</sup> Wis. 11, 20.

<sup>192</sup> *Princ.* II.9.1.

<sup>193</sup> *Princ.* IV.4.8.

<sup>194</sup> *Princ.* IV.4.8; my italics.

<sup>195</sup> *Princ.* I.5.3.

<sup>196</sup> *Princ.* I.7.3.

<sup>197</sup> Ez. 18, 4.

<sup>198</sup> *selEz.* 18, PG 13.817.

thereafter free to come to a dialectical relation either to God or to other rational beings.

This is the answer that Origen offers as a result of his fundamental view of rational creature as an inseparable entity, in which the distinction between body and incorporeal element are mere intellectual abstractions. A rational being is in itself indivisible, single and not compound. Thus what is theoretically described as an 'incorporeal' element of a rational creature, is in no way understood to live in itself autonomously and independently from the body.

### *The conception of the world*

There are serious reasons, which render the study of Origen's concept of cosmos an indispensable presupposition of studying his concept of time. As we shall see in due course, the concept of time proper is defined in close correlation to that of cosmos. It is then reasonable to anticipate that it will be possible to determine some principal characteristics of time in correspondence to similar characteristics of the cosmos. For instance, if the cosmos is held to be eternal, then time should be regarded as eternal too, in the sense of endless duration. Besides, it has been claimed that Origen holds the notion of a world before time, in a Platonic sense. Again, a study in his concept of cosmos will show whether or not can we speak of cosmos without necessarily implying the coexistence of time; that is, to find out whether cosmos can make sense in the absence of time.

The analysis of this concept of time would be either impossible or misleading, unless it is clear how the cosmos is conceived, and what its content (or, contents) is. It is therefore fundamental that, before any discussion on time proper takes place, the notion of cosmos be canvassed.

Origen was conscious of the crucial importance of the concept of cosmos. He often focused his analysis on the meaning of it; indeed, there are numerous points where he tries to illustrate (sometimes through extensive expositions) the meaning of cosmos. The *Commentary on Genesis* is the work, which would offer the most systematic analysis on the question. It would be reasonable to assume that, in that work, the issue had been treated in detail. This work,<sup>199</sup> however, is

<sup>199</sup> Apart from fragments. s. PG 12.45ff; 17.12ff; GCS, 6, 23-30 (homilies).

lost and this is a serious gap in his extant writings.<sup>200</sup> For, in his exegesis of the First Chapter of Genesis, he had provided an extensive account of his views about the cosmos. This is not just a conjecture; it is he himself who makes references to his analyses in that commentary.<sup>201</sup> His conception, nonetheless, can be gathered from other points of his extant work. For the purpose of my topic, these references are rather sufficient; for my aim at this point is consideration of the meaning of cosmos, not of his entire Cosmology.

The central idea is that the term *κόσμος*, as found in the Scripture, is a 'homonym' (ὁμωνυμία). In the *commGen* it is stated that "the word [sc. cosmos] should be examined as a homonym" (τὴν λέξιν ὡς ὁμωνυμιον ἐξετάζεσθαι).<sup>202</sup> It is a task of the interpreter to assign to scriptural terms each time that meaning which upholds the reverence to the magnificence of God.<sup>203</sup> It is also argued that those who have neglected the fact that the term cosmos is a homonym have committed the fault of making most irreverent assertions about God.<sup>204</sup>

This is the rule according to which a specific content should be attributed to the term cosmos in each particular case. This rule is reverence to God and avoidance of 'malicious interpretations' (μοχθηρῶν ἐκδοχῶν).<sup>205</sup> Thus, in interpreting the passage of Scripture I John 5, 19, 'The world lies in the power of evil', he avers that, by the term 'world', John refers only to 'the earthly and human affairs' (τῶν περιγείων καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων); for if someone thinks that the term points to 'the system of heaven and earth and those contained in them' he would be led to the most impertinent and irreverent assertion about God, namely, that the sun and the moon and the stars 'lie in the evil' although they just perform a regular movement by order of God.<sup>206</sup>

<sup>200</sup> Instead, we have sixteen Homilies preserved in Latin, now available in English translation: *Origen: Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, tr. R.E. Heine, Washington, 1981. Of this text, only a small fragment is preserved in Greek (from Homily 2). Origen's exegeses of Genesis have partially been preserved by Eusebius and Procopius of Gaza.

<sup>201</sup> *Cels*, VI, 60.

<sup>202</sup> *commGen*, 3, (comm. on Gen. 1, 16–18); PG 12.89; *Philocalia*, 14, 2.

<sup>203</sup> *commGen*, 3, (comm. on Gen. 1, 16–18); *commJohn*, I, XXXVIII; also *Princ*, I.5.4; IV.4.3.

<sup>204</sup> *commGen*, 3, (comm. on Gen. 1, 16–18).

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>206</sup> *commGen*, 3, (comm. on Gen. 1, 16–18).



Accordingly, the scriptural portion John 1, 29 'This is the lamb of God who bears the sin of the world' refers to 'earthly places' (περιγείους τόποις) and only those who 'are unaware of the homonym' (διὰ τὴν ἄγνοιαν τῆς ὁμωνυμίας) would 'stupidly argue' (φιλονεικούντες ἡλιθίως) that at this point the term 'world' could have a broader meaning.<sup>207</sup> Again, in the passage 2 Cor. 5, 19, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself', the term 'world' refers only to the earthly and human reality, not 'to those existing in the whole world' (περί τῶν ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ).<sup>208</sup>

In *commJohn* it is once more stated that there are various meanings of the term *cosmos* (ἐκ τῆς 'Κόσμος' φωνῆς) in the Scripture;<sup>209</sup> and in *commMatt* he once more undertakes the task to clarify the different imports of this 'homonym' by selecting and interpreting several passages of the Scripture where the term appears. Quoting Matthew 18, 7-14, 'Woe to the world for the temptations to sin', he sets his intention forth: "Intelligere autem aliquid poterimus, si congregemus scripturarum exempla in quibus nominatur mundus".<sup>210</sup> He does so by referring to numerous passages of Scripture where the term 'cosmos' appears. So, "one should not think that it is the same thing to speak simply of the world or of the world of heaven or of the world of Esther".<sup>211</sup>

The conclusion at that point is that the usual meaning of *cosmos* in the Scripture is not that of the 'system consisting of heaven and earth' (τὸ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς σύστημα),<sup>212</sup> but 'only the earthly place' (ὁ περιγείος μόνος τόπος).<sup>213</sup> Sometimes the meaning of *cosmos* is even narrower, pointing just to that part of the earth, which is inhabited by people, that is the *οἰκουμένη*.<sup>214</sup> In *Cels* it is stated that it is usual

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>209</sup> *commJohn*, 6, LVII.

<sup>210</sup> *commMatt*, 13, 20. The text is extant only in Latin since, at this point, there is a small lacuna in the original Greek text; nevertheless, there is no question about the validity of the Latin translation at this point, since an account of the various meanings of *cosmos* follows in the ensuing Greek text.

<sup>211</sup> *commMatt*, 13, 20.

<sup>212</sup> The expression "the system of heaven and earth" (τὸ σύστημα ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς) is a Stoic definition; s. *SVP*, II, 168, 11; II, 169, 39; II, 192, 35. Diogenes Laertius ascribes this definition to Posidonius verbatim: Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum*, Book 7, section 137. Origen uses this definition at several points: *Cels*, VI, 59; *commJohn*, 1, XV; *commMatt*, 13, XX; *commGen* PG 12.89; *Philocalia*, 14, 2; *selPs*, 118.

<sup>213</sup> *commMatt*, 13, 20; s. also *Princ*, I.5.5.

<sup>214</sup> *commMatt*, 12, 27; 13, 20.

(ἔθoς) to find the term *cosmos* in Scripture in the sense of 'the earth'.<sup>215</sup>

It is plain then that there are different purports assigned to the term *cosmos*: this may mean the visible whole which consists of 'heaven and earth',<sup>216</sup> that is, the visible firmament consisting 'of the moon and the sun and the heavenly bodies called 'planets' or wanderers,<sup>217</sup> or just the earth (περίγειος τόπος), or that part of the earth which is inhabited by people (οἰκουμένη), or even the human environment itself.<sup>218</sup> However, it should be constantly borne in mind that all these different meanings are employed for the sake of exegesis. In interpreting a certain passage the import of *cosmos* which should be employed is that which could in no case lead to irreverent implications about the grandeur or goodness of God. Any interpretation of *cosmos* which would put the magnificence or righteousness of God in question should be dismissed and another import (either broader or narrower) should be applied to it.

All these interpretations of the term *cosmos*, therefore, are upheld for an aim which is primarily theological. The question then, which is invited, is this: did Origen hold a notion about the actual content of *cosmos*, which would be a natural one? That is, did he maintain a natural conception of the world, a theory independent from the circumstantial need to interpret a particular point of the Scripture? Did he hold a picture about the (in his view) *objective* structure of the world? Did he have a theory about the cosmic structure that would serve to the exposition of his cosmology?

As a matter of fact, beyond all the specific meanings adopted for the sake of a particular exegesis, Origen did hold a clear personal conception of the *cosmos*. This is expounded both in *Princ* and in many of his writings in Greek alike.

In the Second Book of *Princ*, he attempts 'to inquire into the meaning of the actual term 'world'; for this is a term which is frequently shown in the holy scriptures to be assigned different imports.<sup>219</sup> He makes a systematic inquiry into the meaning of the term: the name

<sup>215</sup> *Cels*, VI, 49.

<sup>216</sup> *Cels*, VI, 49.

<sup>217</sup> *Princ*, II.3.6.

<sup>218</sup> *commMatt*, 12, 27.

<sup>219</sup> *Princ*, II.3.6.

cosmos indicates not only the world but also (in its literal sense) the notion of 'ornament'. The latter is found at certain points of the Old Testament.<sup>220</sup> In Scripture cosmos often means our earth together with its inhabitants. But this visible universe which consists of heaven and earth is also called world, since Paul says, 'The fashion of this world will pass away'.<sup>221</sup>

Continuing the notional topography of his world, Origen makes a step further: there is yet another heaven, of another broader sphere; this heaven contains and encloses that earth which Jesus in the gospel promises to the 'meek' and 'gentle'<sup>222</sup> and this sphere is called in the holy scriptures the 'good land' and the 'land of the living'. There is then another 'heaven' and another 'earth' beside this visible firmament. That place, however, is but one, indeed the highest among all these which constitute the world: this is an abiding place for the pious and blessed, in a 'good land', as it were, and a 'land for the living', which the 'meek' and 'gentle' will receive as an inheritance. There are also other places in the world. In general though, by the term 'world' he understands "all that is above the heavens, or in them, or on the earth, or in what is called the lower regions, or any places that exist anywhere; together with the beings who are said to dwell in them. All this is called the world."<sup>223</sup>

The conclusion is that "the entire universe of things that exist, both celestial and supercelestial, earthly and infernal, may be spoken of in general way as a single perfect world, within which or by which those other worlds that are in it must be supposed to be contained".<sup>224</sup>

This is Origen's fundamental world-picture; in his work preserved in Greek there are numerous references to the various 'spaces' in the world. In *Cels* he refers to the 'most pure celestial spaces of the world' (ἐν τοῖς καθαρωτάτοις τοῦ κόσμου χωρίοις ἐπουρανίοις) and to the 'even purer supercelestial ones' (ἢ καὶ τοῖς τούτων καθαρωτέροις ὑπερουρανίοις).<sup>225</sup> There is also reference to the 'aether and those places which are located above it' (ἐν αἰθέρι καὶ τοῖς ἀνωτέρω αὐτοῦ

<sup>220</sup> Is. 3, 17, Is. 3, 17, 24, Wis. 18, 24.

<sup>221</sup> 1 Cor. 7, 31; *Princ.* II.3.6.

<sup>222</sup> Matt. 4, 4.

<sup>223</sup> *Princ.* II.4.3.

<sup>224</sup> *Princ.* II.3.6.

<sup>225</sup> *Princ.* II.3.6.

τόποις).<sup>226</sup> In *homJer* it is pointed out that the 'kingdom of God . . . comes from the superior places' (ἀπό τῶν κρείττονων χωρίων);<sup>227</sup> and in *commJohn* it is stressed that when we say that the gospel has been given to the whole world, by 'world' is meant not only the 'earthly place' (τῷ περιγείῳ τόπῳ), but also 'the whole system consisting of heaven and earth or heavens and earth' (τῷ συστήματι τῷ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς ἢ ἐξ οὐρανῶν καὶ γῆς).<sup>228</sup>

Pointing to places which are lower and inferior compared to the human condition, he refers to beings which exist 'down in hades or in any space like that' (ἐν ᾧδου κάτω ἢ τινι τοιούτῳ χωρίῳ).<sup>229</sup> The places which are 'up' are numerous and among them there are differences.<sup>230</sup> In *commMatt* he refers to the 'heavenly places' (οὐράνιοι τόποι)<sup>231</sup> putting the terms in the plural. Likewise, in *selPs*, he speaks of the 'dimmer spaces' (σκυθρωποτέροις χωρίοις)<sup>232</sup> using plural too. In the same work he speaks of 'various worlds' (τοὺς ποικίλους κόσμους) which 'contain the various bodies of rational creatures' (τὰ διάφορα σώματα τῶν λογικῶν).<sup>233</sup> In *expProv* he speaks of all 'rational natures' (λογικῶν φύσεων) which 'are sorted out in various worlds and bodies in proportion to their existential state' (διαιρουμένων κόσμοις καὶ σώματι κατὰ ἀναλογίαν τῆς καταστάσεως).<sup>234</sup>

This is the sense in which he speaks of 'bodies, which comprise the world',<sup>235</sup> drawing a distinction between 'life in flesh and blood' and life 'in aethereal body'.<sup>236</sup> The latter belongs to 'resurrected' creatures: they are believed to live in 'places' (χωρίοις) which are of most pure aether and so thin as to be more translucent than light itself (καὶ λεπτότητι φωτός διαυγεστέροις).<sup>237</sup> The quality of the matter of these bodies is commensurate with the moral quality of creatures.

<sup>226</sup> *Cels*, III, 42; V, 4.

<sup>227</sup> *homJer*, 14, 17.

<sup>228</sup> Once again the Stoic definition by Chrysippus, for the need of exegesis; *commJohn*, 13, XXXVII; Cf. *Cels*, 6, 59.

<sup>229</sup> *commJohn*, 13, XXXVII.

<sup>230</sup> *commJohn*, 19, XXII.

<sup>231</sup> *frMatt*, 51.

<sup>232</sup> *selPs*, 21, PG 12.1256.

<sup>233</sup> *selPs*, 138, 14-6, PG 12.1661.

<sup>234</sup> *expProv*, 3, PG 17.168.

<sup>235</sup> *Cels*, IV, 57. s. also, *Cels*, III, 51-52.

<sup>236</sup> *commJohn*, 1, XXVI.

<sup>237</sup> *frJohn*, CXXXIX.

This is why he speaks of 'aethereal places' (αἰθερίους τόπους).<sup>238</sup> As a matter of fact, this expression is a kind of natural explanation of why these bodies are 'not seen': their material character (which is proportionate to their moral superiority) is so fine that it is 'more translucent' than light itself and cannot be seen by humans.

The notion of 'body' then should be understood in a broader sense. There is no need to insist on the nature of these bodies. Suffice it to bear in mind that all rational creatures are corporeal. This corporeality can be realized through different forms of bodies, even through *something* corporeal which is 'different from a body' (καὶ τὸ τοῖον μὲν σῶμα, καὶ ποιόν σῶμα, ἄλλο δὲ τι ἕτερον σώματος).<sup>239</sup>

The differences among rational creatures of different ranks of life lie in the different degree of their participation to (and knowledge of) the Logos.<sup>240</sup> Christ nevertheless is present in all ranks of life since 'all rational creatures participate in Christ'.<sup>241</sup> Rationality (ὁ λόγος) is what establishes a certain affinity between God and creatures.<sup>242</sup> Creatures 'cannot be regarded as totally alienated from God'<sup>243</sup> precisely on account of their *rationality*, even though the degree of rationality in rational creatures varies. Christ, as Logos, descends to all ranks of life<sup>244</sup> and 'is present in each rational creature'.<sup>245</sup> Even 'daemons are regarded as created by God, not as daemons but inasmuch as they are rational creatures' (καθὼ λογικοί τινες).<sup>246</sup> The higher a 'heaven' the closer to the Logos this is believed to be. This is the sense in which Christ is 'the king of heavens' and his

<sup>238</sup> *commJohn*, 13, XL. At this point there are two obviously small gaps in the original text. E. Preuschen in the edition *Der Johanneskommentar* of the Prussian Academy propounds this restoration of the text: "ἐν τοῖς πρὸ τῆς (εἰς τοὺς) αἰθερίους τόπους ὁδοῦ χωρίοις" (*Origenes Werke*, 4, p. 266). I think that instead of ὁδοῦ, which does not make much sense here, it is ἀναβάσεως that should be adopted, as it is a usual expression of Origen's. Thus the text should be read thus: "ἐν τοῖς πρὸ τῆς (εἰς τοὺς) αἰθερίους τόπους (ἀναβάσεως) χωρίοις"; Cf. C. Blanc, *Origène, Commentaire sur S. Jean*, III, p. 174, n. 2.

<sup>239</sup> *commJohn*, 20, XXVIII.

<sup>240</sup> *selPs*, 5. A rather extensive account of the 'secret' doctrine of different ranks of rational creatures is given in *commMatt*, 17, 2.

<sup>241</sup> *commJohn*, 2, XI; s. *infra*.

<sup>242</sup> *Cels*, IV, 25.

<sup>243</sup> ὁ γὰρ λόγος τὴν ἀρχὴν ἔχων ἀπὸ τοῦ παρὰ Θεοῦ λόγου οὐκ ἔα τὸ λογικὸν ζῶον πάντῃ ἀλλότριον νομισθῆναι Θεοῦ. *Ibid*.

<sup>244</sup> *commJohn*, 1, XXXI; *Cels*, I, 62.

<sup>245</sup> *frJohn*, XVIII.

<sup>246</sup> *Cels*, IV, 65.



'kingdom is not a sovereignty over a part of the lower places, or of a part of the higher ones, but it is [sovereignty over] all the higher places which have been called heavens';<sup>247</sup> this because Christ the Logos has full authority 'not only over one heaven, but over all the heavens'.<sup>248</sup>

Origen's averments about the incarnation of the Son should be understood in the light of this analysis. The Logos is he who came down to the earth 'descending not only one heaven but all of them, whatever their number may be' (καταβάς οὐχ ἓνα μόνον οὐρανόν, ἀλλὰ πάντας, ὅσοι ποτέ εἰσίν).<sup>249</sup> Although Origen rejects the opinion about the existence of 'seven heavens',<sup>250</sup> he affirms that 'the Bible does seem to teach that there are many heavens, perhaps meaning the spheres of the planets of which the Greeks speak or perhaps something else more mysterious'.<sup>251</sup> Thus he appeals to Moses who

says that in a divine dream our forefather Jacob had a vision in which he saw a ladder reaching to heaven and angels of God ascending and descending upon it, and the Lord standing still at its top;<sup>252</sup> perhaps in this story of the ladder Moses was hinting at these truths or at yet more profound doctrines. Philo also composed a book about this ladder, which is worthy of intelligent and wise study by those who wish to find the truth.<sup>253</sup>

This statement, as well as similar others, should be understood in the light of the conception of the world comprising different spaces or particular 'worlds'.

This is the context in which a particular point in *Princ.* should be understood in order to avoid misunderstandings: it is averred<sup>254</sup> that Jesus

alludes to yet another world, beyond this visible one, which is difficult to describe and depict in actual truth. For he says, 'I am not of this

<sup>247</sup> *comm.Matt.*, 14, 7.

<sup>248</sup> *comm.Matt.*, 13, 31.

<sup>249</sup> *exclPs.*, 17, PG 17.112.

<sup>250</sup> *Cels.*, VI, 21; VI, 23.

<sup>251</sup> *Cels.*, VI, 21. Origen held a notion which was 'more mysterious', since he perceived these particular worlds to be different in *quality*, not in terms of geometrical distance. s. *infra*.

<sup>252</sup> Gen. 28, 12–13.

<sup>253</sup> *Cels.*, VI, 21. Origen here alludes to Philo's work *de Somniis*.

<sup>254</sup> *Princ.*, II.3.6.

world;<sup>255</sup> and the words, 'I am not of this world', suggest that he was of some other world.

At that point it is remarked that this notion can in no way be related to the Greek one about a spiritual 'world of ideas'. What is implied is that Jesus, in descending to the human rank of life, has passed through the higher worlds. This is why the 'world', which Jesus speaks about, 'excels in quality and glory, but is nevertheless contained within the limits of this world',<sup>256</sup> which obviously alludes to the uppermost rank of life, in which Christ is understood to reign, too.

The term used to denote these particular 'places' which comprise the entire 'single'<sup>257</sup> world is *χωρίον*. This is derived from *χωρος* which means 'place' or 'space'. Thus *χωρίον* means a particular space. It is remarkable that the same term *χωρος* is used in modern science, particularly in the mathematical theory of spaces. It is also significant that Origen has a clear grasp of the differences among these particular spaces: they are not understood in terms of spatial distance; these spaces are separated from each other by means of a certain *qualitative*, not geometrical, distance. If these spaces are to be examined only in terms of geometrical distance, then there is no actual distance among them: they are all here, on the earth. This notion is upheld in *Princ.* through an appeal to Clement of Rome who 'speaks of other parts of the world which none of our people can reach, nor can any of those who live there cross over to us; and these parts themselves he called 'worlds', when he says, 'The ocean is impassible to men, and the worlds beyond it are governed by the same ordinances of God the Ruler'.<sup>258</sup>

However, in this Latin portion it is not clear whether Clement of Rome regarded the distance between the worlds as a spatial one, or not.<sup>259</sup> Origen, on the other hand, is categorical on this point: in

<sup>255</sup> John, 17, 14-16.

<sup>256</sup> *Princ.* II.3.6. It should be noted, however, that in *Princ.* the notion of a radical chasm between God and the world is extremely vague, in contrast to the clarity with which this notion is explicated in the Greek texts. Thus the Latin rendering of *Princ.* may well lead to miscomprehensions as to whether certain passages refer to the higher ranks of life of the world or to the divine reality.

<sup>257</sup> *Princ.* II.3.6.

<sup>258</sup> *Princ.* II.3.6.

<sup>259</sup> Cf. Clement, *Epistula ad Corinthios*, XX, 5, 8: 'The unsearchable places of the abysses and the unfathomable realms of the lower world are controlled by the same

*selEz* he explicitly states that these other worlds are 'on the earth': 'There are certainly other worlds on the earth and this can also be shown from our education (μαθήματα); for it is also Clement who says, 'The ocean is impassible to men and these worlds beyond it are governed by the same ordinances of the Ruler'.<sup>260</sup>

So, although Origen's world is one and 'single',<sup>261</sup> it comprises particular worlds. Nevertheless, being a theologian, he is primarily interested not in these worlds, as places, but in the dwellers of them. The pertinent reference in *Princ* is quite expressive; the 'places' come only 'secondly'; what is significant is the hierarchy of the creatures:

The entire constitution of the world is various and diverse; for it consists of rational beings, and others more divine, and of bodies of different kinds; . . . then secondly of places, such as heaven or the heavens.<sup>262</sup> . . . In this world some creatures are said to be supercelestial, that is placed in the more blessed abodes and clothed with the brighter and more heavenly bodies; and among these many differences are revealed.<sup>263</sup> . . . Some creatures, however, are called earthly, and among these, too, there are no small differences, for some are barbarians, others Greeks, and of the barbarians some are wilder and fiercer, whereas others are more gentle.<sup>264</sup> . . . There are also certain invisible powers, to which the management of things upon earth is entrusted; and we must believe that among these, too, no small differences exist, just as is found to be the case among men. The apostle Paul indeed intimates that there are also certain infernal powers and among these in like manner a condition of variety must undoubtedly be looked for.<sup>265</sup>

Hence, although Origen is very clear in expounding the hierarchy of his world, his main interest is focused not on the particular spaces themselves, but on the dwellers of these places: each space is the dwelling place of a particular mode of rational existence. When he refers to the 'world', he primarily has in mind and wants to indi-

ordinances . . . The ocean, which men cannot pass, and the worlds beyond it, are ruled by the same injunctions of the Master." (tr. by K. Lake; Loeb Classical Library, *Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1, p. 45).

<sup>260</sup> *selEz*, 8, PG 13.796.

<sup>261</sup> *Princ*, II.3.6.

<sup>262</sup> *Princ*, II.1.1; s. also, *Princ*, II.2.2.; II.3.4.; II.1.4.; II.9.1.

<sup>263</sup> *Princ*, II.4.3; also *commJohn*, 1, XXVII; 2, XXII; 19, XX.

<sup>264</sup> *Princ*, II.4.3; using the language of 1 Cor. 15.40.

<sup>265</sup> *Princ*, II.4.3. He presumably refers to those who dwell in the 'lower parts of the earth', according to Eph. 4, 9.

cate the entirety of rational creatures living in all the particular spaces of the world. "These are who dwell 'in heaven and on earth and under the earth,'<sup>266</sup> the three terms indicating the entire universe."<sup>267</sup>

The notion about the different modes of existence and ranks of life is bolstered by scriptural authority: he appeals to Paul, namely Col. 1, 16, where the apostle speaks of 'thrones, dominions, principalities and powers'; also, to Eph. 1, 21, where he speaks of Christ 'who is above every principality and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this world, but also in the world to come'. And here is the conclusion:

Here he [sc. Paul] plainly shows that besides those beings he has mentioned, there are certain others, which may be named indeed in this world, but yet have not on the present occasion been enumerated by him, and which perhaps were not known to any other person; and there are others still, which cannot be named in this world, but will be named in the world to come.<sup>268</sup>

This view, as expressed in *Princ.* can be found in and confirmed by the writings in Greek. In *commJohn* there is reference to the creatures of other spaces which have been created by God through the Son:<sup>269</sup>

I think therefore that rational beings are classified in various ranks and among them there is the supreme one, then the second, then the third and so on, down to the last of the whole; to say for sure which is the supreme rank of life, which is the second and which is the third and to classify them down to the last one is not within human capability, but it is beyond our nature.<sup>270</sup>

At this point, he attempts to afford a classification of the higher rational beings by their names based on scriptural passages where

<sup>266</sup> *Philocalia*, 2, 10.

<sup>267</sup> *Princ.* 1.6.2.

<sup>268</sup> *Princ.* 1.5.1. The scriptural passages on which Origen grounds this notion are the following: Heb. 1, 4; Col. 1, 16; Eph. 1, 21; also, Matt., 25, 41 and Rev. 12, 7 (for the expression 'angels of the devil'); John 12, 31; 14, 30; 16, 11 ('prince of this world'); 1 Cor. 2, 6 ('princes of this world') and also Eph. 6, 12; Luke 7, 21; 4, 33 ('evil spirits' and 'impure daemons'); Phil. 2, 10 (being 'earthly' or 'under the earth'); Deut. 32, 9 (considering 'the reference to certain different classes, as when it is said 'the Lord's portion in his people Jacob, Israel in the cord of his inheritance') and Deut. 32, 8 ('angels of God').

<sup>269</sup> *commJohn*, 2, XIV.

<sup>270</sup> *commJohn*, 1, XXXI.

those names are found. Thus he divides them into 'gods',<sup>271</sup> 'thrones', 'dominions', 'principalities', 'powers'.<sup>272</sup> In *commMatt* he speaks of rational beings which are 'superior to humans' (τὰ κρείττονα ἀνθρώπων).<sup>273</sup> His general view though is that "it is only God who knows the various regiments of souls or the powers that are with them" and it is only he who knows the causes of this classification.<sup>274</sup> In like manner he refers to the ranks of life below the human one, namely, demons.<sup>275</sup>

The conclusion is that what is strictly meant by the term 'world' is the entirety of particular worlds each of which contains a certain grade of life. Although this cosmos consists of many particular spaces, it is regarded as one, single and perfect.<sup>276</sup> The main interest is focused on those who live there, not on the spaces themselves. So Origen's world is virtually the entirety of persons, endowed with the capability of free moral action.<sup>277</sup>

*The notions of 'not seen' and 'invisible'*

This fundamental distinction plays an important role and is made by means of a comment on the following passage of Paul:

All things were created in him [sc. Christ], things in heaven and things on earth, things visible and invisible, whether thrones, dominions, principalities or powers, all were created through him and in him, and he is before all creatures, and he is the head.<sup>278</sup>

This portion is taken to suggest that the term 'visible' applies to what is corporeal, whereas 'invisible' denotes what is incorporeal.<sup>279</sup> The term 'invisible' points to

a substance in which we can discern neither colour nor shape nor possibility of touch nor size, a substance perceptible to the mind alone

<sup>271</sup> Quoting Ps. 135, 2; Ps. 49, 1; 1 Cor. 8, 5.

<sup>272</sup> Quoting Col. 1, 16; s. also *commMatt*, 17, 20.

<sup>273</sup> *commMatt*, 13, 20.

<sup>274</sup> *commMatt*, 17, 21.

<sup>275</sup> *commJohn*, I, XXXI; also *Princ*, I.5. 4–5.

<sup>276</sup> *Princ*, II.3.6; II.4.3; *commJohn*, 12, XXXVI.

<sup>277</sup> *Princ*, III.1.1.

<sup>278</sup> Cf. Col. 1, 16–18. *Princ*, I.7.1. Cf. Ch. 5, p. 173.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*; s. also *Princ*, I. Pref. 8–9; I.7.1; IV.3.15; *Cels*, VI, 64; VII, 46. *fJohn*, XIII.



which anyone can call whatever he pleases. The Greeks speak of this substance as *asomaton*, or incorporeal; but the divine scriptures call it 'invisible'.<sup>200</sup>

There is also reference to another passage of Paul, namely 2 Cor. 4,18, where the distinction between 'things, which are seen' and 'things, which are not seen' is drawn. Here is how this is explained:

Now the things which are invisible are not only not seen, but do not even possess a nature which admits of their being seen; they are what the Greeks have called 'asomata' or incorporeal. But the things of which Paul said, 'they are not seen', possess a nature which admits of their being seen; he is explaining, however, that they are not yet seen by those to whom they are promised.<sup>201</sup>

These two Pauline passages are taken as the scriptural basis for the distinction between incorporeal and corporeal nature to be made. This is the distinction in terms of which the radical transcendence of God to the world (particularly to space) is portrayed. As it will be shown later, the same perception of God (namely, his transcendence) is also expressed by means of the notion of atemporality.

According to this distinction, 'invisible' is what is incorporeal and hence cannot be seen by reason of its *essence*. On the other hand, 'not seen' is that which cannot be seen, not because this is incorporeal, but because it is made of a kind of matter which cannot be seen by humans. Thus what is 'not seen' is material, whereas what is invisible is incorporeal beyond any connection with any matter at all. The term 'spiritual' is sometimes used to denote the same perception of immateriality.<sup>202</sup>

Although this distinction is not only made, but also explicated, it has in fact disappeared in the rush of producing Latin renderings of Origen's writings. The incisiveness of the contrast was by and large overlooked by his ancient translators, yet this should not allow for misleading conclusions. For instance, when Rufinus passes on to us

<sup>200</sup> *Princ.* IV.3.15. The so-called Fragment 2 in Koetschau's edition is one of his interpolations in *Princ.* I. Pref. 8, and reads thus: "The term 'asomaton', that is incorporeal, is unused and unknown, not only in many other writings but also in my scriptures"—a passage from Antipater of Bostra in John of Damascus, *Sacra Parallela*, II.770; PG 96.501.

<sup>201</sup> *Princ.* II.3.6.

<sup>202</sup> *selPs.* 23, PG 12.1269, also *Cels.* III.47.

statements about 'a creation besides the one that we see' he is no doubt faithful to Origen, yet the ensuing phrase 'for there is another one now invisible to us'<sup>283</sup> should be read with attentiveness to this crucial distinction that Origen draws between 'not seen' and 'invisible'.

*God is incorporeal*

Origen states that "when the apostle says that Christ is the image of the invisible God, he declares that God is invisible".<sup>284</sup> Therefore,

the substance of the Trinity, which is the beginning and cause of all things, 'of which are all things and through which are all things and in which are all things'<sup>285</sup> must not be believed either to be a body or to exist in a body, but to be wholly incorporeal.<sup>286</sup>

The point is further elaborated thus:

God must not be thought to be in any kind of body, nor to exist in a body, but to be a simple intellectual existence, admitting in himself of no addition whatever, so that he cannot be believed to have in himself a more or less, but is Unity, or if I may so say, Oneness throughout, and the mind and fount from which originates all intellectual existence or mind. Now neither does mind need physical space in which to move and operate, nor does it need a magnitude discernible by the senses, nor bodily shape or colour, nor anything else whatsoever such as these, which are suitable to bodies and matter. Accordingly . . . only the species of deity, if I may so call it, has the privilege of existing apart from all material intermixture . . . That mind needs no space in which to move according to its own nature.<sup>287</sup>

Moving along this line, reference to 'the invisible and incorporeal God',<sup>288</sup> is frequent; he refers to the divinity, which 'in virtue of the majesty of its incorporeal nature, is confined to no place, in no place'<sup>289</sup> since 'the nature of the Trinity is one and incorporeal'.<sup>290</sup>

<sup>283</sup> *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 7.12.10.

<sup>284</sup> Col. 1, 15–16; *Princ.* IV.3.15.

<sup>285</sup> Rom. 11, 36.

<sup>286</sup> *Princ.* IV.3.15.

<sup>287</sup> *Princ.* I.1.6.

<sup>288</sup> *Princ.* IV.4.1.

<sup>289</sup> *Princ.* IV.4.1.

<sup>290</sup> *Princ.* IV.4.5.

Besides, 'it is impossible to speak of a part of what is incorporeal or to make any division in it.'<sup>291</sup> The significance of this remark will become clear in treating the notion of corporeality, which is next.

*The world is material*

As opposed to the divine nature, creation is bound with matter and distinction: "every created thing . . . is distinguished in God's sight by its being confined within a certain number or measure, that is, either number in the case of rational beings or measure in the case of bodily matter"—which makes up the bodies of rational creatures, since all of them "make use of bodies".<sup>292</sup> Further, "a body has a shape".<sup>293</sup> "Every body is made of matter" and has "shape and size and colour" which "are properties of bodies."<sup>294</sup> Moreover,

To see and to be seen is a property of bodies, which it would certainly not be right to apply either to the Father or to the Son or to the Holy Spirit in their relations with one another. For the Trinity by its nature transcends the limits of vision, although it grants it to those who are in bodies, that is to all other creatures, the property of being seen one by another. But incorporeal, and above all intellectual nature is capable of nothing else but to know and to be known.<sup>295</sup>

At that point it is clearly pointed out that the expression 'those who are in bodies' indicates the entirety of creatures in all ranks of life.

This is the context in which the distinction between 'things invisible' and 'things not seen' should be understood. The things stated by Paul as 'not seen' should be understood as 'not yet seen', not as not admitting of being seen at all; which means that they are not invisible in their essence.<sup>296</sup> We do not see these things, not because they are not capable of being seen, but simply because it is our physical structure in the human rank of life which does not allow these things to be seen by us.<sup>297</sup>

<sup>291</sup> *Princ.*, IV.4.4.

<sup>292</sup> *Princ.*, IV.4.8.

<sup>293</sup> *Princ.*, II.10.2.

<sup>294</sup> *Princ.*, II.4.3.

<sup>295</sup> *Princ.*, II.4.3.

<sup>296</sup> *Princ.*, II.3.6.

<sup>297</sup> This physical structure is directly related to moral reasons; I discuss this later, in reference to the idea of 'pre-existent causes'.

We should also notice one more property applied to bodily nature, which is ultimately a property of the world itself: "this nature [sc. the bodily one] is proved to be changeable and convertible by the very condition of its being created—for what was not and began to be is by this very fact shown to be of a changeable nature".<sup>298</sup> Therefore, "rational nature is changeable and convertible".<sup>299</sup> It is stressed again that "since these rational beings, which as we said above were made in the beginning, were made before they existed, by this very fact that they did not exist and then began to exist they are of necessity subject to change and alteration".<sup>300</sup>

Let us then see the conclusions out of these assertions about corporeality.

Since incorporeal nature can be applied to God alone and "life without a body is found in the Trinity alone"<sup>301</sup> and "bodily nature was created out of nothing after a space of time and brought into being from non-existence",<sup>302</sup> it follows straight off that the entire 'world' is 'material'. I put this term in quotation marks, because 'matter' in this case has a broader meaning: this is the stuff not only of bodies 'seen', but also those 'not seen'. This fact is possible since material substance possesses such a nature that it can undergo every kind of transformation. When this is drawn down to lower beings it is formed into the grosser and more solid condition of body and serves to distinguishing the visible species of this world in all their variety. But when it ministers to more perfect and blessed beings it shines in the splendour of 'celestial bodies'<sup>303</sup> and adorns either the 'angels of God' or the 'sons of the resurrection'<sup>304</sup> with the garments of a 'spiritual body'.<sup>305</sup> All these beings go to make up the diverse and varied condition of the one world'.<sup>306</sup> This is why there is reference to 'a variety and diversity of bodies, out of which a world is always composed'<sup>307</sup> and 'the diversity of the world cannot exist apart

<sup>298</sup> *Princ.* IV.4.8.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>300</sup> *Princ.* II.9.2.

<sup>301</sup> *Princ.* II.2.2.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.* The expression 'after a space of time' should be regarded in the context of what I have argued about the awkward use of temporal terms in the *Princ.*

<sup>303</sup> *Princ.* II.1.4.

<sup>304</sup> 1 Cor. 15, 44.

<sup>305</sup> Cf. Luke 20, 36; Matt. 22, 30.

<sup>306</sup> *Princ.* II.2.2.

<sup>307</sup> *Princ.* II.3.3.

from bodies' and 'bodily nature admits diverse and various changes to such an extent that it can undergo every kind of transformation'.<sup>308</sup>

There is also reference to 'seen or not seen creation',<sup>309</sup> as well as to 'the other creation he [sc. Paul] has spoken of here can be understood of a creation beside the one the we see. For there is another one now invisible to us,<sup>310</sup> and "Paul indeed knew that the creations of God are many and innumerable, of which even he had not received complete knowledge, only partial knowledge".<sup>311</sup>

The conception of the 'world' as material is fundamental for the overall understanding of Origen's thought.<sup>312</sup> It is surely possible to corroborate the foregoing points of Latin translations from portions preserved in Greek.

In *commJohn*, there is reference to the 'world' (κόσμος) which has been made 'material' (ὕλικός γενόμενος), and has 'various places' (τόπους ἔχει διαφόρους) some of which are lower, whereas others are higher (εἶεν ἂν τινες τόποι οἱ κάτω καὶ ἄλλοι οἱ ἄνω); still all those 'places' of the world should be regarded as being 'down', so long as they are compared with what is 'immaterial and invisible and incorporeal'. The term 'down' has 'not so much a spatial significance' (οὐ τοσοῦτον τόπων), but denotes the *qualitative* superiority of the invisible and incorporeal nature over the corporeal one (ὅσον τῇ πρὸς τὰ ἀόρατα συγκρίσει). This is the sense in which incorporeal nature (τὰ ἔξω σωμάτων) is 'above all the heavens'. Hence all the creatures of the world should be regarded as being inhabitants of a place being

<sup>308</sup> *Princ.* II.1.4.

<sup>309</sup> *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 7.10.6. T.P. Scheck has offered a good translation from Latin, but crucial facets of Origen's theology eluded him, e.g. he thinks Origen sustains a 'pre-existence of souls' (p. 90, n. 206) and he translated unsuspecting of the crucial distinction between 'not seen' and 'invisible'. It will take some time until a misleading past in scholarship will no longer exert influence upon younger and obviously diligent scholars. Cf. similar points retaining to this criticism in *Origen, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Books 1-5*, transl. T. Scheck, book series: *The Fathers of the Church*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, 2001; p. 91, n. 282; p. 374, n. 573. Likewise in *Origen, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Books 6-10*, transl. T. Scheck, Washington, 2002; p. 168, n. 231.

<sup>310</sup> *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 7.12.10.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.12.11; italics mine.

<sup>312</sup> R. Norris, like so many others, took for granted that what Origen perceives as 'world' is an 'order of rational spirits' (*op. cit.*, p. 148) which exist eternally (pp. 154-5). References by G. Bigg, G. Florovski, H. Crouzel, M. Simonetti, E. de Faye, and others, on this topic are more or less similar to that and are discussed in due course.



'down', even if they live in the highest rank of life (καὶ γὰρ πᾶς ὁ τῶν βλεπομένων πολίτης καὶ παρερχομένων καὶ προσκαίρων ἐκ τῶν κάτω ἐστίν, κἄν ἐν συγκρίσει τόπων ἐκ τῶν ἀνωτάτω τυγχάνη).<sup>313</sup>

We see, therefore, that there is a close interconnectedness between the notions of *world* and *corporeality*. The term 'world', whenever used, implies corporeality. It follows then that this term cannot be used in expressions such as 'spiritual world' or a 'world of incorporeal rational creatures before time'. For what is spiritual is of necessity incorporeal, whereas what refers to the world is of necessity corporeal. Spiritual (that is, incorporeal) life is exclusive to the Deity. The terms *world* and *spiritual* (that is, incorporeal) are incompatible with each other. This is why there is no room for expressions such as 'spiritual world', which can make no sense in this frame of thought.

Origen definitely moves in a Stoic vein in taking the view that created rationality is always and necessarily embodied in matter. This Stoic tenet was an aspect of their doctrine that matter is permeated and controlled by a rational principle. According to the Stoics, the universe had its origin in fire; but this was not a mere amorphous blaze; it embodied a controlling principle. Thus the whole universe is organized with a rational end in view, namely to promote the good of rational creatures, including men; and its overall rationality is reproduced in varying degrees in the organizing principles which control the development of its parts, the so-called 'seminal principles' (σπερματικοὶ λόγοι). Thus the cosmos as a whole exhibits a rational structure and governing principle, but obviously some parts of it are distinguished by having a rationality of their own, and are called 'microcosms' on this account.

### *The world as a 'downfall' (καταβολή)*

The qualitative difference of the world vis-à-vis the divine life is expressed through the word 'down',<sup>314</sup> according to the foregoing discussion. The same notion is adumbrated by means of the word *καταβολή*. An account of this appears in *Princ.*

<sup>313</sup> *comm* John, 19, XX -commenting on John 8, 23.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*

Still, there is a point which I do not think we ought to pass by lightly, and that is that the holy scriptures call the foundation of the world by a new and peculiar name, terming it *καταβολή*. This word is incorrectly translated into Latin by *constitutio* or foundation, for *καταβολή* in Greek has rather the significance of *deicere*, that is, to cast downwards, and is, as we have said, incorrectly rendered into Latin by *constitutio*. An example occurs in the gospel of John, when the Saviour says 'And there shall be tribulation in those days, such as hath not been from the foundation of the world'.<sup>315</sup> Here 'foundation' stands for *καταβολή* and the meaning of this term must be taken to be as explained above. Moreover the apostle used the same word in the epistle to the Ephesians, when he says, 'Who chose us before the foundation of the world';<sup>316</sup> for here, too, the 'foundation' represents *καταβολή*, which must be taken to have the same meaning as that given in our interpretation above.<sup>317</sup>

The inference out of this discussion is that "A descent . . . of all alike form from higher to lower conditions appears to be indicated by the meaning of this word *καταβολή*."<sup>318</sup>

There would be no question about the authenticity of this point, since the same reasoning appears in *commJohn*, in the exposition of the qualitative difference between corporeality and incorporeality. At the point where Origen says that we should 'in a sense' (*κατά τι τῶν σημαινομένων*)<sup>319</sup> term the Son of God himself as 'world' (*κόσμος*). The term *κόσμος* is used here as a metaphor, in order to indicate the 'multi-decorated' wisdom of God. Thus he affirms that this 'world' is but the Son of God, 'the Logos who is perfectly apart from any matter'.<sup>320</sup> There is nothing in common between that 'world', which is 'up', and our world which is 'down', being a *καταβολή* from that higher world. His opinion is that it is not accidental that 'the saints' have 'invented this term' (*τὸ ὄνομα πλασάντων*)—namely, *καταβολή*—

<sup>315</sup> The portion attributed to John, is actually from Matthew, 24, 21, where however the word used is *ἀρχή*, not *καταβολή*. In OT, the term *καταβολή* appears in Matt. 13, 35; 25, 34; Luke, 11, 50; John, 17, 24; Eph. 1, 4; Heb. 4, 3; 9, 26; 1 Peter 1, 20; Rev. 13, 8; 17, 8. The comment on the Latin meaning of *καταβολή* as *constitutio* was obviously made by Rufinus. To make his own point, Origen deals with the scriptural use of the term *καταβολή* in *commJohn*, 19, XXII.

<sup>316</sup> Eph. 1, 4.

<sup>317</sup> *Princ.* III.5.4.

<sup>318</sup> *Princ.* III.5.4.

<sup>319</sup> *commJohn*, 19, XXII.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*

in order to express the conception (διὰ ταιαύτην ἐπίνοιαν) of the world as being 'down'. For they would have just said 'before the creation (κτίσεως) of the world', yet they did not say so; they said 'Before the katabole of the world'.<sup>321</sup>

The term *καταβολή* literally means 'thrown down'. It, therefore, implies a notion of *fall*. This is why this term is most suitable as a scriptural basis (though not the only one) to which Origen alludes whenever he refers to his doctrine of Fall. The notion itself indicates that the material world had a beginning and it is clear that providential creation had a beginning, too. However, his views on this question have been widely miscomprehended. Thus he has been ascribed a notion of 'eternal creation' in a Platonic sense; that is, a notion of a beginningless world of spirits, out of which the Fall occurred.

My analyses hitherto have made clear that such an allegation is altogether ungrounded. However, since this claim is well entrenched among scholars, and since the question of the *duration* of the world is closely related to Origen's conception of time, I shall dwell on further discussion of this subject in the ensuing section, so that that no doubt should remain that this allegation is entirely erroneous.

<sup>321</sup> John 17, 24. *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 'BEGINNINGLESS WORLD': A MYTH RECONSIDERED

Origen's opinions about the 'duration' of creation have been a matter of controversy, since a notion of so-called 'eternity of the world' has been ascribed to him. This is one of the main points on which Origenism (or, what was thought to be Origen's thought) was condemned.<sup>1</sup> As time proper is defined in close relation to the world (which I shall discuss presently), his opinion about the 'duration' of the world affects directly his view of time. Analysis of this issue then is critical for a proper understanding of this ontology of time.

In canvassing the question of creation having a beginning or not, we shall take into account the fact that it is Origen himself who calls the reader's attention to the different significations denoted by the tenses in which verbs are used.<sup>2</sup> Thus he is alive to the fact that the Imperfect tense denotes what was always existing (like 'was'); this is also what he believes about the Present tense (as in the case of 'is', which denotes the timeless being of Wisdom, in the same way 'was' does). As opposed to this diction, he is conscious of what the Past tense denotes:<sup>3</sup> it indicates what happened at an indefinite moment in the past.<sup>4</sup> A similar view is found in the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*:

Because of these, therefore, it is said to the holy body of the Bride: 'How lovely have thy cheeks become!'. And notice that He did not say 'How lovely your cheeks *are*!'—but 'How lovely *have* thy cheeks *become*!' He means to show that *previously they were not* so lovely.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Fragment 5, Koetschau from Justinian's, *LibOr* (Mansi IX.528) incorporated in his edition of *Princ.* in I.2.10. Also, Fr. 10 (from the same writing of Justinian's), incorporated in *Princ.* I.4.5.

<sup>2</sup> *frLuc*, 34; *commGen*, 3 (commenting on Gen. 1, 16–18.); *expProv*, 5; *commJohn*, 2, I; 2, II; 2, XIX; 20, XXII; *frJohn*, I; *frJohn*, CX and CXI. Cf. *supra*: following Aristotle, Origen is very much alive to the temporal signification of tenses.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *frLuc*, 34.

<sup>4</sup> The word 'Αόριστος (Past Tense) literally means Indefinite.

<sup>5</sup> R.P. Lawson, *op. cit.*, p. 146; italics mine. In English the verb is in the Present Perfect tense, but in the Greek text, on which Origen comments, the verb is in the

The analyses on the actual implications of the term 'became' (in reference to the Logos being 'with' God) demonstrate an awareness of the actual signification of the tenses and elucidate determinative tenets. This is why I maintain that a philological analysis of Origen's terminology can provide significant upshots about his authentic views. For when he uses terms, especially verbs, he is particularly meticulous in respect of the philosophical and theological implications entailed by the way these terms are used.

In the beginning of this section we saw how he interprets the scriptural language, as well as how he couches his own views referring to the divine being itself. It is he himself who draws the reader's attention to the use of verbs of the scriptural language and extensively reflects through considerations of this kind.<sup>6</sup> Let us then see how he uses language himself in reference to the 'creative relation'<sup>7</sup> of God with the world.

Origen's doctrine of the divine being has certain aspects which are quite clear: Wisdom was timelessly in God apart from any creation, be it providential or actual. This means that God is visualised apart from any creation or even *thought* of creation. He created because he *willed* so. Wisdom 'was in herself in no relation to anyone' (σοφία ὑπάρχουσα οὐδεμίαν σχέσιν πρὸς ἕτερόν τινα εἶχεν).<sup>8</sup> This is the state in which God is conceived in Himself, not as Creator.

It is out of God's *decision to create* that the Son of God, as Wisdom, 'became' (γενόμενος) 'God's benevolent decision' (εὐδοκία) and 'wanted' (ἠβουλήθη) and 'willed' (ἠθέλησεν) 'to establish a creative relation to future creatures (τὰ ἐσόμενα)'.<sup>9</sup> Creation then is but a product of an act of volition. This act then is fundamentally imbued by the essential predicate of *contingency*. Which means that had the divine will wished otherwise, it could have brought it about that the world never came into existence at all.

This point calls for particular consideration. Although I shall argue for Origen's innovative conceptions, the doctrine of creation out of

Past tense. The passage *Cant.* 1, 10 reads thus: 'τὸ ὁραϊώθησαν οἱ σταγόνες σου ὡς τρυγόνος, τράχηλός σου ὡς ὀρμίσκος'. The verb form which Origen points out is ὁραϊώθησαν.

<sup>6</sup> *contra* John, 2, XIX; *fr* John, 1; *hom* Jer, 9, 4.

<sup>7</sup> *fr* John, 1; σχέσιν δημιουργικῇν.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*



nothing appears in him not as something like a parthenogenesis. There was indeed a background to the idea and it should be taken for granted that Origen drew heavily on this tradition.

Origen understands the creation of the world not as the unfolding of a cosmic essence, but as an act of volition. This concept of *freedom of will* stands in the core of this doctrine of creation. In the first place, the notion of freedom pointed to the finite human personality, regarded in its moral action. According to Aristotle, freedom is the capacity to choose among different (but, given) options, without coercion by external pressure or constraints. With the Epicureans, freedom received a metaphysical import: it was the uncaused action of a rational substance.

This particular notion of action emerging out of self-motivation, not out of any compulsion, in Christianity takes the form of creation *ex nihilo*: the uncaused production of the world solely out of the divine will. The world exists because God willed so; the world is as it is, because God will this to be so.

Just as I might say that we exist, this cannot be understood to mean that we exist as a wage for our works. Plainly it is a *gift* of God that we exist; it is the grace of the Creator who willed us to exist.<sup>10</sup> . . . even the fact that we are able to do anything at all, to think and to speak, we do through his *gift* and generosity.<sup>11</sup> . . . Just as the Father gives life to whom he *wills* and the Son gives life to whom he *wills*, and just as the Father has life in himself and he has granted to the Son to have life in himself,<sup>12</sup> so also the *grace* that the Father gives, this the Son also gives. One should know, of course, that all that human beings have from God is *grace*. For they have nothing as a debt. For who has first given to him and it will be paid back to him? Therefore, whatever *he who was not and is* has, by receiving it from *him who always is and will be forever*, is of *grace*.<sup>13</sup>

This is the major contrast<sup>14</sup> between Christianity and Platonism: God creates not only out of nothing, but also out of grace, that is, out of love. There is nothing to compel him to do so.

<sup>10</sup> *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 4.5.2.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.1.14.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. John 5, 21 and 26.

<sup>13</sup> *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 10.38.

<sup>14</sup> The foregoing portion is a compilation from Origen's *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. The italics are mine and accentuate this contrast.

As I said, the idea of the world having a beginning is not an innovation of Origen. It existed already in previous writers, in different forms and variations. It is usual to aver that the Greeks sustained the idea of a world without beginning and this holds true for Plato and his immediate successors, Aristotle, Speusippus, Xenocrates. For them, the universe existed from all eternity. However, beside the majority of Platonists, there was a minority, who taught that the world had a real beginning. In this minority one can find personalities such Plutarch and Atticus, who argued that the world had a real beginning, though not precisely a beginning in time as we know it. As for Philo, his wavering position on the issue is discussed forthwith.

On the other hand, the author of Wisdom<sup>15</sup> says merely that God's all-powerful hand created the world out of formless matter, an opinion which the Christian apologist Justin was content to reproduce.

However, nowhere in these writers do we find the view later defined by orthodox Christians that God created the world *ex nihilo*. It is not to be taken for sure that, the writer of 2 Maccabees, when referring to God 'making the world out of what is not' (ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων),<sup>16</sup> may have envisaged this doctrine.

During the first century A.D. some voices might be taken to suggest something of the notion of a world having a beginning. But one cannot be sure. Thus Eudorus seems to have sustained the idea that God created not only the Ideas but also matter; however, all he probably meant was that matter, like the Ideas, was eternally dependent on its divine origin; it was after all a fairly natural development of the Pythagorean theory that all things proceed from the One. Cicero, on the other hand, knows, but rejects, the view that matter was created by divine providence.<sup>17</sup>

Beside the (conscious or latent) idea of the world having a beginning, the notion of a momentarily creation was also current.

Creation *ex nihilo* was expounded with great clarity by Basilides, early in the second century. Origen, refers to Basilides, and treats him as a Gnostic 'heretic'.<sup>18</sup> This doctrine was adopted into orthodox

<sup>15</sup> Wis. 11, 17.

<sup>16</sup> 2 Maccabees, 7, 28. Cf. C. Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity*, p. 68.

<sup>17</sup> s. C. Stead, *op. cit.* pp. 67-8. This page is indebted to this excellent scholar.

<sup>18</sup> *homJer*, 10.5; *homLuke*, 1; *homJer*, 17.2; *fr1Cor*, 8; *selfob*, 41; *enmarJob*, 41.

Christianity by Theophilus of Antioch, *c.* A.D. 180, and is taken for granted by Irenaeus. An argument commonly used was that it was impossible to imagine matter existing eternally without interference or improvement alongside an almighty God. Theophilus of Antioch, however, went well beyond this: the notion of pre-existing matter is unacceptable to him, because it contradicts God's omnipotency. It is not at all important if God was to create out of an already subsisting matter: men such as craftsmen do exactly the same. God's divine power appears in the fact that he brings things to the fore 'out of non-being' (ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων). The phrase is used twice in the same section; the idea is that not only substances come to being out of nothingness, but also a human being receives 'motion and soul' (ψυχὴν καὶ κίνησιν) from God.<sup>19</sup>

Origen took up this expression, namely 'out of non-being' (ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων), from Theophilus of Antioch and used it word-for-word, expounding his views in a similar context,<sup>20</sup> no doubt bearing in mind the expression of 2 Maccabees 7, 28.

So Wisdom was in God's atemporal being; and this Wisdom 'willed' (ἡβουλήθη, ἡθέλησεν) 'to accept a creative relation' (ἀναλαβεῖν σχέσιν δημιουργικὴν) to what was to come into being out of non-being out of God's *decision*. Besides, there is reference to a reality where 'time cannot be found'<sup>21</sup> and 'the third and fourth conceptions of the Logos did not exist',<sup>22</sup> since there was no creation yet.

It is out of this reality that 'God *brought* (ἤγαγεν) everything into being'<sup>23</sup> and 'God *made* (ἐποίησεν) the beings out of non-beings';<sup>24</sup> 'life is the holy Trinity who gives life to everything and it is she who brought (παράγαγουσα) creatures into being out of non being';<sup>25</sup> 'those who did not exist before (τὰ μὴ πρότερον ὄντα) have been handed out to Jesus by the Father himself; and this is not said about just some of them, but about them all'.<sup>26</sup> There is also reference to all those who 'have received their being from God' (ὑπὸ γὰρ τοῦ Θεοῦ

<sup>19</sup> Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyicum*, 2, 4.

<sup>20</sup> *fr1Cor*, 84.

<sup>21</sup> *commJohn*, 2, XIX.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *frJohn*, II.

<sup>24</sup> *commJohn*, 1, XVII.

<sup>25</sup> *expProv*, 16, PG 17.196.

<sup>26</sup> *commJohn*, 32, III.

τὸ εἶναι δεξάμενοι)<sup>27</sup> and were 'brought into being out of non-being' (ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ εἶναι παρήχθη).<sup>28</sup> Moreover, it is averred that we are indebted to God because 'he made (ἐποίησεν) us who did not exist before'.<sup>29</sup>

In *Cels* he speaks of 'God who made everything'<sup>30</sup> and elsewhere he explains that in this 'everything' time should be included, too:

If everything is made through him, it is well said that he exists before the aeons; and this is whence we learn that the aeons came into being out of non-being.<sup>31</sup>

It is also stated that Christ is said to be the beginning 'because it is he who gave (διδούς) being'.<sup>32</sup>

Accordingly, God is said to be 'creator, *because* it is he who brought things (γεγονότα) into being out of non-being'.<sup>33</sup> For the 'heaven and the earth and everything in them have been produced into being out of non being'.<sup>34</sup>

Again, in reference to the Son, it is said that 'the Son and Logos of God is a hypostasis, it is he who produced (παραγαγόντα) everything from non-being into being, by his Wisdom'.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, in *expPs*, it is compliantly stated that by the term 'works' of God (as in Psalm 144, 9) David means 'the rational natures' (νῦν ἔργα τὰς φύσεις τὰς λογικάς λέγει).<sup>36</sup>

Much the same goes for expressions pointing to the creaturely nature of the soul. There are references to the 'the created 'hegemonikon' (τὸ δημιουργηθέν ἡγεμονικόν),<sup>37</sup> the 'created nature' (δεδημιουργημένην φύσιν) of 'the human soul',<sup>38</sup> as well as 'the maker' of the 'soul' (ἡ τοίνυν ψυχὴ πολλά παρὰ τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτὴν λαβοῦσα).<sup>39</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *selPs*, 21, PG 12.1260.

<sup>28</sup> *selPs*, 115, PG 12.1557.

<sup>29</sup> *selPs*, 144, PG 12.1672.

<sup>30</sup> *Cels*, II, 79.

<sup>31</sup> *selPs*, 54, PG 12.1469.

<sup>32</sup> *expProv*, 1, PG.17.156.

<sup>33</sup> *selPs*, 138, PG 12.1661.

<sup>34</sup> *expProv*, 18, PG 17.204.

<sup>35</sup> *expProv*, 9. According to the fundamental view of the actual content of the 'world', reference is made to the entirety of ranks of life: to 'rational creatures' (τὰ λογικά), not just to human beings; Cf. *comenJohn*, 13, XXXVII; *frJohn*, II.

<sup>36</sup> *selPs*, 144.

<sup>37</sup> *frI-118Lam*, XXVII.

<sup>38</sup> *Cels*, IV, LXXXIII.

<sup>39</sup> *frI-118Lam*, XXXIV.

The notion of creation out of nothing is unfolded as a datum on which Origen does not appear to have to elaborate. It befits the divine property to make beings appear from nonthingness:

the Apostle seems profuse in God's praises and has recorded the beginning of his initial creation with admiration, when God made the universe exist *ex nihilo* and called the things that were not, by virtue of his power, as things that are and that do exist. Nothing was difficult for him in the process of creating, to such an extent that although nothing was existing, everything, suddenly called forth, came into existence as if they had always existed.<sup>40</sup>

Like the foregoing Latin portion, a similar statement in *Princ* is no doubt to be trusted.

It is proved by many declarations throughout the whole Scripture that the universe was created by God and that there is no substance which has not received its existence from him; which refutes and dismisses the doctrine falsely taught by some,<sup>41</sup> that there is a matter which is co-eternal with God, or that there are unbegotten souls, in whom they would have it that God implanted not so much the principle of existence as the quality and rank of their life.<sup>42</sup>

The portion goes on with reference to the so-called *Shepherd* of Hermas and the Book of Enoch 2, 5, which further buttress up the idea of God having caused all thing to be out of nothing.<sup>43</sup>

There is, therefore, a battery of passages where Origen's conception of creation *ex nihilo* is unequivocally explicated. These are not the only points where he puts forward his tenet that it is God who brought everything into being out of nothing: he expresses this belief elsewhere, too.<sup>44</sup> These passages certainly help towards seeing his ideas in a better light. What is of primary interest in these portions though is not the very idea itself, namely, that God is the sole creator out of nothing, a view which of course is neither unexpected nor does it come forth for the first time.<sup>45</sup> What is significant is the

<sup>40</sup> *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 4.5.13. A similar explicit statement to God, who made 'what did not exist', in 4.7.3.

<sup>41</sup> Against the Gnostic Marcion and others, if we are to believe Tertullian (*Adversus Marcionem*, I.xv) who charges this Gnostic with having upheld the Platonic notion of an uncreated original formless stuff.

<sup>42</sup> *Princ*, 1.3.3.

<sup>43</sup> *FP*, p. 31, and notes 1-3.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *selEz*, 16.

<sup>45</sup> Yet even this view of Origen's has been challenged by scholars who attribute



*manner* in which this is presented, the mode of the expressions used at crucial points in order to spell out aspects of this conception of creation *ex nihilo*.

As a matter of fact, whether creation out of nothing is a biblical notion or not is a matter which does not enjoy unanimity. As R. Sorabji points out,<sup>46</sup> an early Biblical account of God's creative power in the *Book of Job* 28 and 38 has been taken to mean that God put order into pre-existing chaos, rather than creating out of nothing. In the *Wisdom of Solomon* 11, 17, it is stated that God 'created the cosmos out of a formless matter' without saying whether that matter had a beginning. In 2 *Maccabees* 7, 28, the reference to creation out of nothing can easily be reinterpreted.<sup>47</sup> Thus it has been asserted that neither in the Bible nor in the Jewish-Hellenistic literature is there a clear statement of creation out of nothing in a sense which can include a beginning of the material universe. In that case it is sustained that the view of creation out of nothing was invented by Christians in the second century A.D., in controversy with the Gnostics.

It should be noticed that Origen unwaveringly uses the past tense, in order to denote that the world had a beginning. God was 'before' any notion of creation and created because he 'willed' so. Studying the diction through which the notion of creation is expressed, one can see that there is nothing to indicate or imply that God had decided *from everlasting* to create the world and that his decision was simply realized at the moment which marks the beginning of creation. *Coming into being out of non-being* is a notion which in itself *began* to make sense only once God *decided* to create. There was nothing to compel him to do so. He did this out of a 'benevolent decision' (εὐδοκία), that is, out of *an act of loving freedom*.

Creation, on account of being *per se* the product of an act of volition, is in its essence relative to what God *did*. On no account does it bear upon what God in Himself is.

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to him a doctrine of 'eternal creation'. R. Norris, for example, suggests this as follows: "Origen feels it necessary to insist explicitly on the teaching that nonmaterial beings (or rather, *some* nonmaterial beings) must be classified as 'created'..." (*op. cit.*, p. 149; italics his). In order to abide by his premise that Origen held a 'doctrine of eternal creation' (*op. cit.*, p. 154) he goes as far as to impugn what Origen so often and so explicitly states, namely that *everything* was created.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. R. Sorabji, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. H.A. Wolfson, *Philo*, Cambridge Mass., 1947; vol. 1, pp. 302-3.

This is a point of particular significance and we should dwell on this a little further.

If Origen held a tenet such as that creation has *beginninglessly* been God's decision, this should imply that the will of God to create existed in him beginninglessly, too, even if creation had not been realized yet. What he suggests, however, is quite the opposite; this is clearly portrayed both explicitly and by means of certain uses of language, that is, through the mode of the expressions employed in each case.

He uses the past tense in a conscious way, knowing that this tense denotes that something occurred, something *became* while it did not exist before as such that one subsequently became. The past tense itself implies a kind of progress or process from one situation to a next one. This is why Origen so strongly excludes any use of past tense when he attempts to adumbrate the life of God Himself. This is also why he emphasizes that 'the Logos did not *become* in the beginning, but he *was* what he was in the ἀρχή'.<sup>48</sup> Which means that if the past tense were used instead of Imperfect, this could denote that there was a reality in which the Logos was not in the ἀρχή, that is, in the Wisdom. But this runs contrary to his principal dogma that the Logos has *beginninglessly* been with Wisdom.

He knows, and has stated,<sup>49</sup> that when one strives to portray the being of God, no verb can adequately express this reality. Nevertheless, he uses language in such a manner that the inevitable inaccuracy should be diminished to the minimum possible. Thus he uses either imperfect tense<sup>50</sup> or present tense<sup>51</sup> as more fit (rather, less inaccurate) in order to point to the being of God Himself.

On the other hand, it is the past tense which is deemed more suitable to express what came into being out of non-being. In the same sense that he states that 'the Logos did not *become* in the beginning, but he *was* what he was in the beginning',<sup>52</sup> he points out (referring to this portion of John):

Using the terms befittingly he [sc. John] applied the form 'Became' to his flesh, while 'Was' indicates his divine nature.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>48</sup> *commJohn*, 2, XIX.

<sup>49</sup> *frJohn* I.

<sup>50</sup> *commJohn*, 2, XIX.

<sup>51</sup> *frJohn*, 1.

<sup>52</sup> *commJohn*, 2, XIX.

<sup>53</sup> *frJohn*, I; s. also *frJohn*, CXL.

It is then quite plain that Origen is perfectly aware of the significance of the past tense: it denotes what came into being at a moment of the indefinite past, while before this it did not exist at all.

This is the conceptual background against which his use of the past tense with respect to God's *creative act* should be considered. It is noteworthy that this way of expression (that the world is an occurrence brought into being out of non-being) is used not only for the actual creation, but also for the providential one. This means that the will and decision of God to create originated in his benevolent freedom. This is a belief clearly and meticulously couched—although there is perfect awareness of the problems of putting such an abstruse and elusive notion in words.

Hence, it is stressed that Wisdom 'wanted' (ἠβούληθη) and 'willed' (ἠθέλησεν) creatures to come into being—using the past tense. It is also averred that Wisdom 'became' (γέγονεν) God's benevolent decision (ἐβόλη), which actually suggests that God Himself *became* creator.<sup>54</sup>

The very creative act out of this *decision* is couched in an compliant manner; he refers to the providential creative words of (and 'reasons' created by) God as 'pre-uttered words' (προπαρωθέντας λόγους).<sup>55</sup> It is significant again that the term *προπαρωθέντας* is a verbal form in the past tense, namely, past participle. This means that these 'uttered words' of God to his Wisdom are not a fact in Wisdom from everlasting, but they *became*, so to speak, 'when' God willed so.

In the same vein, it is stated that Wisdom, conceived as life, 'accepted' (ἀνεδέξατο) a relation to rational creatures (τὰ λογικά) because this 'life' willed (βούλησεν) to benefit them; so she brought their substance to participating in life (ἐπὶ τὸ εἶναι αὐτὰ ποοῦσθαι μετενοσίας ἰσότητος).<sup>56</sup>

It is plain that there is only a sole mode, in which Origen refers to the divine will to bring creation into being out of non-being; this is the steadfast use of the Past tense. This evincibly suggests that God's will did not exist from everlasting, but it emerged as it were, and is realized in the creation.

<sup>54</sup> *John*, I, XIX.

<sup>55</sup> *comm. John*, I, XIX.

<sup>56</sup> *John*, II. The term *ἀνεδέξατο* expresses the notion quite meaningfully. For the

verb *ἀναδέχομαι* means accept, entertain and give security (cf. s. L. and S., p. 103).

There is a *decision* of God to create; yet this decision is conceived not as a beginningless one: it is expressed as a product of the divine volition, which on no account is a concomitant of the divine being *per se*.

Origen does not say that the Wisdom of God 'wants' or 'wills' (which would be θέλει or βούλεται); nor does he use the imperfect tense (which would be ἤθελεν or ἐβούλετο and might be rendered in English as 'used to want' or 'used to will'). Both tenses here (namely present or imperfect tense) could imply that this particular decision of God (that is, the decision to carry out the creative act) was a beginningless one.<sup>37</sup> But, quite demonstrably, the forms used are 'wanted' and 'willed', which underscore the *contingent* character of his decision to create.

Accordingly, it is not said that Wisdom accepted a creative relation to the world 'being' himself (which would be ὦν) God's 'benevolent decision' (εὐδοκία); but it is said that he 'became' (γενόμενος) God's 'εὐδοκία'<sup>38</sup> and 'accepted a relation' (σχέσιν πρὸς αὐτὰ ἀνεδέξατο), because she wanted 'to benefit' (ὠφελησαι—this form is in the past tense, too) 'the rational creatures' (τὰ λογικά),<sup>39</sup> which are called 'future beings' (τὰ ἐσόμενα)<sup>40</sup>—using the future tense of the verb 'to be' in order to denote that the product of creation did not exist beginninglessly.

It has been argued that the Christian view differs from the Platonic one on account of the role of *will*.<sup>41</sup> The Platonic illustration of body and shadow, or sun and light, has been regarded as excluding God's

<sup>37</sup> I certainly use the terms here by convention: the terms 'past' or 'beginning' make no sense in timelessness; what nevertheless I inquire here is whether Origen holds a notion of 'eternity of the world', even if this 'world' is expressed in terms of God's purpose to create it. For some scholars alleged that even if one concedes that the world did not actually exist, they ascribe to Origen a view of God as *beginninglessly* having decided to create. This is what G. Florovski did (*Aspects of Church History*, pp. 45ff.). My point is that Origen does not hold such a notion.

<sup>38</sup> *fr* John, I. This 'became' should be given particular attention. It is the same verb, in the same form, about which Origen explicitly states that it denotes a previous nonexistence; s. *supra*.

<sup>39</sup> *fr* John, II.

<sup>40</sup> *fr* John, I.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. J. Pépin, *Théologie cosmique et théologie chrétienne*, Paris, 1964; pp. 502–6; C. Tresmontant, *La Métaphysique du christianisme et la naissance de la philosophie chrétienne*, Paris, 1961; pp. 190–4; 319–26; 364; A.H. Armstrong, 'Elements in the thought of Plotinus at variance with classical intellectualism', *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 3, (1973), pp. 13–22.

will and choice. On the contrary, the Christian idea is that creation involves divine will, not necessity, and this had already been asserted before Origen, as I said.<sup>62</sup>

On the other hand, the notion of *will* is not altogether absent from the Platonic texts. For example, this can be found in Plato's *Timaeus*.<sup>63</sup> In that work, the Demiurge is repeatedly represented as deliberating, that is, thinking out how to achieve his aims. As regards Plotinus, although he does not follow his master all along, he presumably feels able to be dismissive of volition in connection with lower tiers of reality. Thus, although notions of will are found in the *Enneads* (βούλησις, θέλησις, ἔφεσις),<sup>64</sup> they are mainly used in order to dismiss the idea that secondary beings exist through the will of the One.<sup>65</sup> At any rate, Plotinus allows the lower levels of reality to create by will (θέλησις), but he regards the creation of lower levels of reality as *necessary*.<sup>66</sup>

So the very notion of *will*, regarded in itself, is a distinction which has not been unchallenged as a criterion for the distinction between the Platonic and Christian conception of creation, since a notion of *will* can be found in Plato as well as in Plotinus.<sup>67</sup> However, there is a point in Origen's thought which *does* distinguish these two conceptions of creation. The contrast with all versions of Platonism which Origen established is to be found in what actually the notion of the divine will denotes and entails.

The notion that he actually upholds is that of a radical chasm between God and the world. In his thought makes no sense to speak of *necessity* in lower levels of reality, or absence of necessity in higher levels of reality. These Plotinian affirmations flow from the Neoplatonic

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 2.1.1; 2.30.9; 3.8.3. Christian writers after Origen pointed out this distinction, too; Cf. Augustine *De Civitate Dei*, XI, 24; *Enarratio in Psalmum* 134, sermo 10; Thomas Aquinas *in Caelo* I, lectio 29, n. 12.

<sup>63</sup> *Timaeus*, 29E–30A; 41B; s. Pépin, *op. cit.*

<sup>64</sup> *Enneads*, VI.8.9 (44–8); VI.8.13; VI.8.15 (1–10); VI.8.18 (35–52); VI.8.21 (8–19). Plotinus, nevertheless, dismisses many of these references as inaccurate; s. *Enneads*, VI.8.13 (1–5 and 47–50); *Enneads*, VI.8.18 (52–3).

<sup>65</sup> *Enneads*, V.1.6 (25–7).

<sup>66</sup> *Enneads*, II.9.3 (1–18); II.9.8 (21–7); III.2.2; 3.2.3 (3–5); IV.8.6 (12–13); V.1.6; V.1.7 (37); V.3.16 (1).

<sup>67</sup> Later Platonists also attributed a notion of 'will' to the Demiurge's creative act. Cf. Iamblichus *de Mysteriis* 3, 28; Proclus, *in Platonis Timaeum Commentarii*, (ed. E. Diehl, Leipzig, 1903–6); 1.362; 1.371, 4.



conception of the world and particularly the conception of *continuity* from the One down to the Intellect and Soul and matter. Affirmations of this kind are sheerly alien to Origen's thought. To him there is no *essential* difference between the different ranks of life. Whether they are higher or lower, there are two fundamental elements which determine their being:

First, all rational creatures are of *one nature*, on account of being creatures, and by reason of the (varying, notwithstanding) relation of all species with the Logos. In respect of this, there is a universality of nature of all rational creatures, namely *rationality*, although its degrees vary.

Secondly, the world is *outside* of God, it is a 'downfall' (*καταβολή*), the sheer *down* from the divine being. Hence, even a supreme rank of life is regarded as being 'down';<sup>68</sup>

In Origen, 'strictly speaking' (*τῷ ἀκριβέσι ἐξερᾶζοντι*),<sup>69</sup> there are no 'lower' and 'higher' levels of reality of the world proper, in the way that Platonists regard it. What actually exists is the absolute distinction between 'up' and 'down', that is, an ontological dissimilarity between the timeless divine being and the temporal world. The notion of the radical *hiatus* between those two realities, as well as the notion of the divine volition, is precisely the ground on which he rejects any notion of *necessity* concerning the creation of the world. Even the supreme rank of life is regarded as being 'down' in precisely the same sense that the rest of them are 'down', too. They all comprise the one single world, which is essentially 'out' of God, since the divine nature is radically alien to the worldly essence, an essence imbued by the notion of *creativity*.

Beyond that, there is another point which contrasts Origen's thought from Neoplatonism. The conception of God who creates because he wills to *benefit*, that is, creates out of love, constitutes a stark difference from the Plotinian conception of creation—a difference which has included scholarship.

In Plotinus the creative being's thought and will is turned upon itself. This thought is not directed towards producing a creature and (which is a most striking contrast) it is not *for the sake* of a creature.

<sup>68</sup> *communifolium*, 19, XXII; also s. *homifolium*, 8.  
<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

It creates not because it *decides* to do so in order to *benefit* the creatures (least of all regarded as *future* ones), but creates simply by being what it is. This actually means that the creative act is a mode of the creator's very being.<sup>70</sup> The role of will in the Neoplatonic view has rather the meaning that anything which is already perfect will generate something of itself.<sup>71</sup>

It should be pointed out, nevertheless, that here Plotinus expresses his conception of the relation of the secondary reality, namely Intellect, to the One. It is to the One creating the Intellect that Plotinus denies the role of will.<sup>72</sup> He regards it as something like the light which surrounds the sun.<sup>73</sup> As turning into something illuminated is part of the essence of light, in like manner God is nothing without this creative procedure, through which the cosmos is generated. There is a necessity established in the essence of this supreme creative force: creation is a meaningful action, but this is not a free action. Creation of the world by the deity is a standing atemporal and eternal necessity.

Perhaps this analysis should be regarded to call for a parallelism with Origen's theology: in fact a vast number of scholars saw in Origen's doctrine of creation a Neoplatonic provenance, taking his view of the relation between the Father and Son to be a Plotinian concept in Christian language.

To prove how fallacious such a view is demands a treatise of its own, but one or two objections must be considered, and the truth be extracted from them. Then they will appear as bereft of reason. I note therefore that those who make these misleading assertions contradict themselves. For they also use the so-called Fragment 32, incorporated by P. Koetschau in his edition of *Princ*, where it is explicated that 'the Son *was born out of the will* of the Father'.<sup>74</sup> The juxtaposition shows that those who want to give credit to Justinian's testimonies (and they are exactly those who attribute Neoplatonism to Origen) cancel out themselves. For it becomes clear that, even at this point, the very notion of the Father's *will* radically contrasts Origen's thought (as represented by Justinian) from that of Plotinus:

<sup>70</sup> *Enneads*, III.2.1-2; V.1.6.

<sup>71</sup> *Enneads*, V.1.6; V.1.7 (2 and 37); V.4.1.

<sup>72</sup> *Enneads*, V.1.6 (25-7).

<sup>73</sup> *Enneads*, V.1.6; V.1.7 (2 and 37); V.4.1.

<sup>74</sup> *libOr*, Mansi IX.525.

whereas Plotinus *denies* any role of will to the One creating the Intellect, Origen is represented to *affirm* a role to the will of the Father begetting the Son. Plotinus' affirmation of a *necessity* in the creation of lower levels of reality (that is, the visible world) renders the contradistinction of the Neoplatonic conception of creation from that of Origen's even stronger.

At all events, even in the few cases that Plotinus indicates the role of will in one way or another, creation itself has a character of a cosmic law rather than a *free decision*—least of all has it the character of a *benevolent decision*, an act of volition out of love. So although Plotinus indicates a *will*, this suggests that a cosmic law of creation which is *beyond* whatever possesses choice (προαίρεσις), or even life.

With regard to Neoplatonism then, Origen's tenet is not the case of a divine will which is but a mode of the ontology of the divine being, a natural manifestation of the divine being itself. Such a manifestation could be regarded as *will* only in the most attenuated sense. It is the case of a *free decision*, which is by no means dictated by the nature of the divine Being *per se*. A decision which has nothing to do with the ontology of God Himself. Which means that the notion of God *Himself* stands in an absolute ontological priority to that of God as *Creator*.

This is a distinction on which great stress should be put. For in fact this is a concept which constitutes a major catalyst and a massive transformation in the development of the Christian doctrine of creation.

Vast is also the difference from the Hebraic conception of creation. For with Origen the case is not simply creation out of nothing, but creation out of *love*.

As regards Plato, he did adhere to the general tradition of his day that nothing ever becomes out of nothing.<sup>75</sup> This is a common Greek view, according to which the world has neither beginning nor end; creation out of nothing is a view generally not upheld by the different Greek schools. Even Plato, who spoke of a beginning of time,<sup>76</sup> did

<sup>75</sup> Cf. A.H. Chroust, "The meaning of time in the ancient world", *The New Scholasticism*, XXI (1947), p. 21.

<sup>76</sup> Aristotle points out that among all thinkers of the past Plato alone taught that time had a definite beginning; Cf. *Physica*, 251b16ff. Even in that case, however, space proper is regarded as beginningless.

stick to the general tradition of his day. The Demiurge did not create *ex nihilo*, but he put a pre-existing matter in order.<sup>77</sup> To him, strictly speaking, 'creation' consists in bringing order and 'measure' into chaos<sup>78</sup> and in nothing beyond that. The notion of 'creation' as found in *Timaeus* does not imply any original generation *ex nihilo*, but an act of ordering and bringing symmetry into the pre-existing chaos of the original 'cosmic stuff'. This is the point of major contrast between Plato and Origen.

According to Plato, Being and Action, true existence and its creative action, Substance and Function, are synonymous.<sup>79</sup> To him, god would have never really existed before he actually created. It is god's infinite charity and his perfection that always compels him<sup>80</sup> to exercise his creative power in actuality. Therefore, in Plato there is an intrinsic ontological connection between what god *does* and what god *is*. The divine creativity is exactly the point of this relevance.

On the contrary, Origen *did* hold the idea of coming into being out of non-being, and repeatedly lays stress on this notion. On account of this he did not need to employ any Platonic notion of everlasting exercise of the divine creativity. God in Himself and God as Creator are by no means synonymous, as they are in Plato. They are not related on the level of ontology. Simply, the latter (that is, the creative *act*) is but a manifestation of the ungraspable divine will. In Plato, the divine creativity is a constitutional element of the ontology of the godhead. In Origen, the act of creation constitutes only a small fraction of the discourse about God—and even this by no means pertains to the divine ontology. This is the point which Rufinus did not grasp and hence his interpolations into the *Princ* where he deals with a problem for which Origen's theology actually allows no room at all.

It is a stark contrast that in Origen it is not will which is beyond God, but it is *God Himself* who is beyond the notion of God's will.<sup>81</sup>

Following the preceding discussion, the contrast with Origen's conception of God as Creator is quite obvious. My analysis right from

<sup>77</sup> Origen is aware of this view and states that in *Cels*, VI, 48. Cf. τὸ παρά Πλάτωνι ἐν ταῖς ἐπιστολαῖς λελεγμένον . . . περί τοῦ διακοσμήσαντος τότε τὸ πᾶν.

<sup>78</sup> *Timaeus*, 30A.

<sup>79</sup> *Sophista*, 247 D; 248 C.

<sup>80</sup> *Timaeus* 29 E ff.

<sup>81</sup> *s. supra*.

the beginning of this chapter shows that in him the notion of *God Himself* stands in an absolute *ontological priority* to that of *God as Creator*. This means, in the final analysis, that the existence of creation in itself has a *contingent* character: this is not originated in any *necessity* whatsoever.<sup>82</sup>

This is the sense in which Origen avers that the 'so to speak, essence' of God should be distinguished from the essence of any created nature (οἰοεῖ ἀφιστάντι τὴν οὐσίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν γεννητῶν) with which this 'has no communication' (οἷς οὐ κοινωνεῖ) at all.<sup>83</sup> This accentuates the radical dissimilarity between creaturely essence and what intellectual abstraction would call the 'essence' of God. Indeed, the expression 'so to speak' points to his fundamental view that God is 'beyond essence',<sup>84</sup> namely, he 'does not participate in essence at all'.<sup>85</sup> For it is he who created the 'essence', which was 'uncreated' (ἀγέννητον) before. God 'is transcendent to anything that pertains to the world' (τὸν ὑπερβαίνοντα πάντα τὰ τοῦ κόσμου πράγματα).<sup>86</sup> It is par excellence in terms of the radical distance between divine nature and creaturely essence that the radical *hiatus* between them is conceived. In this context, Origen refers to the love of God for human beings, although in terms of 'nature' he 'has nothing to do with them'.<sup>87</sup> Hence, on account of this emphasis on God's radical transcendence to the world there can be no question of essence of God. His being is beyond any problematique about essence whatever. For this began to make sense only once creation came into being; therefore, essence proper is ontologically posterior to God Himself.

In view of this, the remarks of G. Florovskii<sup>88</sup> about the 'distance of essences' between God and the world is an incomplete and inaccurate echo of a tenet already expounded by Origen. Florovskii's ascription

<sup>82</sup> Which means that R. Sorabji's assertion that the basic idea of 'conditionality' in the creation of the world is originated in Augustine is not correct. The credit should be given to Origen. Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 241.

<sup>83</sup> *de Or.* XXIII, 5.

<sup>84</sup> *commJohn*, 19, VI (ὑπερέκεινα οὐσίας); *Cels*, VII, 38 (ἐπέκεινα οὐσίας). The statement ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας is a Platonic one (*Republica*, 509B8-9), referring to one supreme Form, the Form of the Good, which is 'not being, but beyond being'. The notion of the uncreatedness of 'essence' before creation is also stated in *commGen*, 3.

<sup>85</sup> *Cels*, VI, 64.

<sup>86</sup> *frMatt*, 357. The opinion that 'essence' was uncreated before creation is stated in *commGen*, 1 (comm. on Gen. 1, 12; . . . τὸν Θεόν, ἀγέννητον εὐρόντα τὴν οὐσίαν.

<sup>87</sup> *commRom*, 25.

<sup>88</sup> G. Florovskii, *Creation and Redemption*, p. 53.



of this notion to John of Damascus<sup>89</sup> should then be disqualified. He also appeals to Augustine who said "nihilque in ea esse quod ad Trinitatem pertineat, nisi quod Trinitas condidit" (there is not anything which is related to the Trinity, apart from the fact that the Trinity has created it).<sup>90</sup> But it was Origen who had preceded Augustine by pointing out the radical irrelevance of Wisdom to anything created and the 'acceptance' of a 'creative relation' to the world out of the benevolence of God (εὐδοκία Θεοῦ). It was indeed Origen who sustained that 'the nature of the Trinity has nothing in common with the creation except the work of goodness'.<sup>91</sup>

I, therefore, can say this: in reference to God's creative act, Origen uses the verbs in a manner which is quite indicative of how he conceives of the 'creative relation'<sup>92</sup> of God to the creation: Whenever he refers to the being of Wisdom, namely the Son of God, he uses the present tense and stresses that the 'Wisdom is being' (ἐστὶ ὑπάρχουσα),<sup>93</sup> thereby denoting his conception of the atemporal being of God; for he deems the present tense the most appropriate in order to talk about the being of God.<sup>94</sup> He also quotes the imperfect tense used by John in the beginning of his gospel and emphatically points out that the being of the Logos of God is expressed through the term 'was' (ἦν), not by any other form such as 'became' (ἐγένετο). He also points out that the latter is suitable only for what came into being out of nothing, such as 'life'. For it is John himself who says that life 'became' in the Logos.<sup>95</sup>

On the other hand, when referring to the actual creation, he states this as 'future beings' (τὰ ἐσόμενα), using the future tense. He is perfectly conscious of the connotation of this tense: it is used to indicate something not existing at present but coming into existence in the future,<sup>96</sup> that is, *after* what is indicated by the present tense.

<sup>89</sup> G. Florovski, *op. cit.*, p. 310, n. 12.

<sup>90</sup> Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, I; cited in G. Florovski, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

<sup>91</sup> *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 8.13.7.

<sup>92</sup> *frJohn*, I.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> John, 1, 4; *frJohn*, II. In fact John says 'In him was life'. In Fr. II, however, the opening of the Gospel is considered with the full-stop put thus: 'Without him was not any thing made. What became in him, was life'. (Χωρίς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδέν. Ὅ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν.)

<sup>96</sup> *frJohn*, I.

Finally, when he refers to the *dessein* of God to create and the *will* of Wisdom to establish a creative relation with what was to come into being, he uses the past tense. Thus he maintains that this decision came out of God's freedom and it is not a predication which could be applied to God Himself. By referring to the 'creative relation' of the Logos to the creation by means of the past tense, he denotes an *occurrence* which appeared as of an indefinite moment of the past, while this did not exist from everlasting.<sup>97</sup>

The point which I have just made is a crucial one, not only for the portrayal of Origen's ontology of time, but also for his theology as a whole, since it is generally claimed that he held the so-called doctrine of eternity of the world. The tenet ascribed to him is that he regards the world as something like an eternal companion of God. Koetschau embodies in his text two fragments representing Origen to hold such a tenet. These two passages,<sup>98</sup> however, do not really belong to this work; they are only allegations of Justinian, made in his *libOr*. Nor is there any reason to accept that these portions have something to do with Origen's authentic views. Far to the contrary.

If Origen held a view of the world being with God apart from any notion of beginning, then this world (whatever its nature would be) should stand in a relation to God not really different from the relation of the Father to the Son. For both, the world and the Son, would be regarded as timeless as well as beginningless. It is interesting to see, however, how Origen couches his view of God's relation to the world on the one hand and of the Father's relation to the Son, on the other. For it is again in implicit, yet decisive, terms of time that he depicts the radically different nature of the relation in either of these two perceptions.

As far as the world is concerned, I need not make any further analyses since God's creative relation to the world has already been canvassed: God 'willed' to bring the world into being out of non-being, and so he did. I have also argued that this notion entails that there was a 'when'<sup>99</sup> that only God was; and there was a 'then' that

<sup>97</sup> This wording, however, should be regarded in the context of Origen's statements about the difficulty to express doctrines which involve timelessness. Cf. *commentJohn*, 2, XIX.

<sup>98</sup> Fragment 5 Koetschau in *Princ*, 12.10, and Fragment 10 Koetschau in *Princ*, 14.5.

<sup>99</sup> Those who attribute this view to Origen allege that he held a notion of some

there were both God and his *decision* to create beings out of non-being.<sup>100</sup>

Let us then see how the relation of the Father to the Son is portrayed. A passage from *homJer* deserves to be quoted in full, all the more since it has been sometimes fallaciously construed:

If 'anyone who commits a sin is said to be begotten by the devil',<sup>101</sup> then we have been begotten by the devil as many times as we have committed sins; miserable then is he who is begotten always (ἀεί) by the devil and, again, blessed is he who is begotten always (ἀεί) by God. For I shall say that a just man has been begotten by God not only once (οὐ γὰρ ἅπαξ), but he is begotten always (ἀεί) out of each particular good deed in which God begets a just man; and if I let you know about the Saviour, that the Father did not just beget the Son and then severed him from his generation, but always begets him (οὐχί ἐγέννησεν ὁ πατήρ τὸν υἱόν καὶ ἀπέλυσεν αὐτόν ἀπὸ τῆς γενέσεως αὐτοῦ, ἀλλ' ἀεί γεννᾷ αὐτόν), then I shall say something similar about any righteous man. Let us see then what our Saviour is. He is an 'effluence of glory'.<sup>102</sup> We cannot say that the effluence of glory was begotten once and is no longer begotten (οὐχί ἅπαξ γεγέννηται καὶ οὐχί γεννᾶται), but the effluence of God's own glory is begotten as long as there is the light which creates the effluence. Our Saviour is God's Wisdom and this Wisdom is an 'effluence of eternal light'.<sup>103</sup> Since therefore the Saviour is always begotten (εἰ ὁ σωτὴρ ἀεί γεννᾶται), this is why he says 'he begets me before all hills'<sup>104</sup> (he does not say that he has begotten me before all hills, but he says 'he begets me before all hills'); hence the Saviour is always begotten by the Father (καὶ ἀεί γεννᾶται ὁ σωτὴρ ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρός).<sup>105</sup>

The same notion is found in the *Princ*:

The Father begets the only begotten Son and brings forth a Holy Spirit, not as beings who did not exist before, but in the sense that

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'spiritual world' before time; regardless of any other argument against such a claim, the fact is that in his thought the notions of 'spiritual' and 'world' when used together make no sense; the only exception is Origen's term 'intellectual world' (νοητός κόσμος) used in a specific context; Origen points out that this expression means the Son of God, the term 'world' being just a metaphor. Cf. *commJohn*, 19, XXII.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*; s. also *frJohn*, I.A. Hamman develops his arguments on the erroneous premise that Origen held a doctrine of 'eternity of creation'; Cf. A. Hamman, "L'Enseignement Patristique sur la Création", *Revue des Science Religieuse*, 42 (1968), pp. 101-4.

<sup>101</sup> 1 John 3, 8.

<sup>102</sup> Heb. 1, 3.

<sup>103</sup> Wis. 7, 26.

<sup>104</sup> Wis. 7, 26.

<sup>105</sup> *homJer*, 9, 4. s. also *commJohn*, 1, XXIX.

the Father is the origin and source of the Son or the Holy Spirit and no thought of before or after can be entertained in respect of them.<sup>106</sup>

Any idea that 'God the Father ever existed, even for a single moment, without begetting his Wisdom'<sup>107</sup> is explicitly rejected.

It is remarkable that, at that point of *Princ.*, he refers to the relation of the Father to the Son by commenting on the same scriptural passage (namely, Prov. 8, 25) as in the Greek passage in his Homily on Jeremiah:

God was always the Father of his only-begotten Son, who was indeed born from him and draws his being from him, but he is yet without any beginning, not only of that kind which can be distinguished by periods of time, but even of that kind which the mind alone is wont to contemplate in itself and to perceive, if I may so say, with the bare intellect and reason. Wisdom, therefore, must be believed beyond the limits of any beginning that we can speak of or understand.<sup>108</sup>

Thus Origen accentuates once again that it is the present tense which can express (with minimal inaccuracy) the relation of the Father to the Son. Certainly 'all things were made by him',<sup>109</sup> but 'he himself is before everything' (Εἰ γὰρ 'πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο', καὶ αὐτός ἐστι πρὸ πάντων).<sup>110</sup> Wisdom, that is the Son, who said 'God made me the beginning of his ways towards his works',<sup>111</sup> was 'before' God 'made anything' (πρὸ τοῦ τι ποιῆσαι).<sup>112</sup>

This notion is incisively stated in a pithy passage of the Eighth Homily on Luke:

Christ is the 'image of the invisible God',<sup>113</sup> not having himself become image' (οὐ γενομένη εἰκών); on the other hand, the soul was made 'in image' of an image (that is, in image of Christ) which was 'existing before her' (that is, before creation) (ἀλλὰ 'κατ' εἰκόνα' προϋπάρχουσαν αὐτῆς). As a matter of fact, every soul strives to become the 'image of Christ' who is 'the archetype, the Son of God, the image of God'.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>106</sup> *Princ.* II.2.1.

<sup>107</sup> *Princ.* I.2.2.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.* Here Origen alludes to the Stoic notion of καταληπτική φαντασία; s. *infra*, pp. 158–61.

<sup>109</sup> John 1, 3.

<sup>110</sup> *selPs.* 23; PG 12.1269; italics mine.

<sup>111</sup> Prov. 8, 22.

<sup>112</sup> *commMatt.* 14, 14; italics mine.

<sup>113</sup> Col. 1, 15.

<sup>114</sup> *homLuc.* 8; italics mine.

What Origen strongly *rejects* here is any implication that the birth of the Son is an event which occurred once and the Son exists thereafter. The birth of the Son, the relation of the Father to the Son, is an *ontological relation*: no notion of beginning, such as coming into being out of non-being, can be applied to this.

But this is exactly what Origen *affirms* about creation. The expression 'to come into being out of non-being' is typical of the wording through which he points to creation. By means of this expression he contrasts the Son's being with the *becoming* of creation:

The birth of Christ<sup>115</sup> is not a way from non-being to being, as some people think, but it is a way from 'being in form of god'<sup>116</sup> to undertaking the 'form of a servant'.<sup>117</sup>

That the Son, unlike the world, is co-eternal with the Father is a tenet of Origen testified to by eminent Fathers, such as Athanasius<sup>118</sup> and the historian Socrates.<sup>119</sup> Athanasius clearly indicates that it was Origen who inspired him in much of his battle against Arianism.<sup>120</sup> The contrast in the two different ways in which he regards these two different relations (Son/world) to God is quite obvious: the world came into being out of non-being. Such a notion can by no means be applied to the Son.

It is indicative of how strongly Origen feels about this view that he remains remarkably meticulous when he refers to the two imports of the term 'wisdom': regarding the 'theoremata' (or, objects of contemplation) and 'reasons' (which are also called 'wisdom'), he stresses

<sup>115</sup> He refers to the Incarnation.

<sup>116</sup> Phil. 2, 6.

<sup>117</sup> Phil. 2, 7; *frMatt*, 3.

<sup>118</sup> Athanasius, *De Decretis Nicaenae Synodis*, 27, 1-2.

<sup>119</sup> Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Book 2, chapter 21. In the same work, Book 6, chapter 12, Socrates rebukes those who falsely attacked Origen stating them by name (Methodius of Olympus, Eustathius of Antioch, Apollinaris, Theophilus of Alexandria) adducing as evidence against them Athanasius and his statements about Origen preaching the Son as coeternal with the Father.

<sup>120</sup> Here is how R. Norris attempts to 'explain' what, 'from the point of view of a Platonist' (namely Origen), he sees as a 'contradiction': that is, how is it possible that something is both incorporeal and generate? All he does is to regard that the term 'beginning' has the meaning which Origen (explicitly and so many times) attributes to the relation between the Father and the Son. In order to stand by his contention about the 'doctrine of eternal creation' (*op. cit.*, p. 154), Norris (*op. cit.*, p. 151) goes as far as to ascribe to Origen a notion which the Alexandrian theologian so strongly rejected.



that they are not beginningless, but 'made';<sup>121</sup> in this way this 'wisdom' is distinguished from the person of the Son of God who timelessly *was* (not *became*) with the Father.<sup>122</sup> The same notion is more poetically expressed in the *Cant*, where the providential creation (that is, creation of 'theoremata' and 'reasons') is adumbrated in terms of 'pregnancy' (or, conception: σύλληψις): 'the beginning of being lies in the conception' by the 'mother' (διὰ τὸ ἐν τῇ συλλήψει τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς συστάσεως εἶναι),<sup>123</sup> that is, the divine life.

According to this relation of creation to God, he is stated at points as the 'cause' of creation. This is applied to the notion of 'coming into being out of non-being', to the creative act of God, which is to the creation of *both* incorporeal and corporeal nature. God is stated as 'cause' by virtue of the fact that he created 'corporeals and incorporeals' (τῶν σωματικῶν καὶ τῶν ἀσωμάτων, καὶ τούτων ἀπάντων αἰτίου Θεοῦ).<sup>124</sup>

The same predication is attributed to Christ, inasmuch as he is regarded as Creator, namely as Wisdom who 'willed' to 'accept a creative relation to future beings'. Thus Christ is a 'cause' because it is he who gave the 'being' (αἰτία...ὡς τὸ εἶναι διδούς) out of non-being.<sup>125</sup>

In another instance, Christ is stated as the 'cause' of everything, be it 'visible or invisible', in the sense that he 'is before them and the cause of them' and gave them their 'being' (τὸ εἶναι).<sup>126</sup> At that point Origen makes clear that he alludes not only to the actual creation, but also to the providential one: he speaks of the making as well as of the 'substantification' (οὐσιώσει),<sup>127</sup> pointing out that Christ is the 'cause' not only of the actual existence of things, but also of

<sup>121</sup> *expProv*, 7.

<sup>122</sup> C. Bigg takes for granted that Origen held a notion of eternity of the world (*The Christian Platonists of Alexandria*, pp. 240–2). I have already argued how mistaken he was in rendering Origen's views of the 'conceptions' of the Son (*op. cit.*, p. 210, n. 1; s. *supra*). Bigg failed to grasp that whereas Wisdom and Logos *were* timelessly conceptions of the Son, the rest of them *became*, due to the very fact that the world was brought into being out of non-being.

<sup>123</sup> *Cant*, 3; commenting on Song of Songs 3, 4.

<sup>124</sup> *selPs*, 2.

<sup>125</sup> *expProv*, 1.

<sup>126</sup> *fJohn*, 1.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

the 'reasons' for them—a notion to which he attributes *par excellence* the notion of 'coming into being out of non-being'.<sup>128</sup>

In the context of his claims about Origen's thought, C. Bigg means to associate his doctrine of creation with Platonism. He knows, however, that he cannot do that through an immediate relation with Plato. For in the *Timaeus* the world of Ideas appears to have an independent eternal existence from the Demiurge, and Bigg acknowledges that.<sup>129</sup> Thus, he endeavours to sustain the allegation of Platonism in Origen through a connection with Philo's concept of creation, according to which the Ideas exist in the divine Mind.<sup>130</sup> But this is wrong since in Philo there is a Platonic notion to which Origen's concept of creation is sheerly contrasted: Philo considers a 'world of ideas' which function not only as 'models' but also as *efficient causes*.<sup>131</sup> These efficient causes have to exist beginninglessly in a timeless world, which is not the case with Origen: here the models are present in the world, they are not transcendent beings. In Origen, the object of providential creation constitutes an *actual* creature: these 'reasons' are but creatures, whereas the sole 'cause' of creation is God.<sup>132</sup> At the providential stage creation is already a fully real fact, not creation of a latent form.

Besides, as Philo refers to an 'original matter',<sup>133</sup> there is a conception which excludes creation *ex nihilo* in a strict sense. This has been pointed out by A. Chroust as an inference. I can, however, support this assertion by appealing to a passage where God is presented to create in a Platonic sense, namely, as 'putting in order what is disorderly' (τὴν ἀκοσμίαν ἐν κόσμῳ τιθεῖς). The only difference from Plato is that Philo perceives this eternal 'disorderly' cosmic state as 'incorporeal'.<sup>134</sup> Besides, there are at least two statements of Philo

<sup>128</sup> *selPs*, 32.

<sup>129</sup> C. Bigg, *op. cit.*, p. 296.

<sup>130</sup> This was also held by eclectic Platonists such as Plutarch of Chaeronea; Cf. *Philopoemen*, I, 10.1: Σωκράτης καὶ Πλάτων χωριστάς τῆς ὕλης οὐσίας τὰς ἰδέας ὑπολαμβάνει ἐν τοῖς νοήμασι καὶ ταῖς φαντασίαις τοῦ Θεοῦ τούτέστι τοῦ νοῦ, ὑφεστώσας.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. *De Opificio Mundi* 3E ff; 5C; 7B ff; 29C; *Legum Allegoriarum Libri*, 44A; *De Migratione Abrahami*, 404B (edit. Magney); also Cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 28A ff. cited in A.H. Chroust, *op. cit.*, p. 61, n. 370.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. points where God is stated as the *cause* of creation: *commJohn*, 1, XVII; *commJohn*, 2, I; *selPs*, 2; *expProv*, 1.

<sup>133</sup> *De Opificio Mundi*, 2B; ap. Chroust.

<sup>134</sup> *De Opificio Mundi*, 133–35.

that creation out of non-being is impossible,<sup>135</sup> although he condemns the view that the cosmos has always existed.<sup>136</sup> Philo's position is unclear anyway. As Christopher Stead remarks,<sup>137</sup> although Philo condemns the view that the cosmos has always existed, he argues that there was no time before it began;<sup>138</sup> but he also paraphrases the *Timaeus* passage on the goodness of the Demiurge<sup>139</sup> and uses it to explain God's ordering of the cosmos in accordance with his pre-existing designs.<sup>140</sup> His reading of the *Timaeus*, therefore, allows a definite creative act which in fact was instantaneous.<sup>141</sup> This seems to rule out the allegorical explanation of the past tense, though Philo uses one to explain away the 'six days of creation'. Other points are simply left unclear, for instance, how time began 'either at or after' the creation of the world.<sup>142</sup>

In fact, therefore, Origen's conception of providential creation cannot be associated with Philo's views. For in Origen the 'patterns' are created *out of nothing*, they are a real part of creation, not a transcendent cause of it. They are being, as well as functioning, *within* the world. This is a critical point on which Origen's thought stands in contrast to the corresponding tenet of Philo.

The idea of God as 'cause' of 'creation' (both the providential and actual one) is of utmost importance. For the adoption of the notion of *cause* is strikingly indicative of the conception of creation having an actual beginning.

A fundamental principle set forth by Origen is that *what proceeds from a cause must necessarily have a beginning*.<sup>143</sup> The very fact, therefore, that creation had a *cause* entails that it had a *beginning*, too. R. Sorabji's assertion, that Origen sustains that there is an 'intelligible world' which is 'without beginning'<sup>144</sup> is not correct. I have already argued that the term 'intelligible world' makes no sense, since creation 'without beginning' is a notion alien to this frame of thought. This pertains also to the providential creation. The 'reasons' and *θεωρήματα* which

<sup>135</sup> *De Aeternitatis Mundi*, 2.5; *De Specialibus Legibus*, 1.266.

<sup>136</sup> *de Opificio Mundi*, 7.

<sup>137</sup> Christopher Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity*, Cambridge 1994, p. 67.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.* 26.

<sup>139</sup> *Timaeus*, 29c.

<sup>140</sup> *de Opificio Mundi*, 21-2.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.* 13.

<sup>142</sup> *de Opificio Mundi*, 26.

<sup>143</sup> *Princ.* III.5.1.

<sup>144</sup> R. Sorabji, *op. cit.*, 251, n. 111.

are the outcome of that creation *had a beginning*. This is what eluded R. Sorabji and hence his assumption that these creatures 'have existed always'.

Certainly this 'cause' does not imply any notion of causality; it only suggests that the world came into being out of non-being,<sup>145</sup> as well as that it is God who *caused* this world to be.<sup>146</sup> The fact that God created the world does not constitute any causality whatsoever: to be the *cause* of creation does not necessarily imply any *causality*. Causality is a *principle* according to which something *has to* come to pass, as a result of a previous occurrence (according to Aristotle this occurrence might be even simultaneous). God caused the world to be, not according to any principle, but just because He *freely and for once* wished to create. Causality can hardly be related to a notion of 'for once'. Occurrences according to a principle such as causality come to pass more than once.

Moreover, here we have one more indication of Origen's conception of God as contrasted with the Platonic concept of Creator. The Platonic God *has to* be Creator; it is in his nature, as God, to create. This means that the creative action is an *ontological principle* attributed to the Platonic God, as well as to the Plotinian One. On the contrary, for Origen God created (that is, *caused* creatures to be, that is, creatures exist *because* God willed so), but neither does this divine act follow any *principle* nor is this subject to any established law compelling creation.

The very adoption of the notion of *cause*, nevertheless, positively brings up his fundamental tenet that creation is not beginningless. What is more, the idea of beginning itself indubitably indicates that God Himself is *prior* to the created reality. In fact Origen upholds the principle that 'What creates is senior to what has been created.' (Πάν γὰρ τὸ ποιοῦν πρεσβύτερον τοῦ πεποιημένου).<sup>147</sup>

The relation of God to creation is radically different from the relation of the Father to the Son.<sup>148</sup> There can be no perception of

<sup>145</sup> *selPs*, 2. Cf. my ensuing discussion on 'Timeless Causality', pp. 355ff.

<sup>146</sup> *expProv*, 1. Origen here emphasizes that the term ἀρχή (beginning) may also mean 'the cause of coming into being' (Ἀρχή καὶ ἡ τινός ὑπάρξεως αἰτία), obviously availing himself of Aristotle, as noted earlier.

<sup>147</sup> *comGen*, 3; the same expression in *frGen*, *Philocalia*, 28, 14; *comJohn*, 2, IV (s. *infra*). This phrase was taken up by Eusebius verbatim: *Preparatio Evangelica*, 6.11.56.

<sup>148</sup> Asserting that those two kinds of relation are virtually the same, R. Norris made a mistake. Cf. *op. cit.*, 151.

a reality in which the Son was not being; but there is a clear conception of the divine being where there was no creation at all.<sup>149</sup>

Origen's views themselves, therefore, as well as the manner in which they are couched, determinably demonstrate that in his thought there is no room for any notion such as 'eternity of the world'. It is he himself who vehemently attacks Heracleon who "most impudently . . . says that neither the acon nor what is in the acon was made through the Logos, thinking that they were made before the Logos".<sup>150</sup>

The very notion of beginning denotes that creation was created out of non-being. This is why, in *Cels*, he challenges 'those who hold that the world is not created', arguing that those who sustain such a tenet 'cannot speak of any *beginning* of the world' (ὥς οὐκ ἔστιν οὖν τοῖς ἀγένητον ὑφισταμένοις τὸν κόσμον ἀρχὴν αὐτοῦ εἰπεῖν).<sup>151</sup> They are those who believe in any kind of beginningless world, such as the Platonists who sustained the idea of an intelligible world and a beginningless matter.

Origen's exposition has nothing of the suggestiveness of Plato's one, which left room for so many subsequent interpretations. The same goes for Philo's statements. They were seminal, so that his viewpoint was finally proved controversial. Although he issues at least one denial of creation out of nothing, there are some seeming affirmations along with it. At any rate, he was sufficiently vague to allow room for debate. Besides, he by and large falls short of the timeless conception.

In contrast, Origen's conception of creation *ex nihilo* is clear-cut. There is no point of his work allowing for the possibility that he was groping for a notion of *beginning*. On the contrary, he has an unwavering grasp of the idea and attaches to this an indubitably clear sense. This is why he forcefully opposes the Greeks (who are

<sup>149</sup> E. de Faye has grounded his work *De l'influence du Gnosticisme sur Origène* on two mistaken assumptions. Firstly, that Origen holds a notion of a 'transcendent world' of spirits. Secondly, that he holds a 'doctrine of eternal creation', an assumption quite fallacious, too, as the discussion here shows. The claims of de Faye in that work, where he asserts an influence of the Gnostics on Origen, grounding these assertions on false premises inevitably lead him to conclusions which seriously distort Origen's authentic views. Cf. E. de Faye, "De l'influence du Gnosticisme chez Origène", *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, Paris, 87 (1923), 181-235.

<sup>150</sup> *comm* John, 2, XIV.

<sup>151</sup> *Cels*, IV, 79.



in fact implied in his foregoing portion) and does speak of the *beginning* of the world (namely, its creation out of non-being) throughout his theology. Subsequently, he has no difficulty in speaking of a state 'before' creation of 'any rational nature' (πρὸ πάσης λογικῆς φύσεως),<sup>152</sup> whereas in *Cels* he reaffirms that 'the world has come into existence' (ὁ κόσμος γεγένηται).<sup>153</sup>

In contrast to those who 'cannot speak of any beginning of the world',<sup>154</sup> Origen himself quite often uses the notion of *beginning*. In denying that evil exists in rational creatures by nature, he brings the notion of *beginning* up again, speaking of 'natures existing in the beginning' (ἀρχῆθεν φύσεις).<sup>155</sup> In point of this, he contends that a rational nature is what it is (in terms of moral quality) because of its own responsibility and on account of its structure itself, that is, because it was made free in the *beginning* (ἀρχῆθεν).

Although God's decision to create appears in a timeless reality (the divine one), Origen inevitably has to express this notion in temporal terms. This is why he calls on the reader not to be embarrassed by the use of temporal terms in a discussion involving the timeless reality.<sup>156</sup> Behind this literary convention, however, we can discern his deeper distinct perceptions of God *Himself* and God *as Creator*, as well as the ontological priority of the former to the latter.

In his thought there is a notion of *when* God decided to create. It is then significant to ponder upon this 'when' and see how this is perceived.

The Wisdom of God is a subsistence existing before the aeons as a timeless one; but *when* (ὅτε) she accepted a relation to the creatures, *then* (τότε) she *became* the beginning of God's ways, be they constructional or providential; so this beginning is yoked together with the creatures of which she *became beginning* (ὅν γέγονεν ἀρχή), and we mean her relation to creatures; but Wisdom herself is timeless, substantially being with God before the aeons (ἡ δὲ σοφία αἰδώς, οὐσιωδῶς πρὸ αἰώνων παρὰ τῷ Θεῷ ὑπάρχουσα).<sup>157</sup>

<sup>152</sup> *selPs*, 109, PG 12.1569; the same in *selPs*, 4, PG 12.1133.

<sup>153</sup> *Cels*, IV, 79.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>155</sup> *commEph*, p. 404, 219–223; also, 407, 34–35.

<sup>156</sup> *commJohn*, 2, XIX.

<sup>157</sup> *expProv*, 8, PG 17.185.

Thus, although the atemporal character of Wisdom's being is strenuously emphasized, the concept of creation not existing in Wisdom herself, even as a *thought* or *will* or *decision* of God, is maintained.

There is a notion of '*when . . . then*', which conclusively indicates the conception of God as being Creator not of necessity, and also figures a reality in which God is not Creator *yet*. Thereupon lies the conception of *God Himself* quite apart from any notion of creation.

The conception of God Himself as distinct from his being known as Creator is precisely what allows Origen to sustain that creation does not introduce any change in God. This is why he had no reason to deal with the pseudo-question 'what was God doing before creation?'. R. Sorabji<sup>158</sup> ascribes this concern to Origen, but his mistake is that he bases his case on *Princ*, whereas all Greek and other Latin texts show that he did not need to deal with such nonsense. For such a question is based on a completely unreasonable premise: when one makes this *before* a serious point of debate, he has already established the entirely arbitrary presupposition that time exists. He speaks of the divine life having postulated that this is a temporal reality. This is why he speaks of 'before'. Once, however, it has been set forth that the divine reality is timeless, no question of the sort can be posed. As a matter of fact, it is not enough to merely postulate that time did not precede the world at all. This premise has to be constantly borne in mind and to be entertained all along the pertinent problematique. Otherwise it is reduced to a faint theoretical echo within a discourse where the existence of time has virtually been instilled.

Origen was a man of sound logic and a thorough knowledge of the rules of dialectics. This is why he did not feel it necessary to deal with a pseudo-question such as this. Once he had affirmed, in the clearest terms possible, that the divine reality is timeless, he knew that terms such as 'before' or 'after' or 'later' are just inevitable (yet conscious) linguistic inaccuracies.<sup>159</sup> Least of all would he take this inevitable linguistic inaccuracy as an actual philosophical problem and deal with it seriously. For the notions of 'before' or 'after' applied to the divine timelessness suggest nothing more than the ontological relation of the *will* of God to creation.

<sup>158</sup> R. Sorabji, *op. cit.*, 196.

<sup>159</sup> *comm John*, 2, XIX.

Beyond that, however, what R. Sorabji calls the 'why not sooner?' argument originates in a tacit Platonic premise: it takes for granted that God *should* do something 'before' he created. For God cannot be perceived as not *doing* anything, since in Platonism and Neoplatonism the divine creativity bears upon the very essence of the divine being itself.

The answer actually lies in the sharp contrast between Origen's thought and both Platonism and Neoplatonism. For, as I emphasized, on no account has his concept of creation anything to do with what God *is*. Any facet of his doctrine of creation, and certainly the notion of creation *ex nihilo*, has to do only with what God *did*. There is no legitimate way of drawing any conclusion about the divine being in itself from the creative *act* of God; an act which in no way can provide conclusions about God Himself. Unlike Platonism, in Origen the creative act of God has nothing to do with the divine ontology.

Besides, the deeper meaning of his creative act, as an act of *freedom*, is this: any notion of *why* is excluded in an absolute sense. God did not create within any context involving any *why* whatsoever. The notion of God being *free* to assume the *function* of creating suggests the thorough absence of such a context, the completely unconditional decision and the fully *contingent* character of creation. This free divine exercise of creativity is the absolute absence of any notion of *why* compelling, or even just impelling, towards creating the world.

The concept of the divine freedom in creation is pivotal, because it is indispensable for understanding this point. It should be absolutely dissociated from the sense attached to human freedom. For it pertains not only to the manner in which God *acts* (or, does not act at all), but also points to the manner in which God Himself *is*. This means that the state of God in Himself perceived in the absence of creation (in the state prior to creation, so to speak—but in fact a state ontologically ungraspable) is also excluded from any notion of *why*. Which means that there are *no* reasons for God not only to create, but also not to create. Which also means that there were no reasons on account of which God did not create earlier, so to speak. There were no reasons which were augmented in a later stage and it was *then* that God decided to assume the function of Creator on account of these reasons. The absolute absence of any causal nexus between the divine Being and the divine creative Function, as well as the absolute absence of any *why* for God to become Creator,

are two indispensable notions for this doctrine of creation to be comprehended.

So much with regard to the 'why not sooner?' argument. It is not only the notion of 'sooner', but also that of 'why' which in no way carries over the divine case. A lot of stress has been put by scholarship on this 'sooner', which after all points to the relation of God with the product of his creative act. I think that the notion of 'why' deserves to be paid particular attention and consideration, all the more since it mainly bears upon the divine being *per se*.

Hence Origen did not need to expound his considerations in the vein that R. Sorabji<sup>160</sup> does; that is, to wonder how is it possible for creation to imply no change in God Himself. The usual mistake (made there, too) over Origen's conception about the 'generation' of the Son from the Father is this: scholars speak of 'eternal generation' of the Son, as if this were a *continuous action* of the Father. The fact, however, is that he speaks of 'generation' portraying an *ontological relation* within the divine life, not an *act* whatsoever.<sup>161</sup>

By contrast, creation came into being out of non-being through a creative *act* of God, namely, out of his creative 'utterance' *γεννηθήτω* (let be). It is quite a crucial point that creation is regarded as not 'consubstantial' with God, whereas the Son is portrayed as *ὁμοούσιος* to the Father, a notion which has serious implications for Origen's doctrine. Again though I shall not elaborate on this point, which is beyond my scope and requires an extensive exposition of this theology.

At any rate, the fact that creation is a product of God's free *will*, as well as that what came into being out of non-being is 'not consubstantial' with God Himself, are two principal points which underline that God's creative *act* does not establish any change in Him Himself. The distinction drawn between God in Himself and God as known to the world, is one of the most fundamental conceptions stated throughout Origen's work.<sup>162</sup>

<sup>160</sup> R. Sorabji, *op. cit.*, 310.

<sup>161</sup> Further discussion on this particular topic is beyond my scope. However, the passage from *hym̃̃er* quoted above (p. 138) is quite eloquent.

<sup>162</sup> One can now see how wrong is the assertion of R. Norris, that one cannot think of God without thinking at the same time of the world. To him 'the doctrine of 'eternal creation' is, in Origen, a correlate of his understanding of the divine nature.' (*op. cit.*, 154). These are the views of G. Florovski, too (*Aspects of Church History*, p. 49) and of a vast number of scholars, some of which have already been mentioned.

Human intellect, being of necessity in time, would be tempted to pose a question such as 'does this decision of God coincide with the realization of creation, or is it prior to this?'. The strict answer is that this question itself makes no sense at all, since in timelessness there can be no notion of 'before'. Still Origen does affirm that the providential creation was brought into being 'before' the actual one. The '*when . . . then*' notion indicates that this creation of reasons, according to which the world was made, is not something pertaining to the ontology of Wisdom: it only indicates a process, yet not a process in time, in fact a similar one to the notion of 'days' in Genesis, which indicate no temporal succession, but only a process of thought.

This means that the relation of Wisdom, even as Logos, to creatures is not an element of the substance of Wisdom herself. This is what is really expressed by the statement that Wisdom 'accepted' (ἐδέξατο) this relation to 'future' creatures (τὰ ἐσόμενα). Hence if it is asked whether or not can we visualize a state of Wisdom without necessarily thinking of creation, or implying this in any way, Origen's answer is that indeed we can envisage Wisdom in such a way. For creation itself is but a product of God's volition. This is the actual perception hinted at by the expression '*when . . . then*', as well as by verbs such as 'accepted' (ἐδέξατο), 'wanted' (ἠβουλήθη) and 'willed' (ἠθέλησεν), in the passages canvassed in the previous pages. In point of the doctrine of creation, to say that someone is a Platonist is tantamount to saying that he holds God to be Creator of ontological necessity. Origen is far from any notion of this sort, as we have seen.

In view of this, the basic idea of *conditionality* of creation does exist in Origen's works. R. Sorabji's assertion,<sup>163</sup> therefore, that this idea is a discovery of Augustine is not correct. It was Origen who decisively enunciated that creation is a product of God's free will, namely, that God would have never created had he not willed to do so. R. Norris, on the other hand, took for granted that Origen holds a Platonic view of an 'eternally' pre-existing 'world of intelligences'. He has thus upheld the typical claim which has been taken up by numerous scholars. However, he finds himself somewhat confused, as he notices certain notions which are unlike a Platonist: "From a

<sup>163</sup> R. Sorabji, *op. cit.*, 241.



point of view of a Platonist, there is a contradiction involved in saying that something is both incorporeal and generate."<sup>164</sup> The problem of Norris is that although he brands Origen as a 'Platonist', still he finds fundamental views which are discordant with Platonism. This falls foul of the original claim: how could those be squared with each other? This places an onus on him to afford a convincing resolution. However, he does not put his premise in question and remains defiant to the outright fact that his own considerations render his claims self-defeating. Instead, he endeavours to accommodate his answer to his bias, contenting himself with beating a hasty retreat and reverting to his original premise: Origen is not after all an inconsistent Platonist; he did not really hold that creation had a beginning and came into being out of non-being.

This conclusion, however, is wrong, since the premise about a world of 'rational spirits' existing without beginning is wrong in the first place. For in Origen the notion of *beginning* is too strongly enunciated to be extinguished. Certainly it is not a very apt comment to say that "Origen wants to have his cake and eat it": that is, to maintain that the 'world of spirits' is without beginning and at the same time to speak of 'beginning'. The simple answer is that Origen does not hold any notion of a beginningless world. If I am to break down resistance, I could say that Norris's comment applies rather to himself. For, on the one hand, he seeks to maintain his assertion that Origen holds a 'doctrine of eternal creation' and, on the other, he concedes the inescapable fact that Origen does sustain that the creation had a *beginning*. Certainly this is not a 'contradiction' of Origen, but a miscomprehension of Norris.<sup>165</sup>

The final comment which I wish to make is that Norris would be more confused if he had grasped one more point, which has totally eluded him: not only did Origen hold that something can be incorporeal as well as generate, but also this 'generate' is not 'consubstantial' (ὁμοούσιον) with the divine incorporeality. This is a distinction which Plato had no inkling of, whereas to the Gnostics it could seem outrageous. Besides, it is well-known that Augustine struggled hard to free himself from the Manichaean view that the soul is of the same substance with God.

<sup>164</sup> R. Norris, *op. cit.*, 149ff.

<sup>165</sup> *Loc. cit.*, 149-54.

There should be no doubt that in *Princ* Rufinus has severely obfuscated the notions expounded there.<sup>166</sup> For the perception of the 'reasons' coming into being out of non-being into the Wisdom (a notion so conspicuously expounded in the works in Greek) is not clearly expounded; to the extent that this is there, it is rendered in an obscure (and I think, intentionally obscure) manner. Quite obviously Rufinus had not grasped Origen's distinction between God *Himself*, on the one hand, and God as *Creator* out of a free *decision* and *will* of his, on the other. He apparently feared that creation's coming into being could entail some kind of change in God *Himself*.

I maintain that these points of *Princ* (in which the so-called 'why not sooner?' argument seems to be implicitly handled) are only a catastrophic interpolation by Rufinus,<sup>167</sup> which provoked misunderstanding of Origen's real views. Rufinus was obviously apprehensive that this theology could not answer a quaint question such as 'what was God doing before creation?', or 'why did he not create sooner?' Hence he tucked an entirely unnecessary, and even misleading, argumentation into the text of *Princ*.

Such an argument can be found in Aristotle opposing the view that there could have been rest for an infinite period and then motion, in the sense that 'orderly succession'<sup>168</sup> could be impossible. Augustine's answer to a similar question (namely, 'what did' God do before creation) was that 'He was preparing hell for people who pry into mysteries'. His serious answer to this question is that there was no time before creation. Still this is simply a mere repetition of an inspired view of Origen, already put forward in *commJohn*, 2, XIX, in *frJohn*, XIII, as well as in *Princ*, IV.4.1: this latter passage of *Princ* acquires a totally different meaning regarded in the context of the fact that Origen *did not* hold any notion of beginningless creation.

<sup>166</sup> Cf. *Princ*, I.2.2.

<sup>167</sup> *Princ* I.1.6; I.2.10; I.4.3-5. (This section is found in one MS only and has been obliterated from another. s. Koetschau's ed., p. 65, n. on I.8; II.5.2-3.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. Aristotle: *Physica*, 8.1, 252a11-19; *De Caelo*, I.12, 283a11. Augustine: *Confessions*, XI.12 (answer to the 'why not sooner?' argument); *Confessions*, XI.13; *de Genesi contra Manichaeos*, I.2.3; *De Civitate Dei*, XI.5-6 (there was no time before the creation). In modern times this argument has been set forth by G.W. Leibniz in his famous exchange of five papers with S. Clarke: he developed his argument of 'why not sooner?' in attacking the Newtonian opinion that time exists independently of change. However, any further discussion on this point is beyond my scope. Cf. H.G. Alexander, *The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence*, Manchester, 1956; 26-7, 37-8, 75-7.

The fact is that such a question was posed not by Origen, but by the Gnostics and Manichaeans,<sup>169</sup> notably the heretics against whom he polemicized so many times either implicitly or by name.

The interpolation of this question in the Latin rendering of *Princ* was a major mistake of Rufinus. Juxtaposition of texts extant both in Greek and Latin illustrate him as a man of good will, a devoted man enthusiastic for Origen, but of no particularly high intelligence, or interpretative ability. All the writings extant in Greek clearly show that Origen did not need to address himself to this fake-question. For he definitely distinguishes the conception of God *Himself* from the notion of God's *decision* and *will* to create. That God *decided to create* does not entail any change in Himself. On the contrary, despite the fact that God *decided* to create, He *Himself* remains unchanged. The statements in *Cels* leave no room for doubt on this question: it is explicitly contended that "the teaching of Jews and Christians preserves the *unchangeable and unalterable [nature] of God* (τὸ ἄτρεπτον καὶ ἀναλλοίωτον τοῦ Θεοῦ) . . . For in prayers to God the Scripture says 'But You are the same'. And it is believed that it is God who said 'I have not changed'."<sup>170</sup>

In the same work this conception of God is unequivocally enunciated:

If he [sc. Celsus] had read the words of the prophets, where David says, 'But You are the same' and where Malachi, I think, says 'And I have not changed', he would have seen that *none of us say that change takes place in God concerning either His action or our conceptions about Him. Remaining the same* He controls the things that are subject to change, as that is their nature; and his Logos persuades [us] that they are under control.<sup>171</sup>

The scriptural passages, which Origen appeals to, are Ps. 101, 28 and Mal. 3, 6. It is remarkable that he uses them both in the two passages, quoting them in the same order. It is obvious that the first portion mainly points to the notion of God Himself, whereas the second one alludes to the fact that any notion about Him does not imply any alteration to God Himself. In his translation of *Cels*, H. Chadwick<sup>172</sup> has translated the passage of Malachi 3, 6 as 'I

<sup>169</sup> Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 2.28.3; Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, I.2.3.

<sup>170</sup> *Cels*, I, 21; italics mine.

<sup>171</sup> *Cels*, VI, 62; italics mine. Cf. *Cels*, V, 21: 'the entirely unchangeable nature of God' (τὸ πάντῃ ἄτρεπτον τοῦ Θεοῦ).

<sup>172</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 21.

change not'. I understand that this is the English rendering of the scriptural *οὐκ ἠλλοίωμαι*, quoted by Origen. However, the verb is in the present perfect tense, not in the present tense; so the passage means 'I have not changed'. Whether in the Hebrew text the verb is in the present perfect tense or in present tense, I do not know. What I do know, however, is that in the Greek text of the Septuagint, which Origen quotes, the expression is in the form *οὐκ ἠλλοίωμαι*. It is important for this topic to point the difference out, as the quotation is meant to suggest that eventhough God *decided* to create, and so he did, there is no change or alteration that took place in God Himself.

The ontological priority of the notion of God Himself to any conception of Him is again positively put forward. The conceptions of God as Creator or as Judge or as Provident, or whatever one would conceive him of, do not suggest any change in God Himself, who is beyond any possibility of change. Particularly, as far as his creative act is concerned, the notion of his decision and will plays a determinate role in this distinction, which is a fundamental premise of Origen's entire theology.

What Rufinus did not grasp in its full significance was the major break between Platonism and Origen: this break lies in the notion of 'coming into being out of non-being' without any necessity involved.

Besides, at the same point of *Princ.*<sup>173</sup> Rufinus represents Origen to maintain that creation, as narrated in Genesis, does not point to the very beginning of the world. In fact he appears unaware of the distinct conceptions of providential and actual creation. His concern is to represent Origen as holding that God was never idle. He takes into consideration only the existence of the actual world and interpolates the assertion that the narration in Genesis refers only to the creation of the present world. He confuses the notion of successive worlds with Origen's conception of the creative act of God. The latter totally eluded Rufinus.

Hence, anyone who would rely on such statements of *Princ* is bound to be confused and misled. This in fact has befallen the vast majority of those who offered accounts of Origen's thought on this point out of a study of *Princ* only and without a considered study of all the works in Greek and Latin.

<sup>173</sup> *Princ.* III.5.3.



From these texts, however, it can be conclusively drawn that the narration in Genesis is taken to refer to the very beginning of creation. The notions of providential and actual creation are grounded on passages of Genesis. After all Origen is a Biblical theologian, who is happier in quotation from the Scripture than in using philosophical terminology. Thus the pertinent analysis in these two sections of the Latin version of *Princ* should be regarded as an interpolation of Rufinus: he took the 'why not sooner?' pseudo-question as a real problem; hence he deemed that he ought to defend his author on this ground and shield him from a potential charge of heresy. At the same time, however, he was unaware of critical facets of this theology, such as the distinction between the notions of God Himself and God as Creator, and consequently the conception of time, and nonetheless the Alexandrian's entire doctrine of creation. We know that there is a lack of congruence between any given Greek fragment and Rufinus's Latin version. This means that the translator abridged the work to a considerable extent. In the case of the doctrine of creation Rufinus' initiative was harmful to the essence of this theology.

What I have attempted in this section is to expound a crucial and controversial aspect of one of the most mystical doctrines of Origen's entire theology. How delicate this tenet is evident from the historical fact that its distortion was fatal for the comprehension of this theology as a whole.

In doing so, I solely based my argument upon his own statements, avoiding deductions or conclusions drawn dialectically. Certainly there are some points of this exposition which seem to be paradoxical. For example, it could be asked: how is it possible to speak of a 'beginning' (in the sense of coming into being out of non-being) in a reality which is timeless? Similarly, one could ask: how is it possible to speak of actual creation coming into being *after* the providential creation?

This is the very point where the distinction between God *Himself* and God a *Creator* appears as the decisive factor for understanding his dogma. This distinction is in fact a truth which cannot be apprehended by conscious mind, and Origen did know that this doctrine was bound to be misunderstood once couched in words. This is why he regarded this doctrine as a 'mystical' one. This is also why he states that this doctrine is 'difficult to enunciate' (δυσδιήγητον) and



'far beyond our linguistic ability' (καὶ πολλῷ τῆς λέξεως ἡμῶν μείζον).<sup>174</sup> We should recall, however, his emphatic statement that his use of temporal notions when speaking of the divine timelessness should be regarded in a loose sense on account of the non-existence of time.<sup>175</sup>

That a dogma is bound to be misunderstood once couched in words is one of the main reasons which render a certain conception mystical. Origen was very much alive to this fact. At the point where Celsus speaks of the Greek tenets explaining why man has assumed a body, he makes a short comment yet he forbears to set forth his own views.<sup>176</sup> He only makes a hint by means of the Stoic expression *καταληπτική φαντασία* (direct cognitive impression),<sup>177</sup> averring that this in fact constitutes a criterion for knowledge of a certain subject. In *Princ.*, although not by the Stoic term, he alludes to this intellectual capacity expounding the atemporal ontological relation of the Father to the Son:

God was always the Father of his only-begotten Son, who was born indeed from him and draws his being from him, but he is yet without any beginning, not only of that kind which can be distinguished by periods of time, but even of that kind which the mind alone is wont to contemplate in itself and to perceive, if I may so say, *with the bare intellect and reason*. Wisdom, therefore, must be believed beyond the limits of any beginning that we can speak or understand.<sup>178</sup>

The reference to direct cognitive impression (*καταληπτική φαντασία*) points to his belief that a certain knowledge of a mystical doctrine is possible, through a flash of insight or, as he puts it, through bare mind and reason. The same Stoic expression *καταληπτική φαντασία* is used in opining that "any attempt to substantiate a narration, even if it is true, and to produce a full knowledge of it (*καταληπτικὴν ἐμποιῆσαι περὶ αὐτῆς φαντασίαν*) is one of the most difficult tasks and is in some cases impossible".<sup>179</sup> This is an issue on which much could be said. However, since Origen himself does not elaborate, this ques-

<sup>174</sup> *commJohn*, 10, XXXIX; s. also *commJohn*, 10, XLI.

<sup>175</sup> Cf. *commJohn*, 2, XIX.

<sup>176</sup> *Cels.*, VIII, 53.

<sup>177</sup> *Cels.*, VIII, 53. *Καταληπτική φαντασία* is a concept of the Stoic theory of knowledge. It suggests a cognition of the intellect which is posited to be true and no doubt can be entertained as to its truth. Cf. *Cels.*, I, 42; *Philocalia*, 15, 15.

<sup>178</sup> *Princ.*, I.2.2.

<sup>179</sup> *Cels.*, I, 42.

tion should not detain us here. I shall only make a few hints about the deeper conception of grasping truth through 'bare reason'.

In conceiving of God either in Himself or as Creator, there is a correlation of the temporal human intellect with the atemporal divine being. As Origen points out, human expressions can be but *tensed*, in this agreeing with Aristotle. This is the so-called *discursive thought* which takes one thing after another *progressively*, it depends on imprinted images and, consequently, this thought is spread out in time. As a matter of fact, in discursive thought there is an intrinsic *complex* character.

In contrast to this, the *non-discursive thought* involves no complexity and is not directed to propositions which are complex. The Greek and, much more, oriental reflection, acknowledged this way of perceiving truth; that is, through a sheerly unmediated and non-propositional way. The Stoics spoke of direct cognitive impression (καταληπτική φαντασία). Plotinus (although dissenting from the Stoics on so many points) considered this kind of thought in terms of contact with the higher reality.<sup>100</sup> In fact, the contemplation of truth through non-discursive thought involves an apprehension which has a *timeless* object of knowledge, namely, the divine reality.

In Origen the case is rather different on account of the dissimilarity of his own world-picture and mode of thought from those of the Stoics and Neoplatonists. The difference from the Stoics lies in the application of this mode of contact with a *transcendent* reality. Regarding Neoplatonism, Origen differs in holding this contact with God to have a *personal* character. This, however, bears upon Origen's Trinitarian Theology, as well his doctrine of the Logos, which are out of my scope.

The fact is that he viewed the doctrine of creation as not amenable to being coherently couched in words. This is why he deliberately eschewed an outright explication of what is not susceptible of being entertained propositions which are strung together in 'that'—clauses. Instead, concepts are contemplated here in isolation from each other, but they are not chained or concatenated at all. This conception involves no entertainment of propositions which would build up a

<sup>100</sup> Cf. *Enneads*, IV.4.1. On this point there is a particularly interesting article by A.C. Lloyd: 'Non-discursive thought—an enigma of Greek philosophy'. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 70 (1969–70), 261–74.

statement that something compositely couched is the case. Any statement of this kind is simply impossible. This is why he avers that

there are certain things, the meaning of which is impossible to explain by any human language, but which are made clear through simple apprehension rather than through any power of words. This rule must control our interpretation even of the divine writings, in order that what is said therein may be estimated in accordance not with the meanness of the language but with the divine power of the Holy Spirit who inspired the composition.<sup>181</sup>

Similarly, in *Princ.*: "Now . . . let us . . . contemplate the *beginning* of creation, so far as it is possible for the mind to contemplate the *beginning* of God's creative work."<sup>182</sup>

According to Origen, no progress is adequate so as one might come in contact with God. This is one of his major points of contrast to Plotinus,<sup>183</sup> stemming from the Christian notion of a radical gap and discontinuity between the divine reality and the world. If Origen can hold (as he does) a concept of non-discursive apprehension of the divine reality, this is not because man ascends through mystical progress, but because God descends, as Logos instructing and as Holy Spirit casting light on a rational creature.

But we affirm that human nature is not self-sufficient in any way to quest for God and to find him in Himself, unless it is helped by the God who is object of the search. He is found by those who, after doing what they can, admit that they need him, and shows himself to those to whom he judges it befitting to appear, so far as it is possible for God to be known to man and for the human soul which is still in the body to know God.<sup>184</sup>

Thus apprehension 'through bare mind and reason', or 'direct cognitive impression' (καταληπτική φαντασία) as Origen calls it in Stoic terminology, is actually a kind of instruction originated in the divine gracious consent. In the final analysis, this is an illumination descending from (and pertaining to) *timelessness*; an illumination which is

<sup>181</sup> *Princ.* IV.3.15. Plato, allows a certain kind of knowledge (namely, the knowledge of the Forms) to be impossible to convey in writing. s. *Protagoras*, 329A; 347E; *Phaedrus*, 274B; *Seventh Epistle*, 341C-344D.

<sup>182</sup> *Princ.* II.9.1; italics mine.

<sup>183</sup> Cf. *Enneads*, III.7.3.

<sup>184</sup> *Cels.* VII, 42.

offered into *temporality* all the same. In timelessness there is neither complexity nor progress, and any discussion about this reality is beyond any sort of dialectics. Needless to say that it is only the terminology, not the import of the doctrine, which is of Stoic provenance here, since whatever Origen accepted from others he made his own, and the whole comes down to us with the stamp of his personality upon it. In this case Origen's exposition of the tenet presupposes a transcendent reality: the function of 'direct cognitive impression' applies to this, and we know that the idea of transcendence was unacceptable to the Stoics.

One would say, however: 'But this is not plausible!' In saying this, he will have, quite unconsciously, already enunciated the very definition of 'direct cognitive impression' (καταληπτική φαντασία) according to Stoic thought. As a matter of fact, the Stoic conception is that the 'direct cognitive impression' (καταληπτική φαντασία) is 'different from what is plausible' (διαφέρειν δὲ τὴν καταληπτικὴν φαντασίαν τοῦ εὐλόγου).<sup>185</sup> What seems to be plausible is subject to dialectics; besides, after a certain argumentation, this 'plausible' could be disputed. On the contrary, direct cognitive impression (καταληπτική φαντασία) is not susceptible to disproof whatever.<sup>186</sup> This means that whereas 'plausible' can be proven to be *untrue*, what is apprehended through καταληπτική φαντασία could never be proven to be untrue.<sup>187</sup> This is why this was regarded as a 'criterion of truth' (κριτήριον ἀληθείας).<sup>188</sup> For, by definition, 'καταληπτική φαντασία is what arises from what *really exists*, that is, from what is true, and it would never arise from what does not exist.' (φαντασία καταληπτική ἐστὶν ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὑπάρχοντος καὶ κατ' αὐτό τὸ ὑπάρχον ἐναπομεμαγμένη καὶ ἐναπεσφραγισμένη ὅποια οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο ἀπὸ μὴ ὑπάρχοντος).<sup>189</sup> So the truth apprehended through καταληπτική φαντασία is beyond 'sensual perception' (καὶ χωρὶς τῆς κατὰ τὰς αἰσθήσεις ἐνεργείας),<sup>190</sup> as well as beyond what seems to be 'plausible' (διαφέρει τοῦ εὐλόγου).<sup>191</sup>

<sup>185</sup> *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, I, 141, 5-6; again, in 15-16; (SVF: The numbers indicate volume, page and verses).

<sup>186</sup> τὴν μὲν γὰρ [sc. καταληπτικὴν φαντασίαν] ἀδιάφυστον εἶναι, τὸ δὲ εὐλογὸν καὶ ἄλλως ἀποβαίνειν. SVF, I, 141, 6-7.

<sup>187</sup> Cf. SVF, II, 29, 39.

<sup>188</sup> SVF, II, 22, 28-30.

<sup>189</sup> SVF, I, 18, 6-11; also in SVF, II, 24, 12-14; II, 31, 7; II, 33, 4.

<sup>190</sup> SVF, II, 24, 11.

<sup>191</sup> SVF, I, 141, 5-6 and, again, in 15-16.

With respect to the problem of time, let me give this example: the first of the celebrated Zeno's paradoxes of motion disputed the very possibility of a man to move at all. An obvious and 'plausible' everyday experience was rebutted by means of dialectics, and debate on such grounds goes on until our day, although it should not, in the light of the development of Infinitesimal Calculus.

The real import of direct cognitive impression (καταληπτική φαντασία) plays a crucial and decisive role in understanding Origen's concept of a non-beginningless world. It is certainly not incidental that, whenever he treated this delicate question, he expressed (rather, hinted at) his view using the Stoic notion of καταληπτική φαντασία. This fact must be paid serious attention and painstaking study in order to comprehend his conception of creation and its relation to God. To him these questions cannot be taught through words; they can only be apprehended through direct apprehension. For the theological notions used (τῶν θεολογουμένων ἐννοιῶν) are only a *means* of expression, and actually stand *between* human mind and God.<sup>192</sup> It should be emphasized, however, that even direct apprehension is not regarded as an adequate intellectual function in order to comprehend these questions entirely. This comprehension, in its fullness, is a *hope* stemming from the promise of 'seeing' God 'face to face', it pertains to the eschatological reality and is destined to be fully realized *only* then.<sup>193</sup>

This is the very fact on account of which this apprehension 'through bare reason' (reason=λόγος is also the term for Logos) cannot be expressed through discursive thought. For once one ventures to attain this, he will inevitably involve what is *timeless* (and thus not susceptible of extension and progress) in a discursive thought and propositions which are *a priori* bound with progress and spread out in time. This means that one might attempt to put into words a *timeless* reality through means which are by nature bound with *time*, they presuppose time, and analysis of them inevitably introduce a fusion of timelessness with time—which is self-defeating.

This is the reason why Origen constantly eschewed outright exposition of this timeless reality through discursive reflection. He just appealed to apprehension 'by the bare mind and reason' and to the

<sup>192</sup> Cf. *fr John*, XIII.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*



'direct cognitive impression' (καταληπτική φαντασία) of those who wish to comprehend these doctrines. This is an attitude which is indicative not only of his respect for the ungraspable transcendence of the divine reality, but also of his sound dialectical discipline. This attitude cannot be challenged by anyone who purports to stick to the rules of logic and dialectics. No one could ask the question about any 'before' the providential creation, in which 'before' there was only God and no creation at all. The very question is absurd. For once one poses a question about any 'before'<sup>194</sup> (or implies a similar temporal notion), he has already *postulated time into timelessness*, and thus, is oblivious of the fundamental premise; in fact, a virtually arbitrary and absurd assumption will have been illegitimately inserted into the argument. Such a reasoning, therefore, is open, indeed extremely vulnerable, to severe objections and can in no way make suitable sense. The falsification and impropriety involved in this case is quite plain. For notions pertaining to two radically different realities are incongruously concatenated.

There is, therefore, a point which should be clear-cut: In approaching this aspect of Origen's thought, one should try to reflect in tune to this kind of understanding. This is a crucial consequence which flows from the very fact that this doctrine is suggested (rather than plainly expounded) by means of a thinking which is not directed to explicit propositions. Once one is prompt to frame in easy statements a tenet which has been developed on the non-discursive premise, he is bound to slip to wrong conclusions. In this respect then, the assumption of a 'Platonic conception of creation' is but a falsification made by those who overlook this requisite. The Platonic view is, at least, susceptible of an explicit exposition and does not need to be entertained such a kind of thinking in order to be comprehended; quite obviously, this doctrine of creation does not need to appeal to direct cognitive impression (καταληπτική φαντασία) at all.

There is, therefore, a point which should be made perfectly clear. In approaching this aspect of Origen's thought, one should get rid of premises which are plausible only in a temporal situation. For instance, if we say that something was white and *became* blue, it is

<sup>194</sup> This had been already stated by Plato, who concedes that any notion of 'before' or 'after' is possible only within time existent. s. *Timaeus*, 37 E ff; Cf. *Parmenides*, 156 A ff.

reasonable to assume that there is a *moment* which marks the *succession* from being white to becoming blue. But such an assumption is not plausible in timelessness. Unless this point is fully assimilated, one is bound to think of timelessness on the same premises that one reflects about a temporal state. In that case misguided conclusions are inevitable and endless debate will be invited, such as those about the narration of Genesis, challenging all reference to 'days' in the absence of the world or in an incomplete creation.

Considering Origen's views of time and creation with respect to God, therefore, one has always to stick to the fundamental premise put forward by himself: the divine reality is a state of *timelessness*—not everlasting duration,<sup>195</sup> not omnitemporality. This is the fundamental axiom of his doctrine, which should not be escaped by the 'eternity of the world'-mongers.

On account of the sheer fact that atemporality is *atemporality*, one cannot think of either *succession* or any *turning points* into timelessness, as if this state were subject to (or, bound with) temporal flux. There are neither *turning points*, nor *moments*, nor *succession*, nor *temporal flux* in timelessness. Subsequently, any question pertaining to timelessness and involving notions of this kind is groundless and misleading. Once timelessness is regarded as a kind of *duration*, the discussion is bound to be misleading and prejudicial to Origen's authentic doctrine. For the fundamental premise (that of timelessness) is disposed of through the very fact that temporal notions such as 'succession' and the sort, are arbitrarily introduced into the argument.

To couch this reality in words (which constitute a temporal function and are themselves a manifestation of the temporal reality) is impossible. To visualize, or to feel it (in a way which is inevitably vague) is not impossible. In any event, it could be a fatal mistake

<sup>195</sup> That God has everlasting duration rather than atemporality was held by Aristotle; Cf. *Metaphysica*, 12.7, 1072b13–1073a13. As regards Plato, there is still intense controversy as to whether he regarded the Ideas as 'everlasting' or 'timeless'. For in his works the implications of duration and timelessness stand side by side and he offers no clear resolution; thus J. Whittaker in 'The 'eternity' of the Platonic Forms' argues that Plato's notion of eternity is 'everlasting duration'. This is a view similar to F.M. Cornford's who interpreted eternity in Parmenides and Plato as 'duration'; s. F.M. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 98; 102. On the other hand, L. Taran regards Plato as the first atemporalist and so does M. Schofield; Cf. L. Taran, *Parmenides*, Princeton 1965, 175; Malcolm Schofield, "Did Parmenides discover eternity?", *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 52 (1978), 243–66. Both the latter authors, unlike Plato, aver that in Parmenides eternity means 'duration'.

(which could thoroughly mislead the entire problematique) to establish temporal notions and by means of them produce questions or assertions intermingling temporality with timelessness.

My conclusion is that there is no such notion as 'eternity of the world' in Origen's thought. What he actually holds is quite the opposite. Creation came into being out of non-being by an act of God's will, a decision of free volition out of love.<sup>196</sup> In his own words following Paul's Eph. 3,18, "we are fixed and rooted in the love of God".<sup>197</sup> This pertains not only to the creation of the material world, but also to the providential creation of the θεωρήματα and λόγοι, even to God's *will* and nonetheless to his *decision* to create. It can definitely be sustained that Origen does hold a perception of God in Himself, which par excellence underlines a perception of God without necessarily thinking of him as Creator.

To speak of Platonism in Origen has been a kind of engrained habit. This is the normal verdict which has been a virtually universal view. Differentiations relate only to the degree of the claimed Platonism and Neoplatonism. It is certainly true that the cultural environment of Alexandria was impregnated with the Platonic idealism, which in fact held considerable sway in the region. But this did not render Origen's own intellectual evolution inevitably Platonic all along. He was not bowled head over heels by the Platonic outlook to the extent that is currently believed. With regard to my subject-matter *at least*, much has to be reconsidered and revised, and the well-entrenched putative verdict should be disconfirmed. The arid claim that Origen's doctrine of creation is but a crude echo of Neoplatonism, or even a refined one couched in Christian terminology, is sheerly ungrounded.

The condemnation of 553 A.D. imposed on him was chiefly based on pointless and distorting interpolations found within an untrustworthy rendering of *Princ* and false and hostile testimonies of Justinian;

<sup>196</sup> Quite unconsciously, Justinian, in *libOr*, speaks of God's 'will' (τῷ βουλήματι) to create. It is obvious, however, that he had not the slightest idea of the serious implications that the notions of God's *will* has in Origen's theology. (Cf. Mansi, IX, 489). The pertinent passage was incorporated by Koetschau in his edition of *Princ*, as Fragment 24 (in *Princ*, II.9.1). The fallacy of this act of Koetschau's is discussed later, at the point where Origen's conception of the relation between time and the notion of Infinite is discussed.

<sup>197</sup> *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 7.11.2.

testimonies, which did not lack political aims, in fact they stemmed from ecclesio-political machinations which were continuously at work; what was really missing was a definitive knowledge of Origen's views. Instead, Justinian and his theological advisors took for Origen's theology what the so-called 'Origenists' asserted, taking Origen's speculations without understanding them and turning them lightheartedly into dogmas. So the case was not practically against Origen himself (dead for three centuries) but against those who called themselves 'Origenists'. However, the charge of heresy had been directed against Origen even during his lifetime.<sup>198</sup>

The following story is pretty indicative of the unending historical plight of Origen. Pope Anastasius I, bishop of Rome (399–401), issued a letter to John, bishop of Jerusalem. In this letter, the pope approves of the condemnation of Origen's writings—a condemnation which had been issued by a synod of anti-Origenist bishops in Egypt. The pope claimed that Origen's object was to disintegrate the Christian faith and he virtually anathematized Rufinus, the translator of Origen's works. At the same time, however, the same pope admitted that he had never read Origen's writings and, what is more, he had never heard of the man (the man he was condemning by the same letter). The case was simply that this bishop of Rome was acting under the influence of Jerome and Marcella (an anti-Origenist friend of Jerome's) and wrote this letter just for the sake of satisfying Jerome's wishes. To obtain the letter, Marcella had supplied the pope with an edition of Rufinus's translation of Origen's *De Principiis*, which contained forgeries.<sup>199</sup> In view of such intrigues, anyone can appreciate the value and authority of many condemnations passed against Origen.

The truth is that the *Princ* is a conspectus not of Origen's actual theology but of the arguments against *Origenism* by his uninformed opponents. How little had the so-called Origenism to do with Origen's real views is a question which still waits for its definitive answer; an answer which could be reached only as an upshot of a thorough research of his works extant both in Greek and Latin. As long as this task is not fulfilled, much room remains open to a tragic historic bias against the authentic views of an honest pioneer of Christian thought.

<sup>198</sup> Cf. *Princ*, 1.6.1; *homLuc*, 25.

<sup>199</sup> On this incident, s. Rufinus's complaints in his *Apology Against Jerome*, 1.19.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### GOD THE LOGOS AND WORLD

#### *The 'place' of the Logos*

The distinction drawn between Wisdom and Logos is only an intellectual one. The concept of cosmos is the central philosophical notion, by means of which this distinction is made and understood. For the Logos is perceived as the Wisdom herself in her relation to the world. There is no question of any actual otherness. Speaking of either Wisdom or Logos, the essential reference pertains to the same person, namely, the Son of God. The difference is that Wisdom indicates the living incorporeal personal subsistence in herself, without any allusion to the world or to anything else, while the Logos is the Wisdom conceived in her 'communication with rational creatures' (κατά μὲν τὴν σύστασιν τῆς περί τῶν ὅλων θεωρίας καὶ νοημάτων τῆς σοφίας νοουμένης, κατὰ δὲ τὴν πρὸς τὰ λογικά κοινωνίαν τοῦ λόγου λαμβανομένου).<sup>1</sup> This means that Wisdom is perceived as Logos by a rational creature who communicates with her.

The notion of the conceptions (ἐπίνοιαι) of the Son allows him to portray the relationship of the timeless God with the temporal world. This correlation is possible through the particular conception of the Logos and its implications. Through his activity, the Logos becomes a kind of span, something of a connection, through which this relation between Here and the Beyond is established.

Wisdom was made the beginning of God's ways towards his works. It is along these 'ways' that 'the Son of God is moving decorating, providing for, making benefaction, favouring, in this made wisdom. The Logos is, therefore, said to be ἀρχή, being different from her [sc. the wisdom] not in substance, but only in [mere] conception and relation; so that he [sc. the Logos, who is] stated in the scriptures is the same being (ὑπαρξίς) in substance; he is Wisdom inasmuch as he is affiliated with God, [whereas] he is the creative Logos in so much as he has inclined, so to speak, towards creatures, (ἀρχὴν ὄν) εἶναι τὸν λόγον

<sup>1</sup> *comm. John*, I, XIX.



φασίν οὐχ ἕτερον ὄντα αὐτῆς κατ' οὐσίαν ἀλλ' ἐπινοία καὶ σχέσει, ἔν' οὕτως εἶπω, ἥ μὲν ὑκείνεται τῷ Θεῷ σοφία, ἥ δὲ νένευκεν, ἔν' οὕτως εἶπω, πρὸς τὰ δημιουργήματα ὁ δημιουργικὸς λόγος).<sup>2</sup>

The view reiterated here is that of the relation of the Logos to God himself and to the world; but there is something more indicated through this passage: not only did the Logos create the world; but also he is constantly related to it, as he acts perpetually 'decorating, providing for, making benefaction, favouring'.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the world is regarded as something 'external' to God.<sup>4</sup> Hence we should conclude that Origen conceives the Logos as being both 'in' wisdom, that is, into timelessness, and within the world, that is, 'outside' of the Trinity.

It is through this conception that the Logos may be regarded as a mediator between the timeless God and the temporal world.

God is the original 'place, as it were' (οἶονεὶ τόπος) of the Logos.<sup>5</sup> But this is not the only 'place' of his: he is also fully present in the world, yet not being himself *part* of the world; he is 'stretched out alongside with' the world (συμπαρεκτεινόμενος). The notion is found in Jerome's Latin translation of Origen's *Homilies on Luke*; the verse of the Psalm 'The sound of his teaching has gone out into every land, and his words to the ends of the earth'<sup>6</sup> is commented thus: 'Our Lord Jesus has been spread out to the whole world, because he is God's power.<sup>7</sup> . . . Behold the Saviour's greatness. It extends to all the world.'<sup>8</sup> He goes on thus:

<sup>2</sup> *Jr John*, I.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Princ.* IV.4.1.; s. also *comm John*, 20, XVIII.

<sup>5</sup> *comm John*, 20, XVIII. Determined to read Neoplatonism into the works of Origen, R. Norris states that 'the Logos appears . . . as the first step 'down' from the One in the stream of existence' and he is 'the expression of eternal Mind' (*op. cit.*, p. 154). Origen never used these Plotinian categories. Beyond that, however, the assertion that the Logos is 'existing down' in relation to God is a miscomprehension by those who in all ways wish to attribute a Plotinian perception of the world to Origen. The discussion in this section shows how wrong they are in regarding the Logos as being somewhere 'lower' from God or 'standing midway' (s. *infra*) between God and the world. The Logos *is and always was with* God in the divine timelessness.

<sup>6</sup> Psalm 18, 4, also cited in Rom. 10, 18; Origen adds the expression 'of his teaching' and twice substitutes 'his' for 'their'.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. 1, 24.

<sup>8</sup> *Homilies on Luke*, 4.5. On the Logos 'extending' to all the world, s. ch. 6, p. 211.

Go up to the heavens.<sup>9</sup> See how he fills the celestial regions: 'He appeared to the angels'.<sup>10</sup> Go down in your mind to the nether world. See that he went down there, too. 'He went down, the one who also went up, to fulfil everything',<sup>11</sup> 'so that at Jesus' name every knee might bend, those of heavenly beings, and earthly beings, and beings in the nether world'.<sup>12</sup> Ponder the Lord's power, how it has filled the world, that is, the heavens, the earth, and the nether regions. He passed through heaven itself and rose to the regions above. We have read that the Son of God 'passed through the heavens'.<sup>13</sup>

It should be noticed that the cosmic presence of the Logos is understood to be 'by his power', which is a significant difference from Stoicism, for whom the logos is a cosmic principle and hardly is there a distinction between this logos *per se* and its *action*. The Logos of Origen is transcendent to the world, still "by the power with which he is said to fill the world,<sup>14</sup> he comes to each man and speaks in his heart and teaches him discretion of good and evil".<sup>15</sup> Which means that there is also another 'place' where the Logos is present: this 'place' is each individual rational being. In fact, Christ

is so powerful as to be invisible (ἀόρατος)<sup>16</sup> in his divine nature, and to be present in every individual man and also to be extended alongside with the whole world (ὅλην τῇ κόσμῳ συμπαρακτεινόμενος). It is he who is declared by [the saying] 'He stood in the midst of us'.<sup>17</sup>

The presence of the Logos is affirmed in the 'entire world', that is in all the ranks of life. It is exactly this presence of the Logos that makes creatures to be rational (λογικά). This Logos is actually an educator, on account of his presence within rational creatures.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Ps. 138, 8 and Rom. 10, 6.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Cor. 5, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Eph. 4, 10.

<sup>12</sup> Phil. 2, 10.

<sup>13</sup> Heb. 4, 14. We should bear in mind that Origen's Homilies represent his theology expounded before the public in the Church, including catechumens. Hence no elaborate notions should be expected in such portions. However, even in such instances fundamental views of his theology are implicitly present.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Jer. 23, 24; Wis. 1, 7; s. also *commJohn*, 6, XXXIX; *Homilies in Leviticum*, 5, 2.

<sup>15</sup> *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 3.2.9; Cf. *commJohn*, 1, XXXVII; 2, XV; *Princ.* I.3.6.

<sup>16</sup> It should be recalled that the term 'invisible' implies incorporeality, which is a property exclusive to the Trinity.

<sup>17</sup> John, 1, 26. *commJohn*, 6, XXX.

He is, as it were, a teacher to those receiving instruction, existing inseparably in the nature of rational creatures, instructing towards what should be done, even when we decline to obey his instructions;<sup>18</sup> ... Hence he [sc. Christ] says; 'It is the Logos<sup>19</sup> which I have pronounced to you him who will judge you',<sup>20</sup> and this is equivalent to 'I myself the Logos, who is always speaking within yourselves, will condemn you and there will be no room for you to justify yourselves'.<sup>21</sup>

It is the Logos within men who announces the Father to them.<sup>22</sup> The Logos 'made us out of nothing'; and, 'once we were made, he upholds us into being, and every day provides for us covertly and overtly, both as a whole and each one individually, even though we may be not aware of this'.<sup>23</sup>

When Origen maintains that 'the good Father did not altogether abandon those who fell out of him',<sup>24</sup> he actually suggests that God the Logos (although external to the world, by virtue of his divinity) is also present and acting within the world. Thanks to this function of the Logos the world is being held in existence.

When Paul says about the Logos 'For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things',<sup>25</sup> the expression 'of him' (ἐξ αὐτοῦ) 'represents the beginning of existence of everything' (παριστάς τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς τῶν πάντων ὑποστάσεως); the expression 'through him' implies the world's being kept into existence (καὶ τὴν συνοχὴν ἐν τῷ 'δι' αὐτοῦ); and the expression 'to him' suggests the end (καὶ τὸ τέλος ἐν τῷ 'εἰς αὐτόν').<sup>26</sup>

The Logos, therefore, is present both in timelessness and in time. It is through him that a perpetual communication between the world and God is being kept up. Thus the fundamental tenet that God is radically transcendent to the world is maintained; still it is through the Logos that a working relation between the world and God is established. This is a point of substantial dissent from certain schools

<sup>18</sup> *commJohn*, 2, XV.

<sup>19</sup> In Greek the word Logos means also 'word' and 'speech' and 'instruction' and 'preaching' and 'teaching'.

<sup>20</sup> John 12, 48.

<sup>21</sup> *commJohn*, 2, XV.

<sup>22</sup> *commJohn*, 1, XXXVIII.

<sup>23</sup> *scIPs*, 144, PG 12.1672.

<sup>24</sup> *commJohn*, 1, XIV.

<sup>25</sup> Rom. 11, 36.

<sup>26</sup> *Cels*, VI, 65.

of the secular (mainly the Stoic) thought, which regarded god as immanent in the world. Quite consciously it is stated in *Cels* that 'the logos of everything is according to Celsus god himself, but in my view it is the Son of God' (ἀλλὰ καὶ ὁ τῶν πάντων λόγος ἐστὶ κατὰ μὲν Κέλσον αὐτός ὁ Θεός, κατὰ δὲ ἡμᾶς ὁ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ).<sup>27</sup>

This view of the Logos eluded H. Chadwick. He takes it that, according to Origen, the Logos as mediator between God and creation is ontologically standing 'midway between uncreated nature and that of all created things'.<sup>28</sup> Subsequently, he takes it that Origen holds a notion similar to that of Philo, according to whom 'the Logos is neither uncreated like God nor created like us, but midway'.<sup>29</sup>

If Chadwick had in mind pertinent Stoic and Aristotelian tenets, I would assume that he took Origen to have fallen in line with these tenets. As a matter of fact, the soul and intellect of which Plotinus speaks are a sort of world-soul and world-intellect, which are *also* within ourselves. Humans can ascend from the kind of thinking characteristic to the soul to that which is characteristic of the intellect and, finally, to a mystical experience of the One. What Chadwick did not grasp though is that, at the point which he comments on, Origen refers to the Logos as 'διὰ μεταξύ ὄντος τῆς τοῦ ἀγενήτου καὶ τῆς τῶν γενητῶν πάντων φύσεως'<sup>30</sup> which is an expression purporting to describe the *function* of the Logos for the sake of the world, not his ontological status. For He *in himself* is prior to the world. Origen is prompt to affirm that he is begotten,<sup>31</sup> yet, he adds, this portrays an ontological relation between the Father and the Son and in no way does it relate to the kind of 'genesis' which means 'to come into being out of non-being'.<sup>32</sup>

It is quite indicative that, in *selPs*, he comments on Ps. 109, 3 by representing the Father saying to the Son 'I begot you before any rational nature'. The Logos is a 'ruler' of the world, still he is also 'together with' the Father.<sup>33</sup> This is plainly stated in *commJohn*, where

<sup>27</sup> *Cels*, V, 24.

<sup>28</sup> H. Chadwick, Origen, *Contra Celsam*, p. 151.

<sup>29</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 151, n.4. Aristotle, on the other hand, introduces the agent intellect in *de Anima* 3.5. The Aristotelian Alexander of Aphrodisias maintains that this agent intellect was God (*de Anima, Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, Berlin, 80, 16–92, 11).

<sup>30</sup> *Cels*, III, 34.

<sup>31</sup> *frMatt*, 242.

<sup>32</sup> *frMatt*, 3, s. also *commMatt*, Cf. A, in PG 17.289.

<sup>33</sup> *selPs*, 109; s. also *frJohn*, CV.

the reasoning is developed by considering the passages Gen. 1, 1: 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth'; and John 1, 2: 'He was in the beginning with God'. The inference is that the expression 'He *was* in the beginning' clearly suggests a seniority to what *was created* in the beginning'. Therefore, 'the Logos is older' than all creation (τὸ δὲ 'Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν' σαφῶς πρεσβύτερόν ἐστι τοῦ ἐν ἀρχῇ πεποιημένου, οὐ μόνον στερεώματος καὶ ξηρᾶς, ἀλλὰ οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς πρεσβύτερός ἐστιν ὁ λόγος).<sup>34</sup>

This is the sense in which the term 'Pantocrator' (Παντοκράτωρ) is applied to Christ.<sup>35</sup> He is 'Pantocrator' because 'everything has been given to him' by the Father.<sup>36</sup>

T. Torrance took for granted that Origen held the 'eternal coexistence of the universe' with God.<sup>37</sup> He claims that 'according to Origen God has endowed the creation with His own rationality. This meant, as Origen pointed out, that God has limited Himself in the limitation of creation . . .'.<sup>38</sup> Torrance's syllogism is that, since the world and God are 'coeternal', there can be nothing in God which is beyond or transcendent to the world; there can be nothing which pertains *only* to God and not to the world. However, Origen's views about those conceptions pertaining 'only to Christ and to no one else' (ἐαυτῷ καὶ οὐδενί)<sup>39</sup> grant quite the opposite: not only for God the Father, but also for the Son (although he is *also* in the world, as Logos) there are conceptions which *do not* pertain to the world; in other words, God Himself should be thought of regardless of creation.

The Logos, therefore, is *both* in God and in the world. It is not in his nature to be 'midway'. His ontology is not disputed: his divinity is the same as that of the Father. To be in the world (both as a whole and in each rational creature) pertains to his action and 'his power',<sup>40</sup> not his ontology. Probably those who confuse the *action* of

<sup>34</sup> *commJohn*, 2, IV; italics mine. Once more, attention should be paid to the manner in which Origen develops his arguments, namely the scrupulous linguistic analysis of scriptural passages, particularly the temporal significance and implications of tenses of verbs.

<sup>35</sup> *excPs*, 23, PG 17.116; *selPs*, 23, PG 12.1269; *frJohn*, XLVI; *Cels*, VII, 10.

<sup>36</sup> *frMatt*, 242, quoting Matt. 11, 27.

<sup>37</sup> T. Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation*, London, 1969; p. 63ff.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *s. supra*

<sup>40</sup> *s. supra.*



the Logos in the world with his own ontology, misunderstand his being a 'mediator' between God and the world. However, here is how Origen leaves no room for misunderstanding:

The Apostle, when discussing the mediator, indicated this by a plain distinction by saying, 'the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus';<sup>41</sup> by which he was obviously teaching that 'mediator' must be referred not to Christ's deity but to his humanity, i.e. his soul.<sup>42</sup>

In Origen there is no question about the nature of the Logos in himself. His nature is the divine one.

Christ came to this task not from the compulsion of his nature, but moved by compassion alone. For he was 'in the form of God'; and when he sees that death is exercising dominion through the people by the transgression of the one man, he is not oblivious to his own creation.<sup>43</sup>

Even in the absence of any creative decision, or creative will, or creative act of God, the Logos has always been in the divine being. The conception of divine transcendence remains both intact and useful in adumbrating Logos in this way. The same conception allows for a clear distinction from views of Heraclitus, which might be apparently similar. As a matter of fact, Heraclitus regards rational beings to be such by means of their participation to the Logos. Sextus Empiricus, although expressing himself through Stoic terminology (which is considerably later to the Presocratic vocabulary) is held to render pretty faithfully Heraclitus' views. He describes a 'common and divine Logos, by means of participation to which we become rational',<sup>44</sup> adding that what appears to be common in all [rational beings] is reliable, just because this is perceived by the Logos, which is common to all and divine; but what happens to one single rational being should not be given credit. Therefore, there is a common world of truth, but this could be approached only if we leave our individual and discordant senses behind, and draw conclusions through them only by means of meditation, or, better still, through intuition.

<sup>41</sup> 1 Tim. 2, 5.

<sup>42</sup> *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 3.8.4.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.2.5.

<sup>44</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos*, VII, 126ff; H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 4th ed., Berlin, 1934-37; 22A16.

It is then quite obvious that to Heraclitus the Logos is simply a cosmic principle and, what is more, there is no descending of this Logos to rational beings, but rather an 'ascending' of them to this Logos through 'meditation' and 'intuition'. In Origen, by contrast, we have the personal transcendent God the Logos, who condescends out of grace and compassion to rational beings, being continuously in them after he brought them into being.

This conception of the Logos allows two notions to be correlated: first, God is timeless and radically transcendent to the world: secondly, God is the creator of this world, he communicates with it and indeed acts within it.

This is the path through which Origen was able to step from his Theology (that is, his conception of God in Himself) to his Cosmology.

### *World and Time*

There is one final point which should be made in examining God, World and Time, and their mutual relation, in this section. It is the appearance of time with respect to creation.

Regarding the assertion that Trinity alone transcends all time, whereas 'the rest of things . . . which are external to the Trinity, must be measured by ages and periods of time',<sup>45</sup> Origen explains that this 'external' means the world itself.<sup>46</sup>

The idea that the world was made through the Logos maintains the view of God as changeless. It is a fact that God is beyond time, which makes him not subject to change. Accordingly, rational creatures are subject to alteration and change<sup>47</sup> by reason of that they came into existence out of non-existence. It is also on account of the world being *out* of God (namely, that the world is something 'external'<sup>48</sup> to God) that the existence of the world does not entail any notion of change in God Himself.

<sup>45</sup> *Princ.* IV.4.1.

<sup>46</sup> *commJohn*, 20, XVIII. I agree with the interpretation of the English translator of *Princ.* G.W. Butterworth who, in his introduction to the book, states that 'rational beings . . . are definitely outside the Godhead, as the Son and Spirit are definitely within.' Cf. *FP*, p. lv.

<sup>47</sup> *Princ.* II.9.2.

<sup>48</sup> *Princ.* IV.4.2.

It is Origen's view that the creation is closely related to the existence of time. It is pointed out that the term 'genesis' means 'the way of coming to being out of non-being',<sup>49</sup> as well as that it suggests the 'substantification' (οὐσίωσιν) of rational natures.<sup>50</sup> It is further argued that the actual creation is also subject to time. This is why 'mind which is still subject to creation, and on account of this it is also subject to time, cannot see God as it should'.<sup>51</sup> Time is 'something' (τι)<sup>52</sup> which is closely connected to 'material life' (τῇ ἐνύλῳ ζωῇ).<sup>53</sup> It is not the same thing to speak of 'not seen' (τὸ μὴ ὁράσθαι) and 'invisible' (τὸ ἀόρατον): 'not to be seen does not entail to be invisible', but 'to be invisible does entail to be not seen'; 'for there are many bodies which are not seen, although they are visible either because they are covered, as it were, or because we are not in the place where they are'. In reference to 'invisible', even rational creatures which are in the supreme grades of life are not able to see God, not so because of their disability, but because of God's incorporeality.<sup>54</sup>

The close relation between the existence of time and the existence of the world is positively affirmed: 'time cannot be found' when the 'third and fourth conceptions' of the Son of God 'did not exist at all'.<sup>55</sup> It is 'life' which is regarded as the 'third' conception of the Son of God; 'life' is also one of the conceptions of the Son which do not pertain to Christ himself, but only 'to others' (οὐχ αὐτῷ ἀλλὰ ἑτέροις).<sup>56</sup> This means that time is associated with creaturely 'life', which involves 'distinction', 'diversification' and 'corporeality'.

Therefore, the radical transcendence of God with respect to the world is portrayed in a twofold way, both in terms of *space* (mainly expressed in terms of corporeality) and *time*. The product of the

<sup>49</sup> *frMatt*, 3.

<sup>50</sup> *selPs*, 32.

<sup>51</sup> *frJohn*, XIII.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* The assertion of J. Cheek that the state 'before' the actual creation was not a timeless one is wrong. (s. J. Cheek, *Eschatology and Redemption in the Theology of Origen*, Drew University, 1962, p. 277). In his effort to identify Origen's conception of time to what O. Cullmann has asserted as 'biblical view of time', Cheek falls into the mistake to attribute to Origen the doctrine of eternal creation; Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 534, n. 15.

<sup>54</sup> *frJohn*, XIII. Cf. Ch. 3, pp. 110ff.

<sup>55</sup> *commJohn*, 2, XIX.

<sup>56</sup> *commJohn*, 2, XVIII.

actual creation is of necessity, and by its nature, a corporeal existence. Again, what came out of the creation of the world is of necessity, and by nature, a temporal being. This is why Origen says that any being, of any rank of life, is a 'temporary' (προσκαίρων) one 'even if, in regard of his particular place, he is one of the supreme ranks of life' (καὶ ἐν συγκρίσει τόπων ἐκ τῶν ἀνωτάτω τυγχάνη).<sup>57</sup>

### *Conclusion*

What I have discussed so far is the relation between God, World and Time. In reference to the relation of God to time, God radically transcends time. No temporal notion can be applied to him at all. Referring to God by means of language, it is clear that expressions (especially verbs) are *a priori* inaccurate and simply conventional. God is also incorporeal, and it is solely he who is incorporeal. Life without a body is exclusive to God. There is no other way for the term *life* to be applied to incorporeal nature. As God is timeless, and hence absolutely exempt from all temporal notions, no concept of duration can be applied to him. God's being is not an everlasting duration, which necessarily implies being into time in a mode of dominating it. God is above and outside time. He should be then comprehended as living in a reality of timelessness, not one of everlasting duration.

The world is the outcome of God's will. It came into existence 'when' the Fall occurred and was made by the Logos according to a providential creation of a 'wisdom' which is a creature *in* the Wisdom (namely, the Son) of God and came into being out of non-being. God willed to create out of a benevolent decision of his own freedom and love. Conceiving of God as Creator is quite different from God Himself—a reality which stands in a radical ontological priority to any other conception of God, or any theological notion employed in order to speak of Him.

The world is innately associated with time in the sense that all ranks of rational creatures (which are understood to comprise the one and single world) are within time, they are temporal. As there is no time prior to creation, strictly speaking it makes no sense to

<sup>57</sup> *comm. John*, 19, XX.

speak of a *before* creation. Using the term loosely, however, it can be said that there was no world before creation. The world is material, consisted of matter of different qualities. This visible firmament is just one of the different kinds of created matter.

The notion of the world implies of necessity the existence of both corporeality and time. Any world apart from corporeality and time is unthinkable, either as a philosophical notion or as a reality. In Origen's thought there is no room for any 'incorporeal world' 'before' time. The term 'incorporeal world' applied to this thought is self-contradictory, self-defeating and hence absurd. For incorporeality excludes any existence of 'world' and vice versa. Since the world came into existence out of non-existence, there is no room for any notion of 'eternity of the world', in the sense that any kind of world may have existed before this creation. Such a notion is flatly and unqualifiedly rejected. Only God himself was 'before' creation and nothing was apart from him. The world is the radically *out* of God, still God sustains this and intervenes and acts into it as God the Logos.

God's transcendence with respect to the world is portrayed in terms of Space (mainly expressed in terms of corporeality) and Time. I have thus far discussed the relation between God, World and Time. Whatever may time be, we already know that Origen holds a notion of atemporality; we have actually seen the limits of time's existence, that is, where time does not exist and where it does exist. This means that we have seen the notions of atemporality and temporality, as well as the relation between them. My next step then should be to examine what Origen's ontology of time is.



## CHAPTER SIX

### TIME PROPER

#### *The background*

With reference to the Hellenic background, it is a favorite generalization to speak of *Greek* conception of time, as if there were only one view of it in the Greek world. The fact is, however, that there was considerable dissent and, even more, intense controversy among the different philosophical schools. I shall now examine what constitutes the Greek and the non-Greek setting which reached Origen as a background.

Of the entire Greek tradition, I shall mainly outline the Platonic, Aristotelian and Stoic views of time in order to purport that the Stoic conception of time was an autonomous one, quite independent from that of either Plato's or Aristotle's. It will be shown that the reasoning of the Stoic view of time springs from entirely different premises. It is bound up with the entire Stoic philosophy and its study *ipso facto* stems from, and brings to, the core of this particular philosophy.

I shall argue that although there is a certain ring of the Stoic view in Origen's ontological conception, he himself pioneered a radical break-through towards a new concept of time, the *Christian* one. It goes without saying that there was a rich legacy from the different Greek schools of thought concerning time. These schools never really reached any sort of agreement, not even on the fundamental premises of this question. So the task was not simply one of choosing, or a matter of syncretism. Bearing in mind his own theological outlook, Origen had to clear the field of stumps and boulders, so that his successors could walk freely and without hindrance over smooth places.

The interconnections between the Stoic concept of time and the rest of the crucial concepts of this philosophy will be examined in due course; first though I should outline the other Greek conceptions, from which I purport that the Stoic one was different.

Despite erroneous claims for the contrary,<sup>1</sup> the Greeks did employ time, along with space, as a frame for their thought-form. Already in the seventh century B.C., Hesiod composed in the form of poetry the myth of five races of men: the first, the golden race, lived in the original blessed age in which earth of itself produced rich harvests and men were like gods. This was followed by the silver race, then the copper race, later the race of heroes and finally the iron race.<sup>2</sup> Through such a mystic and mythological manner, using the medium of allegoric or metaphoric imagery, many ancient Greeks provided their accounts of the question of time, expressed in terms of problems of beginning, becoming, enduring and ceasing.<sup>3</sup>

The Presocratic philosophers also touched upon the problem of time in that unique poetic-philosophical manner in which they expressed their conception of reality. Anaximander,<sup>4</sup> Anaximenes,<sup>5</sup> Heraclitus of Ephesus,<sup>6</sup> Anaxagoras,<sup>7</sup> Empedocles,<sup>8</sup> deal with problems in which the question of time is a central one: cyclic destruction, regeneration, infinity of (successive or co-existing) worlds, world-periods, and the like.

The Pythagoreans made a serious attempt to deal with the question of time as such. Stobaeus<sup>9</sup> adduces the testimony that Philolaus deals with the beginninglessness and endlessness of the universe and Aristotle provides information about the views of the Pythagorean Alcmaeon,<sup>10</sup> as well as of the Pythagorean Paron<sup>11</sup> on time, which they consider as infinite. They point out that 'before' and 'after'

<sup>1</sup> It has been asserted that Hebrew thought employed *time* as its thought form whereas Greek thought employed *space*. This is a simplistic yet widespread opinion among scholars. An example is the book by T. Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared With Greek*, tr. by J. Moreau, London, 1960; pp. 123ff.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Herodotus, II, 53.

<sup>3</sup> Homer, Hesiod, Theognis, Musaeus, Epimenides, Acusilaus, Pherecides, Epicharmus were some of the most prominent of them. Cf. H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 4th ed., Berlin, 1934-37; Appendices I, II, III.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Diels, *op. cit.*, App. II, 9.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 2, 17; 3, A 11; 3, b 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 12, B30; B31; 12, A1; A9; 12, B60; 12, A6; A7; A8. Cf. Plato, *Cratylus*, 402A.

<sup>7</sup> Diels, *Frag.* 12; Aristotle, *Physica*, 250b25ff.

<sup>8</sup> Diels, *Fr.* 8; *Fr.* 17, 18; Cf. Aristotle, *Physica*, 252a33.

<sup>9</sup> Stobaeus, *Eclogue*, I, 420.

<sup>10</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, 986a27ff.

<sup>11</sup> Aristotle, *Physica*, 222b18; Also cf. Simplicius, *Commentary in Aristotle's Physica*, 754, 8; 754, 14.

make sense only in time, whereas eternity is a timeless perpetual 'now'.

Plato's views of time have enjoyed a special interest, perhaps because of the mythological (and thus, ambiguous) form in which he expressed his views, as well as because of the special attention that Christian theologians paid to them. To Plato, time proper is something continuous and thus beyond the possibility of conceptual definition. To speak about *moment* is but an intellectual abstraction; moment in itself is not actually time and does not really exist;<sup>12</sup> for, if it existed, time would become static and the content of it would include the possibility of rest without motion and change. Time is not an aggregate of static nows; it is inherently related with change and motion. There can be no motion without time.<sup>13</sup> Thus *time—motion—change* are so closely connected together that they cannot be understood independently from each other. This means that there is no time without motion and change. Subsequently, whatever is temporal is subject to motion and change. Plato rejects the possibility of human comprehension of notions such as beginning or end of time.<sup>14</sup> Even the fact that God created time cannot be fully grasped: one can have only a vague idea of such a notion.<sup>15</sup> It is true though that he definitely disapproves of the concept of time being without beginning.

Aristotle singles his master out stating that, with the exception of Plato, all the philosophers are in agreement that time is uncreated.<sup>16</sup> But the Platonic purport of this 'creation' is only the idea that time appeared with the order which was set on the pre-existing 'original matter'. As a matter of fact, Plato, in tune with the general tradition of his day, rejects the idea of creation out of nothing. This, nevertheless, should be regarded as a question needing some further discussion, since it is he who elsewhere speaks of the 'countless ages of the past'.<sup>17</sup> Besides, he holds that Being is synonymous with Action, that is, true existence is synonymous with its creative act, Substance

<sup>12</sup> Plato, *Parmenides*, 156D.

<sup>13</sup> Plato, *Parmenides*, 151E ff; *Timaeus*, 38A ff.

<sup>14</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, 37D ff.

<sup>15</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, 38B.

<sup>16</sup> Aristotle, *Physica*, 251b15 ff.

<sup>17</sup> Plato, *Respublica*, 499C.

is synonymous with Function.<sup>18</sup> God's perfection always compels him to act,<sup>19</sup> and he cannot be conceived of being in timeless eternity without exercising his creative ability. So it is beyond human comprehensive ability to grasp what God did *before* he created the universe—if such a notion could make any sense at all. Besides, it is not clear whether Plato held a temporal beginning of the world.<sup>20</sup> It is true though that he denied the existence of time in the original chaos, since time is denied to the irregular and, therefore, to the irrational motion of the chaos.<sup>21</sup> Time did come into being and this notion is stated in the celebrated passage of *Timaeus*:

When God the Father and creator saw the creature . . . the created image . . . He rejoiced . . . and determined to make a copy . . . like the original . . . But to bestow the attribute (of the eternal) in its fullness upon a creature was impossible. Wherefore he resolved to have a moving image of eternity (εἰκό δὲ ἐπινοεῖ κινητόν τινα αἰώνος ποιῆσαι). And when he set in order the heavens, he made this image eternal but moving according to number (κατ' ἀριθμόν ἰοῦσαν αἰώνιον εἰκόνα), while eternity itself rests in unity. And this image we call time.<sup>22</sup> . . .

. . . Time, then, and the heavens came into being at the same instant in order that, having been created together, if there was ever to be a dissolution of them, they might be dissolved together. This [sc. time] was framed after the pattern of the eternal nature, in order that it might resemble this as much as possible (κατὰ τὸ παράδειγμα τῆς διαιωνίας φύσεως, ἧν ὡς ὁμοιότατος αὐτῷ κατὰ δύναμιν ἦ). For the pattern exists from eternity (τὸ μὲν γὰρ δὴ παράδειγμα πάντα αἰωνά ἐστιν), whereas the created heaven has been, is, and will be, in all time. Such was the mind and thought of God when he created time.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Plato, *Sophista*, 247D; 248C.

<sup>19</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, 29eff.

<sup>20</sup> Since Plato's views in *Timaeus* are couched in an allegorical form, it is not surprising that even his closest disciples disagree and vastly differ in their opinions about the real meaning of *Timaeus*. Cf. Aristotle, *De Coelo* 280a20; 300b16; *Physica* 251b17; *Metaphysica*, 1071b31; 1071b37; *De Anima* 406b25ff. Aristotle clearly contrasts his views in *De Generatione et Corruptione*, 329a13. On this question there is further reference in Simplicius, *Commentarius in Aristotelis Physica*, 488, 15; 489, 6; 489, 9; Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Commentarius in Aristotelis Physica*, 1091a27; Plutarch, *De Animae Procreatione in Timaeo* III, 1; IV, 1; John Philoponus, *De Aeternitate Mundi*, VI, 8; VI, 21; VI, 27; V, 131.

<sup>21</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, 38B.

<sup>22</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, 37Cff.

<sup>23</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, 38B; Aristotle rebuked Plato for having thought that time was created; Cf. Aristotle, *Physica*, 251b16ff.

Aristotle treated the problem of time facing a vast extent of questions which are related to it.<sup>24</sup> At the outset he states that time could not be without change or motion,<sup>25</sup> because it is only through the different stages of motion or change within our mind that we are able to conceive of time.<sup>26</sup> Although 'fast' and 'slow' are defined by time, time proper is something constant, because time is not defined by time.<sup>27</sup> Hence, although time is something related to motion or change,<sup>28</sup> it is itself something fundamentally different from motion and change proper:

Clearly then it [sc. time] is not motion . . . But neither time exists without change. . . . It is evident, then, that time is neither motion nor is it independent from motion.<sup>29</sup>

Thus time is a number or measure of motion (κινήσεως ἀριθμός)<sup>30</sup> as well as the number (ἀριθμός) of motion with respect to our distinction between the 'before' and the 'after'.<sup>31</sup> As 'everything that moves is in time'<sup>32</sup> and it is time which marks motion,<sup>33</sup> 'time is what is counted and not that with which we count'.<sup>34</sup> Hence to Aristotle time is a number. To be 'in time', therefore, means to be counted or measured by time.<sup>35</sup> Time in itself is continuous since

<sup>24</sup> Aristotle, *Physica*, bk IV, Chs. 10–14 (217b29–224a16).

<sup>25</sup> *Physica*, 218b22. Aristotle was criticized for his attempt to relate time to motion by Strato of Lampsacus (also called the 'Physicist'). He discusses this question in his work entitled *Περὶ Χρόνου* and perhaps in his *Περὶ Κινήσεως*, which are both lost. Cf. Diogenes Laertius V, 59ff; Simplicius (*op. cit.*, 965, 10); Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeon Commentarii*, 242E ff. He was also criticized by Sextus Empiricus (*Pyrrhonia*, III, 136ff; *adversus Mathematicos*, X, 176ff) and Plotinus (*Enneads*, III.7 ff.).

<sup>26</sup> *Physica*, 218b22ff; 222b30ff; 235a11.

<sup>27</sup> *Physica*, 218b14ff.

<sup>28</sup> *Physica*, 219a1ff; 218b22ff; 236b20; 241a17; 251b11; 218b34.

<sup>29</sup> *Physica*, 219a1ff: "Ὅτι μὲν οὖν οὔτε κίνησις οὔτε ἄνευ κινήσεως ὁ χρόνος ἐστί, φανερόν. (It is evident, then, that time is neither motion nor is it independent from motion). *Physica*, 218b22: "Ὅτι μὲν τοίνυν οὐκ ἐστὶ κίνησις, φανερόν. (Clearly then it [sc. time] is not motion). *Physica*, 218b24: "Ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδ' ἄνευ μεταβολῆς (But neither does time exist without change).

<sup>30</sup> *Physica*, 221b8; 221a1; 251b10.

<sup>31</sup> *Physica*, 219a13–34; 221b12–14; *De Caelo*, 279a14.

<sup>32</sup> *Physica*, 223b31; 232b21; 236b20; 239a20ff; 241a15.

<sup>33</sup> *Physica*, 220b16.

<sup>34</sup> *Physica*, 219b5ff; 220b15; 221a1; 221b7; 221b11; 221b21; 221b25.

<sup>35</sup> *Physica*, 221a3ff: "To be in time means, for motion, that both it and its essence are measured by time". *Physica*, 221a8ff: "To be in time means one of two things: 1. To exist when time exists; 2. as we say of some things that they are 'in number' . . . or that things have a number. Things which are always (immutable and



this is an attribute of what is continuous, namely, the number of motion.<sup>36</sup> this is a single, infinite and uniform 'continuum'.<sup>37</sup> Time is uncreated and it is infinite in respect of both its divisibility and its extremities.<sup>38</sup> Thus it has a uniformity of nature and "continues through its entire duration inalienably and without modification";<sup>39</sup> it is always what it is, it is not *in* time and it is not contained by time, or measured by time, or affected by time.<sup>40</sup> Time is the everlasting duration itself. Regarding the ontology of time, it is plain that Aristotle moves from an *epistemological premise* (we notice time, when and only when we notice change) to an *ontological conclusion* (time does not exist without change). The equation of number with measure in Aristotle's view aside, this definition actually seems to suggest that if no one exists to do the counting, there is not anything countable. This oblique reference to time as a measure establishes the sense in which time is a number.

Of the immediate disciples of Plato it was only Haestiacus of Perinthus (of the so-called old Academy) who fully abided by his master's allegorical definition of time. He avers that "time is the course of the heavenly bodies in their relation to one another".<sup>41</sup> Speusippus, on the other hand, seems to follow Aristotle, as he defines time "the quantity within motion" (τὸ ἐν κινήσει ποσόν).<sup>42</sup> In the same vein, Xenocrates defines time as "the measure of what has been created as well as everlasting motion" (μέτρον τῶν γεννητῶν καὶ κίνησιν αἰδίων),<sup>43</sup> which maintains the Platonic definition of time as *motion*, and is also in line with the Aristotelian view of time as *number*.

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unchangeable], namely God, are not, as such, 'in time'. For they are not contained by time, nor is their being or existence measured by time" (221b2). They are not "affected by time, which indicates that they are not in time" (221b5). s. also *Physica*, 221b16; 221b21. Hence Aristotle distinguishes the infinite everlasting duration from eternity proper which is a 'being above time'.

<sup>36</sup> *Physica*, 220a24ff. Cf. 219a10ff; 219b9ff; 233a14ff.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Aristotle's views on the infinite divisibility of all quantities, including time: *Physica*, 227a10ff; 231a21ff; 232a23ff; 233b15; 233b32ff; 234a10ff; 234a10; 235a25; 237a10; 237b8; *De Generatione et Corruptione*, 317a2ff; *De Caelo*, 306b22.

<sup>38</sup> *Physica*, 233a18ff. Cf. 233a25.

<sup>39</sup> *De Caelo*, 279a22ff.

<sup>40</sup> *Physica*, 221b3ff.

<sup>41</sup> Stobaeus, *Eclogue*, I, 250; about Haestiacus of Perinthus, Cf. Diogenes Laertius, III, 46.

<sup>42</sup> Plutarch, *Questiones Platonicae*, VIII, 4, 3. In this definition, however, is not clear as to whether time is the 'number' of motion or the 'measure' which is *in* motion.

<sup>43</sup> Stobaeus, *Eclogue*, I, 250.

On the other hand, the followers of Aristotle, the Peripatetics, did abide by their master's definition of time,<sup>44</sup> perhaps because this was not allegorical and was more concrete. Besides, it had a scientific character not susceptible to much controversy and variegated interpretations, as happened with Plato's views. Thus Theophrastus defends the notion of a universe without beginning or end, and similar views were exposed by Eudemus of Rhodes and Dicaearchus of Messina. It was Strato of Lampsacus who expounded his own views of time in an *ad hoc* treatise, challenging the Aristotelian definition of time in terms of number or motion as unsatisfactory, and possibly erroneous. He defines time as 'the quantity in all action' (τὸ ἐν ταῖς πράξεσι ποσόν)<sup>45</sup> and 'the quantity of everything that is in motion and at rest' (τὸ ἐν κινήσει καὶ ἡρεμίᾳ ποσόν<sup>46</sup> and μέτρον κινήσεως καὶ μονῆς).<sup>47</sup> This notion of *rest* is particularly interesting, since it was on this that Plotinus grounded his arguments against the connection of time with motion.<sup>48</sup>

As regards the Epicurean attitude, I shall only briefly state that they generally were influenced by the Aristotelian view. They regarded time as a 'symptom accompanying things in motion' (σύμπτωμα τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶ παρακολούθημα κινήσεων),<sup>49</sup> namely, a concomitant of motion. However, in view of Origen's disdain for the Epicurean thought, there is no need to pursue this issue any further.

I now come to the Stoic concept of time. According to the Stoics, time is in essence an extension (διάστημα). This definition has enjoyed

<sup>44</sup> Simplicius, *Commentarius in Aristotelis Physica*, 411, 5ff. Nevertheless, the real meaning of Aristotelian definition of time is not exempt from controversy; particularly there is dissent with regard to the meaning and distinction (or, link) between number and measure. Cf. Gregory Vlastos "Creation in the *Timaeus*: Is it a fiction?", in R.E. Allen (ed.), *Studies in Plato's Metaphysics*, London 1965, p. 413; also "The disorderly motion in the *Timaeus*" (reprinted from *Classical Quarterly*, 1939, *ibid.*, pp. 386-6. Julia Annas, "Aristotle, Number and Time", *Philosophical Quarterly*, 25, 1975, pp. 97-113, esp. 100. J. Whitaker, *God, Time and Being, Two Studies, Symbolae Osloenses*, supp. vol. 23, p. 25, n. 5. J. Moreau, *L'Espace et le temps selon Aristote*, Padua, 1965, pp. 125, 129-30. Also, A.H. Armstrong, note *ad loc.* in the Loeb edition, Cambridge Mass., 1967 and the P.H. Wicksteed - F.M. Cornford Loeb translation of *Physica*, 219b1-2, Cambridge Mass., 1963.

<sup>45</sup> Simplicius, *op. cit.*, 789, 34.

<sup>46</sup> Stobaeus, *Eclogue*, I, 250.

<sup>47</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Pyrrhonia*, III, 137; *adversus Mathematicos*, X, 228; X, 177.

<sup>48</sup> S. *infra*, *Enneads*, III.7.8.

<sup>49</sup> Stobaeus, *Eclogue*, I, 252.

little attention and most probably it has been inadequately comprehended. Some scholars seem to be uncertain as to whether the Stoic definition should be regarded as nearer to that of either Plato's or Aristotle's, leaving this ambiguity unresolved.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, it is only after a short consideration that A. Chroust concludes that the Stoic definition of time was but an echo of the Aristotelian one.<sup>51</sup>

I think that the flaw in understanding the Stoic definition lies in the failure to grasp the crucial, indeed ontological, significance of the notion of *extension*, as I shall discuss presently. In reference to the earliest of the Stoic accounts, Zeno's definition is extant in a portion stating that "of the Stoics, Zeno [says] that time is in general the extension of any motion." (πάσης ἀπλῶς κινήσεως διάστημα),<sup>52</sup> while another one reads thus:

And Zeno said that time is an extension of motion (κινήσεως διάστημα) and the criterion of fastness and slowness. And it is in time (κατὰ τοῦτον) that events occur and everything that becomes and all beings are.<sup>53</sup>

To Chrysippus time is the 'extension of the motion of the world'.<sup>54</sup> Although this seems to be a more specific definition compared to that of Zeno's, on no account could this lend itself to the assertion that it introduces an essential modification of Zeno's view.<sup>55</sup> For his original conception of time as extension remains unchangeable and is the kernel of Chrysippus' conception, too. Besides, there is at least one passage where Chrysippus' view is cited in disjunction, or as an explanatory one, to that of Zeno's:

And Chrysippus [says] that time is the extension of motion (κινήσεως διάστημα) and this is why it is sometimes said to be the measure of fastness or slowness; or [time] is the extension which closely attends the motion of the world and [it is said that] it is in time that everything is moving as well as being.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>50</sup> J.M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy*, Cambridge, 1969; pp. 273-4.

<sup>51</sup> A. Chroust, "The meaning of time in the ancient world", *The New Scholasticism*, XXI (1947), p. 42.

<sup>52</sup> *SVF*, I, 26, 14-15; ap. Simplicius, *ad Cat.* 80a4.

<sup>53</sup> *SVF*, I, 26, 11-15; ap. Stobaeus, *Ecl.*, I.8.

<sup>54</sup> διάστημα κοσμικῆς κινήσεως; *SVF*, II, 164, 14ff.

<sup>55</sup> As asserted by J. Rist, *op. cit.*, p. 278ff.

<sup>56</sup> τὸ παρακολουθοῦν διάστημα τῇ τοῦ κόσμου κινήσει; *SVF*, II, 164, 15-18. This is how Appolodorus defines time, too: "Time is the extension of the motion of the world" (χρόνος δ' ἐστὶ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου κινήσεως διάστημα), *SVF*, III, 260, 18-19.

It has been maintained that this definition in terms of its letter may be nearer to Aristotle (time is the measure or number of motion), but it is not impossible that the spirit of this definition be more related to that of Plato (time is the moving image of eternity).<sup>57</sup> I do not see, however, why the Stoic definition should by all means be associated with either the Platonic or the Aristotelian one. What I think is that Zeno's conception is clearly a third view, at least in this respect: the Platonic is undoubtedly a metaphysical as well as a theological conception, while the Aristotelian is a scientific and mathematical one. To Zeno though time is neither something related to the Beyond or to metaphysics in any respect (for he was a materialist Stoic), nor is it an intellectual mathematical perception, namely, a number or measure. Time may be 'and a criterion of fastness and slowness'; but in the first place (that is, on the grounds of *ontology*) the essence of time proper is postulated as *extension*.

Thus time is associated with a natural reality (that is, motion) and is regarded in itself as a natural reality, too: a sort of extension which is indispensable for motion to take place and to make sense. Time is neither an *image* of a metaphysical reality, nor is it a mathematical conception, namely *number* or *measure*. Time is a sort of natural *extension*.

It is true that Aristotle states periods of time as 'extensions' (διάστημα). There are, however, certain substantial differences: Aristotle never allowed for διάστημα to portray the ontological identity of time proper. To be the *number* of motion is one thing, but to be the *extension* of it is quite another. He used the term διάστημα in the everyday sense of something which joins two points. In this sense, διάστημα may have an either temporal or spatial import. But on no account does this constitute a definition of time proper. In fact Aristotle never took διάστημα to indicate time proper, as Zeno and Chrysippus did. For he held a different view of the essence of time *per se*. Aristotle, as well as Plato, could, like everybody else, use the commonplace of διάστημα suggesting *parts*, or periods, of time. But they never suggested that time *itself* is an extension. It was only the Stoics who explicitly defined διάστημα as indicating time proper ontologically. The portrayal of time as διάστημα is exactly what *moving image* is for Plato and *number* or *measure* is for Aristotle.

<sup>57</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 273-4. Rist, anyway, states that he is not sure as to whose definition should Zeno's one be considered as more closely related.



The Platonic definition of time is grounded on a fundamental premise, which is the notion of *transcendence*. Whatever the interpretation of *Timaeus* at this point may be, there is one fact which cannot be disputed: the main point which Plato wished to make in his definition is the *similarity* of time to eternity (s. *supra*: ἵν' ὡς ὁμοιότατος αὐτῷ κατὰ δύναμιν ᾗ). This, in the final analysis, implies the *dependence* of the temporal to the eternal, the dependence of the image to the archetype. It is true that Plato's views on the question of the beginning of the universe are vague and surrounded by rancorous controversy. But this is so only because he directed his main attention not to the problem of beginning, but to the point that the cosmos is originated and dependent on an absolute and supreme *transcendent cause*. This is the main notion expressed through the allegorical statements in *Timaeus*. If some contradictions can be pointed out in the statements concerning the notion of 'beginning',<sup>58</sup> they are due to Plato's prime concern with the notion of dependence of the world on an supreme absolute transcendent cause—which left the notion of beginning in *Timaeus* as a second-class problem.

This background and reasoning are alien to the Stoic thought, where the notion of transcendence makes no sense at all. The Stoics firmly stick to the materiality of the world which is regarded as the 'whole' (τὸ ὅλον)<sup>59</sup>—with nothing existing beyond that. So the spirit of the Stoic definition of time can have essentially nothing in common with the views of Plato.

On the other hand, the apparent similarity of the Stoic definition to the Aristotelian one does not actually suggest any real affinity between them. Once time is postulated as a number or measure of motion, it follows straight off that time could not exist if there were no soul at all. On this point Aristotle is quite explicit: if there is no one to count, there can be nothing to be counted—thus there could be no 'number',<sup>60</sup> even though motion proper could still make sense.

<sup>58</sup> For example, he affirms the pre-existence of human being; Cf. *Meno* 86A; *Respublica* 611A; *Phaedrus* 245Dff; *Phaedo* 75Cff; 106D; *Leges* 781E. But since soul (which in itself is an *orderly* reality) has always existed, this means that orderly reality has *always* existed—which contradicts the statements that time was created when order was brought into the pre-existing chaos and the 'original stuff'.

<sup>59</sup> *SVF*, II, 167, 8.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. *Physica*, 223a25–35: Πότερον δὲ μή οὐσης ψυχῆς εἴη ἂν ὁ χρόνος ἢ οὐ, ἀπορήσειεν ἂν τις· ἀδυνάτου γὰρ ὄντος εἶναι τοῦ ἀριθμήσοντος ἀδύνατον καὶ ἀριθμητὸν τι εἶναι, ὥστε δῆλον ὅτι οὐδ' ἀριθμός· ἀριθμός γὰρ ἢ τὸ ἡριθμημένον



For it is only the soul which is qualified to count. Without soul there is only motion. If there is only motion, but no possibility of counting, this definition fails.

The statement of Aristotle, as quoted in the note below, has been hard to accept by many commentators, who have sought to reinterpret the text. A list of interpretations is supplied by P.F. Conen.<sup>61</sup> In a perspicuous discussion he cites Simplicius, H. Carteron, W. Bröcker, A.-J. Fegustière and J. Moreau. R. Sorabji, on the other hand, simply takes it that Aristotle made a mistake at this point, namely, in his assertion that where no-one exists to do the counting, there is no countability. He makes an interesting comment:<sup>62</sup> Aristotle here moves from an *epistemological* premise (we notice time, when and only when we notice change) to an *ontological* conclusion (time does not exist without change). The remark is apt on the ground of analytical philosophy. It would be said, however, that this facet of Aristotle's definition has an *existentialistic* vein. On this ground there can be a certain link between experience and ontology. For Aristotle's averment (we notice time) is neither epistemological, nor even a psychological one. He refers to the *experience* of time rather than to any sort of *knowledge* of it. Anyhow, I shall take Aristotle's words as they are clearly stated in *Physics* and shall not deal with this analysis any further.

In Aristotle's definition there are two fundamental premises: first, motion; secondly, the soul, who is the counting agent and renders a meaning upon number. Thus this definition of time is sound only if there are those two prerequisites, namely, the moving (or changing) object and the counting intelligent subject. This point raised no problems to his theory of time,<sup>63</sup> since he held the notion of everlastingness of the world.

In Aristotle, therefore, what is of ontological priority with respect to time is *motion*. In contrast, to the Stoics the main ontological

ἢ τὸ ἀριθμητόν. Εἰ δὲ μηδὲν ἄλλον πέφυκεν ἀριθμεῖν ἢ ψυχὴ καὶ ψυχῆς νοῦς, ἀδύνατον εἶναι χρόνον ψυχῆς μὴ οὐσης, ἀλλ' εἰ τοῦτο ὃ ποτε ὄν ἐστιν ὁ χρόνος, οἷον εἰ ἐνδέχεται κίνησιν εἶναι ἄνευ ψυχῆς. Τὸ δὲ πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον ἐν κινήσει ἐστίν· χρόνος δὲ ταῦτ' ἐστίν ἢ ἀριθμητὰ ἐστίν.

<sup>61</sup> P.F. Conen, *Die Zeittheorie des Aristoteles*, Munich 1964, pp. 156-69.

<sup>62</sup> R. Sorabji, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

<sup>63</sup> According to a testimony of Censorinus, Aristotle himself taught that mankind has always been. At any rate, Aristotle was quite clear in his view of the eternity of the world: man is the end of nature, and hence of the world, which itself is without beginning. Cf. F. Hultsch, *Censorini, De Die Natali*, Leipzig, 1867; IV, 3.

definition of time is *extension*. Time would be regarded *also* as a 'measure', but this is just an additional property of it. This means that if time is not regarded as a measure, and if there is no one to count it, the Stoic definition of time does not fail—unlike the Aristotelian one. The critical point which really stands behind this substantial difference is, I think, the Stoic doctrine of cosmic periods.

The Stoics, as well as Aristotle, held that time is *one* and it is a *continuum*. If, hypothetically, the Stoics held time proper to be in essence a number, then the end of each cosmic period could entail the end of time and the beginning of *another* time. But this is clearly rejected. For they all, especially Chrysippus, are explicit that each new world begins and ends with a cosmic destruction, but time does not.<sup>64</sup> This means that time proper is an element of the world quite independent from whether the 'substance' (οὐσία), which constitutes the world, is 'decorated' (διακεκοσμημένη) during the cosmic period, or 'undecorated' (ἀδιακόσμητος) during the dissolution of the world. Time is *one* extension along which the alternations of this substance occur periodically.

Time is *one*, it is without beginning, indeed this is a continuum infinite in both directions. If time proper were defined as the number of the worldly motion (and thus: orderly—since there can be no number of motion in disorder), this could entail that *this* present world is without beginning or end. This is an idea held by Aristotle, but totally unacceptable to the Stoics. Besides, in a general conflagration there are no souls to count motion—and yet time does exist and its continuity is maintained, too.

The conclusion is that if the Stoics accepted the Aristotelian definition of time, then fundamental premises of their philosophy (such as the doctrine of cosmic periods) could have no adequate ground. In short, the Aristotelian definition of time is essentially incompatible with fundamental Stoic doctrines. This is why time is in principle an *extension*—a definition which can defy Aristotle's denial of successive worlds and does not necessarily presuppose an intelligent subject to count time (which is indispensable for the Aristotelian conception of time to make sense). To Stoics, time may be regarded

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Philo, *De Aeternitate Mundi*, I.33ff: "...ὁ κόσμος...ὡς δοκεῖ τοῖς Στωϊκοῖς διῆκον ἄχρι ἐκπύρωσεως, οὐσία τις ἢ διακεκοσμημένη ἢ ἀδιακόσμητος, οὗ τῆς κινήσεως φασὶν εἶναι τὸν χρόνον διάστημα...".

as *also* a 'measure', not because time itself is a number, but only because motion takes place *in* time, namely, in the *extension* which time proper is held to be. For it is not number, but *extension* that constitutes the fundamental ontological definition of time proper. Thus the occurrence of a cosmic catastrophe (which marks the end of a world and the beginning of the next one) and the subsequent absence of any orderly motion (as well as the absence of any intelligent subject capable of counting motion) does not put the Stoic definition of time in any question whatsoever. This is possible on account of the fact that the Stoic definition of time is radically different from the Aristotelian one. In Aristotle what stands in ontological priority to time is *motion*. In contrast, to the Stoics the ontological definition of time is *extension*. Time may *also* be a measure, but this is an additional property, not the indispensable ontological identity of it.

It is clear then that the Stoic definition of time is *autonomous* and quite independent from either the Platonic or the Aristotelian one. Later it was Proclus who pointed out that the Stoic view is actually different from the views of time of either Plato or the Peripatetics.<sup>65</sup> In the extant passage though there is only his claim, but no the arguments for it. I cannot know whether or not Proclus distanced Plato's view on the grounds stated above. What I do know though is that so far it has not been realized that the Stoic conception of time is essentially independent from either the Platonic or the Aristotelian one. This is why some scholars opt for relating it to the Platonic views, others (such as H. Chroust) take it to be similar to those of Aristotle's, whereas others (such as J.M. Rist) do not plump for either the former or the latter and leave the question moot.

To the Stoics (in contrast to Plato), *time—motion—change* are not intrinsically associated to the extent that they could not be understood independently from each other. It is true that the notion of *motion* is deeply involved in the early Stoic definition. Time proper, however, is by no means a reality dependent upon motion. The Stoic definition in no way entails that time cannot exist without motion. Such a conclusion could ensue from both the Platonic and the Aristotelian definition—but not from the Stoic one. A Stoic could never argue that there is no time in the absence of motion—which

<sup>65</sup> *SVF*, II, 166, 6–10.

Plato and Aristotle did. Certainly the Stoics did allow that whatever is temporal is subject to motion and change. But on no account is this concession a necessary corollary of their definition of time proper.

Among all the Greek definitions, it is solely the Stoic one in which the notion of motion is not ontologically indispensable for the very existence of time proper. This happens on account of the ontological priority of time to motion. This is in fact the point of the critical relation of motion to time and this is how the involvement of motion in the definition of time should be viewed. It is only in Stoic thought that a *per impossibile* absence of motion does not necessarily entail the impossibility of existence of time proper. Certainly in that case the question which could be invited is what is the point for time to exist at all. This, however, is an *epistemological* question, perhaps a question pertaining to the meaning of time or the *raison d'être* of it. But on no account is it an *ontological* question; which means that the hypothetical absence of motion does not of necessity extinguish the ontological ground for the existence of time proper. The discussion could perhaps invite the question of why in such a case time *should* exist—but there is no ground to support the claim that in that case time *could not* exist.

The nature of time is to be an extension *for* the motion of the world, yet the existence of time does not *depend* on this motion at all. Certainly to the Stoics the perpetual motion of the world is an unquestionable fact. Nevertheless, they did not ground the existence of time proper on motion itself as, more or less, the rest of the Greek schools did. It is rather motion which is dependent on time. Particularly in Zeno's definition, the concept of time is ontologically prior to the notion of motion—not vice versa. Time is the indispensable substratum for motion not only to take place, but also to make sense.

The Stoic time as *διάστημα* (extension) is related to *διάστασις* (dimension) rather than to motion, albeit it could hardly be claimed that the Stoics in any respect anticipated the conception of time held by Modern Physics. Nevertheless, the radical difference between time as extension and those of time as either moving image or number is quite obvious on the ground of this contradistinction: the Stoic one is the case of a *static* time, as contrasted with the Platonic (as well as the Plotinian) *dynamic* notion and the Aristotelian abstract scientific mathematical perception.

There are assertions that neither the Pythagoreans nor the Stoics made an explicit part of their theory that time will be the *same*



throughout successive aeons. Taking into account the Greek idea of the Great Year, for example, it could be argued that, once this period comes round and the heavenly bodies return to their original alignments, then time comes to an end and starts again. However, there is a point which has to be made against these assertions.<sup>66</sup> This argument is sound *only* if time is regarded in the Aristotelian sense of *measure* or *number*. Once time is essentially an *extension*, this argument is not sound. If time is but the number counting the years of a cosmic period, then certainly it will reach the number of years which comprise a cosmic period and then counting will have to *begin* again, which means that *another* time should start all over again. In contrast, if time in its essence is an *extension*, there is nothing to suggest that this will *begin* again. This extension is infinite in both directions, as the Stoics explicated. I think that this is a main reason why they seem to have not dealt with the question of the *sameness*, or not, of time in the course of the world. They simply did not need to do so.

Much debate has been made about *cyclicity* of either time or events.<sup>67</sup> It is popular among scholars to speak about 'cyclic' or 'rectilinear' time, the former being regarded as the 'Greek' conception of it. This notion of cyclicity enjoys much currency and use, perhaps because it provides a simplistic spatial figure of time. This is, however, a distinction which is misleading for comprehension of the problematique of time proper.

The notion of cyclicity could hardly make sense in any Greek school. *Cyclic* events have no room even in philosophers such as Heraclitus or the Stoics. At most one would speak about *periodical* events, which *re-cur* in normal periods of the infinite, linear, continuum of time. With regard to Plato, for instance, suggestions of 'cyclicity'<sup>68</sup> have their counter-parts in his works. In the *Respublica*,<sup>69</sup> he seems to suggest that some day in the future the ideal State,

<sup>66</sup> R. Sorabji suggests that it was only with *Eudemos* that the idea that *time* will be the same was put forward (*op. cit.*, p. 184).

<sup>67</sup> Cf. R. Sorabji, *op. cit.*, pp. 184ff.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Plato, *Timaeus*, 22Cff, 23Aff.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Plato, *Respublica*, 499d. περί τούτου ἔτοιμοι τῷ λόγῳ διαμάχεσθαι, ὡς γέγονεν ἡ εἰρημένη πολιτεία καὶ ἐστὶν καὶ γενήσεται γε, ὅταν αὕτη ἡ Μοῦσα πόλει εὐκρατὴς γενήσεται. οὐ γὰρ ἀδύνατος γενέσθαι, οὐδ' ἡμεῖς ἀδύνατα λέγομεν· χαλεπὰ δὲ καὶ παρ' ἡμῖν ὁμολογεῖται. *Italics mine.*



which he portrayed, will materialize. It could then be reasonable to argue that the portrayal of an occurrence lying in the indefinite future is a *τέλος* which implies a *linear* conception of time.

There is only one case for cyclical time to make sense: that is, a *hypothetical* eclectic attitude, according to which the Stoic notion of successive worlds is upheld, while time is also regarded as a *number* (in an Aristotelian sense). At the end of a cosmic period time will have to start again, because this will have reached the amount of years comprising the cosmic period and it will not be possible for this number-time to increase further. Since Aristotelian time is infinite (with no absolute beginning or end), the *counting* (of the *number*, which is time) will have to start again. Thus, there is no absolute beginning and time proper seems to be repeated in a cyclic scheme. It is only in such a hypothetical case that one would speak of *cyclical* time: that is, an infinite series of counting up to a certain number, and then starting from the beginning counting all over again. Such an eclectic view of time, however, if ever any, never made a substantial mark in Greek thought.

Thus the very notion of *repetition* of events in fact implies a *distinction* of events, even if they are *structurally* identical from one cosmic period to another. Hence, the notion of cyclicity alleged as a universal Greek conception of time is absurd. As for Aristotle, he speaks of time as 'something like as cycle'.<sup>70</sup> It would have been a flagrant mistake to take this phrase out of its context and allege that Aristotle suggested that time is 'cyclical', a mistake which clearly showed that this portion of *Physica* had not been properly studied—anyway a mistake which I do not think is made nowadays.<sup>71</sup> If one wishes to stick to this notion of cyclicity (although there is no reason to do so at all),<sup>72</sup> he would at best speak of a *spiral* of space—time.

<sup>70</sup> Aristotle, *Physica*, 223B.28–29; Cf. also 223B.24–25; 223B.31–33.

<sup>71</sup> O. Cullmann buttressed his assertions about what he calls the 'Greek' view of time on this point of Aristotle and refers to a number of scholars who treated the passage in the same way; Cf. *Christ and Time*, (Greek tr. by P. Coumantos, Athens, 1980); p. 240, n. 3. Similarly, Cf. C. Puech, "Gnosis and Time", in *Man and Time*, Princeton, 1973; p. 42 and n. 6. What Aristotle suggests is that time is not rectilinear but *curved*. Although not referring to Aristotle's view, T. Boman criticized Cullmann for asserting that time is 'rectilinear' whereas astronomical time is always cyclic; Cf. T. Boman, *op. cit.* p. 162.

<sup>72</sup> In fact the only reason is the insistence of certain theologians who assert a simplistic and misleading catch-all description of time as a 'Greek' one, in order to

Thus, on account of the conception of time as extension, the Stoics did not need to enunciate that time is in essence *one* and the same throughout the successive aeons. Nevertheless, they did emphasize that time is a continuum which is not broken off during the destruction of a world. This point comes in support of my argument that the Stoic concept is in essence radically different from that of Aristotle's.

I conclude then that there is an autonomous Stoic tradition on the conception of time (namely, on the particular question of *what* time proper *is*). This stands beside the Platonic and Aristotelian views, being independent from them. Any attempt to associate the Stoic view with either the Aristotelian or the Platonic one could be pointless. The claim about an essential similarity between the Platonic or Aristotelian view on the one hand, and the Stoic one on the other, in fact implies that there is an essential dependence of the Stoic thought upon either the Platonic or the Aristotelian one. In effect such a claim disputes the fact that Stoicism constitutes an independent and self-directing stream of thought. It would be not only out of my scope, but also superfluous, to argue that this is not quite the case. For it would be absurd to call into question the historical fact that Stoicism is quite independent from any other Greek school of thought; that it had its own momentum and its highly vigorous and influential presence in the spiritual environment and evolution of ideas—namely, into that which is usually described by the all-embracing expression 'Greek thought'.

It is true, nevertheless, that the Stoic definition has enjoyed little attention among scholars. It is characteristic that, in a work aiming to deal with certain conceptions of time in Antiquity, John Callahan<sup>73</sup> leaves the Stoic view out of consideration. On the other hand, as I said, it is only after a very short discussion that A. Chroust concludes that the Stoic definition of time was only an echo of the Aristotelian one.<sup>74</sup> Perhaps all this is due to the lack of a detailed Stoic treatment of the question. For indeed they never afforded a comprehensive account of their tenet. Plutarch upbraids the Stoics

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make the point of a Hebraic and Christian 'rectilinear' time. The issue of time, however, is not that simple and needs a more sophisticated treatment.

<sup>73</sup> John Callahan, *Four views of Time in Ancient Philosophy*, Connecticut, 1968.

<sup>74</sup> A. Chroust, "The meaning of time in the ancient world", *The New Scholasticism*, XXI (1947), 42.

with inconclusive indefiniteness. He observes that they define time as an 'extension of motion' (διάστημα κινήσεως) 'and nothing else' (ἄλλο δ' οὐδέν). He adds that they regard it as a mere attribute resulting from motion, a consequence of motion (ἀπό συμβεβηκότος ὀριζόμενοι), while they 'fail to consider its essence and its faculty' (τὴν δ' οὐσίαν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν δύναμιν οὐ συννοοῦντες).<sup>73</sup>

Plotinus also exercised a severe criticism against both Aristotle and the Stoics. He rejected the definition of time as number, whereas the Stoic definition of time as extension seemed to him as not touching upon the problem of time proper. His argument was that one would never find *what* time proper is by simply counting it. On the other hand, the Stoic statement that time is an extension seemed to him a tautology, since time was defined by a predicate (namely, διάστημα) which was not defined in itself. Thus, in his view, the Stoics fell short of actually defining time:

But if someone were to say that the extension of motion is time, not in the sense of extension itself, but that in relation to which the motion has its extension, as if it were running along with it, what this is has not been stated. For it is obvious that time is that in which the motion has occurred. But this was what my discussion was trying to find from the beginning, what time essentially is; since in fact this is like the same as an answer to the question 'What is time?'—which says that it is extension of motion in time. What, then, is this extension which you call time and put outside the proper extension of the motion? Then again, on the other side, the person who puts the extension in the motion itself, will be hopelessly perplexed about where to put the dimension of rest. For something else could rest for as long as something was moved, and you would say that the time in each case was the same, as being, obviously, different from both. What, then, is this extension, and what is its nature? For it cannot be spatial, since this also lies outside movement.<sup>76</sup>

It is plain that this assessment of Plotinus points to the earliest of the Stoic accounts, namely, that of Zeno's. The criticism is nonetheless extended to later Stoics, too. Chrysippus defined time as "an

<sup>73</sup> *SVF*, II, 165, 20–22.

<sup>76</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.8. I have in general followed the translation of A.H. Armstrong, but with some substantial changes: I translate *διάστασις* as 'extension', not as 'distance' which does not really mean *διάστασις*, but *ἀπόστασις*. Also, the expression *ὅσον γὰρ* means 'as long as'; Armstrong's translation as 'for the same space' would create confusion, as he obviously means 'space of time' exactly at the point where Plotinus makes the crucial distinction between space and time.

extension which is alongside following the motion of the world" (τὸ παρακολουθοῦν διάστημα τῇ τοῦ κόσμου κινήσει).<sup>77</sup> Although Plotinus does not refer to any Stoic philosopher by name, it is obvious that the following portion of the *Enneads* is actually aimed against Chrysippus:

As for calling it an accompaniment of motion, this does not explain at all what it is, nor has the statement any content before it is said what this accompanying thing is, for perhaps just this might turn out to be time. But we must consider whether this accompaniment comes after motion, or at the same time as it, or before it (if there is any kind of accompaniment which comes before) for whichever may be said, it is said to be in time. If this is so, time will be an accompaniment of motion in time.<sup>78</sup>

It is true that the Stoics do not offer any elaborate account of their essential idea of time as extension. The foregoing criticism focuses on this lack of elaboration, purposing to offer a cluster of puzzles in the attempt to discredit the Stoic definition. This is understandable, since it comes from a Middle-Platonic and Neoplatonic direction, that is, rival schools of thought. I should have thought that A.H. Armstrong is quite right in calling Plutarch 'a very hostile witness' of the Stoics.<sup>79</sup>

This criticism, however, downgrades the *ontological* character of the Stoic *διάστημα*. For the Stoics do not really regard time as a *consequence* of motion: time is in fact the indispensable element for motion to make sense and to take place. There is an absolute ontological priority of *διάστημα* to motion, as well as to any other notion involved in the early Stoic definitions.

On the other hand, it is no accident, nor is it due to negligence, that they did not develop their conception in detail. On the contrary, it can be sustained that not to elaborate too much is an inherent proclivity of their theory of time. This is explicable in the light of their principles themselves: in Stoicism the notions of *reality* and *corporeality* are closely related. The general old Stoic tenet was that it is only bodies which are real (as *real* regarding only what is acting or suffering). Hence they would regard time as real only once

<sup>77</sup> *SFV*, II, 164, 16–17.

<sup>78</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.10.

<sup>79</sup> A.H. Armstrong, *An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy*, London, 1981, 120.



they had affirmed it to be a body. Since time is obviously not a body, the spontaneous Stoic reaction in the first place would be to reject the idea that time exists, indeed to negate it altogether. But this is self-defeating, too, since it runs contrary to the putative human experience, or a crude awareness of time, at least.

The Stoics solved the problem by conceding the existence of four 'incorporeals', namely, time (ὁ χρόνος), space (ὁ χώρος), an expression (τὸ λεκτόν) and the void (τὸ κενόν).<sup>80</sup> It is apparent though that in the Stoic philosophy, and its materialism, the term 'incorporeal' is a cause of embarrassment. On the other hand, a further analysis of the question of time could cause further perplexity. This is what they sought to evade. To them time has always remained a 'something' (τὶ), which stands between being and non-being, in a state between existence and non-existence.

The Stoics in general distinguished three degrees of reality: the ὄντα (beings) were regarded as being of full reality and these were only bodies. The incorporeals were called τινά (somethings), but they were not regarded as ὄντα. Below them, the οὐτινα (nothings) were mere conceptions (ἐννοήματα). Time belongs to the second rank of reality.<sup>81</sup> Another distinction of degrees of reality is between what is ὑφ' ἑαυτῷ (subsisting) and what is ὄν (being). The former seems to correspond to τινά (somethings).<sup>82</sup>

This is why Proclus accurately observes that the Stoic conception of time was far too different from that of either the Platonists or the Peripatetics. To Stoics, according to Proclus, "time was one of what they called the incorporeals, which are despised by them as inactive and not being, and existing only in bare mind".<sup>83</sup>

<sup>80</sup> *SFF*, II, 17, 18–24. With reference to the Stoic thought, for the translation of τὸ λεκτόν as 'an expression' s. L. & S., p. 1037.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. *SFF* II, 117, 1ff; II, 166, 4–10; Sextus Empiricus, *adversus Mathematicos*, X.213; Cf. J.M. Rist, *op. cit.*, Ch. 9; also, Pasquale Pasquino "Le statut ontologique des incorporels", in Jaques Brunschwig (ed.), *Les Stoïciens et leur logique* (Paris, 1978).

<sup>82</sup> Cf. R. Sorabji, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>83</sup> *SFF*, II, 166, 4–10. ἔτι δὲ καὶ κεῖνο ληπτέον ἀπὸ τῶν προειρημένων ὅτι πολλοὺ δεῖ τοιοῦτον ὑπονοήσεται τὸν χρόνον ὁ Πλάτων οἷον οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Στοᾶς ὑπέλαβον ἢ τῶν ἐκ τοῦ Περιπάτου πολλοί, οἱ μὲν κατ' ἐπίνοιαν ψιλὴν αὐτὸν συνιστάντες ἀμενηνόν καὶ ἔγγιστα τοῦ μὴ ὄντος· ἐν γὰρ οὖν τῶν παρ' αὐτοῖς ἀσωμάτων ὁ χρόνος, ὃ δὴ καταπεφρόνηται παρ' αὐτοῖς ὡς ἀδρανὴ καὶ οὐκ ὄντα καὶ ἐν ἐπινουίαις ὑφιστάμενα ψιλαῖς· οἱ δὲ συμβεβηκός τῆς κινήσεως λέγοντες.



In Stoic philosophy a theory ascribed to Chrysippus was that only something 'fully real' should be considered as 'existing' (ὑπάρχειν). They used to make the distinction between ὑπάρχειν and ὑφ' ἑστάναι.<sup>84</sup> The latter is not a full but only a 'potential' reality. 'Fully real' is an event which takes place *in actuality*: 'walking', for example, exists fully only as long as one walks; it does not exist fully when one is lying or sitting.<sup>85</sup> In this context, the Stoics argue that only the present time is fully real. On the other hand, they hold time to be infinite in both directions (namely, past and future) and infinitely divisible. Obviously, they can infer the infinite divisibility from their fundamental view of time as a continuum.<sup>86</sup> According to a testimony of Plutarch, to the Stoics the 'present' is time so infinitely small, that it is 'crushed' between past and future (which are regarded as not fully real). Finally, the present itself is extinguished and does not really exist. What remains out of this 'crushing' is past and future, which though are considered as not 'full' but 'potential' realities.<sup>87</sup> This is the Stoic reasoning which subtracts reality from the present. It is on account of this that Plutarch ascribes to the Stoics the opinion that time itself is not a 'being'.<sup>88</sup>

Such were the matters surrounding the question of time. Platonists, for example, maintained that it is continuity itself that assigns unreality to time.<sup>89</sup> Chrysippus, however, rejects this assertion. He does not allow that to regard time as a continuum entails an unreality of the present, or of the events of the present time. Subsequently, he develops a battery of arguments on this subject. What the Stoics actually did was to draw a distinction between what *exists* (such as material objects, or an action—as long as it takes place) and what is *real* (which includes material objects, as well as incorporeal, such as time). Perhaps this distinction eluded Proclus when he recorded the Stoic view of time.<sup>90</sup>

There has been some criticism to my assessment of incorporeality being an element of embarrassment to the Stoics, particularly my

<sup>84</sup> *SFF*, II, 164, 27.

<sup>85</sup> *SFF*, II, 164, 26–30.

<sup>86</sup> *SFF*, II, 164, 23–25.

<sup>87</sup> *SFF*, II, 165, 37–43.

<sup>88</sup> *SFF*, II, 117, 42–43.

<sup>89</sup> J.M. Rist, *op. cit.*, 280.

<sup>90</sup> *SFF*, II, 166, 4–10.

opinion that 'incorporeality' and 'reality' are to them incompatible ontological qualities.<sup>91</sup> It would then be not without value to provide some further elaboration, so that no doubt should remain.

That the Stoics regarded time as an incorporeal which 'existed in thought' (ἀσώματον, ἐννοούμενον)<sup>92</sup> is a testimony which has significant ramifications. Beside the testimony of Plutarch about time being regarded by the Stoics as 'non-being' (οὐδέν, ὄντα δ' οὐ),<sup>93</sup> Sextus refers to 'those who deny the existence of expressions (λεκτῶν)' reporting that they are 'not only the Epicureans, but also the Stoics, such as the students of Basilides, who opine that what is incorporeal is non-existent' (μηδέν εἶναι τὸ ἀσώματον).<sup>94</sup> Sextus must be given credit since he evidently had grasped crucial points of the Old Stoa, particularly its dialectics. In this context an incisive distinction pointed out by himself should be recalled: to speak of 'truth' (ἀλήθειαν) is one thing, but to speak of 'what is true' (τὸ ἀληθές) is quite another. These are two different things 'in three ways, that is, in essence, in constitution, in force of meaning'. It is significant to follow Sextus pointing out the difference 'in essence' (οὐσία) between the two terms: this difference 'in essence' is portrayed thus: 'truth is a body' whereas 'what is true (τὸ ἀληθές) is incorporeal'.<sup>95</sup> 'Truth is a body' means (as I myself indicated earlier speaking of 'walking') the actuality of an fact taking place. To say that a body is real is an *expression*, which is a 'truth': this is an 'impression' (φαντασία),<sup>96</sup> but this is not a body; being just an 'expression', this is one of the incorporeals (τὸ λεκτόν). We have then two different existential statuses being different not simply 'in force of meaning', but also 'in essence' and 'in constitution': 1) The *reality* of the body, which is 'truth' (ἀλήθεια). 2) The *expression* of this reality, which is something 'true' (ἀληθές), it is incorporeal and is not called 'truth': this is a certain 'something' (τὶ), but this is not endowed with the superior ontological authority such as

<sup>91</sup> Marcelo Boeri in his "The Stoics on Bodies and Incorporeals" (*The Review of Metaphysics*, 54, June 2001, p. 735) referring to my article "Origen and the Stoic View of Time" (*Journal of the History of Ideas*, v. 52 (4), 1991, pp. 535–561) disputed my opinion about the perplexity which is caused to Stoic thought out of the sheer ontological difference between incorporeal and corporeal reality.

<sup>92</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos*, X.218.

<sup>93</sup> s. *supra*, SVF, II, 117, 40–43.

<sup>94</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos*, VIII.258; SVF, III, 258, 5–8.

<sup>95</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos*, VII.38; SVF, II, 42, 18–39.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos*, VII.242; SVF, II, 25, 5ff.

that with which a body is. This is in fact what Alexander of Aphrodisias blamed the Stoics for: he pointed out their inability to determine what is 'being' (ὄν) and what is a 'something' (τὶ), demonstrating their logical quandary which made them 'escape from the question which they have been asked and to which they should have answered' (διαφεύγειν τὸ ἠπορημένον).<sup>97</sup> If then Plutarch might be regarded as a hostile witness to the Stoics, and even if Proclus were too critical of them, Sextus Empiricus appears at this point rather apathetic, reporting indifferently what the Stoics really sustained on the ontological difference between corporeals and incorporeals: the contrast was a sheer difference of essence, the primary ontological authority being ascribed to bodies. In view of this, I see no reason why credit should not be given to Dexippus, who reports that 'the Stoics did not grant the incorporeals as existing in themselves' (ἀσώματα γὰρ μὴ παραδεχόμενοι καθ' ἑαυτά).<sup>98</sup>

In any event, the foregoing assessment applies more to Old Stoicism and not so much to that later version of the school which reached Origen. C. Stead tells us that this was represented by three writers: The well-known Roman littérateur Seneca (c. 2 B.C. to A.D. 65); the freed slave Epictetus (c. 55–135 A.D.); and the emperor Marcus Aurelius (b. 121, Emperor 161, d. 180). These thinkers were viewed with sympathy by Christians, and Seneca was even supposed to have corresponded with St Paul (the spurious letters in fact date from the third or fourth century). All three believed in an overruling providence. Indeed the first two adopted a definitely theistic view, teaching the kinship of the human mind with God.

In reference to the conception of time, V. Goldschmidt<sup>99</sup> asserts that Marcus Aurelius is actually a follower of Chrysippus. He takes it that Marcus's only divergence from early Stoicism is his pessimism on the subject. J.M. Rist,<sup>100</sup> on the other hand, holds that in Marcus's era (which is shortly before Origen) the problem of time had a totally different content from the early Stoic one. To Zeno and Chrysippus time is a problem of Physics: the questions concerning time arise from the natural observation of bodies. This problem, therefore, is

<sup>97</sup> *SVF*, II, 117, 1–8.

<sup>98</sup> *SVF*, II, 150, 43–45.

<sup>99</sup> V. Goldschmidt, *Le Système Stoïcien et l'Idée de Temps* (Paris, 1953), p. 197.

<sup>100</sup> J.M. Rist, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

not related to morality. It is from this point of view that time is regarded as a second class problem.

To Marcus time is itself a moral problem. What is the meaning that moral life may have once all actions and accomplishments will vanish into triviality? This was Marcus's disheartening quandary. The Stoicism of this period was distressed by a sense of frustration and pointlessness, which was never really overcome. This is also the point where time itself is related to ethics. Nowhere in his *Meditations* does Marcus refer to any definitions of time, such as these afforded by the earlier Stoics Zeno or Chrysippus or Apollodorus; nor is the definition of time *per se* what is of interest to him when he deals with this problem. It has been argued that in Marcus's time Stoicism had degenerated into an arid moralism. J.M. Rist contends that this is a misleading generalization, yet he concedes that Marcus Aurelius (who was aware of many of the theories of the early Stoa) had lost the sense of their import. He further maintains that the fundamental interrelationship of ethics and physics has eluded Marcus.<sup>101</sup>

Moving on, I shall also make a brief reference to Plotinus' view of time. To him time is ontologically defined as *life*: the life of the Soul in the motion, by which it changes from one phase of life to another.<sup>102</sup> So time, as well as the motions of the physical world, are defined in terms of life and motions within the Soul as such. The Soul partakes of both the spiritual world and the material world<sup>103</sup> and it is itself which produces both time and the physical world. It is then the descent of the soul to the motion of this lower realm that generates time. All physical motion is 'in time', but the motions (namely, the life) of the Soul itself are not in time.<sup>104</sup> Time originates through the desire of the Soul to translate into physical reality what it had visualized in the purely spiritual world.<sup>105</sup> The Soul generates time within itself as an image of eternity primarily for itself, but subsequently for the physical world as such.<sup>106</sup> Thus the Platonic notion of time as an *image* is also maintained. The notion that time *moves* is maintained in a sense; for time is regarded as 'a

<sup>101</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 283-8.

<sup>102</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.2.

<sup>103</sup> *Enneads*, I.8.14; III.6.14; III.8.3; IV.8.7; VI.4.16; IV.8.3.

<sup>104</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.13.

<sup>105</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.3.

<sup>106</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.10.

state of the Soul consisting of alternating motions from one sphere of life to another'.<sup>107</sup> Beyond all these, however, the main ontological definition of time in Plotinus is that time proper is *life*.

Approaching the second and first centuries B.C. it was a general symptom of the era to seek refuge in eclecticism, mainly from Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics. This happened with the question of time, too. In thinkers such as Carneades (of the Middle Academy), Panaetius and Posidonius, there is an apparent eclecticism and syncretism on the question of time. On the other hand, Sextus Empiricus develops a battery of arguments in order to prove the unreality (ἀνυπόστατος) of time.<sup>108</sup> It was the era when the historical period of scientific inspiration and offer had run out, and the main human desire was not for *knowledge*, but for *salvation*.<sup>109</sup>

Within this context, the Gnostic attitude towards time is inspired not by the desire to attain to a scientific knowledge of it, but to be emancipated from it. In tune with their overall hostile attitude towards the world, which they regarded as evil, they seek salvation, not *in* time, but *from* time. Regarding the being-in-the-world as a fallen state from an original state of freedom, their attitude to time is inspired by the nostalgia of a lost freedom. They detest time and seek to shatter it, since this is a means for their being in slavery and servitude.<sup>110</sup> So their tendency is to annul it and deny it as a 'lie' or, at least, to surpass it. The Gnostic mind is trying to escape the worldly reality through a mythological thought. In this thought, atemporality and temporality are mingled together, as the Gnostic tries to achieve a personal 'resurrection' and 'perfection', not through a process in time, but rather through a mystic experience.

Beside this tradition (namely, the variegated Greek views, as well as the Gnostic one) there was the Biblical attitude. Whether a specific conscious Hebraic conception of time actually existed, or not, is a question which I leave moot for the time being. What existed though was the intense orientation towards the future and the expectation for fulfillment of the divine promises, as stated in the Old Testament.

<sup>107</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.10.

<sup>108</sup> *Pyrrhonism*, III, 136ff; *adversus Mathematicos*, X, 169ff.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Windelband, W-Heimsoeth, H., *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie*, p. 246.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. H.C. Puech, "Gnosis and Time", from *Man and Time* (Princeton, 1973), pp. 38-84.



Christianity, being primarily a religion of salvation, establishes a mode of thought according to which the main concern is directed towards the future. This attitude is found throughout the Bible, especially after the meaning that scripture acquired with the New Testament. However, the question of time proper was never treated in a manner allowing to speak of a *tradition* which reached Origen on this particular issue.

The exception was Tatian (probably, 120–173 A.D.), who upheld the idea of static time: all the notions about a temporal flux are but a subjective impression based on the illusion that time moves. He contends that it is not time that moves, but human beings who move through time. Time does not move nor does it change. The feeling that it moves (which produces the notions of temporal motion, or change) is a fallacious imagery. This is like the impression of those who are sailing on a ship and think that it is the landscape that moves and not they.<sup>111</sup>

On no account however could this statement of Tatian's be regarded as an elaborated view of time. For this is all he had to say on the issue in his combative work *Against the Greeks*: a work in which he endeavours to touch upon all philosophers, all persons (mythological or real) and all the questions which the Greeks dealt with in one way or another: a vituperative composition aiming at an indiscriminate attack on the Greek philosophers. No one could then expect that in such a work any serious exposition of philosophical problems could be offered. Anyhow, in this passage Tatian postulates a reversed view: it is human beings, not time, that move, thus taking up the notion of static time. This, however, is an assertion too general to be regarded as a sufficient treatment of the issue. Certainly it is un-Platonic, but not a positively un-Greek one. For Aristotle, as well as the Stoics, would promptly endorse the opinion that time itself does not move. On the other hand, the psychological division into past-present-future cannot be denied at all. On this, all Tatian seems to say is that the distinction into past, present and future is but a subjective illusion. A. Chroust averred that this passage of Tatian's constitutes a 'phenomenalist' and 'subjectivist' interpretation of time.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>111</sup> Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos*, 26, PG 6,862.

<sup>112</sup> Tatian, *op. cit.* Cf. A.H. Chroust, *op. cit.*, 68.

This, however, is exactly the opposite of what Tatian actually does. For it is the 'phenomenalistic' and 'subjectivistic' conception of time that Tatian contemptuously rebukes, regarding it as an illusion. This view brings Tatian close enough to the Aristotelian Alexander of Aphrodisias (fl. c. 205 A.D.) who held that the 'generation' of what is called 'instant' 'is in the mind'.<sup>113</sup>

With reference to time, the term *διάστημα* had also been used by Athenagoras.<sup>114</sup> This term is found in the expression 'equal extensions of time' (*ἰσομέτροις χρόνου διαστήμασιν*).<sup>115</sup> But it is doubtful whether this constitutes an outright Stoic influence. As I argue presently, mere usage of the term *διάστημα* alone is not sufficient for the assumption of Stoic influence to be grounded solidly. There is nothing really worth mentioning which Athenagoras did towards formulation of a concrete Christian view of time. In his day there was definitely no sophisticated conception such as that which Origen initiated later on.

The variegation on this question during that early period of Christianity can be better pointed out through the study of also another Christian writer: until now it is only Tatian's brief statement which has enjoyed much attention among scholars. Still there is another view which, as far as I know, has been neglected hitherto. I refer to Justin, who was contemporary to Athenagoras. In a work purposed to refute certain views of Aristotle, he first quotes Aristotelian passages and then states his own arguments against them. At a number of points the reader can see that, although Justin rejects certain Aristotelian views (such as beginninglessness and infinity of time), he remains rather faithful to the Aristotelian view of time as a 'number' of motion.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>113</sup> R. Sharples, in collaboration with F.W. Zimmermann, "Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On Time*", *Phronesis*, 27 (1982), pp. 58-109.

<sup>114</sup> Athenagoras, *De Resurrectione Mortuorum*, PG 6.1005.

<sup>115</sup> Athenagoras, *op. cit.*, 1005. It is remarkable that M. Spanneut believes that the Stoic influence upon the early Christian writers does not go further than Clement of Alexandria. s. M. Spanneut, *Le Stoïcisme des Pères de l'Église* (Paris, 1957), p. 356. Besides, Origen's fundamental view on the essence of time is totally different from that of Philo's. For the latter clearly holds a Platonic conception of time and postulates that the divine life (*αἰών*) is "the archetype and model for time"; *Quod Deus Immutabilis Sit*, 6.32.

<sup>116</sup> Justinus Martyr, *Philosophus*, *Confutatio quorundam Aristotelis dogmaticorum*. PG 6.1525ff. The points to which I refer are 1525D, 1528B-C, 1529A, 1532C, 1533A etc.

Thus, at the time of Athenagoras and Justin (that is, more or less fifty years before Origen) the Christian writers were groping for a new view of time. But there was no definite theory established as a *Christian* one. Least of all does the question of time, if posed at all, seem to have enjoyed unanimity among Christians.

*Time as extension (διάστημα)*

I am now going to assert that Origen has in the first place (and to a certain extent) employed the fundamental early Stoic perception of time as *extension*, forming his own view in line with his overall theological principles. In doing so, he selected from the Stoic philosophy whatever seemed to him as helping to the representation of his own idea of time. Nevertheless, beyond whatever might be regarded of Stoic origin, I shall argue that there is a unique contribution of Origen himself towards the formation of a radically new concept of time. This was actually a feat which had a decisive (still not acknowledged as yet) impact on the Christian writers of the centuries after him.

It is reasonable to assume that Origen was aware of the Stoic treatment of time and the criticism against it. This can be gathered not only from his generally acknowledged erudition, but also from his profound knowledge of the Stoic thought—a knowledge which stands out in his *Contra Celsum*. Still time is a subject upon which he touches only occasionally. He was not interested in composing any *ad hoc* treatise on time proper. But a study of his entire work (particularly that preserved in the Greek original text) reveals beyond doubt that he did formulate a certain conception of his own. This is constantly present in his entire theology, imbuing this essentially and determinably.

Origen meets Stoicism at the time when this philosophy, as expressed by Marcus Aurelius, displays symptoms of degeneration and stalemate. That he was well acquainted with early Stoicism was his advantage. For he was aware of the whole historical process (and, particularly, the evolution of ideas) which had eventually led this philosophy to unsurmountable quandary.

As I have pointed out, the term *διάστημα* alone in a writer's phraseology is not sufficient ground to establish Stoic influence. This would be a mere indication which needs to be buttressed up with

more solid evidence. I shall adduce this evidence in due course. In the first place though, the suggestion that time is held to be a kind of extension is made by Origen himself. In contrast, he never uses terms which even remotely would be reminiscent of either the Platonic or the Aristotelian perception. Time is constantly regarded as a kind of *extension* (διάστημα).

He speaks of 'this temporal extension' (τὸ χρονικόν τοῦτο διάστημα)<sup>117</sup> and 'the temporal extension itself' (αὐτό δὲ τὸ χρονικόν διάστημα).<sup>118</sup> Likewise, (quoting and explaining the parable in Matt. 20, 1-16) there is reference to 'extensions (διαστήματα) between the third the sixth and the ninth hour', as well as the 'extension' (διάστημα) from the time of Moses until the time of Jesus Christ.<sup>119</sup> In the same work, he reflects on the deeper meaning of the scriptural 'three equal extensions (τρία ἴσα διαστήματα) [between] the third and sixth and ninth hour'; also, of the 'smaller extension' (ἐλαττον διάστημα) between the eleventh and twelfth hour; and of the 'extension (διάστημα) from the dawn until the third hour'.<sup>120</sup> Accordingly, the 'extension of one day' (μιάς ἡμέρας διαστήματος) is compared to the duration of 'an entire aeon' (τὸν ὅλον αἰῶνα).<sup>121</sup> In reference to this, he reflects on scriptural temporal terms considering them as possibly alluding to actual 'temporal extensions' (χρονικῶν διαστημάτων).<sup>122</sup> It is apparently on account of time regarded as extension, that human life is stated as a kind of 'road' (ὁδός): 'this life is a *road* which is walked by all men' (ὁδός γὰρ ὁ βίος, ὑπὸ πάντων ἀνθρώπων παροδευόμενος).<sup>123</sup> In the same vein, there is reference to 'length of time' (μῆκος χρόνου).<sup>124</sup>

In compliance with this conception of time as extension, human action in time is regarded as a mode of walking. There is a comment about those who 'did not *walk* the *way* they ought to, nor did they carry out the works they ought to' (οὔτε γὰρ ἦν ἔδει πορεύων

<sup>117</sup> *frMatt*, 487.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.* At this particular point, Origen uses the term 'extension' to denote not a period of time, but a certain moment of it, namely the expected second advent of Christ, according to Matt. 25, 31; it is also significant that, in this passage, he refers to events as occurring *in* time (τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ).

<sup>119</sup> *commMatt*, 15, 34.

<sup>120</sup> *commMatt*, 15, 28.

<sup>121</sup> *deOr*, XXVII, 13.

<sup>122</sup> *deOr*, XXVII, 14.

<sup>123</sup> *frMatt*, 102 II; italics mine.

<sup>124</sup> *selPs*, 22, PG 12.1264; italics mine; the same expression in *selJob*, PG 17.61.

περιεπάτησεν οὔτε ὥς ἐχρῆν πράξεις ἐπετέλεσεν) and speaks of the *walking* towards the realization of 'virtue' (δέον ὁδεῦσαι ἐπὶ τὸ πέπειρον καὶ γλυκεῖαν ποιῆσαι τὴν τῆς ἀρετῆς σταφυλὴν).<sup>125</sup> Also he states that 'he who begins with the words of Jesus Christ when he is at preliminary stage of exercise, still *walks* along the tough road, which to the beginners seems to be steep, and violently captures the kingdom of heavens which can stand violence' (ἀρπάζει βίαν τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν, βίαν ὑπομένουσαν).<sup>126</sup> In *commJohn*, the eschatological perception of acting in time is portrayed through the expression 'the road which leads above all heavens' (τὴν φέρουσαν ὁδὸν ἐπὶ τὰ ὑπεράνω πάντων τῶν οὐρανῶν).<sup>127</sup> In the same work, he ponders upon the different imports<sup>128</sup> of the term ἀρχή, in order to afford an exegesis to the passage of John 1, 1 'In the beginning was the Logos' (Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος).<sup>129</sup> When the analysis comes to the meaning of ἀρχή as *beginning*, this is regarded neither as a beginning of movement (of a Platonic *moving image* of eternity), nor as a beginning (of any Aristotelian *number*). Quite remarkably, the temporal signification of it is pointed up through the statement that ἀρχή denotes 'something like the beginning of a road':

One meaning refers to change and this pertains, as it were, to a road and length which is declared by the Scripture: 'The beginning of a good road is to do justice'.<sup>130</sup> For since a 'good road' is most great, it should be understood that praxis, which is presented by the phrase 'to do justice', relates to the initial matters, and contemplation [relates] to those that follow. I think its *termination* and *goal* is in the so-called restoration because there is no one enemy left at that time, if indeed the statement holds true, 'For he must reign *until* he has put all his enemies under his feet. And the *last* enemy to be destroyed is death.'<sup>131</sup> For *at that time* those who have come to God because of the Logos which is with him<sup>132</sup> will have contemplation of God as their exclusive activity, that, having been accurately formed<sup>133</sup> in the knowledge of the Father, they may all thus become a son, since now the Son

<sup>125</sup> *commMatt*, 17, 24.

<sup>126</sup> *frMatt*, 227.

<sup>127</sup> *commJohn*, 19, XX.

<sup>128</sup> *commJohn*, 1, XVI.

<sup>129</sup> *commJohn*, 1, XVI.

<sup>130</sup> Prov. 16, 7.

<sup>131</sup> 1 Cor. 15, 25.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. John 1, 1.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Gal. 4, 19.



alone has known the Father. For if someone should diligently examine *when* it is that those shall know the Father to whom the Son who has known the Father reveals him, and should see that the one who sees *now* sees 'through a glass, darkly',<sup>134</sup> not yet having known 'as he ought to know';<sup>135</sup> he would be right in saying that no one has known the Father even if he be an apostle or prophet,<sup>136</sup> but it will come to pass *whenever* they become one as [the] Son and the Father are one.<sup>137</sup> But if anyone should think that we have digressed by clarifying one meaning of 'beginning' and making these remarks, we must show that the digression was necessary and useful for that which is to be explained. For if 'beginning' has to do with change and a *road* and *length*, and 'The beginning of a good road is to do justice'<sup>138</sup> it is possible to learn that every good road has somehow 'doing justice' as a 'beginning', and *after the beginning*, contemplation, and in what manner it has contemplation.<sup>139</sup>

In this passage Origen provides his view of the temporal meaning of ἀρχή, as 'beginning'. What is more, he alludes to the *raison d'être* of time itself, as he clearly implies that this temporal 'road' is the way along which rational creatures will 'walk' striving towards salvation.

The employment of this figure of speech suggests time to be an extension. In this respect, it is not accidental that time itself is likened to a road or a length. Although the term to be explained at this point is a temporal one (namely, *beginning*), the text is full of *spatial* notions, by means of which time is figured as *extension*. The set of these passages demonstrates that whenever Origen refers to time (or alludes to it by means of pertinent expressions) he always intimates it as a kind of extension. I say a *kind* of extension, because he is not entirely content with the usage of the term extension (διάστημα) alone; or, at least, he does not feel that mere employment of this term can fully represent his perception of time. For although extension is indeed an essential definition of *what* time proper is, this in no way can be regarded as an exhaustive account of the question.

<sup>134</sup> 1 Cor. 13, 12.

<sup>135</sup> 1 Cor. 8, 2.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Eph. 3, 5.

<sup>137</sup> John 10, 30.

<sup>138</sup> Prov. 16, 7.

<sup>139</sup> *comm. John*, 1, XVI. Italics mine.

*The term συμπαρεκτείνεσθαι*

The decisive innovation pioneered by Origen was the introduction of the term *συμπαρεκτείνεσθαι* (to be stretched out alongside with) in the nomenclature of time. This is a term pregnant with meaning used whenever he points to time or wants to indicate a temporal function. A passage in *expProv* reads as follows:

By the term *aeon* he means the period of human life, in like manner that Paul says; 'I will eat no meat in the *aeon*, so that I will not occasion a temptation to my brother';<sup>140</sup> he called *aeon* that which is stretched out alongside with the structure of his life (τὸ γὰρ συμπαρεκτεινόμενον τῇ συστάσει τῆς ζωῆς αὐτοῦ).<sup>141</sup>

Similar to this, he speaks of time as 'measured alongside with' (παρὰ-μετρούμενος) everyone's life.<sup>142</sup> It should be noticed that he refers to time through no noun at all; he just uses the participle *συμπαρεκτεινόμενον* as an illustration of time itself.<sup>143</sup> Everything pointing to time is predicated by the term *συμπαρεκτείνων* or *συμπαρεκτεινόμενος*. This is used in order to speak of either time itself, or of duration, or even to denote a presence in time. In *commMatt*, here is how he refers to the incapability of human nature to reach a perfect grasp of God:

For we cannot hold a memory which could be enduring (*διαρκῆ*) and stretched out alongside with (*συμπαρεκτεινομένην*) the nature of objects of contemplation (*θεωρημάτων*), on account of the vast multitude of them.<sup>144</sup>

What the term 'stretched out alongside with' suggests at this point is a temporal apprehension, which would be extended throughout the period of a lifetime; an apprehension which would have *duration*. This is why, in the foregoing passage, the terms 'enduring' (*διαρκῆ*)

<sup>140</sup> 1 Cor. 8, 13.

<sup>141</sup> *expProv*, 10. Cf. a definition of *αἰών* by Aristotle: τὸ τέλος τὸ περιέχον τὸν τῆς ἐκάστου ζωῆς χρόνον . . . αἰὼν ἐκάστου κέκληται; *De Caelo* 279a25.

<sup>142</sup> *relPs*, 60, PG 12.1484.

<sup>143</sup> The Greek term for "noun" is *οὐσιαστικόν*, which means a name for the *οὐσία* (essence) of a person or thing. Origen does not use any noun (*οὐσιαστικόν*), that is, he does not give any outright indication of essence (*οὐσία*) of time proper other than *διάστημα*.

<sup>144</sup> *commMatt*, 12, 6. He refers to the 'objects of contemplation' (*θεωρήματα*) of wisdom.

and 'stretched out alongside with' (συμπαρεκτεινομένην) are interchangeable.

Even the temporal presence itself is indicated through the same term συμπαρεκτείνεσθαι. In *commJohn*, he expounds his opinion that the Logos of God is present in both the divine timelessness and the temporal world. This presence of the Logos in time is denoted by the term συμπαρεκτείνεσθαι. It is stated that Christ "is so powerful as to be invisible by virtue of his divine nature, to be present each individual man and to be also stretched out alongside with the whole world (παντί δὲ καὶ ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ συμπαρεκτεινόμενος); this is what is declared by the 'He has stood in the midst of you'."<sup>145</sup> The same predicate is used in another case as well:

And when it is said to him [sc. to the Son of God] the word 'You are my Son, I have begotten you today',<sup>146</sup> to him 'today' is always (ἀεὶ); for to God there is no evening and I think that there is no morning either; but the time, so to speak (ἵν' οὕτως εἰπῶ), which is stretched out alongside with (ὁ συμπαρεκτείνων) his unbegotten and timeless (ἀίδιῳ) life, this is the day called today, on which the Son has been begotten; for there can be neither beginning nor any day of his birth.<sup>147</sup>

It is plain that this passage introduces no notion of time in God. Not only because here the timelessness of the divine life is again stressed; but also because the word *time* is used in a consciously loose sense—hence, the expression 'so to speak' (ἵν' οὕτως εἰπῶ). The task facing Origen at this point is to provide an exegesis of the term 'today' as found in the foregoing portion of the Psalms. What he does then is to interpret this 'today' in a way consonant with his fundamental view of the atemporality of God. The task is hard indeed; yet he copes with it in a twofold way: first, he once more explicates the timeless character of the divine life; secondly, he considers 'today' as the timeless state of the divine life, in the same sense that he has done it in the passage from his Homilies on Jeremiah. His intention being to emphasize the unique ontological relation between the Father and the Son, he elaborates on this in a telling portion of his Homilies on Luke:<sup>148</sup> although there may be

<sup>145</sup> John 1, 26. *commJohn*, 6, XXX.

<sup>146</sup> Ps. 2, 7, quoted in Luke 3, 22; Cf. Heb. 1, 5–7. Origen comments on this also in *Homilies on Luke*, 31.4.

<sup>147</sup> *commJohn*, 1, XXIX.

<sup>148</sup> *Homilies on Luke*, 31.4.

many saints who are called 'sons' by adoption, the Logos is called "his own Son", in order to point to him who alone is begotten by an ineffable generation from God himself".<sup>149</sup> In view of this, the 'day' of the Psalm is by no means a temporal notion: this is simply an analogy:

And you should see that as day we can consider the whole of the present aeon, which is long with respect to us, but it is short and consisting just of a few years with respect to the life of God and of Christ and of the Holy Spirit.<sup>150</sup>

It is noteworthy that here human *time* is compared with divine *life*, not with any divine *time* whatsoever. In the same vein, the term is used in order to denote what exists in time. In interpreting the passage of Paul 'according to the riches of his grace wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence',<sup>151</sup> he comments as follows:

And thus the whole richness of the grace of God, which was abounded to the saints, has from a certain beginning to be 'nourished' and 'increaseth'<sup>152</sup> and is multiplied in such a way that either one has these aforesaid gifts stretched out alongside according to his merits or he lacks them inasmuch as he fails to do what he has to do.<sup>153</sup>

This passage is of special significance, since Origen alludes to his conception of the state before the Fall, as well as to the beginning of time. It is remarkable that the expression 'from a certain beginning' (ἀπό τινος ἀρχῆς) contains the term *ἀρχή* in a twofold sense: it indicates the Wisdom from whom those who deserve her are 'nourished',<sup>154</sup> it also indicates the fact that the Fall marks the beginning of time and it is from that beginning onwards that the grace of God is 'stretched out alongside with' the world in order to help it towards its restoration by its own free will.<sup>155</sup> In this case, therefore, the term 'stretched out alongside with' signifies the bestowal of

<sup>149</sup> *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 7.9.3. s. ch. 4, pp. 138–40; 149.

<sup>150</sup> *commMatt*, 15, 31.

<sup>151</sup> Eph. 1, 7–8.

<sup>152</sup> Col. 2, 19.

<sup>153</sup> *commEph*, 239, 37–41.

<sup>154</sup> In this case *ἀρχή*, alludes to the wisdom itself and, therefore, it has a non-temporal meaning.

<sup>155</sup> At this point, the term *ἀρχή* has obviously a temporal import, alluding to the beginning of time.

God's gifts upon creatures within time. More specifically, this alludes to the notion that those gifts may be bestowed upon a rational creature for a period of time (and in that case this creature is said to have those gifts 'stretched out alongside with' him), while at another period of time those gifts are not there, on account of the rational creature's own merits.

Thus it is through the temporal implication of the term 'stretched out alongside with' that Origen couches his notion of the non-permanent bestowal of the divine grace upon creatures and, subsequently, his view of time as a *milieu* where a dialectical relation between God and creatures takes place.

The usage of the term *συμπαρεκτείνεσθαι* is a significant and meaningful innovation. The initial Stoic view of *extension* is not abandoned. In formulating the Christian concept, however, there is further refinement and clarification of the pertinent terminology. The introduction of this term constitutes a comprehensive and elaborate account of *what* time proper *is*. What is more, it points to the relation of time to space proper (which, at one point, is called 'structure of this world'). As a matter of fact, the term is used in order to point to a presence in time: explaining the term of Paul 'the aeon of this world'<sup>156</sup> it is stated that what would be understood by this expression is 'time which is stretched out alongside with the structure of this world from the beginning to the end' (τὸν συμπαρεκτεινόμενον χρόνον τῇ τούτου τοῦ κόσμου ἀπ' ἀρχῆς μέχρι τέλους κατασκευῇ).<sup>157</sup>

So it is Origen himself who makes the intellectual distinction between time proper and the 'structure of this world', in the same way that he distinguishes between the time of Paul's lifetime from the 'structure of his life'.<sup>158</sup> What these distinctions actually suggest is an abstraction figuring the 'structure' of the world (that is, space proper), or the 'structure of life', conceived apart from time.

The significance of the introduction of this term can be better demonstrated once *συμπαρεκτείνεσθαι* is scrutinized, in order to elicit crucial notions that are inherent in this and are consciously denoted. The verb did not exist in classical Greek.<sup>159</sup> However Chrysippus

<sup>156</sup> Eph. 2, 2.

<sup>157</sup> *commEph*, p. 403.

<sup>158</sup> *expProv*, 10.

<sup>159</sup> In classical Greek there was the verb *παρεκτείνειν*.



used the verb in a figurative manner, which probably was inspiring to Origen: the Stoic philosopher refers to 'the fired iron' contrasting this from the 'fire' itself which is 'stretched out alongside with' this iron.<sup>160</sup> This distinction between fire and iron, although the fired iron is one thing, must have played a role in Origen's thought in formulating the distinction between 'time' and the 'structure of this world', namely between time proper and space.

During the Hellenistic period, the term was used in a variety of senses. Among those who had used the term before Origen were Galen (2nd century A.D.),<sup>161</sup> Asclepiodorus Tacticus (1st century A.D.) and Cleomedes (Mathematician, 2nd century A.D.). A characteristic use of the term (in the sense of 'co-extension') is found in the work *De Musica* of Aristides Quintilianus,<sup>162</sup> who is estimated to have lived only a few decades before Origen.

The meaning applied to *συμπαρεκτείνεσθαι* was 'to have the same extension with something else'. Of the Stoics, Marcus Aurelius had used the term *συμπαρεκτείνειν*,<sup>163</sup> in the sense of 'extending parallel to' and, therefore, 'to contrast' or 'to compare'. The term was certainly used in the subsequent centuries and the Suda Lexicon (960 A.D.) included the lemma.

At all events, it was Origen who first employed the term in order to couch a certain perception of time proper, as well as the relation of time to space. I shall argue later that this concept itself, as well as the pertinent terminology exerted a profound and decisive influence upon the Christian writers of the later centuries: an influence not acknowledged, not even suspected as yet. First though let us see what is the conception of time denoted by the term *συμπαρεκτείνεσθαι*.

The verb is a compound one, consisting of the words *σύν*-, *παρά*-, *ἐκ*-, and *τείνεσθαι*. The first three are prepositions; the fourth is a verb. What we have, therefore, is a verb predicated by three prepositions. The main body of the term is certainly the verb *τείνεσθαι*, which means 'to be stretched' or 'to be spread'. The preposition *ἐκ*

<sup>160</sup> *SVF*, II, 177, 11. It is characteristic of how little importance was granted to this term, that Johan von Arnim does not include this in his Index of the Stoic terminology (the entire volume IV of *SVF*).

<sup>161</sup> Galen (163 A.D.), *Περὶ Χρείας Μορίων* (*De usu partium*): *συμπαρεκτενιόμενον ὅλῳ τῷ μήκει τῆς ράχεως*.

<sup>162</sup> Aristides Quintilianus, *De Musica*, 2, 17.

<sup>163</sup> *Meditations*, 7, 30: *συμπαρεκτείνειν τὴν νόησιν τοῖς λεγομένοις*.

means 'out'; thus, the verb ἐκ-τείνεσθαι means 'to be stretched out' or 'to be extended'.

Up to this point the fundamental Stoic notion of time as extension is maintained. In fact, a Greek word for 'extension' (which is ἔκτασις) is the noun derived from the verb ἐκ-τείνεσθαι. A further step is to allow the preposition παρά (side by side with, parallel to). Zeno does not seem to make use of it, as we have seen. The preposition παρά, however, is found in the wording of Chrysippus and Apollodorus (παρ-ακολουθοῦν διάστημα). Origen discarded the term παρακολουθοῦν on account of its implication that time 'follows', as it were, space. Instead he maintained only the preposition παρά, which renders the verb παρ-εκ-τείνεσθαι meaning 'to be stretched out beside'. Finally, he upholds the preposition σύν (with); thus he intimates time to be an extension which 'is stretched out beside' and yet *with* the 'structure of the world'; which means that time is accompanying space, not following it.

The Stoics Chrysippus and Apollodorus had made an attempt to adumbrate the relation of time to (what they called) the 'world' through the term παρακολουθοῦν διάστημα. The word παρακολουθοῦν, however, means 'that which accompanies *following*'. This term then implies a notion of 'coming behind, or after'. In this sense time is regarded as 'standing beside' the 'world',<sup>164</sup> yet 'following' it.

As a matter of fact, the Stoics seem to be uncertain as to whether time was created 'together with' the 'world' (σὺν αὐτῷ), or 'after it' (μετ' αὐτόν). Subsequently, they appear uncertain as to whether time 'has been of the same age with the world' (ἰσῆλικα τοῦ κόσμου γεγονέναι), or it is 'younger' than the world (ἢ νεώτερον ἐκείνου).<sup>165</sup> On this uncertainty Philo follows the Stoics; the only thing he seems to assert for sure is that time could not be 'older' than the world; 'for it is unbefitting a philosopher to dare affirm' this'.<sup>166</sup> The Stoics regard god as the creator of time; but they consider the world as the 'father' of time.<sup>167</sup>

<sup>164</sup> This is denoted by the preposition παρά in the term παρ-ακολουθοῦν.

<sup>165</sup> SVF, II, 165, 4-9. As we saw, this is a point on which Plotinus criticizes the Stoics for their failure to define whether this παρακολουθήμα is 'later or contemporary or earlier' to motion. *Enneads*, III, 7.10.

<sup>166</sup> *De Officio Mundi*, I, 26-7: πρεσβύτερον δ' ἀποφαίνεσθαι τολμᾶν ἀφιλόσοφον.

<sup>167</sup> SVF, II, 165, 10-12.

The Stoic usage of the expression *παπακολονδὸν διαστημα*, therefore, is an indication of this notion: time accompanies the world, still it comes 'after', because it is realized *out of* the cosmic motion. This tenet is actually a corollary of their definition, according to which the *extension-time* lends itself to the cosmic motion, so that *motion* can make sense and indeed take place at all. It is obvious though that the Stoics never managed to hand down a precise account of the relation between time proper and space.

By contrast, Origen couched his own view by introducing the term *συναπεκτείνωμενος*. He is very much alive to the fact that time *does not follow* space. This point should be paid serious attention, since it prevents the kind of criticism that Plutarch levelled against the Stoics. Although there is reason to doubt whether Plutarch was absolutely fair to the Stoics, he still observes that they define time as an attribute resulting from motion, a consequence of motion. Be that as it may, Origen is beyond the range of such criticism since he discarded the term *παπακολονδὸν* altogether.

There is a contradiction which should be made at this point: Plutarch, too, held the notion that time 'runs together *with* life and keeps pace in its course' (ἢ σὺνβηί καὶ σὺντρέχει).<sup>168</sup> In his mythical portrayal of the beginning of temporality, he speaks of 'a restlessly active nature, which wanted to control itself and be on its own, and chose to seek for more than its present state, this moved, and time moved with it.'<sup>169</sup> In the Greek text the term 'with' is not actually used. It is nevertheless stated that 'once this nature moved, time moved, too' (ἐκινήθη μὲν αὐτή, ἐκινήθη δὲ καὶ αἰὼς). Hence the notion of *accompanying* is positively implied.

The difference lies in this: the Neoplatonic conception of time moving with the world maintains the essential *dynamic* notion—time itself *moves*. In Plato this is a *moving* image, indeed time is described as travelling: he refers to something (the One) travelling with time from the past via the now to the future, which suggests that the now stands still and is overtaken.<sup>170</sup> In the same vein, in Plotinus time

<sup>168</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.13.

<sup>169</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.11.

<sup>170</sup> Plato, *Parmenides* 152A3. However, in the same work (152B4–D4) the *now* is

described as always present to the One, which implies that the *now* travels along with the One. In any case, the dynamic notion is present in the Platonic conception of time.

*nus*. His entire perception of time is also a dynamic one: time proper originates in the *motion* of the Soul. By contrast, Origen does not uphold such a notion at all. On no account does the term *with* (inherent in the term συμπαρεκτείνων) suggest any movement of time proper, from which the notion of motion is consistently withheld.

The definition of time as being in essence διάστημα συμπαρεκτενόμενον is what establishes this radical difference from both the Platonic and the Neoplatonic dynamic conception of time.

This is the structure of Origen's term συμπαρεκτείνεισθαι for time. Let us then see the implications of his steps. Although he took up the Stoic perception of time as διάστημα, the term συμπαρεκτείνεισθαι is derived from a completely different root, that is, the verb τείνεσθαι. I assume that he did so because he wished to obviate somehow the primarily spatial notion implied by the term διάστημα. For he knows perfectly well (as undoubtedly the Stoics did, too) that this extension is not a spatial one: the term itself is but a metaphor, a figure of speech. Since, then this is not of a spatial nature, what is the relation of this extension to space proper?

The Stoics undoubtedly were conscious of the fact that time is something different from space;<sup>171</sup> they also certainly knew that this extension has no spatial purport. However, they did not manage to invent a terminology expressing this awareness tellingly. This is the point on which Plotinus focused his criticism against them. Zeno (assuming that the extant fragments do justice to him) seems to have thought that it is enough to take as obvious that the term extension is just a simile. Chrysippus and Apollodorus simply added the participle παρακολουθοῦν (being beside and following). This, however, is not a very substantial contribution towards eliminating the ambiguity. For it confuses rather than elucidates the relation of time proper to space.

It is not accidental that the meticulous Origen discards the term παρακολουθοῦν altogether. What he does instead, is to opt for the simultaneous usage of the prepositions σύν (with) and παρά (beside). Thus time is illustrated as a kind of extension, which is stretched out 'alongside with' space, being 'beside' it. Time is something *different*

<sup>171</sup> As discussed already, it was a problem for the Stoics whether time should be considered as a body or not, subsequently, whether it should be regarded as a 'being' or not.

from space and yet it is stretched out alongside *together with* it. There is no notion of 'following' one another; they are just associated and linked 'together'. This is how he resolved the ambiguities inherent in the Stoic definitions.

I have already suggested that mere usage of the term *διδότῃα* alone is not sufficient in order to ground the assumption of Stoic resonance. For there is an essential presupposition for the term *διδότῃα* to be regarded as an element of Stoic provenance: it should be definite that this indicates the ontological perception of time proper. Only then could one speak of a certain proximity with Stoicism. It is reasonable to assume that Origen adopted the fundamental Stoic conception of time proper as appropriate, in the first place, to his own perception of it. In Stoic philosophy he found the essential perception of *what* time proper is. He employed this as concordant with the principal doctrines of his theology. But the fact that the Stoic definition of time proper constitutes a springboard for him can be substantiated and illuminated only by the further developments which he himself devised.

That Origen's time as *διδότῃα* is in fact the Stoic ontological conception of time is demonstrated by the term *συναπαρκετεῖναι*. If he used only the term *διδότῃα*, this would be an *indication*, yet not concrete *evidence* that he was regarding the Stoic conception as befitting his own view of it. This is why I have refrained from endorsing M. Spanneur's opinion<sup>172</sup> that the usage of the term *διδότῃα* by Athenagoras constitutes an outright Stoic influence.

With regard to Origen the indication becomes *evidence* once his term *συναπαρκετεῖναι* is thoroughly studied. This is what really buttresses up the assertion that time proper is in essence perceived as *extension*. For the term 'stretched out alongside with' (τὸ συναπαρκετεῖναι)<sup>173</sup> bears upon his conception of time, as well as its relation to space. This is the reason why the study of this term is an indispensable complement for the point of a certain relation between Origen and the Stoics on the ontological conception of time proper to be made. In fact though the elicitation of the implications inherent in the term *συναπαρκετεῖναι* does not stop here. For a considered view emerges out of further study: the term *συναπαρκετεῖναι*

<sup>172</sup> M. Spanneur, *op. cit.*, 356.

<sup>173</sup> *exp. Prov.*, 10; *comm. John.*, 1; XXXIX; *comm. Eph.*, tr. IX.



itself, on the one hand, and certain other portions of his work, on the other, indicate that time is held to be a *dimension* of the world.

*Time is a dimension*

It should be pointed out that in Greek the terms *διάστημα* (extension) and *διάστασις* (dimension) have the same root; also, their meaning has an inner connection: *διάστασις* (dimension) is definitely a ideational *διάστημα* (extension) alongside which life is moving on. Besides, the notion of *διάστασις* is inherent in the term *συμπαρεκτείνων*, as I point out presently in relation with certain considerations of J. Callahan.

It is significant that Origen points to the divine life through the term *ἀδιάστατος* (dimensionless). This life is held to be the pre-eminent one, a state which is called 'perpetual life' (*ἀειζωΐας*).<sup>174</sup> The same term is used at another point, in order to indicate the divine life as the final goal of all creation. This is described as 'calm and dimensionless life' (*ἀταράχου καὶ ἀδιαστάτου ζωῆς*).<sup>175</sup> Thus the contrast between the atemporal divine life and the temporal world is pointed out through the term *ἀδιάστατος*. This is a point which deserves to be perused. I have already shown that the radical transcendence of God to the world is portrayed in terms of space and time. The life of creation is contrasted with the divine life on account of the fact that the latter is spaceless and timeless. When, therefore, the divine life is portrayed as dimensionless, obviously this implies the absence of space and time.

Considering time as a *dimension* is the point where Origen's ontological definition of time as *διάστημα* (extension) and the notion of *διάστασις* (dimension) converge. For one thing, the two terms are related to each other on the grounds of philology and etymology.

<sup>174</sup> *expProv*, 16, PG 17.196; Cf. the same term in *op. cit.*, 2, PG 17.168.

<sup>175</sup> *expProv*, 2, PG 17.168. The term *ἀδιάστατος* meaning *without extension* or *dimension* is used in Plutarchus, *Moralia* (ed. G.N. Bernandakis, 7 vols., Leipzig 1888-1896); vol. 2, p. 601c; Plotinus, *Enneads*, I.5.7.; and Alexander of Aphrodisias in *Aristotelis Tropicorum libros octo commentaria*, 31.18. (ed. M. Wallies, *Commentaria in Aristotelis Graeca* iii, pars i. Berlin, 1891). As regards Christian writers, *ἀδιάστατος* meaning *without extension* or *without dimension* is found in Gregory's of Nyssa *adversus Eunomium*, 8 (PG 45.796), 9 (PG 45.813ff; 804).

For another, it is he himself who correlates them in order to express a substantial facet of his conception of time.

The term ἀδιάστατος was very favorite to Philo who uses this no less than forty-nine times in his existing corpus. He uses this explicitly in relation to the concept of 'dimension',<sup>176</sup> more usually in the sense of 'continuous' and 'stable',<sup>177</sup> and more specifically the continuous and stable condition 'near God',<sup>178</sup> or even of the constancy of things applying to God.<sup>179</sup> In a telling passage,<sup>180</sup> Philo directly associates the notion of ἀδιάστατος to its root-sense of 'that which has no dimension'. In this context, he distinguishes what is 'dimensionless nature' (ἀδιάστατος φύσις) from what is described and found only 'in terms of dimensions' (διαστηματική φύσις).

Time as dimension is then a point well worth-reflecting upon, in order to ponder on the inner import attributed to the notion as well as the effects flowing from it. Like the term διάστημα (extension), the term διάστασις (dimension) applied to time is not an invention of Origen's. While the former has a special position in the Stoic philosophy of time, the latter is used by Plotinus in his treatment of time. The term ἀδιάστατος can be found at a good many points of the *Enneads*, particularly in the section where the question of time and eternity is canvassed.<sup>181</sup> The word διάστασις (dimension) was used in the Neoplatonic treatment of time, too:<sup>182</sup> time is a 'dimension of life' (διάστασις ζωῆς),<sup>183</sup> whereas 'eternity' (αἰών) is 'dimensionless' (ἀδιάστατον) and 'non temporal' (οὐ χρονικόν).<sup>184</sup>

<sup>176</sup> *De Decalogo*, 26.

<sup>177</sup> *De officio mundi*, 153; *Legum allegoriarum libri i-iii*, 3, 92; *Quod deterius potiori insidiari soleat*, 118; *De posteritate Caini*, 12; *De plantatione*, 53; *De sobrietate*, 29; *De migratione Abrahami*, 33; *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit*, 16 and 200; *De congressu eruditionis gratia*, 134; *De mutatione nominum*, 86; *De Abrahamo*, 138 and 154; *De Josepho*, 147; *De vita Moysi (lib. i-ii)*, 1, 123; 2, 55; 2, 184; *De specialibus legibus (lib. i-iv)*, 1, 169; 1, 285; 1, 338; 2, 20; 2, 42; 2, 56; 2, 211; 2, 220; 4, 161; *De virtutibus*, 6 and 52; *De praeniis et poenis De execrationibus*, 72, 102 and 105; *De aeternitate mundi*, 62 and 75; *De providentia*, Fragment 2, 13; *Quaestiones in Genesim (fragmenta)*, 4, fragment 169.

<sup>178</sup> *De plantatione*, 53; *De migratione Abrahami*, 56.

<sup>179</sup> *De confusione linguarum*, 115; *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit*, 76; *De congressu eruditionis gratia*, 4; *De somniis (lib. i-ii)*, 1, 147.

<sup>180</sup> *De decalogo*, 24.

<sup>181</sup> In reference to time and eternity, the term ἀδιάστατος can be found at the following points of the *Enneads*: III, 7-13; III.7.3; III.7.6; III.7.11; III.7.13. Also, for ἀδιάστατος eternity in Plotinus, s. III.7.2 (31), III.7.3 (15&38), III.7.11 (54).

<sup>182</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.8.

<sup>183</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.11.

<sup>184</sup> *Enneads*, I.5.7.

On no account, however, does this suggest that Origen's views are in any way related to Neoplatonism. For one thing, he was twenty years older than Plotinus; he wrote his commentaries on the Proverbs (where the notion of dimension is found) probably around 238 A.D.<sup>185</sup> Taking into account that the *Enneads* were composed when Plotinus was rather aged, it follows that when Origen made these assertions the *Enneads* had not been written yet. Besides, according to Plotinus, time was not created as a being out of non-being, but it followed down a 'restlessly active nature' which was in 'that quiet life'<sup>186</sup> and so this 'nature' 'moved and time moved with it'.<sup>187</sup> Hence, time was existing 'before' time, as it were, and it 'was at rest with the eternity in real being'<sup>188</sup> and 'although it was not yet time', 'it kept quiet too'.<sup>189</sup> Time was made 'according to the pattern of eternity, and as its moving image'.<sup>190</sup>

Origen's view of time is in essence radically different from the Platonic one as regards this crucial point: to Plato, time is a moving image of eternity. The very term *image* connotes that time was established in the world by the Demiurge so that a certain *affinity* exists between this world and the world of Ideas. Time, as an image, is the element by means of which an affiliation and resemblance is established between Here and Beyond.

By contrast, Origen's view is sheerly contrary: it is exactly in terms of space and time that the radical schism between the transcendent God and the world is portrayed. Time *does not* establish any affinity between the divine life and the world. On the contrary, it is exactly *in terms of time* that the radical hiatus between God and the world is portrayed.

There is more: whereas to Plotinus time is *life* (of the Soul),<sup>191</sup> to Origen it is but a *natural element*, namely, an element in the make-up of the world. So, although Origen's life overlapped with that of Plotinus', he is far away from Neoplatonism on this point. At most

<sup>185</sup> Cf. Marguerite Harl, *Origène et la fonction révélatrice du Verbe Incarné*, Paris, 1958, p. 71.

<sup>186</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.10.

<sup>187</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.11.

<sup>188</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.11.

<sup>189</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.11.

<sup>190</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.13; also, III.7.11.

<sup>191</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.11.

it could be said that he found it convenient to make use of a term which was very dear to Philo.<sup>192</sup>

The Stoics did not regard time as a dimension of life. In conformity to their materialism, they by and large considered the natural character of the cosmic motion. Besides, they did not hold any eschatological ideas. To them time was not related to any transcendent reality whatsoever; what is more, it was not assigned any theological significance or purport.

Plotinus, on the other hand, treats the Stoic definition of time as 'extension' with contempt. He grounds his criticism on the lack of elaboration of the Stoic definition and on what he sees as absence of sound reason in their account. My view though is that the argumentative mood of Plotinus stems from a deeper motive: that is, his disdain for materialism and, even more so, the fact that the Stoics determine time only in relation to the *visible* material world. On the face of it, Plotinus seems to challenge the Stoic tenet about what is *real*. I think, however, that what he really challenges is the Stoic *materialism* and the lack of any notion of *transcendence*. In effect he attacks the absence of a theology acceptable to him; he also repudiates the Stoic insistence on essentially linking the notion of *real* with what is a *body*. The censure stems from a point of root incompatibility between Stoicism and Plotinus. To the former, it is only in the most attenuated sense that incorporeality is granted reality. To Plotinus, on the other hand, matter has so little hold on reality that material things do not deserve a distinct slot of their own in his scheme of being.

Origen is far from this kind of dispute: he held both a notion of *materiality* (of the entire world) and a notion of (the divine) *transcendence*. He is not dismissive or scornful of either corporeality or incorporeality, nor does he impeach the reality of either of them. They are both fully real, if pertaining to different ranks of being. Thus he can make use of the Stoic *διάστημα*, as well as of the Neoplatonic *διάστασις* and *ἀδιάστατος*, and yet attribute time an import befitting exclusively his own thought.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. *De aeternitate mundi*, 75. At that point Philo says that "according to the best professors of natural philosophy, fate has no beginning or end, being a chain connecting the causes of each event in unfailling continuity without a gap or break (*ἀδιάστατος*)".

The distinction between time and the 'construction of this world', or the 'structure of life', made in the *commEph*, Fr. IX and *exProv*, 10, implies the intellectual distinction between space and time. It is through the establishment of time as a part of the make-up of the world that 'change' and 'alteration' make sense. Thus a rational nature is 'changeable and convertible by the very condition of its being created—for what was not and began to be is by this very fact shown to be of a changeable nature'.<sup>193</sup> Also, 'rational nature is changeable and convertible',<sup>194</sup> and it was 'necessary for God to make a bodily nature, capable of changing at the Creator's will, by an alteration of qualities, into everything that circumstances might require'.<sup>195</sup> What is called 'structure' of the world provides the setting for the drama of the world (that is, the drama of God's relationship with rational creatures) to take place; the 'structure', therefore, provides the place. It is through *time* that action and movement (and thus, change and alteration) can make sense and be realized. Time then is a 'dimension of life' for creaturely freedom to make sense and to be realized. For it is obvious that hardly could creaturely freedom make sense in atemporality. Time, as a *διάστημα* (extension), is the *διάστασις* (dimension) alongside which world moves towards the end.

The concept of *ἀδιάστατος* (dimensionless)<sup>196</sup> applied to the divine life indicates this life to be totally beyond time, since God himself is beyond change or alteration; certainly it is not accidental that the term 'dimensionless' is associated with the term 'calm' in reference to the state of the divine reality.<sup>197</sup> Everything in the divine life is unchanged since it is perfect. This is why, at another point, the word *ἀδιάστατος* is used to indicate what is certain, positive and not subject to change.<sup>198</sup>

<sup>193</sup> *Princ*, IV.4.8.

<sup>194</sup> *Princ*, IV.4.8.

<sup>195</sup> *Princ*, IV.4.8.

<sup>196</sup> *exProv*, 2, PG 17.168.

<sup>197</sup> Gregory of Nyssa faithfully follows Origen in the distinction between spatio-temporal reality which is 'contained within dimensions' as opposed to the 'dimensionless' divine reality: τῆς σωματικῆς καὶ διαστηματικῆς φύσεως . . . as opposed to . . . ἡ νοερά τε καὶ ἀδιάστατος φύσις; *De anima et resurrectione*, PG 46.48; similarly in *De hominis opificio*, 23.3; PG 44.212. This Gregory's adherence to Origen's terminology is particularly striking in *Contra Eunomium*, 12; PG 45.933; *ibid.* 1064.

<sup>198</sup> *homLuc*, 1.



Origen considers time as a 'dimension' of the world and introduces the term 'stretched out alongside with' (συνπαρεκτεινόμενος) in order to portray the very relation of this dimension to what, by abstraction, he calls 'structure of this world' (alluding to space proper, as a constitutive element of the world). In doing so, he actually seems to have an inner grasp of what only in the twentieth century was conceived as space-time. I cannot know to what extent he was conscious and had a clear conception of this reality; still, even if he had such a conception, he would have never expounded that in a separate treatise. For he emphasizes that his purpose is to enunciate theological views, not assertions on questions concerning nature (φυσιολογεῖν).<sup>199</sup> Whether nevertheless, he had a clear conscious conception of the reality of space-time or not, I can say that he had an intuition of that.<sup>200</sup>

Beside this, nevertheless, he holds the psychological and phenomenological division of time in past, present and future: he refers to Ezek. 16, 30 ('and you have three times committed fornication') and comments as follows: "for the three times (οἱ τρεῖς χρόνοι) comprise the whole aeon",<sup>201</sup> while at another point he refers to "the former and the present and the future things".<sup>202</sup>

In *commJohn* (canvassing the significance of tenses) he refers to existence in relation to the parts of time, namely to past, present and future: the future refers to what 'will exist' (τὸ μέλλον ὑπάρξει).<sup>203</sup> It is also quite indicative of his conception of time<sup>204</sup> that he refers to the 'kingdom of God' as a 'contemplation' of the past aeons as 'aeons made' (γενομένων αἰώνων), while the future time is stated as 'aeons which will be made' (γενησομένων αἰώνων). The meaning of this 'contemplation' has a different character in relation either to the past or to the future: referring to the past (which is already 'made') this contemplation means 'memories' (μνήμας) of the past aeons.<sup>205</sup> In the case of future, this should be understood as a kind of foreknowledge or anticipation. Thus time is treated not only in terms

<sup>199</sup> *Cels*, IV, 60.

<sup>200</sup> Origen expressed this inner feeling of 'space-time' by the term 'aeon'. Cf. *selPs*, 5.

<sup>201</sup> *selEz*, 16, PG 13.813.

<sup>202</sup> *expProv*, 18.

<sup>203</sup> *frJohn*, I.

<sup>204</sup> *selPs*, 144; Cf. *selPs*, 9, 15, and 131; s. PG 12:1196, 1213, 1673.

<sup>205</sup> *selPs*, 76, PG 12.1540.

of an objective reality related to the world, but also is conceived psychologically.

In the light of this analysis, I can now come to a point which seems to have been puzzling so far. My point is that it can now be conclusively established that it was Origen who was actually the source of Augustine's theory of time.

J. Callahan wrote a work<sup>206</sup> arguing that it was Basil of Caesarea who is the source of Augustine's theory of time. Callahan's assertions are incorrect only to the extent that he takes Basil's statements about time to be original. These, however, are Origen's own expressions repeated verbatim. Perhaps things would have been clearer if the Cappadocians had explicated that their affirmations could not claim originality since they were mere repetitions of Origen's perceptions. John Callahan wrote his work in 1958. As late as 1983, R. Sorabji<sup>207</sup> refers to Callahan's views and (although he has some doubts referring to the alleged influence of Gregory of Nyssa upon Augustine) he cannot himself solve what he regards as a 'mystery'. He suggests Aristotelians as a possible source of influence upon Augustine,<sup>208</sup> but he states<sup>209</sup> that he is deterred from drawing conclusions because of Augustine's slowness in acquiring Greek, the language in which Basil and Gregory wrote.

Arguing that Basil is the source of Augustine's theory of time, Callahan also speaks of a 'puzzle',<sup>210</sup> since there is no evidence that Basil's refutation of Eunomius (the work in which Basil's views of time are found, and adduced by Callahan as evidence) was ever translated into Latin, in whole or in part. He also refers to the current opinions about Augustine's limited knowledge of Greek, especially at the relatively early age when he wrote the *Confessions*. According to these opinions, Augustine would not have been able to read Basil's Greek with the facility that the adaptation of Basil's ideas in this chapter of the *Confessions* would seem to require.<sup>211</sup> This raises insuperable difficulties to Callahan: he cannot explain how

<sup>206</sup> J. Callahan, "Basil of Caesarea: A new source of St. Augustine's theory of time", *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 63 (1958), pp. 437-54.

<sup>207</sup> R. Sorabji, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-95.

<sup>208</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 248.

<sup>209</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 290, n. 14.

<sup>210</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 438.

<sup>211</sup> For what he regards as a 'difficult question' he cites the work by H.J. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, Paris, 1949, pp. 27-46, 631-637.

Augustine could have ever come in contact with Basil's writings. He acknowledges that he cannot substantiate how Basil might have influenced Augustine. Finally, he says that he cannot attempt any solution to this question<sup>212</sup> and all he concludes at the end of his work is that Basil influenced Augustine 'through some contact that cannot at present be determined'.<sup>213</sup>

I think I can now offer a definitive and substantiated answer to what has for a long time been regarded as a 'difficult question' (Marrou, 1949), 'puzzle' (Callahan, 1958) and 'mystery' (Sorabji, 1983). This answer can be provided out of the discussion thus far. There is no need to search for some 'contact that cannot at present be determined' between Basil and Augustine. For it was Origen who directly influenced the latter. How Augustine came in contact with Origen's writings is no mystery. At his time, Origen's works had been translated into Latin: during Augustine's lifetime (354–430) Jerome translated a large part of Origen's *Homilies on the Song of Songs* (c. 380) eight homilies on Isaiah, fourteen homilies on Jeremiah, thirty nine homilies on Luke, and Rufinus translated the *Commentary on the Song of Songs* (c. 400), the *De Principiis*, homilies on *Psalms*, *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Joshua*, *Judges*, and, above all, the *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* and other works of Origen. It is also plausible that views of the Alexandrian might have been retailed to Augustine, since the former was highly reputed. In any event, Augustine seems to be aware of Origen's views, since, in relation to other matters, he refers to him by name.<sup>214</sup>

The passage of Basil which Callahan purports to have influenced Augustine is from *adversus Eunomium*, I, 21. In that section, Basil states that time is not the movement itself of heavenly bodies (as Eunomius alleged) but it is "the extension which is stretched out alongside with the constitution of the world" (χρόνος δὲ ἐστὶ τὸ συμπαρεκτεινόμενον τῇ συστάσει τοῦ κόσμου διάστημα).<sup>215</sup>

<sup>212</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 440.

<sup>213</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 450.

<sup>214</sup> *De haeresibus*, XLIII. The points made in this section, which show the extent to which Augustine was indebted to Origen eluded B. Altaner in "Augustinus und Origenes", *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 1950, pp. 15–41.

<sup>215</sup> *adversus Eunomium*, I, 21. χρόνος δὲ ἐστὶ τὸ συμπαρεκτεινόμενον τῇ συστάσει τοῦ κόσμου διάστημα, ᾧ πᾶσα παραμετρεῖται κίνησις, εἴτε ἀστέρων εἴτε ζώων εἴτε οὐτινοσούντων κινουμένων, καθότι λέγομεν ταχύτερον ἢ βραδύτερον ἕτερον ἑτέρου· ταχύτερον μὲν τὸ ἐν ἐλλείποντι χρόνῳ πλείον διάστημα μεταβαίνειν· βραδύτερον δὲ

There is no term or expression in this definition of Basil's which had not already been enunciated by Origen. He repeats this definition not only in spirit, but also in letter. As a matter of fact, he utilizes Origen's expressions themselves.<sup>216</sup> That Basil did not explicate the fact that his statements are but mere repetitions of views and expressions of his master is a historic and serious omission.

At the same point of this work, Basil argues that the movement of stars does not indicate 'what' time is but 'how much' time is.<sup>217</sup> In a column beside this section of *adversus Eunomium*, Callahan quotes a passage from Augustine's *Confessions* (X,23ff). When he comes to compare the two passages he asserts that thanks to the definition of time as extension 'stretched out alongside with' (συμπαρεκτεινόμενον διάστημα) Augustine was able to aver that time is a *distentio*, as well as that time is something distinct from the movement of heavenly bodies.<sup>218</sup> It is true that the very term *συμπαρεκτείνων* suggests the notion of 'dimension', both essentially and etymologically. In addition, nevertheless, Origen used the term *διάστασις*, as already shown. Hence Augustine did not have to think much on this, or to make any inferences or discoveries. Origen had already portrayed the fundamental perceptions clearly and had introduced the appropriate terminology.

I endorse Callahan's position that, when Augustine introduces the term *distentio* speaking of time, what he has in mind is the expression *συμπαρεκτεινόμενον τῇ συστάσει τοῦ κόσμου*.<sup>219</sup> As a matter of fact, an oblique reference to time as dimension is inherent in the expression *συμπαρεκτεινόμενον διάστημα* itself. This is part of the reason why this crucial term should be assigned the importance that it really deserves.

However, I do not endorse Callahan's assumption that this particular point, too, constitutes an influence of Basil upon Augustine.

ἐν πλείονι χρόνῳ κινούμενον, ὃ δὲ ἐπειδὴ ἐν χρόνῳ οἱ ἀστέρες κινεῖνται, χρόνου αὐτοῦ εἶναι δημιουργοὺς ἀποφαίνεται.

<sup>216</sup> For the term *διάστημα*, s. Origen's *Fragmenta in Matthaeum*, 487 (twice); *Commentary on Matthew*, 15, 34; 15, 28; *De Oratione*, XXVII, 13; Time as 'stretched out alongside the constitution of the world' is stated in the *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, Fr. IX.

<sup>217</sup> οὐ γὰρ ποιάν, ἀλλ' εἴπερ ἄρα, ποσὴν μᾶλλον ἢ εἰπεῖν οἰκειότερον. ἀλλὰ τίς οὕτω παῖς παντελῶς τὴν διάνοιαν ὥστε ἀγνοεῖν ὅτι ἡμέραι μὲν καὶ ὥραι καὶ μῆνες καὶ ενιαυτοὶ μέτρα τοῦ χρόνου εἰσὶν, οὐχὶ μέρη; *ibid.*

<sup>218</sup> J. Callahan, *op. cit.*, p. 444.

<sup>219</sup> J. Callahan, *op. cit.*, pp. 447, 450.

For this is a notion of Origen's found (both in letter and in spirit alike) in the *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Fr. IX), as well as in the *Exposita in Proverbia*, 10. This is what eluded Callahan and all the other scholars, who spoke about 'puzzle' and 'mystery' in reference to the influence upon Augustine's theory of time.

There is a line of usage of the crucial terms, which comes down from Origen to John of Damascus. The technical vocabulary on time which Origen introduced is easily traced in an continuous line of theologians, from Origen himself down to John of Damascus. In this chain, Augustine's expression *spatium temporis* is in fact a translation of Origen's expression *χρονικόν διάστημα*, used, for instance (indeed twice), in the Fragment 487 of the *Commentary on Matthew*.

There is a point though which Callahan could not suspect. It is true that Origen's (according to Callahan: Basil's) perception of time enabled Augustine to relate time to *any* motion. But is it coincidental that such a perception of time leads to this radical result? The answer is no. For when Origen initiated his own view of time, he held a concept of the world consisted of ranks of life. Time, as well as *motion*, was perceived as existing in *all* of them. Thus he devised a conception of time which can be related not just to the movement of the heavenly bodies of the visible firmament, or even only to movement of whatever is visible. Time is related even to motion of worlds which are 'not seen' (that is, spaces other than this three-dimensional visible one) still they are 'material'. This is why this time is related to *any motion*, not just to the movement of the visible heavenly bodies or of that of anything visible. For all the particular worlds which comprise the entire (one and single) world are temporal, they are moving and they are 'material', if made of a matter 'not seen'.<sup>220</sup> This is why time has to be related to *any* motion. This is a notion closely related to the special purport that 'world' has.

Although Origen offered inspired statements about time as a dimension, he never composed an *ad hoc* treatise on the subject. The reason is that works of this kind were always outside of his interest.

<sup>220</sup> Modern science now takes for granted that the visible universe is made of only 5% of the matter comprising the entire universe. The other 95% is 'dark matter' and 'dark energy', undetectable for the time being; we do however detect the natural results of their presence all over the universe. It seems after all that humans and the visible firmament are made of a matter 'alien' to this universe.



With regard to the very word *διάστασις* (dimension), he speaks rather by contrast, namely of timelessness as 'dimensionless'. Still the introduction of the term *συμπαρεκτείνων* was sufficient to indicate time as a dimension. The point is though that one should study the whole of Origen's works in order to draw his crystal clear conception of time. For if there are subtle changes found at one point, the reason for them to be made can be found in other passages. This is what Augustine seems not to have been able to do, probably because he did not manage to have all the Greek texts of Origen in Latin translations available to him. Having obviously not comprehended Origen's conception entirely he arrives at this conclusion:

Thus it seems to me that time is nothing other than an extension (*distentio*), but what it is an extension of, I do not know. It would be surprising if it were not an extension of the soul (*animus*) itself.<sup>221</sup>

Had Origen afforded an explicit account of his view of time as dimension,<sup>222</sup> Augustine would know what kind of dimension time is. The fact is, however, that he was unable to comprehend and follow Origen all the way. Hence he seems to seek refuge to Plotinus' conception of the nature of time as 'dimension'. It has been subsequently argued that his conception of time was influenced by that of Plotinus.<sup>223</sup> My view is that such a claim is not unjustified to a certain extent.

This is a tragic irony. For although it was Origen who made the radical transformations and it was he who decidedly established a view of time entirely different from any Platonic or Neoplatonic one—he is now placed outside orthodoxy accused of Platonism and Neoplatonism.

On the other hand, Augustine succumbed to certain perceptions of Plotinus. He certainly had an inaccurate knowledge of crucial facets of Origen's thought, as his attack against him by name shows.<sup>224</sup> Thus, for one reason or another, he did not comprehend Origen's notion that time is *one* and it is an extension of the *entire* world,

<sup>221</sup> *Confessions*, XI.26.

<sup>222</sup> Origen's references are not inadequate—but Augustine depended only on those Latin versions available to him. It is then highly unlikely that Augustine ever acquired a full account of Origen's tenets, which are spread throughout his writings.

<sup>223</sup> Cf. R. Sorabji, *Time, Creation and the Continuum*, pp. 165ff.

<sup>224</sup> Augustine, *De Haeresibus*, XLIII (Migne, PL, XLII).

namely that all rational creatures live in *this* and *one* time. Hence, he introduced a notion of an 'angelic time'<sup>225</sup> which he posited dependent on the mental movements of the angels.<sup>226</sup> Thus the angels are viewed as poised between time and eternity, the latter meaning timelessness. This idea of Augustine's is vague, as he can say neither that these movements are time nor that they are not. Finally he seems to settle for the view that they are *time*, yet of a kind of its own: it is a sort of quasi-time, a notion employed in order to put the angels between time and the divine reality. In any case, one can hardly help thinking that the relation of this 'time' to movements of the souls of the angels is, in essence, quite reminiscent of Plotinus' views of the question.

None of these obscurities appear in Origen. For to him there are only two states with respect to time: *Temporality*, which is the state of the entire world (in all the ranks of life which comprise it); and *Timelessness*, applied to the divine Beyond. There is no mixing or confusion or intermediary state between those two realities. With respect to this, and with no substantial basis, P. Plass makes the erroneous statement that, in Origen, time is 'the unsure, fragile motion of minds'.<sup>227</sup> This particular assertion is ironic; for the conception of time in Origen is *exactly the opposite* to what Plass alleges. In fact, Basil used Origen's conception (as well as his terminology) in order to polemicize against Eunomius, who maintained that 'time' is in itself 'motion'. What Plass does here is to ascribe to Origen a conception which is diametrically opposite to the one he really held.

I think that Augustine's falling into employing Neoplatonic perceptions is due to the fact that he was profoundly influenced by Origen, but he was actually unable to appreciate how deeply and essentially the Neoplatonic view of time as *dimension* (together with the Stoic ontological definition of time as *extension*) was transformed by the Alexandrian. I assume that this is a reason why (in contrast to what happens in Origen) the psychological aspect of time prevails

<sup>225</sup> *De Civitate Dei*, XII.16.

<sup>226</sup> This theory had already been offered in two works straddling the *Confessions*: *De Genesi ad litteram liber imperfectus* III.7-8 and *de Genesi ad litteram*, V.5.12; the mental movements of the angels are described in *de Genesi ad Litteram*, IV.22.39 and *De Civitate Dei*, XI.7.

<sup>227</sup> P. Plass, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

over the objectivist one in Augustine's thought. Plotinus' general idea was that time is somehow dependent on changes in the soul. Augustine was never able to overcome radically the Neoplatonic principle of close connection of the *essence* of time to soul—even though he regards the notion of 'soul' in an apparently different context.

It is rather in vain that Callahan attempts to relate the term 'day' (as found in both Basil's and Augustine's compared passages) claiming that the latter refers to 'day' because the former does so.<sup>228</sup> The connection of 'day' to the definition of time as 'extension' (διάστημα) and 'extended alongside with' (συμπαρεκτείνων) was made by Origen.<sup>229</sup> It was also he who had stated that the term 'day' does not mean 'the course of the sun' (τὸν δρόμον τὸν ἡλιακόν).<sup>230</sup>

Due to Origen's definitions, Augustine did not stick to an entirely psychological conception, but expounded his theory in a manner in which the psychological aspect of time increasingly fades giving room to a more objective definition of it. This is why Augustine's view of time is less psychological at the end of his reflection about it in the *Confessions* than in the beginning of this work. So when Augustine comes to regard the three functions of the mind,<sup>231</sup> no longer regarded as distinguished activities, but rather as three aspects of a single *distentio*, he just comes in line with Origen's view of time.

Origen also held a psychological perception of time, namely time felt to comprise past, present and future, as we have seen.<sup>232</sup> It was this aspect that influenced Gregory of Nyssa more.<sup>233</sup> In Origen though this is not a prevailing facet. He certainly speaks of 'memory' (μνήμην) of past time<sup>234</sup> and of 'contemplation' (θεωρία) of future or past time,<sup>235</sup> as well as of 'knowledge' (γνώσιν) of things

<sup>228</sup> J. Callahan, *op. cit.*, p. 447.

<sup>229</sup> *commJohn*, 1, XXIX.

<sup>230</sup> *selPs*, 117.

<sup>231</sup> Augustine held that time, as a *distentio animi*, has three aspects: memory, attention and anticipation. Without them past, present and future can have no meaning. s. Chs. 14–28 of the *Confessions*, XI.

<sup>232</sup> *selEz*, 16; *expProv*, 18; *expProv*, 28.

<sup>233</sup> This point also provides an answer to what Callahan regards as a 'serious historical problem in relating Augustine to Gregory'; a problem to which R. Sorabji's hesitant suggestion (s. *supra*) does not solve, as he himself concedes. There was no immediate relation of Gregory with Augustine: it was Origen's thought that exerted its influence upon both Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine.

<sup>234</sup> *selPs*, 76.

<sup>235</sup> *selPs*, 9; *selPs*, 15; *selPs*, 144.

'past, present and future'.<sup>236</sup> Still these are always references to psychological states *reflecting* motion *in* time rather than defining and indicating time proper.

This is what constitutes a fundamental difference between Origen and Plotinus. To the latter, time is *in* the soul; but he thinks of a 'soul' which is a universal principle that creates the world and everything in it. In such a view, time is simply the productive *life* of this soul, in which the universe and its motion have their existence. Time is regarded as the power which produces motion (and does not measure it), everything is said to be *in* time. Thus time is stated as a *διάστασις ζωῆς* (dimension of life) only in so far as it produces motion.

To Origen, on the other hand, the distinction of time itself from space, established by the term *συμπαρεκτείνων* (stretched out alongside with), renders time a *dimension* existing in itself beside space. Therefore, the term *διάστασις* has a meaning radically different from that in Plotinus. It is because Origen had considered time as something different from Plotinus' *διάστασις ζωῆς* (dimension of life), that Augustine's *distentio* is rightly regarded as something different from the Plotinian perception of time. Quite correctly, I think, Callahan regards this view of time as a 'radical transformation'.<sup>237</sup> For, indeed, by introducing the term *συμπαρεκτείνων*, Origen made clear that this *διάστασις* (dimension) has nothing to do with the mental phenomena of memory, attention and anticipation.<sup>238</sup> Time in itself is a natural (that is, objective) element in the make-up of the world. Therefore, presentness, pastness or futurity are more than subjective experiences or mere psychological impressions.

I also endorse J. Callahan's assertion that without the definition of time as *extension* 'stretched out alongside with the constitution of the world', Augustine's affirmation of time as the *distentio animi* could be regarded as simply a transformation of Plotinus' *διάστασις ζωῆς*. But the 'radical transformation' of the Neoplatonic conception of *διάστασις* into a radically different notion is undoubtedly an accomplishment of Origen.

<sup>236</sup> *expProv.*, 18; *expProv.*, 28; *Princ.*, III.1.13. At that point Origen states that it is only God who has such a knowledge, alluding to his conception of God as omniscient.

<sup>237</sup> Callahan, *op. cit.*, 450.

<sup>238</sup> *s. supra.*

*Time is a creature*

He then forms his own view according to his fundamental Christian convictions. He has no hesitation in utilizing the wording of pagan philosophical schools, being selective to the extent that his own exposition is served. He took up the fundamental Stoic perception of time as extension, yet he treated it in a way appropriate to his own thought. In fact he accommodated the essential Stoic concept to his own objectives: on the one hand, he put pagan terms into new use, on the other, he initiated a terminology of his own; a meticulous nomenclature expressing very subtle aspects of his own view of time. Although pagan philosophical terms are literally found in Origen, they serve in couching his own view of time. Moreover, their actual purport is different. In reference to this, there are certain things which should be pointed out.

The Stoics considered time as an element of this world. This consideration sprung from both their lack of any notion of transcendence and their virtual ban on incorporeality. Paradoxically though, the full *reality* of time (although an element of the world) is rather impugned, on account of the premises of the Stoic philosophy as a whole.

Origen, on the other hand, had no reason to wonder whether time itself is real. He explicitly affirms the full reality of it. Time is a being made by God out of non-being. In fact there is visualization of a state in which there is no time at all: "for time cannot be found when the third and the fourth conceptions of the Logos did not exist at all;"<sup>239</sup> and "before any existence of time and aeon 'in the beginning was the Logos' and 'the Logos was with God'."<sup>240</sup> Time itself is something 'outside' the Trinity.<sup>241</sup>

Therefore, there was a state in which time did not exist at all. Since time does exist now, it would be plausible to infer that it came into being out of non-being. But there is no need to *infer* this dialectically, since Origen himself enunciates this opinion: with reference to Ps. 54, 20 'God shall hear and will humiliate them, he who is before the aeons; for they have no changes, as they fear not God' he comments thus:

<sup>239</sup> *commJohn*, 2, XIX.

<sup>240</sup> *commJohn*, 2, I.

<sup>241</sup> *Princ*, IV.A.2.



Since everything has been made through him, it is well said that he exists before the aeons. And this is whence we learn that aeons have come to being out of non-being.<sup>243</sup>

In *commJohn* it is pointed out that the expression 'through whom' of John 1, 3 "is never stated in the first place, but is always employed in the second place".<sup>243</sup> This assertion is buttressed up by appealing to various scriptural passages. One of these is Heb. 1, 1-2, according to which God 'has in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the aeons (τοὺς αἰώνας)'. Thus the scriptural authority is afforded by Paul who "teaches us that God made the aeons through the Son; so, on account of having made the aeons, it is the only-begotten whom the 'through whom' is pointing to."<sup>244</sup> This is the context in which Origen attacks Heracleon for holding that "neither the aeon nor what is in the aeon was made through the Logos, claiming that they were made before the Logos".<sup>245</sup> There should be no doubt that it is time itself which is meant by the term 'aeon' in these portions. For the 'aeons' are explicitly stated as consisting of 'years' and 'days':

He who has learned the ineffable and secret things of God has also memories of the past aeons, and of the years in them and of the old days which comprise them.<sup>246</sup>

At another point there is similar reference to 'days of the aeon',<sup>247</sup> and elsewhere it is stated: "It is good to say that one should pray to God day after day, and to sing praising the name of God in the aeon of the aeon". In point of this Psalm of David (namely, Ps. 61, 9) [the expression] 'to sing praising the name of God' is understood to be extended (παρεκτείνειν) until the next aeon whereas the expression 'to pray to him' refers to the time, which comprises days, namely the time which is counted alongside (παράμετρούμενος) everybody's lifetime. "Therefore, as long as we are in life let us pray, so that we become able to sing praising the name of God in the aeon of aeon."<sup>248</sup>

<sup>243</sup> *selPs*, 54, PG 12.1469.

<sup>244</sup> *commJohn*, 2, X.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>246</sup> *commJohn*, 2, XIV.

<sup>247</sup> *selPs*, 76.

<sup>248</sup> *commMatt*, 15, 31.

<sup>249</sup> *selPs*, 60.

So the term *αἰών* is employed in order to indicate time itself. In the light of this, it is plain that in a reference in *deOr* about the 'day of so great an aeon' (τῆς τοῦ τηλικούτου αἰῶνος ἡμέρας)<sup>249</sup> the term *αἰών* suggests a temporal duration. In *commEph* it is conformably affirmed that the term 'aeon of this world' indicates "the time which is stretched out alongside with the structure of this world from the beginning to the end". At the same point there is appeal to the same scriptural passage (namely, Heb. 1, 3) in order to point out that the expression 'through whom he has made the aeons' may well indicate that the aeons 'is a creature' (δόξει κτίσμα λέγειν τοὺς αἰῶνας).

In respect of this, he observes that the expression of Paul in Gal. 1, 4, ('that he might deliver us from this present evil aeon') might be taken as suggesting that time itself (that is, the 'evil aeon') is a living creature. However, he makes the case clear adding promptly that it is again Paul who teaches that this 'creature' is not a living one: in his Epistle to the Galatians it is explicitly stated that the days are not animate beings.<sup>250</sup>

In contrast to Marcus Aurelius, Origen does not personify time. Such a view stems from his overall conception of it, as well as from the purposes of his thought. In one case where he seems to personify time, it is obvious that he just uses an analogy. Thus in *selJob* the passage Job, 32, 9 'It is not those who have lived long that are wise' is commented upon as follows:

He says that it is not necessary that only old men are wise; but it is possible to listen to something important while still in youth. For if time makes people wise, God does this all the more so.<sup>251</sup>

Even in that case, however, Origen's attitude towards time is totally different from that of Marcus Aurelius'. Marcus personifies time in order to prove that it is a 'destroyer'. He stands before the reality with a feeling of melancholy and frustration. He believed in

<sup>249</sup> *deOr*, XXVII, 16.

<sup>250</sup> *commEph*, p. 403, 170-184: πλὴν ἔχει τὴν ἀντεπείχεσθαι τὸ ἐκ τῆς πρὸς Γαλάτας ἐπιστολῆς ῥητόν, ἐπεὶ καὶ περὶ ἡμερῶν λέγεται, τῶν ὁμολογουμένων ὡς οὐκ οὐσῶν ἐμψύχων. s. also, *selPs*, 117. It is important that Origen uses the term 'aeons' (τοὺς αἰῶνας) in the plural, whereas the predicate applied to that term is in the singular, namely, 'creature' (κτίσμα); it is again obvious that the term 'aeons' is used instead of 'time'; this is why the predicate is in the singular.

<sup>251</sup> *enarJob*, 32.

recurrence of identical worlds,<sup>252</sup> so he held that nothing is created and nothing is lost.<sup>253</sup> His beliefs are often combined with an acute sense of the transience of things and events, subjected by fatal vicissitudes to perpetual change;<sup>254</sup> he endeavours to 'love' this poor and heavy destiny,<sup>255</sup> but in fact he is deeply depressed by what he sees as vanity and nullity of man's state on this 'clod of earth', namely the world.<sup>256</sup>

By contrast, in the foregoing passage Origen personifies time in order to imply a benevolent influence of it upon men. Besides, he explicitly rejects what he calls 'the mythology about aeons' (τὴν περὶ τῶν αἰώνων μυθοποιίαν)<sup>257</sup> obviously alluding to the tales of the Gnostics.<sup>258</sup> Thus Origen enunciates that time itself is a creature. As God 'made aeons through the Son'<sup>259</sup> time is a creature which 'came into being out of non-being',<sup>260</sup> when 'God made beings out of non-beings',<sup>261</sup> since 'the holy Trinity brought . . . everything . . . into being out of non-being'.<sup>262</sup>

On this point O. Cullmann asserts that 'aeon' (in Heb. 1, 2) means only 'worlds'; also, that 'aeon' has only an 'extensional' meaning, and all God did was to *arrange* time in an order of consecutive 'aeons' (the number of which, according to Cullmann, is three). His view is that time 'was not created'.<sup>263</sup>

This is in fact a purely Platonic and Neoplatonic frame of thought, which is ironic, since this is precisely what Cullmann is committed to fighting against. For one thing, it was Plotinus who really regarded time as pre-existing 'at rest', as we have seen. For another, there are certain comments to be made with respect to Plato, which Cullmann seems to have never been suspicious of. It makes little difference that Cullmann holds *time* as non-created whereas Plato

<sup>252</sup> *Meditations*, VI, 37; VII, 1; VIII, 1; IX, 35 and 37; X, 27; XI, 1; XII, 26.

<sup>253</sup> *Meditations*, II, 14; VII, 19; IX, 28.

<sup>254</sup> *Meditations*, V, 13; VI, 15; VII, 25; IX, 19; X, 7.

<sup>255</sup> *Meditations*, VII, 67, and Cf. X, 21.

<sup>256</sup> *Meditations*, V, 33; X, 17 and 34; XII, 7 and 32.

<sup>257</sup> *commMatt*, 17, 33.

<sup>258</sup> s. also *Cels*, V, 60; *commJohn*, 2, XXIV.

<sup>259</sup> *commJohn*, 2, X.

<sup>260</sup> *selPs*, 54.

<sup>261</sup> *commJohn*, 1, XVII.

<sup>262</sup> *expProv*, 16.

<sup>263</sup> O. Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, p. 73.

held *matter* (and virtually space proper) to be uncreated. In either case there is *something* which is posited as a 'compulsory' eternal companion of God, namely, existing from everlasting. Cullmann was obsessed with his preoccupation to avoid any spatial reference which would be regarded as a Greek 'contamination'<sup>264</sup> of Christianity. Quite ironically though, in his effort he virtually followed Plato's way of thinking. That in Plato there is a certain notion of everlastingness of space whereas Cullmann spoke of everlastingness of time, does not really constitute a substantial difference. In either case, the essence of thinking is virtually the same: Plato held that the world is uncreated and the Demiurge simply put an original matter in order. Cullmann takes it that all God did was to put a pre-existing time in order, namely to arrange it into 'aeons'. Plato held that matter always existed and the Demiurge established 'order' and 'time' in it. Cullmann claims that time always existed and God established 'order' (namely, 'aeons') and a 'world' in it. Thus all Cullmann does is to furnish a reversed version of a fundamentally Platonic conception, according to a Platonic way of thinking. A version which, it has to be said, falls short of originality and perceptiveness.

Certainly this is not the sole point where the Platonic frame of thought prevails in a work purporting to contrast itself from what is thought to be Greek. For it is Cullmann who speaks of the 'flesh' as the 'great opponent of the spirit'<sup>265</sup> and affirms that the 'communion with Christ' becomes more essentially active 'if we get rid of this natural body as soon as possible'.<sup>266</sup> I do not criticize the actual content of statements such as these. I only note that they are averments running in a Platonic vein, within a work in which Greek thought, especially Platonism, are regarded as a kind of dangerous 'contamination' of the Christian way of thinking.

When Origen affirms that time itself is a creature, he actually goes far beyond this Platonic way of thinking. He was able to do so because he regarded the Greek schools of thought as merely 'outside' the Christian way of thinking, but he was not haunted by the Greek thought, neither did he regard this as a 'danger' or something

<sup>264</sup> The expression 'contamination' appears as a favourite one to H. Puech. Cf. 'Gnosis and Time', p. 52.

<sup>265</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 154.

<sup>266</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 231.

'contaminating'. He was able to employ this stance for the simple reason that (in contrast to many modern scholars) he actually *knew* in depth the Greek attitudes. This calm and clear-sighted familiarity with this thought allowed him to challenge Celsus—and yet, in the same work, to point out this:

We have employed the stance not to despise good teachings, even if their authors are outside the faith yet teaching well, nor to raise objections against them, nor to seek to overthrow statements which are sound.<sup>267</sup>

This is only a small token of Origen's iron will coexisting with peaceful and conciliatory spirit. He had the *feeling* (if not the clear conception) of the reality of space-time. He did not refute such a perception (a commonplace in modern science) because of the presence of the notion of space in it. To him, this notion was neither 'contamination' nor a 'danger'. He was not obsessed with trying to avoid any spatial category and deal only with temporal ones,<sup>268</sup> as scholars such as Cullmann did. He holds that 'aeon' may mean either time or space—but, strictly speaking, this suggests *both* time and space, namely, the reality of space-time.

At all events in Origen there is more than the conception of time as a creature. Time is a 'being' which was made out of 'non-being';<sup>269</sup> which leads to the conclusion that time is *real*. He uses the Present Perfect participle *γεγόνασιν*,<sup>270</sup> meaning that which has been 'made'. Taking into account his vocabulary throughout his Greek writings, one can see that this is the term used to enunciate the reality of the existence of creation. It is stated, for example, that God "is creator because of the beings (*γεγονότα*) brought into being out of non-being";<sup>271</sup> or, "God as creator is in all beings (*γεγονόσιν*)".<sup>272</sup>

Thus time is itself a *being*. There is nothing of the Stoic doubts and embarrassment on the subject. Time is a being of *full reality*, a *creature* made by God together with all creation and it is part of the whole world, that is, part in the make-up of the natural reality.

<sup>267</sup> *Cels*, VII, 46.

<sup>268</sup> Probably this is a point which has never been forgiven by those who regarded themselves as authoritative exponents of Christian faith.

<sup>269</sup> *selPs*, 54, 21, PG 12.1469.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>271</sup> *selPs*, 138, 14–16, PG 12.1661.

<sup>272</sup> *selPs*, 41, PG 12.1416.



In the light of this, G. Florovski is wrong in claiming that it was Augustine who 'discovered' that 'time should be regarded as a creature'.<sup>273</sup> It was Origen who established the view that time itself is a creature. Also, R. Sorabji incorrectly ascribes the idea that 'there was no time before the creation' to Augustine.<sup>274</sup> He takes it that this is 'the best of solutions offered by Jews and Christians'<sup>275</sup> to the so-called 'why not sooner?' argument about creation. It certainly was a brilliant notion, yet it was Origen, not Augustine, who enunciated this idea. On this point Augustine was but a follower of Origen.<sup>276</sup>

Since I have argued for a certain, if limited, propinquity between Origen and the Stoics on the ontological conception of time, I should make the limits of this proximity clearer. I shall then make some further remarks, which will demonstrate Origen's decisive breakthrough towards a radically new view of time.

Following my references to the creaturliness and reality of time, it should be pointed out that the notions of *body* and *incorporeal* have a different import in Origen. To the Stoics incorporeal is a 'something' between being and non-being. They resorted to the four incorporeals<sup>277</sup> out of necessity: neither can they concede them to be bodies, nor can they deny that they exist; the incorporeals are assigned an intermediate tier of reality.

Origen's view on this issue stands in stark contrast. For one thing, incorporeal nature pertains to fully real existence. *Incorporeality* and *reality* are not incompatible ontological qualities, as they nearly are to the Stoics. On the contrary, they are compatible: it is the incorporeal God who pre-eminently *is* being. For another, corporeality pertains to the *fallen* rational creatures, which were created at the Fall. Corporeal nature is originated in moral causes, it has a moral goal, and it will be terminated after proper free moral action. In addition, corporeality is applied not only to the visible world, but also to what is 'not seen' and yet material.

On this account, there are two main differences between Origen and the Stoics:

<sup>273</sup> G. Florovski, *Aspects of Church History*, (Gr. tr., Thessaloniki, 1979), p. 84.

<sup>274</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 234.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>276</sup> This is not the only point on which Augustine follows Origen. *s. infra*.

<sup>277</sup> Space (ὁ χώρος), time (ὁ χρόνος), the void (τὸ κενόν) an expression (τὸ λεκτόν), *SVF*, II, 117, 18–23.

First, he holds that the entire world is material; but he does not argue that only what is a body is a 'being' (ὄν), as the Stoics did.<sup>278</sup> Time is not a body and yet this is explicitly stated as a *being*. He does not wonder as to whether time is real: he unequivocally finds it all too real. He also maintains a notion of *transcendence* with respect to the world and does affirm that what is incorporeal is real. What is more, incorporeal nature is superior, since this is an essentially divine property. Origen was perfectly well aware of the Stoic bewilderment on the question of the existence of what is onvisible and incorporeal. A portion extant in Latin translation is worth quoting:

Moreover there are others who would claim that nothing invisible and incorporeal exists, but they assign everything which exists to bodies. On this basis they claim that God, the Father of all things, is a body. Yet the consequence of their own logic, where it is agreed that every body is corruptible, has undoubtedly forced them, although maintaining that God is a body, to allow that he is corruptible. Because of this logical difficulty they have turned to a verbal expedient and have said that he is indeed of a corruptible nature, but he has not been corrupted because there is nothing superior to him by which he could be corrupted or destroyed. There are innumerable other fictitious devices of men composed with dialectical reasoning and with tricky sophisms.<sup>279</sup>

Secondly, the distinction between corporeality and incorporeality concerns Origen for reasons purely theological, not natural. The bodies of interest to him are those which have a theological significance: such are the bodies of rational creatures only, since their attributes in each case are a demonstration of a certain moral quality. In the final analysis, corporeality is an property of the world as a 'down-fall' (καταβολή); it underlines the radical transcendence and superiority of the incorporeal divine life over the entire world, which is corporeal.

<sup>278</sup> SVF, II, 117, 5-6.

<sup>279</sup> *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 3.2.16. The same argument, on the same subject, extant in Greek, in *Cels*, VI, 71; on a fact of it, *Cels*, VIII, 72. Rebutting the Stoic tenet of a corporeal God, without explicit reference to the Stoics, in *comm. John*, 13, XXI. For their logical predicament on this and other issues, s. *Cels*, IV, 48; VI, 68; V, 20; V, 23; VII, 15. Although sarcastic at this point, Origen had some respect for other aspects of old Stoicism; Cf. *Cels*, I, 24; *Cels*, IV, 56; *Cels*, IV, 74; *Cels*, V, 47.

Origen, as well as the Stoics, knew the simple and plain phenomenological datum that time is not a body. This datum was a source of embarrassment to the Stoics, but certainly not to Origen. The reason lies 1) in their different conceptions of the world itself; 2) their different views of the significance of corporeality and incorporeality; 3) the notion of *transcendence* (which the Stoics did not hold at all); and 4) the different conception of what is *real*.

The fact that time is not a body raises no problem at all to Origen. Time is not a body in the same sense that space proper is not a body, expressions, phrases, affirmations are not bodies, 'void' is not a body,<sup>200</sup> in like manner that a 'predicate', or an 'axiom', or the abstract notion of 'to be attached', or 'to be interwoven with', are not bodies. He was far from the Stoic doctrine that only what is a body is real. In his view it would be 'absurd'<sup>201</sup> to wonder as to whether time is a body or not, in the same sense that he would find it absurd to wonder whether or not length, or height, or breadth, are themselves bodies. His fundamental doctrines prevent him from such 'absurd' questions. In fact these doctrines enable him to affirm explicitly that time is a creature of full reality and to keep away from the disconcertment that this issue caused to Stoic thought. His language is at points incisive and meticulously contrasts Christian theology with the scope and understanding of pagan thought. For his reasoning springs from entirely different premises.

As a result, he never found himself in the predicament of the Stoics, who were ensnared in perplexities created by themselves. He was exempt from this complexity. For the unsurmountable difficulties facing the Stoics stemmed only from their fundamental tenets. It was then inevitable for them to face the subsequent quandary, from which they were never really disentangled. Still, they preferred to remain in the visible material world maintaining their cardinal premises (materialism, no notion of transcendence). This is what Origen calls 'the absurdities of the followers of Zeno and Chrysippus', declaring that he does not sustain views which would lead him to 'fall into these absurdities.'<sup>202</sup>

<sup>200</sup> Cf. *SVF*, II, 117, 20-22.

<sup>201</sup> *SVF*, II, 117, 40-43.

<sup>202</sup> *Cels.*, VIII, 49.

The sameness of the term *διάστημα* aside, Origen had parted way with the Stoics almost right from the start of his perception of time. A Stoic would go with him only a very short part of the way, but he could not go with him far enough. For, in order to go all along, a Stoic had to relinquish fundamental principles of his own philosophy.

Origen, therefore, could be regarded as indebted to early Stoicism only for the initial usage of the term *διάστημα* in order to signify time proper. Still he is immune to the kind of criticism which was directed against the Stoics. He ploughed through his own way and took some radical steps towards forming his own views. Thus not only did he overcome the impasses of the Stoic philosophy, but also moved towards formulating his own view of time.

With regard to time as a creature, a clarification should be made. When Origen avers that time is a 'being' and a 'creature', he virtually suggests the temporal nature of the world. In other words, he denotes time as an element in the make-up of creation, by virtue of which course and motion make sense. As regards the length of time, this has been 'made' only until the present, no matter how this present is conceived from different points of view.<sup>203</sup> Time is an 'extension' for the movement to take place alongside this 'dimension' of life. This extension though is not a completed creature until its end. What was created was *temporality*, the faculty of the world existing and functioning in this specific mode. The extension has been actually realized until the present. The future is not a pre-made extension alongside which the world will move; the future is an anticipated reality, a positively potential reality, but not a pre-made one. Nevertheless, the very fact that temporality (that is, the reasons for time proper to exist) was created guarantees the flux of space-time towards the future. This is why Origen considers time as 'stretched out alongside with' the 'structure' of this world. Future is in front, it is to be realized, but it is not realized yet.

Time then, is the creature by virtue of which the world is temporal; it is not a pre-fabricated extension available to the world in front of it. It is quite characteristic that Origen refers to the future time (that is, to time to come, but not yet realized) using the term

<sup>203</sup> As I discuss later in this section, Origen holds a notion of relativity as far as perception of time is concerned, either regarded from God or from beings of other ranks of life.

παρεκτείνεται, which means 'stretched out alongside', but he does not use the preposition *σύν* (with), as he does with the term *συν-παρεκτείνων*.<sup>284</sup> This is how he makes the distinction between time already realized and time which is still to be realized. In the first case (that is, past and present), time is a creature made; in the second case (that is, future), time is a creature planned beforehand, or provided for. Thus, he accordingly notes that 'God as creator is in all creatures; . . . somewhere (he is present) in potentiality (*δυνάμει*) and somewhere (he is present) in actuality (*ἐνεργείᾳ*)'.<sup>285</sup> What Origen considers as created 'dimension' is *temporality* itself, as an essential property of the make up of the world.

On the other hand, the notion of time comprising three parts is certainly found in Greek thought also; this is particularly stated by the Stoics. Yet since they relate past and future with a conception of infinity,<sup>286</sup> it would be interesting to study how Origen sees the relation of time to the Infinite. Before this though, we should examine a notion directly stemming from the conception of time as a dimension, namely, time as a continuum.

### *Time is a continuum*

Whether time is a continuum or not was a matter of dispute in antiquity. The Stoics in general were rejecting the doctrine of Xenocrates about 'atomic-time-elements'<sup>287</sup> which was an Epicurean tenet. In view of Origen's contempt for the Epicureans and the fact that both Aristotelians and Stoics (despite their differences) regarded time as continuous, it would be plausible to expect that Origen also regarded time as a continuum. Besides, this is a direct consequence of the conception of time as extension. Beyond this, that time is a continuum can be drawn also from Origen's own statements. He makes the distinction of what is distinct and discontinuous from what is a continuum; to the counting of the former he applies the term

<sup>284</sup> Cf. *homJer*, 12, 10; also, *selPs*, 60.

<sup>285</sup> *selPs*, 41, PG 12.1416. Origen here employs the Aristotelian terms '*δυνάμει*' and '*ἐνεργείᾳ*' as in Aristotle's *Metaphysica* 1047b, 31, 1051a, 5 etc.

<sup>286</sup> The Stoics held that time is infinite to both directions, namely to past and future. (*SVF*, II, 164, 20-22) and so did Aristotle.

<sup>287</sup> Cf. S. Sambursky, *Physics of the Stoics*, London, 1959; p. 104.



'number', whereas the term 'measure' is applied to the latter. Thus, when he speaks of rational creatures (which are distinct beings) he uses the term 'number', whereas in speaking of 'matter' he uses the term 'measure':

Moreover when the Scripture says that God created all things 'by number and measure',<sup>288</sup> we shall be right in applying the term 'number' to rational creatures or minds by this very reason that they are so many as can be provided for and ruled and controlled by the providence of God; whereas 'measure' will correspondingly apply to bodily matter, which we must believe to have been created by God in such quantity as he knew would be sufficient for the ordering of the world. These then are the objects which we must believe were created by God in the beginning, that is, before everything else.<sup>289</sup>

He also uses the term 'number' when he refers to 'men', who are individual beings;<sup>290</sup> and makes clear that God 'made all things by number and measure; for to God there is nothing either without end or without measure',<sup>291</sup> concluding thus:

Every created being, therefore, is distinguished in God's sight by its being confined within a certain number and measure, that is, either number in the case of rational beings or measure in the case of bodily matter.<sup>292</sup>

It is against this background that the term 'measure' is applied to time, clearly suggesting that this is a continuum: "the rest of things, however, which are external to the Trinity, must be *measured* by ages and periods of time".<sup>293</sup> Also, phrases such as 'immeasurable ages' are at work in the *Princ.*<sup>294</sup> The same conception is found in *frMatt*, where time is suggested as a continuum (διηνεκές) and action in time, until the end of it, is stated to have a character of action 'in continuity' (διηνεκώς).<sup>295</sup>

<sup>288</sup> Wis. 11, 20.

<sup>289</sup> *Princ.* II.9.1.

<sup>290</sup> *Princ.* IV.3.12.

<sup>291</sup> *Princ.* IV.4.8.

<sup>292</sup> *Princ.* IV.4.8. Omnis igitur creatura intra certum apud eum numerum mensuramque distinguitur, id est uel rationabilium numerum uel mensuram materiae corporalis.

<sup>293</sup> *Princ.* IV.4.1. Cetera uero, quae sunt extra trinitatem, in saeculis et in temporibus metient sunt; italics mine.

<sup>294</sup> *Princ.* III.1.23.; III.6.6.

<sup>295</sup> *frMatt.* 22.

It is then Origen's explicit statements, as well as his terminology itself, that denote time as a continuum. Besides, as it happens in Stoicism,<sup>296</sup> it is the very conception of time as extension that renders time a continuum, indeed a continuum 'stretched out alongside with' the world. At last, time is regarded as a continuum on account of the close connection of it to space, namely, the reality of space-time. This theory is something of an anticipation of later ones, such as that of Alexander of Aphrodisias, who insisted that time is unitary, that instants divide it only potentially, and that this should be taken to mean that they divide it only in thought.

This conception of continuity of time is a basic one for notions such as that of judgement, as well as prolongation of time, which will be discussed presently. At this point though, I shall examine time in its relation to the notion of the Infinite, as promised in the previous section.

### *Time and the notion of the Infinite*

The concept of the infinite plays a particular part in Origen's thought; and yet this is a point on which misunderstandings have occurred. It has been correctly asserted that, for Origen, what is infinite is incomprehensible. What has not been clearly said, however, is that it is creation that Origen has in mind when he relates the notions of 'infinity' and 'incomprehensibility'. In *Princ* there is a passage which reads as follows:

We must suppose, therefore, that in the beginning God made a number of rational and intelligent beings, or whatever the before-mentioned minds ought to be called, as he foresaw it would be sufficient. It is certain that he made them according to some definite number fore-ordained by himself; for we must not suppose, as some would, that there is no end to created beings, since where there is no end there can neither be any comprehension nor limitation. If there had been no end, then certainly created beings could neither have been controlled nor provided by God. For by its nature whatever is infinite will also be beyond comprehension.<sup>297</sup>

<sup>296</sup> For the Stoic view of time as continuum, Cf. *SVF*, II, 164, 23-25.

<sup>297</sup> *Princ*, II.9.1. This text is preserved only in Latin and it is this which Koetschau believed Fragment 24 to be an equivalent of. The ensuing discussion will show that this section has nothing to do with Origen's conception of the Infinite with respect to God.

There is also a passage preserved in Greek and classified by Koetschau as Fragment 24. This, however, although incorporated in the *Princ*, is not Origen's; it is a portion from Justinian's *libOr*,<sup>298</sup> and reads thus:

For we must maintain that even the power of God is finite, and we must not, under pretext of praising him, lose sight of his limitations. For if the divine power were infinite, of necessity it could not even understand itself, since the infinite is by its nature incomprehensible.<sup>299</sup>

In the same text of Justinian's<sup>300</sup> the following opinion is ascribed to Origen:

Let no one take offence at the saying, if we put limits even to the power of God. For to encompass things that are infinite is by nature an impossibility.<sup>301</sup>

Those texts (incorporated in Koetschau's edition of *Princ*, although not Origen's writings) constitute one more misleading rendering of his authentic views. For were they true, this would entail that God himself should not be regarded as 'infinite', because in that case he would be unable to comprehend himself. Thus, the notion of 'infinite' could not be applicable to God.

But this is not quite the case. For Origen *does* apply this notion to God himself. He states that 'finite knowledge' applies only to what has been created, whereas the 'knowledge' of the Holy Trinity is 'without any limit' (ἀπέραντος).<sup>302</sup>

The allegation of Justinian (that the notion of 'infinite' virtually cannot be applied to God, because in such a case God would not comprehend himself) is then a distortion of Origen's authentic views. For he states that God himself is 'infinite' (τῷ ἀπείρῳ).<sup>303</sup> God is also 'from infinite to infinite' (ἐξ ἀπείρων ἐπ' ἄπειρον).<sup>304</sup> There is also an expression which incontestably applies the notion of infinity to God: 'to the greatness of God there is no limit' (καὶ οὐκ ἔστι πέρας τῆς μεγαλωσύνης αὐτοῦ); and his providence (πρόνοια) of creatures is said to be 'from the infinite to the infinite and even beyond' (ἐξ ἀπείρου

<sup>298</sup> Mansi IX, 489 and 525.

<sup>299</sup> Included in *Princ*, II.9.1.

<sup>300</sup> Fragment 38 Koetschau (Mansi IX, 525).

<sup>301</sup> Included in *Princ*, IV.4.8.

<sup>302</sup> *selPs*, 144, PG 12.1673; the same in *frPs*, 70, 14; 138, 7.

<sup>303</sup> *Cals*, III, 77.

<sup>304</sup> *deOr*, XXVII, 16.

ἐπ' ἄπειρον).<sup>305</sup> Hence in accordance with his real view of God, Origen states him as 'omnipotent' (παντοδύναμος)<sup>306</sup> and speaks of his 'ineffable power' (ἄφάτω δυνάμει).<sup>307</sup> It is for sure then that C. Stead's assertion that "Gregory of Nyssa introduced a new factor by describing God as infinite", which is "a natural extension of the common belief in God's total transcendence of the created order" is not fair to Origen.<sup>308</sup>

The very use of the notion 'infinite' itself constitutes an outstanding point of contrast between Greek and Christian thought. Whereas the Greeks are very shy in attributing infinity to God, the Christians (on this following Philo) speak of God as infinite without any hesitation at all. In the Christian Fathers there is a close connection between the infinity and the incomprehensibility of God.<sup>309</sup> My discussion here shows that Origen himself has no hesitation in attributing infinity to God in the most explicit terms. Thus he contributed to the establishment of what today is regarded as a major conceptual (as well as linguistic) contrast between Christians and Greeks.

It is true that in Origen's thought what is infinite is related to what is incomprehensible. But this notion is upheld only in respect of the creation and duration of the world. A relevant portion in *Princ* makes it clear:

Moreover, anyone who looks for them at his leisure can find in the divine scriptures very many sayings of this sort, which assert that the world both had a beginning and is expecting an end. If, however, there is anyone who on this matter would oppose either the authority or the credibility of our scripture, let us ask him the question, whether he asserts that God can comprehend all things or that he

<sup>305</sup> *selPs*, 144. Gregory of Nyssa followed Origen faithfully on this point, too; referring to the 'greatness' of God, he makes his point by means of the notion of *infinite*, using Origen verbatim; s. *Antirrheticus adversus Apollinarion*, Volume 3, 1, page 156 ('the greatness of the divine power goes as far as infinity'); *Contra Eunomium*, 3, chapter 3, 68 ('the infinity of the divine power'); *Epistulae*, Epistle 3, 20 ('the power of Godhead's power is something infinite and immeasurable'). In *Oratio catechetica magna*, 10, the notion of infinity is applied not to the 'greatness' or 'power' of God, but to the Godhead *per se*: "whereas human nature is small and easily describeable, the Godhead is infinite; hence infinity cannot be contained by an individual".

<sup>306</sup> *expProv*, 18, PG 17.204; likewise in *selEz*, PG 13.809.

<sup>307</sup> *frLuc*, 79; *commMatt*, 14, 9.

<sup>308</sup> C. Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity*, Cambridge 1994, p. 202.

<sup>309</sup> A.H. Armstrong-R.A. Markus, *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy*, London, 1960; pp. 9-15.

cannot? Now to say that he cannot is clearly impious. If, however, he should say, as he must, that God comprehends all things, it follows, from this very fact that they can be comprehended, that they are understood to have both a beginning and an end. For that which is absolutely without any beginning can in no way be comprehended. However far the understanding may extend, so far is the ability to comprehend withdrawn and removed endlessly, when there is held to be no beginning.<sup>310</sup>

Part of this passage (namely §2ff, i.e. from 'If, however...' to the end), as well as the ensuing paragraph (III.5.3) should be considered with caution as it is most likely that they constitute interpolations of Rufinus, as I have argued. The point which the reader should draw from this passage is the relation between infinity, comprehensibility and God. In expounding this argument, Rufinus had a vague idea of Origen's conviction that the world is finite—but not because God could not comprehend what is infinite. Origen held that God *does* comprehend what is infinite. His conviction about the finiteness of the world stems from his conception of *prophecy* and, in the final analysis, from his concept of time. The main argument is that if the world is beginningless, *foreknowledge* as such makes no sense. If the world is endless, *fulfilment* of *prophecy* and *promise* make no sense either. Since these notions profoundly determine Origen's concept of time, he argues that the world<sup>311</sup> *must* have a beginning and an end. In the passage quoted in this section, the expression 'the world had a beginning and is expecting an end' is undoubtedly Origen's. The rest of the text is Rufinus's, who had only limited comprehension of Origen's conception of the relation between infinity, duration of the world and God. This is why this text (like all the interpolations of Rufinus) is expressed in an equivocal, vague and diffident manner—that is, in a style which stands in stark contrast to Origen's own style in his writings in Greek.

Hence the argument of the connection between 'infinite' and 'incomprehensible' is adduced in order to ground his fundamental view that the world is not beginningless. Which means this is an argument in support of an idea sheerly opposite to that which Justinian and others ascribed to Origen, who simply held space/time to be finite.

<sup>310</sup> *Princ.* III.5.1–2.

<sup>311</sup> *Homilies on Exodus*, VI, 13.



As often as 'from aeon' to aeon' is said, a length of time is suggested, but there is an end. And if Scripture says 'into another aeon', certainly something longer is denoted, but an end is designated. And as often as 'the aeons of the aeons' is mentioned some end is indicated, although perhaps unknown to us, nevertheless established by God.<sup>312</sup>

As a matter of fact, the connection between what is finite and what is comprehensible is a Stoic argument. R. Sorabji<sup>313</sup> seems to be in doubt as to whether this is true or not. He says that he does not himself find such an argument in the Stoic literature. It is a good opportunity, at this point, to clear this doubt up by saying that this argument was spelled out by Cleomedes (2nd c. A.D.) in arguing that the world is finite:

δῆλον ἐκ τοῦ ὑπὸ φύσεως αὐτόν διοικεῖσθαι . . . δεῖ γὰρ κατακρατεῖν τὴν φύσιν οὕτινος ἐστίν. . . ὥστε φύσιν ἔχων τὴν διοικοῦσαν, αὐτός μὲν πεπερασται ἀναγκαίως.<sup>314</sup>

Sorabji adduces the citation which R. Wallis made in order to prove the Stoic idea that only a finite number of states is *knowable*.<sup>315</sup> But this passage proves nothing of the kind; so Sorabji is rather justified in doubting as to whether the Stoics actually held such an idea or not. It seems that an old suggestion about this Stoic view was made by earlier scholars, but the actual reasoning of this Stoic view was lost. It seems also that R. Wallis was aware of the suggestion about this Stoic view, but not of the source of it. At any rate he adduces a passage which does not prove the point: for all it says is that the gods can know the infinitely recurring events by knowing the events of one cycle. This is why this question is surrounded by ambiguity. I think that the passage which I quoted at this point will eliminate this ambiguity, since it clearly proves that in fact the Stoics held the idea that only a finite number of states is knowable. The Stoics were bound to connect the notions of 'finite' and 'comprehensible' since they held that the world is 'administered by a nature' and yet this nature (namely, their god) is immanent in the world. Since there

<sup>312</sup> *Homilies on Exodus*, VI, 13. The rest of the paragraph is evidently an interpolation of Rufinus.

<sup>313</sup> R. Sorabji, *op. cit.*, pp. 185-6.

<sup>314</sup> *SVF*, II, 170, 27-36: Cleomedes, *De motu circulari corporum caelestrium*, p. 2.

<sup>315</sup> The citation of Wallis is from Nemesius's *On the Nature of Man*, Ch. 38 (*SVF*, II, 190, 10ff.).

were Stoic affirmations identifying their god with the world, the notion of the infinite was puzzling them in any case.

This was not a problem to Origen, who held the notion of God's radical transcendence to the world. He then could affirm that God himself was 'infinite' whereas the world was 'finite'. Yet the world is finite *not because God cannot understand what is infinite*, but because the world came into being for a certain purpose, according to the divine dispensation and it is destined to an end, in the sense of both goal and termination. The argument for the world to be finite lies in the perception of the world itself (namely, that the world has a purpose to accomplish), not in the perception of God whatsoever. Thus, Origen's argument for the world to be finite is not based on its *comprehensibility* by God, but on the fact that the world had a beginning and is directed towards an end. Hence R. Sorabji is not right in asserting that, although he does not find the argument of the 'infinite' being 'incomprehensible' in the Stoic literature, this argument becomes explicit in Origen.<sup>316</sup>

Origen as well as the Stoics affirm that the world is finite. However, they take this view departing from different premises and aiming to different purposes. In Stoicism, the divine comprehensibility is mainly manifested as *συμπάθεια*, whereas in Origen this is mainly perceived as *πρόνοια*, the import of which is irrelevant to the Stoic homonym in many respects. The Stoic *συμπάθεια* exists *in* the world and it is also originated *in* the world since there is no notion of transcendence at all. Thus *συμπάθεια* *has to be finite* just because the world is finite, too.

In contrast, Origen's view is that *πρόνοια* although manifested *in* the world is originated *in beyond* the world, namely, in the divine will. So there is no reason compelling him to accept that the world is finite *because* the *πρόνοια* is finite. On the contrary, because *πρόνοια* *is not finite*, he nowhere postulates that the divine comprehensibility is finite. On the contrary, he explicitly, and in very strong terms, stresses that the divine *πρόνοια* is *infinite*, as the above Greek portions demonstrate.

Therefore, there is no logical nexus between the assertion that the world is finite and the divine ability to comprehend. If Origen affirms that the world is finite, he does so for reasons different from those

<sup>316</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 185-6.

of the Stoics: the course of the world in time is not just a meaningless and aimless natural movement, but there is a meaningful motion through which a final goal is to be achieved. This is why he emphasizes that the world is finite.<sup>317</sup>

Hence, it is not the Stoic argument, namely the divine ability to comprehend the world, which determines Origen's affirmation that the world is finite. For the divine comprehensibility in itself is explicitly stated as 'infinite'.

This is why R. Sorabji is not correct in arguing that Origen's attitude on the infinity of the world is based upon the arguments of the Stoics. The Stoics postulate the world as *finite* because they are preoccupied with preserving the notion of the divine comprehensibility. Origen takes for granted that the divine comprehensibility is *infinite*, yet he avers that the world is *finite because there is an eschatological purpose* which is to be fulfilled in the course of time. Therefore, in the light of his statements in Greek, the point of the Latin rendering of *Princ* where there appears to be a resemblance to the Stoic argument should be regarded as a simplistic rendering due to Rufinus's failure to grasp the intense eschatological character of the Alexandrian's thought.<sup>318</sup> It is Rufinus, not Origen, who appears to follow the Stoic rationale, in contrast to all of his Greek writings. Accordingly, it now becomes obvious how misleading the Fragments which Koetschau included in his edition of *Princ* are.

Besides, in *commMatt* there is the following reasoning against the notion of beginningless of the world:

If the world is not consummated, but exists infinitely, then God will not be such as to 'know everything before it was made',<sup>319</sup> but he might be supposed to know only some of them before they were made and, after them, he learned others; for what is infinite is by nature not confined knowledge, as knowledge itself by nature imposes limits to what is known.<sup>320</sup>

In this context the view expressed in *Princ*, that God has created everything 'by number and measure', can be confirmed from writings

<sup>317</sup> *commMatt*, 13, 1; s. *infra*.

<sup>318</sup> I have already argued that this constitutes a reason for many of Rufinus's miscomprehensions.

<sup>319</sup> Dan., 42.

<sup>320</sup> *commMatt*, 13, 1.

in Greek, since in *commMatt* there is reference to 'the finite number of souls' (ἐκ τοῦ ὁρισμένου τῶν ψυχῶν ἀριθμοῦ).<sup>321</sup> A meticulous study of the argument at this point of *commMatt* shows that God's comprehensibility is not actually questioned. What is argued for is that there must be a certain *before* creation. For unless such a *before* is allowed for, *prophecy* can make no sense. God knows the world as finite not because God is unable to know what is infinite, but because God is said to know everything *before* it was made. If the world is beginningless, the divine foreknowledge could make no sense—not because God cannot comprehend what is infinite, but simply because the notion of *before* loses all meaning.

Origen's idea that what is infinite is incomprehensible is then applied to the world only. On this he is quite explicit speaking about the 'infinite knowledge' of God, as we have seen. However, the world *must* be finite by reason of the fact that it was known to God *before* it came into existence. His deeper aim is to argue that the world is a finite creature, namely, that it had a beginning and it will come to an end. This is in fact closely related to his conception of space-time, which is destined to an end and is not the 'extension' of an endless and meaningless cosmic movement. This is why he explicitly rejects the notion of an 'infinite' (ἀπειράκις) recurrence of worlds.<sup>322</sup>

Origen then holds that what is not infinite (that is, what has a beginning and an end) is comprehensible. From which follows that *what is comprehensible is not infinite*; rather it has both a beginning and an end. This is precisely his conception of time. Regardless of any other statement about the duration of the world, his opinion about the causative relation between *infinite* and *incomprehensible* renders time finite. His view that it is indeed possible to acquire a 'contemplation of both past and future aeons'<sup>323</sup> indicates his conviction that time itself is comprehensible. Time then is not infinite: it has both a beginning and an end. Origen uses the participle γεγνότα (those made) to indicate what is a creature, as we have seen.<sup>324</sup> It is then clear that when he speaks of γεγνότα he includes time in them. Accordingly, he states that "the contemplation of all made things (γεγονότων) is a finite one, in this including also contemplation of

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>322</sup> *Cels.* IV, 67.

<sup>323</sup> *selPs.* 9, PG 12.1196; *selPs.* 15, PG 12.1209; *selPs.* 144, PG 12.1672.

<sup>324</sup> Cf. *selPs.* 54, PG 12.1469; s. *supra*, p. 234.

time;<sup>325</sup> it is only the knowledge of the Holy Trinity that is infinite".<sup>326</sup> The very fact that time itself is a creature leads to the conclusion that time is not infinite, but stretches from a beginning to an end. This is why time is comprehensible and 'contemplation' of the whole time makes sense.

The opinion on the finiteness of time can be assumed from the passages referring to the 'contemplation of made things' (which 'things' include time also). In addition though there are special references to the 'contemplation' of all time. In *selPs* 'the kingdom of God' is interpreted as "the contemplation of the aeons made (γεγονότων) and the aeons which will be made (γενησομένων)".<sup>327</sup> In the same work he observes: "For the kingdom of Lord is the contemplation of all the aeons, both of those made and those which will be made; and it is by this contemplation that enemies become friends."<sup>328</sup> And further: "the inheritance of rational nature is contemplation of these aeons made and of those which will be made."<sup>329</sup> Time then is held to be finite, that is, it had a beginning and will come to an end. This is why he can speak of 'the order of the entirety of aeons' (περί τῆς ἐν ἅπασιν τοῖς αἰῶσι διατάξεως),<sup>330</sup> or 'all the aeons' (ὅλους τοὺς αἰῶνας),<sup>331</sup> as well as of 'the extension of the whole time (τοῦ διαστήματος τὸν ὅλον χρόνον)'.<sup>332</sup>

This notion of finiteness of time could have been gathered right from the start, as a corollary flowing from the fact that time proper is closely connected with the world itself. The implied notion (or, feeling) of space-time could lead directly to the conclusion that time and 'the structure of this world' (or, space) 'begin' together and also come to an end together. Still Origen does explicate his view on the question: time is not infinitely long, but it has a beginning and an end. This is why he also speaks of 'beginning and end and middle of times', as in *Wis.* 7, 17-18.<sup>333</sup>

<sup>325</sup> The expression 'contemplation of made things' is usual in Origen; s. also *expProv.* 19.

<sup>326</sup> *selPs*, 144, *loc. cit.*

<sup>327</sup> *selPs*, 144.

<sup>328</sup> *selPs*, 9, *loc. cit.*

<sup>329</sup> *selPs*, 15, *loc. cit.*

<sup>330</sup> *deOr.* XVII, 14.

<sup>331</sup> *Cels.* IV, 69.

<sup>332</sup> *commJohn.* 10, XXXIX.

<sup>333</sup> *frLuc.* 50.



It is noteworthy that on the question of non-infinity of time Origen is opposed to a fundamental Stoic doctrine, since the latter held time to be infinite in both directions, that is, past and future. On this question his thought is also opposed to O. Cullmann's statements which claim to expound the pure Christian conception of time without any 'Hellenization' of it. As a matter of fact, Cullmann holds time to be infinite in both directions, in this way standing not too far away from the Stoic and Aristotelian conception of it. He indeed postulates time as an extension infinite in both directions.<sup>334</sup> To him time is not a creature,<sup>335</sup> it is infinite and it is in fact an eternal companion of God. This is how he thinks he has solved the problem of time once and for all, so that 'time is no problem any more'.<sup>336</sup> It should be also stressed that the time of the 'present aeon' is not regarded as something different from the time in which God is thought to live. Simply, at this period of time there is not only God but also the world living within the *same* time. That the essence of this reasoning is virtually a Platonic one, in which the notion of the 'everlasting world' has simply been substituted by the notion of 'everlasting time', has already been covered earlier.

Therefore, the notion of the infinite is involved not only in the conception of what is infinitely long, but also infinitely short. It is true that the Greeks failed to master the central concepts of infinitesimal calculus, namely, the limit and the process of the convergence towards a limit.<sup>337</sup> The dramatic confrontation of Greek Mathematics with the problems of continuity and the infinite seems in the celebrated paradoxes of Zeno of Elea, in the first half of the fifth century B.C. These paradoxes, recorded by Aristotle,<sup>338</sup> propound, under the guise of arguments, against the possibility of motion as some of the fundamental conceptions consider space as a continuum of points. It was only the Stoic thought that made some remarkable advances in the infinitesimal calculus and they anticipated some of the concepts formed in modern Mathematics, beginning with the calculus and leading to the fundamentals of theory of sets.<sup>339</sup>

<sup>334</sup> Cullmann, *op. cit.*, p. 61ff.

<sup>335</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>336</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>337</sup> S. Sambursky, *Physics of the Stoics*, London, 1959; p. 89.

<sup>338</sup> *Physica*, VI, Ch. 9.

<sup>339</sup> S. Sambursky, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

The Stoics were considering the 'now' as the limit between past and future, as we have seen. This notion, if pushed a little, could easily lead to the conclusion that this 'now' does not exist at all (τὸ δὲ νῦν ὅλως μηδὲν εἶναι).<sup>340</sup> What is of importance for my subject at this point is that the Stoics held a notion of time as infinitely divisible. This mainly stemmed from their view of time as a continuum.<sup>341</sup> To them, time is not only infinite in both directions, but also it is susceptible of being infinitely divisible, towards a limit which is a 'duration' reduced to nil.

Origen does not hold the former of these Stoic notions (namely, of infinite time). However, he appears to hold the latter, that is, the divisibility of time *ad infinitum*. In his thought it makes sense to speak of an infinitely short time. This denotes a duration of which both beginning and end virtually coincide. He considers this infinitely short duration mainly in reference to divine action the world. It has to be said, however, that the philosophical environment was already mature for accepting the notion of *infinite* in the context that was of main concern for Origen.

The concept of the *infinite* was a strange ground to reflect on within the intellectual frame of the Greeks, who always pursued entities of moderation, of precision and, above all, entities which were integrated in one way or another. Infinite is something unfinished and not integrated; this is why Greek metaphysics was reluctant to welcome this notion to the frame of its investigations. Whereas the isolated use and definition of *apeiron* by Anaximander had a different scope and orientation, Pythagoreans, Atomists and Plato regarded *infinite* as a secondary, indeed inferior, reality. The same notion, however, was the most suitable to adumbrate the relation between deity and the finite things of the world. Metaphysical thought envisaged a god which is beyond limits, and adumbrated this deity by means of all notions suggesting this as a boundless being, endless, indefinite, unbounded, of immense power and unlimited knowledge. In this context, 'infinite' appears the most appropriate term and notion to render this conception of the divine, the supreme reality, God. The term then enjoyed a place as an acceptable term in apophatic theology. The 'One' of Neoplatonism, which was the ultimate source

<sup>340</sup> SVF, II, 165, 39.

<sup>341</sup> SVF, II, 158, 15-19 and 164, 23-26. This was an Aristotelian view, too.

of all kinds and modes of being was 'infinite'. As for the primary divine power which dominates and administers the entire world, which according to the Stoic-Neopythagorean philosophy of nature, is the supreme essence which rules over all nature, it was deemed befitting to be called 'infinite'. In this vein, and consequently to this philosophical environment, it was natural for the creative power of the Biblical God, which is subject to no limit and necessity, and creates everything out of nothing, to be called infinite, too. And not only this divine power, but also the Person of this personal God to be called infinite as well. This means that the notion of infinite is a property of not only the supreme metaphysical reality, but also of the inherent essence of things, and above all, of God.<sup>342</sup> Thus eventually it was self-evident that the supreme being is the 'infinite' which is different and beyond all finite things, notions and relations.

In *commMatt* it is stated that the Logos, although acting within time, does not actually himself need time in order to act within the world. Thus "if one needs much time in order to offer all his belongings to the poor people, the Logos would not be hindered by time in order to make perfect a man who acts in this way". Therefore, "there should be no hesitation in saying that this man becomes perfect all at once (εὐθέως)."<sup>343</sup> With reference to Judgement, it is accordingly stated:

And no one should think that some kind of long time (μακρῶν τινῶν αἰόνων) will be needed for everybody to render an account about all his life here; for God, by his will, will all at one go (ἀθρόως) make everybody recollect everything he committed during his life, be it good or bad; and God, by his ineffable power, will make everybody feel what that was he did so that he will understand why he is punished or honoured. And one might dare say that the *kairos* of the expected judgement does not need time (ὁ τῆς προσδοκωμένης κρίσεως καιρὸς οὐ δεῖται χρόνων); but as the resurrection is said to happen 'in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye',<sup>344</sup> so I think the Judgement will happen, too.<sup>345</sup>

In *commMatt* the same question comes up: no time is needed in order to render an account of all the years we lived in this life (μὴ ὥς

<sup>342</sup> Cf. Windelband-Heimsoeth, *op. cit.*, p. 276.

<sup>343</sup> *commMatt*, 15, 18.

<sup>344</sup> 1 Cor. 15, 52.

<sup>345</sup> *JfLuc*, 79.

χρόνου πολλοῦ δεόμενα, ἵνα συναρθῇ ἡμῖν περὶ τῶν ὅλων χρόνων τῆς ἐνταῦθα ζωῆς λόγος); and no one should be unfaithful to the power of God to make things happen with such a rapidity (τῷ τάχει τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ περὶ ταῦτα δυνάμεως); for God did not need time to make this creation; and if it is said that this has been made in six days one should be very careful in understanding what the meaning of the six days is.<sup>346</sup> Indeed the Judgement will occur in a way which is the same to that which Paul predicts about the Resurrection.<sup>347</sup> Likewise, in a Fragment of *homJer*, quoting Jer. 28, 8 it is pointed out that the consummation will happen all at one go (ἁθρόως).<sup>348</sup>

Therefore, Origen holds that it is possible for an action to take place in time and yet to have no duration. There is a kind of temporality which is time of no duration (not χρόνος διαρκής).<sup>349</sup> This means that a notion of infinitely divisible time is upheld; according to this, a *moment* as a limit between past and future is an infinitely short time without duration at all.

Origen is conscious of this conception; in attempting to depict the significance of the Judgement further, he refers to the 'beginning' of Judgement, stating that this will 'begin with those who owe the most debts'. Yet he puts the following in parentheses, in the middle of his phrase:

[this beginning] should be understood only as an intellectual conception (ἐπινοία λαμβανομένην); for we have not forgotten what we said before.<sup>350</sup>

He knows that in such a case it makes no real sense to speak about 'beginning', as if this were something distinguished from the rest of the whole duration. For to this 'non-enduring-time' notions such as beginning, or end, or indeed even duration, apply only as intellectual abstractions in the most attenuated sense.

Thus the notion of non-enduring time is applied to the creative act of God, to the divine judgement, as well as to the resurrection.

<sup>346</sup> Philo, also held that the six days of creation indicate no time but an order of thought; Cf. *De Opificio Mundi*, I.26-7.

<sup>347</sup> Appealing to 1 Cor. 15, 52 once more: *commMatt*, 14, 9.

<sup>348</sup> Fragment XXXV of *homJer*; I translate the term 'ἁθρόως γενηθησομένην' as 'taking place at one go'; Cf. Aristotle, *Physica*, 186a15.

<sup>349</sup> *commMatt*, 14, 9.

<sup>350</sup> That is, about the non-duration of the judgement; *commMatt*, 14, 10.

There are also other conceptions to which this notion is applied. In a Fragment of *commJohn* we read this comment on John 12, 27:

his [sc. Jesus'] soul was sad and embarrassed about all these; but he was not dominated by embarrassment as one might think, since all this was but momentary (ἀκαριαίως); this is what the word now (νῦν) signifies; for as soon as it began it stopped (ἅμα γὰρ τῷ ἄρξασθαι καὶ ἐπαύσατο); and practically (ὥς ἔπος εἰπεῖν) it was a point of time (σημεῖον ἦν χρόνου). And you should see that he prays for his battle against the powers fighting against him to take place not in duration of time (οὐκ ἐν παρατάσει χρόνου) but in a now (ἀλλ' ἐν τῷ νῦν), which was enough for the soul of Jesus to conquer the power of the evil.<sup>351</sup>

This is how the notion of non-enduring time is described. All the temporal terms used underline the coincidence of the beginning and end of this duration. One also can see a ring of the conception of time as extension and continuum in the figure of 'point of a line' applied to this non-enduring time.<sup>352</sup> For indeed in Geometry a point of a line is postulated as having no length and its beginning and end coincide.<sup>353</sup>

Finally, although Origen holds the notion of infinitely short time, he remains consistent with his conception of time as real. He has none of the Stoic reservations which tend to dispute the reality of 'now' as they consider it 'crushed' to extinction by both past and future. To him 'now' (νῦν) is a fully real time, like all time is. It is in this real 'now' that real temporal events occur; and those events are not only real, but they also are considered to be divine actions of enormous importance for the entire world.

The conclusion is that Origen rejects the view that time is infinite in either of its directions. The interconnectedness between infinity and comprehensibility is regarded in a context different from that of Stoicism. Nevertheless he holds a notion of infinitely short time, a time of no duration at all. In this case he does not use the term 'infinite' directly; yet he expresses his notion of an infinite divisibil-

<sup>351</sup> *frJohn*, LXXXVIII.

<sup>352</sup> Yet Origen knows that this is just an inaccurate expression; this is why he uses the expression 'ὥς ἔπος εἰπεῖν' which I translate as 'practically', following Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon*, but the accurate meaning of this expression is 'I say so yet I use an inaccurate expression'.

<sup>353</sup> It is indicative of a certain conception that in Greek the term for geometrical 'point' and for 'moment' is the same, namely *στιγμή*.



ity of time leading to this conceptual limit by terms such as 'at one go' (ἀθρόως), 'momentary' (ἀκαριαίως), 'now' (νῦν), or as the opposite of what he calls 'lasting time' (χρόνος διαρκής).

Thus he rejects the notion of the infinite when it implies a time very long, a time without beginning or end. But he does hold a notion of *ad infinitum* division of the continuum of time, of a time in which beginning and end coincide.

*Relativity in the perception of time*

Origen regards the entire world as being 'in' time<sup>354</sup> or 'under' time.<sup>355</sup> But although this time is objectively one, the perception of it is not the same in different particular worlds. Thus he introduces a notion of relativity in the perception of time in the various ranks of life. In *homJer*, there is an interesting portion:

What is little to man is much to another living being. For instance, what is little to a man is big to a child. So the time of human life-time is little compared to the whole of the present aeon which comprises many years. Likewise, what is little to God is much to us and the whole aeon is little to God. When, therefore, it is said, 'Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself for a little moment'<sup>356</sup> this saying about a little moment should be regarded as referring not to the relation to those who are ordered to walk and enter his chambers, but to the relation to Him who commands that, to whom is little what to the former is much.<sup>357</sup>

Thus, beside the notion of the radical transcendence of God with respect to time, there is a suggestion of relativity in the perception of time itself by either God or creatures.

This is a point on which Origen's thought is contrasted with the Stoic theory. When they define time as extension, they do not introduce any notion of relativity in the mental hold of it. To them the world is material and their god is also material and immanent in this. In perceiving time as extension, they regard it as a natural reality which has an objective character. On account of this objectivity,

<sup>354</sup> *frMatt*, 487.

<sup>355</sup> *frJohn*, I; *frJohn*, CX.

<sup>356</sup> Is. 26, 20.

<sup>357</sup> *homJer*, 12, 10.

they go further and attribute to time the property of being 'a measure and criterion of both fastness and slowness'.<sup>358</sup>

In contrast, Origen maintains the notion of God's radical transcendence to the world. The notion of relativity is applied not only with respect to God, but also with respect to the sense of time in the different ranks of life:

And you should see that we may regard the whole of the present aeon as day; the aeon is long with respect to us, but is short and consisting just of a few years with respect to the life of God and of Christ and of the Holy Spirit. Something similar can be said about the blessed powers, who have ascended into places which are higher compared to those many ones existing below the Holy Trinity. For the present aeon has the same relation to their life, as a day in the human life in comparison with the whole time that a human being lives.<sup>359</sup>

In line with this idea of relativity in the perception of time, he states that "there is nothing wonderful in the fact that to God the whole aeon is regarded as the extension of one of our days; and in my view, even less."<sup>360</sup>

### *Origen's influence on his successors*

The innovations which Origen initiated constitute a dramatic breakthrough and his radical originations had a strong impact on his successors. This is an infallible measure of the importance of his accomplishment. For in fact he has been the anticipator of critical notions which played a decisive role during the critical interplay between Christianity and paganism. The term *διάστημα* indicating time proper was widely upheld later, during the Arian controversy by both sides in the quarrel.<sup>361</sup> The same term *διάστημα*, in the same

<sup>358</sup> *SVF*, I, 26, 11-12.

<sup>359</sup> *commMatt*, 15, 31.

<sup>360</sup> *deOr*, XXVII, 13.

<sup>361</sup> Thus Alexander of Alexandria states that what was alleged by the Arians was that προηγείται κατ' αὐτούς τῆς τὰ ὅλα δημιουργούσης τοῦ Θεοῦ σοφίας ἐκεῖνο τὸ διάστημα ἐν ᾧ φασὶ μὴ γεγενῆσθαι τὸν υἱὸν ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς; *Epistula ad Alexandrium Constantinopolitanum*, 6; PG 18.557. In the orthodox statements against the Arians, the term *διάστημα* is used so frequently, that it sometimes appears as almost a synonym to 'time'. Thus Athanasius states: τὸ λεγόμενον ἐν τῷ . . . ψαλμῷ πρὸς τὸν υἱὸν ἢ βασιλεία σου πάντων τῶν αἰώνων οὐκ ἐπιτρέπει τινὰ κἂν τὸ τυχόν διάστημα

context and in the same sense as in Origen, was taken up by John Chrysostom,<sup>362</sup> as well as by Essaias Abbas<sup>363</sup> and Olympiodorus of Alexandria.<sup>364</sup>

Not only the term *διάστημα*, but also *συμπαρεκτείνεσθαι* enjoyed a prominent position in the vocabulary of subsequent Christian writers. It can be clearly seen that Origen was the forerunner of the conceptions, as well as terms, which constitute the core of the view of time in a vast number of Christian authors: Gregory of Nyssa,<sup>365</sup>

διαλογίσασθαι ἐν ᾧ μὴ ὑπῆρχεν ὁ λόγος. *Orationes tres adversus Arianos*, 1.12; PG 26.37. Accordingly, Basil of Caesarea states: ὅτε οὐκ ἦν, ὡς φάτε [sc. Eunomians] τί ἦν ἐκεῖνο τὸ διάστημα; τίνα αὐτῷ προσηγορία ἐπινοήσατε; ἡ μὲν γὰρ κοινὴ συνήθεια ἢ χρόνοις ἢ αἰώσιν ἅπαν διάστημα ὑποβάλλει. *adversus Eunomium*, 2.13; PG 29.596. He also speaks about the Sabellians and Arians οἱ χρονικοὺς διαστήματα τοῦ μὲν πατρὸς τὸν υἱόν, τοῦ δὲ υἱοῦ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον διαιροῦσι. *Liber de Spiritu sancto*, 59; PG 32.177. Quite expectedly, the term *διάστημα* in this case is used by him who was most influenced by Origen's thought, namely, Gregory of Nyssa. I quote his statement, not only because the term *διάστημα* is frequently used, but also because at this point Gregory offers an account of his conception of time as 'extension': Ὁ πρεσβυτέρων τῆς τοῦ υἱοῦ ζωῆς τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς δογματίζων διαστήματι τινι τὸν μονογενῆ τοῦ ἐπὶ πάντων Θεοῦ πάντως διίστησι· τοῦτο δὲ ἢ ἄπειρον . . . ἢ τις πέρασι καὶ σημείοις φανεροῖς ὀριζόμενον. ἀλλ' ἄπειρον μὲν εἰπεῖν οὐκ ἔασει ὁ τῆς μεσότητος λόγος ἢ παντελῶς τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς τε καὶ υἱοῦ ἔννοιαν διαγράφει τῷ λόγῳ . . . οὐκοῦν . . . οὐδεμίαν ἔξει χώραν ἄπειρον ἐννοεῖν τὸ διάστημα, ἀλλὰ πεπερασμένῳ τινὶ κατὰ πᾶσαν ἀνάγκην τὸν μονογενῆ τοῦ πατρὸς διαστήσουσι . . . ὁ λόγος οὗτος οὐκ ἐξ αἰδίου εἶναι τὸν ἐπὶ πάντων Θεόν· ἀλλ' ἀπὸ τινος ὀρισμένου σημείου τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐσχηκέναι κατασκευάσει. ὁ δὲ λέγω, τοιοῦτόν ἐστι . . . τὸ μετὰ τι γινόμενον διὰ τοῦ πρὸς ἑαυτοῦ διάστημα ὀρίζει καὶ τὴν τοῦ προϋπνουμένου ὑπόστασιν. *Contra Eunomium*, 1; PG 45.357–360; also: ἡ κτίσις πᾶσα τῷ τῶν αἰώνων διαστήματι παραμετρεῖται. *Contra Eunomium*; PG 45.364.

<sup>362</sup> John Chrysostom: πέντε ἡμέρας ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκίας κατέχεται τὸ πρόβατον [sc. before Passover] . . . ἔπειτα θύεται . . . πέντε διαστήματα χρόνου δηλοῦνται ταῖς πέντε ταύταις ἡμέραις ἀπὸ Αἰδίου μέχρι συντελείας; *In pascha* 5.2; Cf. *ibid.* 5.1; PG 59.735ff; also: τῆς ἐπιούσης ἡμέρας . . . οὐκ οἶδας εἰ τὸ διάστημα ὄψει; *Homilia in Mattheum* 19.5.

<sup>363</sup> Essaias Abbas: ἀνήλωσεν ἐν ματαιότητι τὸ διάστημα τῆς ἡμέρας; *Orationes*, 10; PG 40.1135.

<sup>364</sup> Olympiodorus of Alexandria defines time thus: χρόνος μὲν ἐστὶ τὸ διάστημα καθ' ὃ πράττεται τι. *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten*, 3.1; PG 93.508.

<sup>365</sup> Gregory of Nyssa: διαστηματικῇ τινι παρατάσει συμπαρεκτείνεται [sc. ἡ κτιστὴ οὐσία]; *Contra Eunomium*, PG 45.933. Echoing Origen's expression about the presence of the Logos in the world, he also states: ἴδιόν ἐστι τῆς θεότητος τὸ διὰ πάντων ἦκεν καὶ τῇ φύσει τῶν ὄντων κατὰ πᾶν μέρος συμπαρεκτείνεσθαι; *Oratio Catechetica*, 32, PG 45.80. Referring to the aeons as time, he once more sticks to Origen's own words, speaking of τὴν διαστηματικὴν τῶν αἰώνων παράτασιν; *Contra Eunomium*, 12; PG 45.1064. Following Origen in the sense of 'beginning' (ἀρχή) in Gen. 1.1, as referring to the providential creation he states that ἡ γὰρ ἀρχὴ παντός διαστηματικοῦ νοήματος ἄλλοτριῶς ἔχει; *Apologia in hexaëmeron*, 8.; PG 44.72. Echoing Origen's view that God is the 'cause' of creation in no sense of any temporal causality whatsoever, he speaks of God as αἰτίαν . . . παντός διαστηματικοῦ νοήματος

Gregory of Nazianzus,<sup>366</sup> Basil of Caesarea,<sup>367</sup> Theodoretus of Cyrrhenia,<sup>368</sup> Hesychius of Sinai,<sup>369</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria,<sup>370</sup> Maximus Confessor,<sup>371</sup> Cyril of Alexandria,<sup>372</sup> John Chrysostom,<sup>373</sup> Procopius of Gaza,<sup>374</sup> John of Damascus,<sup>375</sup> are some of those who echoed Origen's view and technical terminology for time.

Recording the views of Gregory of Nyssa on time and eternity, R. Sorabji<sup>376</sup> purports them to constitute a 'fuller'<sup>377</sup> account of the divine reality, compared to that of Origen's. Ironically though, what he adduces as views of Gregory's (contrasting them with those of

ὑπερκειμένην; *De infantibus qui praemature abripuntur*, PG 46.172. Again, he refers to the generation of the Son exactly as it was portrayed by Origen and uses his master's own terminology: μηδέν εἶναι . . . ὁ μεταξὺ τῆς τοῦ υἱοῦ πρὸς τὸν πατέρα συναφείας εὐρίσκεται, μὴ διαστηματικόν τι νόημα; *Contra Eunomium*, 4; PG 45.661.

<sup>366</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus: ὅπερ ἡμῖν ὁ χρόνος . . . τοῦτο τοῖς αἰδίοις, αἰών, τὸ συμπαρεκτεινόμενον τοῖς οὖσιν οἷόν τι χρονικόν κίνημα; *Orationes*, 38.8, PG 36.320.

<sup>367</sup> Basil of Caesarea: τῇ ἑαυτοῦ αἰδιότητι συμπαρεκτεινόμενην ἔχει τὴν πατρότητα; *adversus Eunomium*, 2.12; PG 29.593; *ibid.*, 2.13 (PG 596). Also, ὥστε ὅλη σχεδὸν ἀνθρώπου γενεά τὴν ἐκ τοῦ μίσους ὀργὴν συμπαρεκτείνει; *Epistulae*, 204.1; PG 32.745.

<sup>368</sup> Theodoretus of Cyrrhenia: ὁ Θεὸς τοῦ χρόνου τῆς ζωῆς αὐτῶν ὑπετέμετο· ἵνα μὴ εἰς χρόνον μακρὸν παραμένοντες, συμπαρεκτείνωνται τῇ κακίᾳ; *Commentarius in Isaiam*, 26.16; PG 81.496ff. Here Theodoretus follows a meaning of συμπαρεκτεινόμενον as in Origen's *commEph*: ἀντιφιλοτιμούμενον καὶ συμπαρεκτεινόμενον κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν; *commEph*, Fr. IV, p. 239.

<sup>369</sup> Hesychius of Sinai: συμπαρεκτείνεται ἀνθρώποις ὁ βίος ἐν ἐνιαυτοῖς, ἐν μηνῶν . . . τοῦτοις ἄρα ἐχρῆν καὶ ἡμᾶς συμπαρεκτείνειν τὰς ἐναρέτους ἐργασίας; *De temperantia et virtute centuriae ad Theodulum*, 2.58; PG 93.1329.

<sup>370</sup> The following passage strikingly repeats Origen's own words and was used by Athanasius in his attack against Arianism: Τὰ . . . κτίσματα . . . διαστηματικὴν ἀρχὴν τοῦ εἶναι ἔχει . . . ὁ δὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ λόγος οὐκ ἔχων ἀρχὴν τοῦ εἶναι . . . ἦν αἰεὶ; *Orationes tres adversus Arianos*, 2.57; PG 26.268. What Athanasius uses here is not only Origen's conception of the relation of the Father to the Son, but also his terminology of temporal notions.

<sup>371</sup> Maximus Confessor: τῇ . . . ἀπειρίᾳ συμπαρεκτείνων σου τοῦ ποθοῦντος τὴν κίνησιν; *Opuscula theologica et polemica*, PG 91.9.

<sup>372</sup> Cyril of Alexandria: τῇ τοῦ σώματος ἡλικίᾳ συμπαρεκτείνειν τὰ ἑαυτοῦ; *Scholia de incarnatione*, 13; PG 75.1369ff.

<sup>373</sup> John Chrysostom: τῷ παντὶ αἰῶνι συμπαρεκτεινόμενην . . . τὴν τιμωρίαν; *Homiliae in Genesim*, 27.10; PG 53.23ff.

<sup>374</sup> Procopius of Gaza: τὰ . . . θεῖα θελήματα . . . τῇ θεῖᾳ ἀπειρίᾳ συμπαρεκτεινόμενα; *Commentarii in Proverbia*, 4, 14; PG 87.1256.

<sup>375</sup> John of Damascus: αἰὼν οὐ χρόνος . . . ἀλλὰ τὸ συμπαρεκτεινόμενον τοῖς αἰδίοις, οἷόν τι χρονικόν κίνημα καὶ διάστημα; *de fide orthodoxa libri quattuor*, PG 94.864. This is the same wording used by Origen in *commJohn*, 1, XXIX.

<sup>376</sup> R. Sorabji, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

<sup>377</sup> *Ibid.*

Origen's),<sup>378</sup> are but Origen's own expressions employed by Gregory.<sup>379</sup> The definition of time proper as *διάστημα*; its relation to space, portrayed by means of the term *συμπαρεκτεινόμενον*; the adumbration of the divine life through the term *ἀδιάστατος*, and, in general, the conception of time and divine timelessness are simply word-for-word Origen's ideas and phrases.

Hence, this is not the case of a 'fuller' account. It is rather the case of merely *repeating* the view of time and divine reality, as established and couched by Gregory's master, Origen.

I give one example of the distortions which Origen's thought suffered. In a paper, B. Otis<sup>380</sup> actually follows J. Callahan's views of the conception of time in Gregory of Nyssa and Basil of Caesarea, as discussed shortly below. It is strikingly obvious, however, that Otis has but a vague, distorted and, at any rate, indirect knowledge of Origen's thought. I shall not comment on his claim that Origen's thought was but a Christian version of Platonism; neither on claims such as that Origen regards the Son as 'creaturely'.<sup>381</sup> I only note how erroneous is to argue that the use of the terms *διάστημα* and *διάστασις* used for time proper 'first comes into the Christian vocabulary with Methodius' critique of Origen'.<sup>382</sup> And he further notes: "The point of importance is that before the Cappadocians, *διάστημα* is used in a negative sense (as in Methodius of Olympus) . . . It is not used as an essential and inalienable mark of all creatures. But it is clear that the importance of time is brought out by the abandonment of Origen's eternal creation".<sup>383</sup> The reader can judge for himself how much the author of the article is unaware of Origen's views. He certainly does not suspect that Methodius in his (unfair anyway) 'critique of Origen' was simply using Origen's own notions

<sup>378</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium*, 1.359-64 (PG 45.364); 1.370-1 (PG 45.368); 1.685-9 (PG 45.461-4); 2.459 (PG 45.1064) 8.5 (PG 45.796); 9.2 (PG 45.809); also *hom. in Eccl.* 7, (PG 44.729); in *Hex.* (PG 44.84). On Gregory's view, s. H. von Balthasar, *Presence at pensée* (Paris 1942), pp. 1-10.

<sup>379</sup> R. Sorabji includes the definition of time by Basil of Caesarea among these 'fuller' accounts. On this he obviously follows a mistaken view of J. Callahan's, which I discuss presently.

<sup>380</sup> B. Otis, "Gregory of Nyssa and the Cappadocian Conception of Time", *Studia Patristica*, 117 (1976), pp. 327-57.

<sup>381</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 332.

<sup>382</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 336.

<sup>383</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 336, n. 1.



and terminology. Further, he does not know that what he calls the 'Cappadocian conception of time' has two aspects: first, a mainly 'objective' view of time, held by Basil; secondly, a mainly 'psychological' one, held by Gregory. Both of them originated in Origen and both appear in Augustine. The author further claims that Origen does not actually distinguish between 'time' and 'eternity': "his system makes little of the difference" he alleges. In fact, however, Origen's distinction between divine timelessness and worldly time is far sharper than it is in Gregory of Nazianzus, for example. For to the latter *αἰών* is adopted in a sense which might be taken as a 'time of God'<sup>384</sup> whereas in Origen there is no room for such vague ideas, exactly because time in itself has a certain and crucial *raison d'être*.

I made this extended remark for two reasons. First, because I shall not comment on this paper again. Secondly, to quote an example showing the extent to which Origen's thought has been distorted, and how his conception of time is ignored. In fact, not only Origen is arbitrarily assigned ideas which are precisely the opposite from those that he really held; but also the views of later Christian writers who just utilized his conceptions are presented as an 'answer' to Origen!

The fact is that Origen's terminology exerted a profound influence upon his successors. They obviously found this nomenclature highly meaningful as well as expressive, and so they utilized terms and phrases verbatim. On this issue, however, there is a very substantial difference, which eluded some of these Christian writers.

Nowhere in his entire work does Origen say that the divine life is called *αἰών*. The epithet *αἰώνιος* (= eternal, in the sense of timeless) is certainly applied to God throughout his writings. But nowhere does he aver that the divine life should be applied the term *αἰών*, which after all is a Platonic definition. Whenever he refers to the divine life he applies to it no noun at all. He just uses the participle *συμπαρεκτείνων*, obviously as a figure of speech.

In stark contrast (which establishes a direct affiliation with Platonism), some of his successors took up the term *συμπαρεκτείνων* in order to define the divine life as *αἰών*: Gregory of Nazianzus states that "aion is not time nor is it a part of time . . . but what to us is time . . . aion

<sup>384</sup> Cf. PG 36.320; PG 45.4.628.

is to the timeless, namely, that which is stretched out alongside with beings (τὸ συμπαρεκτεινόμενον τοῖς οὖσιν).<sup>385</sup>

This was the situation at the end of the Fourth century. As late as Eighth century, John of Damascus avails himself of this language of Origen, but follows the definition of Gregory. He allows that the term *aeon* has many significations (such as a lifetime, or a certain long period of time). In reference to the purport of the 'aeon to come' (αἰὼν ὁ μέλλων), he states that this "endless state after the resurrection . . . is not time, neither is it a part of time . . . but this is what is stretched out alongside with the timeless (τὸ συμπαρεκτεινόμενον τοῖς αἰδίοις); . . . thus what time is to the temporal beings, *aeon* is to the timeless."<sup>386</sup>

The *repetition* of the terminology initiated by Origen is pretty striking. Yet it is instructive to notice the *distortion* of his views towards an un-Origenist (and virtually Platonic) vein. For there is a cardinal difference between him and those who bungled his exposition: Origen *does not* say that the συμπαρεκτεινόμενον τοῖς αἰδίοις (which indicates the divine life) constitutes a definition of αἰὼν. What he regards as αἰὼν is a purely and exclusively *natural* reality, a spatio-temporal reality, as explicated by him in the clearest possible terms through an *ad hoc* definition.<sup>387</sup> On the contrary, both Gregory of Nazianzus and John of Damascus take the term αἰὼν to denote the divine life; which means that they regard αἰὼν as a *super-natural* and timeless reality. Both in letter and content, they employ the Platonic and Neoplatonic conception: αἰὼν is *not time*, although it has a *similarity*, an analogy, to time.

To Origen 'aeon is a natural system'. This definition is radically contrasted with the import assigned to it by Platonists and other Greeks. Whereas they regarded αἰὼν as indicating the divine realm, Origen

<sup>385</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus: αἰὼν γὰρ οὔτε χρόνος, οὔτε χρόνου τι μέρος . . . ἀλλ' ὅπερ ἡμῖν ὁ χρόνος . . . τοῦτο τοῖς αἰδίοις αἰὼν, τὸ συμπαρεκτεινόμενον τοῖς οὖσιν. *Orationes*, 38.8; PG 36.320.

<sup>386</sup> John of Damascus: τὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ὄνομα πολύσημόν ἐστι . . . αἰὼν γὰρ λέγεται . . . ἢ ἐκάστου τῶν ἀνθρώπων ζωῇ . . . πάλιν . . . ὁ χιλίων ἐτῶν χρόνος . . . πάλιν . . . ὅλος ὁ παρὼν βίος, καὶ αἰὼν ὁ μέλλων, ὁ μετὰ τὴν ἀνάστασιν ἀτελεύτητος . . . πάλιν οὐ χρόνος, οὐδέ χρόνου τι μέρος . . . ἀλλὰ τὸ συμπαρεκτεινόμενον τοῖς αἰδίοις . . . ὅπερ γὰρ τοῖς ὑπὸ χρόνον ὁ χρόνος, τοῦτο τοῖς αἰδίοις ἐστὶν αἰὼν. *De Fide Orthodoxa Libri Quattuor*, 2.1; PG 94.861.

<sup>387</sup> Origen is clear in defining αἰὼν as a purely *worldly* reality: 'aeon is a natural system'; *selPs*, 5; PG 12.1172.

applies this to the world. Gregory of Nazianzus and John of Damascus (although they made use of the temporal terms of Origen's) attributed *αἰών* a downright Platonic sense, in stark contrast to what Origen himself did.

Philo, too, uses the term *αἰών* stating that it pertains to God. His conception of it is entirely formed under Plato's influence: he regards *αἰών* as the 'exemplar and archetype of time' (τὸ χρόνου παράδειγμα καὶ ἀρχέτυπον).<sup>388</sup> At any rate, Philo's conception of time is the same as that of Plato's: time, by being an 'imitation' of an 'archetype', is something which constitutes an *affinity* between God and the world. By contrast, Origen regards time as the element which pointedly *contrasts* the divine reality with the world. Time establishes no affinity between those two thoroughly different states. This is why, in adumbrating the divine reality, he forebears to use the term *αἰών*.

Gregory of Nazianzus and John of Damascus are supposed to be the exponents of the Christian orthodoxy. It is then an irony that these authors pick up Origen's very words and yet distort his concept towards a Platonic definition of *αἰών*. Their definition is a striking case a dissent (unconscious, to be sure) from the Alexandrian. The difference is thorough and cannot be expunged by their verbatim use of Origen's nomenclature. For this definition is sheerly adverse to his *natural* (and plain un-Platonic) conception of *αἰών*—and yet it was Origen who was anathematized as a Platonist.

R. Sorabji<sup>389</sup> also asserts that Philoponus 'picks up the very words' which 'Proclus and earlier Plotinus, Basil and Gregory' used in their treatment of time and divine reality. Proclus certainly follows Plotinus. But, with reference to the Cappadocians, the 'very words' that Philoponus actually 'picks up' are not theirs, they are Origen's.

As regards Augustine, G. Florovski refers to the creation of the world and time, claiming that it was with Augustine that this relation was clearly portrayed. However, he was not aware of the fact that it was Origen who initiated the concrete perception of the relation between space and time.<sup>390</sup> Florovski's impression is that it was

<sup>388</sup> Philo, *De Mutatione Nominum*, 267; *Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis*, 32; Cf. *Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres Sit*, 165: χρόνος is the βίος of the κόσμος αἰσθητός, whereas αἰών is the βίος of God and the κόσμος νοητός. This is the same (Platonic) definition of αἰών given by Gregory of Nazianzus and John of Damascus.

<sup>389</sup> R. Sorabji, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

<sup>390</sup> G. Florovski, *Creation and Redemption*, (Gr. tr. Thessaloniki, 1980), p. 50.

Augustine who first clearly pronounced that the world was not created 'in time', but 'together with' time.<sup>391</sup> The truth is, however, that Augustine was anticipated by Origen who had explicated that time came into existence together with space. In the passages quoted by Florovski, Augustine makes the distinction between the 'world' and 'time'. Origen, however, had made the much subtler distinction between 'the *structure of the world*' and 'time'. In this way not only did he precede Augustine, but also afforded a more punctilious and accurate articulation by drawing the intellectual distinction between space and time.

Like the rest of the aspects of Origen's theology, this contribution to the ontology of time has not only been disregarded, but also widely distorted. I give only one example of how Hal Koch assesses this thought:

Albinus and Origen represent essentially the same form of eclectic Platonism, sharing a kind of basic Platonic horizon, with numerous Aristotelian and Stoic elements added in. They manifest a wide-ranging similarity in terminology, and they are taken up to a large extent with the same problems, to which they provide essentially the same solutions. In brief: they belong to the same school.<sup>392</sup>

The fact is, however, that if one looks at how Albinus treats time proper, he will be faced with the use of the Stoic term 'extension' within an entire definition which is purely Platonic. According to him, time 'was made as an extension of the movement of the world,

<sup>391</sup> Cf. Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, V, 5, PL XXXVI, 325: "factae itaque creaturae motibus coeperunt currere tempora; unde ante creaturam frustra tempora requiruntur, quasi possint inveniri ante tempora tempora . . . potius ergo tempora a creatura, quam creatura coepit a tempore; utrumque autem ex Deo" (Thus created beings begin to run <moving> into time; hence it would be in vain to search for time before creation, as if it were possible to find time before time . . . so it is more likely that time began from creation than creation from time; yet both <derive> from God). Also in *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, J.2, PL XXIV, 174, 175; *De Civitate Dei*, XI, 6, PL xli, 321: "quis non videat quod tempora non fuissent, nisi creatura fieret, quae aliquid aliqua motione mutaret . . . ?" (Who does not see that time would have never existed unless creation had come into existence, which by some movement could change something or other?) and in p. 322: "procul dubio non est mundus factus in tempore, sed cum tempore" (There is no doubt that the world was not created in time, but along with time). Also in *Confessiones*, XI, 13, PL XXXII, 815-816 et passim. Cf. P. Duhem, *Le Système du Monde*, II, Paris, 1914, p. 462ff.

<sup>392</sup> Hal Koch, *Protonia und Paideusis*, Berlin, 1932, p. 268.

as an image of eternity; and this [image] is a measure of the immutability of the eternal world.'

Intermingling Stoic, Platonic and Aristotelian terminology, Albinus says that time, as we experience it in this world, serves to understand how timeless reality is like. That said, however, the ontological conception of time is clearly the Platonic one: time is an 'image' of the eternal world' (εἰκόνα τοῦ αἰῶνος).<sup>393</sup> The conception of time could not be different, since Albinus says all this in an exposition of the Platonic doctrine. At all events, it is all but the case that Origen and Albinus 'belong to the same school'.

### Conclusion

The questions about time proper which Origen had to resolve may seem simple in the first place, yet they are not actually simple at all. For the question of the reality of time was a highly controversial one, and still is. The arguments from the time of the Eleatic philosophers until the Sceptics were raising strong doubts as to whether time itself really exists. Aristotle's syllogisms had also contributed to such a consideration.<sup>394</sup> To the Stoics, time was just a 'something' between being and non-being, as 'time was one of what they called incorporeals, which are despised by them as inactive and not being and existing only in bare mind'.<sup>395</sup> To Gnostics, on the other hand, time has no full reality<sup>396</sup> and their tendency is to negate and annul it. Time is not a Platonic 'image' of eternity or even a Plotinian 'imitation' of it; it is at best a caricature of eternity and it

<sup>393</sup> Albinus, *Epitome doctrinae Platonicae sive Didaskalicus*, 14, 6.

<sup>394</sup> Cf. Aristotle *Physica*, 4.10, 217b29-218a30. Of great interest, and yet neglected with respect to the problem of time, is the passage in *Metaphysica* 3.5, 1002a28-b11. At that point Aristotle expounds his view of the substance (rather, the non-substance) of *now* in time. s. also: Fred D. Miller "Aristotle on the reality of time", *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, LVI (1974), pp. 132-55; Norman Kretzmann "Aristotle on the instant of change", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, supp. vol. 50 (1976), pp. 91-114.

<sup>395</sup> *SVF*, II, 166, 3-10; Cf. A.A. Long, "Language and thought in Stoicism" in his anthology *Problems in Stoicism*. An account of the ancient arguments about the reality of time has been given by R. Sorabji in "Is time real? Responses to an unaging paradox", *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1982, pp. 189-213.

<sup>396</sup> H.C. Puech, "Gnosis and Time", p. 83.



is so far removed from its model that, in the final analysis, it is regarded as a lie.<sup>397</sup>

Even in our day there are views which strongly deny the reality of time. Prominent among them is that of J.M.E. McTaggart,<sup>398</sup> which has enjoyed much attention amongst those who study the problem of time. Although it has been argued that the words expressing flow could be replaced by other time-words not expressing flow,<sup>399</sup> this view has been resisted by scholars such as R. Gale,<sup>400</sup> whereas others have conceded the replaceability of flowing-words in certain restricted contexts.<sup>401</sup> On the other hand, the idea of flowing time has been heavily repudiated by others, such as D.C. Williams<sup>402</sup> and D.H. Mellor.<sup>403</sup> Besides, in Physics there is a recent version of the view that time might exist, but with a lower degree of reality; this view is different from the Stoic one, inasmuch as it suggests that time depends on a more fundamental and nontemporal reality.<sup>404</sup>

In short, the question of the reality of time has received a vast variety of answers. Time is real, time is unreal, time is of a quasi-reality (a view equally appealing to schools as rival—even on the question of time—as the Stoics and Epicureans),<sup>405</sup> it is of lower degree of reality; time in itself may be real, but at least its divisions are in mind; the whole of time is present (a view of Appolodorus of Seleucia, 130 B.C.), or the present corresponds to the minimum perceptible period (Poseidonius of Apamea, 135–55 B.C.); time comes

<sup>397</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 61.

<sup>398</sup> Cf. J.M.E. McTaggart "The unreality of time", *Mind*, n.s. 17 (1908), pp. 457–74, revised in his *The Nature of Existence*, London, 1927, (vol. 2, Ch. 3).

<sup>399</sup> Cf. Hans Reichenbach, *Elements of Symbolic Logic*, New York, 1948.

<sup>400</sup> Cf. Richard Gale, *The Language of Time*, s. also "Tensed statements", *Philosophical Quarterly*, 12 (1962), pp. 53–9.

<sup>401</sup> Cf. H.N. Castaneda, "Omniscience and indexical reference", *Journal of Philosophy*, 64 (1967), pp. 203–10.

<sup>402</sup> Cf. D.C. Williams, "The myth of passage", *Journal of Philosophy*, 48 (1951), pp. 457–72.

<sup>403</sup> Cf. D.H. Mellor, *Real Time*, Cambridge, 1981.

<sup>404</sup> David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, London, 1980, pp. 210–12.

<sup>405</sup> A major difference on the question of time was that whereas Epicurus postulated time-atoms, the Stoics held time to be continuous and infinitely divisible. The convergence on ascribing to time a lower reality is due to different reasons: Epicurus regarded time as a mere attribute of an attribute, a mere appearance, a symptom accompanying things in motion. The Stoic views on the question have already been discussed.

along in indivisible atoms,<sup>406</sup> or in divisible leaps;<sup>407</sup> there is a kind of time which does not flow or time in itself flows or moves.<sup>408</sup>

These references are only an example of the controversy which has raged from antiquity until our day. It is against this background<sup>409</sup> that Origen's treatment of time should be considered. For it is only thus that his decisive contribution to a certain (namely, Christian) view of time can be really appreciated. Although he held a subsequent psychological view of time, his main and fundamental conception of it was that time is an objective element in the make-up of the world. He allows for the Aristotelian view that human discourse can be but *tensed*;<sup>410</sup> but to him there is nothing of the Aristotelian doubts about the full reality of time and particularly of the 'now'.

In modern thought there is also controversy as to whether *universals* (such as truth, justice, etc.) should be regarded as timeless or not. For example, S. McCall denies the idea that *truth* is timeless.<sup>411</sup>

<sup>406</sup> Such was the view of Diodorus Cronus as presented by Sextus Empiricus; s. *adversus Mathematicos* 10.85–90; 143; 347–9; also *Pyrronia* 2.245; 3.71. On Diodorus Cronus, including biographical information, a work by David Sedley particularly useful: "Diodorus Cronus and Hellenistic Philosophy", *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, n.s. 23 (1977), pp. 74–120.

<sup>407</sup> The history of this notion is expounded by R. Sorabji in *Time, Creation and the Continuum*, Chs. 5 and 25. However, it is still a moot question whether these 'leaps' should be regarded as something different from 'time-atoms'; on this there is some debate stemming from different interpretations of ancient texts, especially those of the Sceptic Sextus Empiricus and the Neoplatonists Simplicius and Damascius—the head of the Neoplatonic school at Athens at the time of its closure by Justinian, in A.D. 529.

<sup>408</sup> This is a distinction proposed by Iamblichus, who died around A.D. 325; Cf. *Iamblichus Chalcidensis in Platonis Dialogos Commentariorum Fragmenta*, Leiden, 1973; Frs 61–8. His views are also reported by Simplicius as presented in S. Sambursky and S. Pines, *The Concept of Time in Late Neoplatonism*, pp. 94–99. According to this testimony, Iamblichus distinguished a generative (γενεσιουργός) time and a generated (γενητός) and flowing (ρέων) one. The former is regarded as existing before all temporal things, whereas it is only the latter which is divisible into past, present and future. In short, Iamblichus draws a distinction between a higher *now* and a lower *now*.

<sup>409</sup> The term 'background' pertains of course to the reader, not to Origen; for many of the views referred here are posterior to Origen. What I meant to show is that the questions about time on which Origen did provide answers have been highly controversial since Antiquity until our day.

<sup>410</sup> A modern work providing an account of Aristotle's commitment to tensed discourse is Jaakko Hintikka's *Time and Necessity*, Oxford, 1973; Chs. 4 and 5.

<sup>411</sup> Cf. Storrs McCall, "Temporal flux", *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 3 (1966), pp. 193–224.

On the contrary, others such as W.V.O. Quine<sup>412</sup> and N. Goodman<sup>413</sup> regard truth as timeless.<sup>415</sup> On these questions Origen has provided his own answers a long time ago, regarding 'truth' as one of the 'conceptions' of the Son and determining its ontological status accordingly in his resolutions about the 'third' and 'fourth' conceptions, as we have seen. His notion of the conceptions of the Son clearly demonstrate his opinion on questions which even today are highly controversial. Origen could have no hesitation in declaring that *truth is not timeless*. For *truth* is but a conception of the Son and it is among these conceptions which 'became' together with time.<sup>414</sup> Thus one can see that issues which are modern (and all the indications are that they will keep on being controversial questions) have been treated by Origen in terms of his theology.

As for his notion of relativity in the perception of time, this is a point where the 'psychological' and the 'objective' views are closely correlated. I have reasons to believe that further study of this particular topic could show that his conception of time is not only modern, but also it has anticipated the future development of the problematique of time to an extent which should be treated in a study of its own.

<sup>412</sup> Cf. W.V.O. Quine, *Word and Object*, Cambridge Mass., 1960.

<sup>413</sup> Cf. Nelson Goodman, *The Structure of Appearance*, Cambridge Mass., 1951.

<sup>414</sup> *commJohn*, 2, XIX.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### PROLONGATION OF TIME

As he does with all the cardinal notions in his thought, Origen buttresses the concept of prolongation of time with the authority of Scripture. He always remains a biblical theologian, who is happier with quotation from Scripture than in using philosophical terminology.

There are two particular passages in which he deems that the origin as well as the answer to this question would be found. The first is Heb. 9, 26: 'For then he must often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but once and for all at the end of aeons he has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.' The second is Eph. 2, 7: 'That in the aeons to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.'<sup>1</sup> The question which seems to arise out of the juxtaposition of these passages is how is it possible, on the one hand to speak of 'end of aeons' and, on the other, of 'aeons to come'. In *deOr* this question is posed thus:

It has occurred to me many times, and I wonder when I compare two apostolic expressions, how there is an 'end of aeons' in which 'once' 'in order to put away sin' Jesus 'has appeared', if there are coming aeons.<sup>2</sup>

This juxtaposition is the springboard for reflection on prolongation of time. An answer to the question is found a little further in the same work:

And in reflecting about things of this kind, I think that, it happens in the same way as the end of the year is the last month, after which there comes the beginning of another month; similarly this present aeon is the end of many aeons which comprise a year, as it were, after which some future aeons will come, the aeon to come being their beginning; and it is in these aeons that God will show 'the riches of his grace in his kindness'.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *deOr*, XXVII, 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

Besides, the conviction that a lifetime is not sufficient a period for a human being to reach perfection, is an additional factor for employing prolongation of time. In *homJer* it is stated that anyone who passes away is 'going out' holding both 'hay and reed' and 'gold and silver and a precious stones' in his hands, that is; he 'goes out' of this life having committed both sins and good deeds. The question to be asked is what is going to happen to this man. The answer is that consummation, as purifying fire, destroys 'hay and reed' that is, what is evil; for 'in the holy scriptures can be found that God is stating first what is dimmer and then what is better'.<sup>4</sup>

The notion of prolongation of time is employed out of the need for this 'then' to come to pass. So it is possible to consider that there will be more time for rational creatures to strive further for their return to God.<sup>5</sup>

In employing this exegesis, Origen feels that he has established a way to explain the scriptural passages so that they do not seem contradictory. This exegesis renders these two passages compatible, that is, expressing consistently one unique conception of time. Hence, he sometimes appeals to one of them and sometimes to the other.<sup>6</sup>

This is the scriptural basis of the idea of prolongation of time to be introduced. The world had a beginning which coincides with the occurrence of the Fall, which marked the beginning of time. The movement of the world in time thereafter takes place in periods, which are called by the scriptural name 'aeons'. This enables Origen to preserve both the doctrine of the Church that the world had a beginning,<sup>7</sup> and his tenet that the whole of time comprises periods or 'aeons'. It is once again in the Scripture (Isaiah 65, 22) that he seeks for authority in order to buttress up his view that a future world will come to pass:

For Isaiah teaches that there will be another world after this, when he says 'There shall be a new earth, which I will cause to endure in my sight, said the Lord'.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *homJer*, 16, 6.

<sup>5</sup> *homJer*, 16, 5.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *commJohn*, 1, VI; *frJohn*, X; *homJer*, 1, 8.

<sup>7</sup> *Princ*, III.4.1.

<sup>8</sup> *Princ*, III.5.3. We recall that this section for the most part (and definitely its beginning) should be regarded as having suffered interpolations by Rufinus. However, there is no reason to dispute the scriptural passage on which the notion of prolongation of time is grounded. Generally, the scriptural authority as found in *Princ*



Accordingly, he appeals to Ecclesiastes<sup>9</sup> for the notion of previous worlds having already existed:

And that there were other worlds before this one Ecclesiastes shows when he says: 'What is it that hath been? Even that which shall be. And what is it that hath been created? That very thing which is to be created; and there is nothing at all new under the sun. If one should speak and say 'See, this is new'; it hath been already in the ages which were before us'.<sup>10</sup>

The conclusion drawn out of these biblical portions is that "clearly the end of this world is the beginning of the world to come."<sup>11</sup> As the foregoing scriptural passages are taken to provide an authoritative ground for the notion of a prolonged space-time, the conclusion is couched accordingly:

By these testimonies each proposition is proved at the same time, namely, that there were ages in the past and that there will be others hereafter. We must not suppose, however, that several worlds existed at the same time, but that after this one another will exist in its turn.<sup>12</sup>

At another point in the same work it is also stated:

This world, however, which is itself called an 'age',<sup>13</sup> is said to be the end of many ages . . . But after the present age, which is said to have been made for the consummation of other ages, there will yet be further 'ages to come'; for we learn this plainly from Paul himself when he says, 'that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us'.<sup>14</sup> He did not say 'in the age to come'; nor 'in two ages'; but 'in the ages to come'. I think, therefore, that the indications of the statement point to many ages.<sup>15</sup>

Thus 'the present aeon' is just one in the series of aeons past and future; this is why Origen refers to '*this* world and aeon',<sup>16</sup> by 'this'

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is also found in writings in Greek. What constitutes the interpolation of Rufinus is the idea that the narration in Genesis does not refer to the very beginning of the actual creation (I adduce evidence in due course); but the notion of prolongation of time is Origen's. Anyhow, this notion is enunciated in *deOr.* (s. *supra*).

<sup>9</sup> Eccl. 1, 9, 10.

<sup>10</sup> *Princ.* III.5.3.

<sup>11</sup> *Princ.* II.1.3.; s. also, *Princ.* II.3.1; III.5.3; *deOr.* XXVII, 15.

<sup>12</sup> *Princ.* II.5.3

<sup>13</sup> Wis. 13, 9.

<sup>14</sup> Eph. 2, 7.

<sup>15</sup> *Princ.* II.3.5.

<sup>16</sup> *commMatt.* 14, 5; italics mine.

denoting that the present aeon is one in a series of many ones. This is also why he speaks of 'the future aeon',<sup>17</sup> as well as of 'the forthcoming aeons'.<sup>18</sup>

Since these considerations are found also in works in Greek, we can accept that the relevant points in *Princ* are authentic. It should also be noticed that Origen is consistent with his view of time as 'stretched out alongside with' the 'structure' of this world. For there is always a unique correspondence between the world and time: in every moment of time there is only a single world.<sup>19</sup> The multitude of worlds is understood only in terms of succession, not as simultaneous coexistence, which is explicitly excluded.

It is in the light of this analysis that the distinction between 'ages' and 'periods of time' should be understood: "the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit must be understood as transcending all time and all ages and all eternity. . . . The rest of things, however, which are external to the Trinity, must be measured by ages and periods of time."<sup>20</sup>

The term 'age' is used to express the duration of a cosmic period, whereas the term 'periods of time' is used indefinitely in order to express a period either longer or shorter than an 'aeon'.

Thus the motion of the world in time is realized through stretches of time called 'aeons' or 'ages'. The whole of time, therefore, consists of consecutive aeons; time as a whole comprises many aeons and is longer than the present age.

If, however, there is something greater than the ages,—so that among created beings we think of ages, but among those who exceed and surpass visible created beings, something still greater<sup>21</sup> which will perhaps exist at the 'restitution of all things'<sup>22</sup> when the universe reaches its perfect end, then possibly that period in which the consummation of all things will happen, is to be understood as something more than an age. With regard to this I am influenced by the authority of holy

<sup>17</sup> *commJohn*, 19, XIV.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Princ*, II.3.6.

<sup>20</sup> *Princ*, IV.4.1.

<sup>21</sup> Here, especially in the expression 'we think', we find once again Origen's notion of relativity in the perception of time from the point of view of various ranks of life. It should be stressed that this relativity refers to the *perception* of time; this is why he uses the expression 'we think' referring to the duration of ages.

<sup>22</sup> Acts, 3, 21.

Scripture, which says, 'For an age and still more'. Now when it says 'still more', undoubtedly it wishes something more than an age to be understood.<sup>23</sup>

Thus the entire conception of successive cosmic periods springs from the questions raised by juxtaposition of scriptural passages. It is also deemed that the answer to the pertinent questions are also found in the Scripture, namely, in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Hebrews, as well as in Isaiah and Ecclesiastes. In other words, the assertion is that both the origin and the solution of these questions are to be found entirely in the Scripture.

The notion of successive worlds and the emergence of a world after the consummation of the previous one, was also one of the main Stoic doctrines. Tatian, for example, states that we should "leave aside" the allegations of "Zeno, who claims that the same people in the same situations will occur again, namely that Anytus and Meletus will accuse again, Voussiris will be again a foreign-killer and Hercules will again commit the deeds".<sup>24</sup>

All those who accused Origen for his tenet of successive worlds have essayed to associate his views with the Stoic doctrine. In *Princ.*, as edited by Koetschau and translated in English by G.W. Butterworth, we find the following note: "In Theophilus of Alexandria's Paschal letter, translated by Jerome in his Ep. 96, we also find the following: 'Nor does any man die over and over again, as Origen dared to write, in his desire to establish the most impious doctrine of the Stoics by the authority of the divine scriptures'; and the note goes on thus: "Rufinus has carefully avoided giving the views that Origen really expressed".<sup>25</sup> This obviously implies that those views might provide ground for the accusations of Theophilus of Alexandria.

Origen himself, however, neither ignores nor tries to conceal the fact that this notion of successive worlds seems to have some apparent similarity to that of the Greeks.<sup>26</sup> He explicates his own opinion on the doctrine of recurrence of identical worlds, regarding this Stoic belief as 'ludicrous'.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *Princ.*, II.3.5.

<sup>24</sup> *SVP*, I, 32, 19.

<sup>25</sup> *FP*, p. 83, n. 1.

<sup>26</sup> *Cels.*, IV, 62.

<sup>27</sup> *Cels.*, V, 20.

I do not know why Celsus, in writing against us, thought it serviceable to throw out a doctrine which needs much proof, or at least a subjective argument, to show as convincingly as possible that 'the period of mortal life is similar from beginning to end, and it is inescapable that according to the set cycles the same things always have happened, are now happening, and will happen'. If this is true, free will is devastated. For if 'it is inescapable that in the period of mortal life according to the determined cycles the same things always have happened, are now happening and will happen', it is obviously inevitable that Socrates will always be a philosopher and be accused of introducing new deities and of corrupting the youth; Anytus and Meletus will always be accusing him, and the assembly of the Areopagus will vote for his condemnation to death by hemlock.<sup>28</sup> Thus also it is inevitable that according to the predetermined cycles Phalaris will always be a tyrant, Alexander of Pherae will commit the same brutalities, and those condemned to the bull of Phalaris will always groan inside it. If this is admitted, I do not see how free will can be preserved, and how any praise or blame can be reasonable. The reply to this assumption of Celsus will be that if 'the period of mortal life is similar from the beginning to end', and if 'it is inescapable that according to the determined cycles the same things always have happened, are now happening and will happen', then it is inescapable that Moses will always come out of Egypt with the people of the Jews; Jesus will again come to visit this life and will do the same things that he has done, not just once but an infinite number of times according to the cycles. Furthermore, the same people will be Christians in the determined cycles, and again Celsus will write his book, which he has indeed written before an infinite number of times.

Celsus affirms that it is only 'the period of mortal life' which 'according to the set cycles' has of necessity always been, and is now, and will be identical. But most of the Stoics say that this is true not only of the period of mortal life, but also of immortal life and of those they regard as gods.<sup>29</sup> For after the conflagration of the universe, which has happened and will happen an infinite number of times, the same order of all things from beginning to end not only has occurred but also will occur. In attempting to remedy the absurdities in some way the Stoics say in every cycle all men will be in some unknown way identical with those of former cycles. To avoid supposing that Socrates will live again, they say it will be someone identical with Socrates, who

<sup>28</sup> The instances in this argument are commonplace: Cf. *Cels.* V, 20; Tatian, 3; Eusebius, *Fragmenta ex opere de theophania*, II, 21; Nemesius, *de Nature Hominorum*, 38; Augustine, *de Civitate Dei*, XII, 13; Origen propounds the argument with biblical instances in *Princ.* II, 3, 4. Cited in H. Chadwick's *Contra Celsum*, p. 237, n. 5.

<sup>29</sup> The Stoic gods are not exempt from the process of *ἐκπόρρωσις* and *διακόσμησις*.

will marry someone identical with Xanthippe, and will be accused by men identical with Anytus and Meletus. But I do not know how the world can always be the same, and one world not merely identical with one another, while the things in it are not the same but are identical to each other. However, the primary argument in reply to the words of Celsus and the Stoics will be discussed elsewhere at a more convenient time, since at the present moment to give a further account is irrelevant to our immediate object at this point.<sup>30</sup>

He returns to this issue later in the same work, in order to argue against the Stoic doctrine of recurrence of identical worlds:

The Stoics maintain that a conflagration of the universe takes place periodically and after that a restoration of order appears, in which everything is identical with what occurred in the previous restoration of the world. All those who were content with the doctrine<sup>31</sup> said that there is a slight and very small difference between one period and the events in the period before it. Now these men say that in the succeeding period the same things will recur: Socrates will be the son of Sophroniscus again and will be an Athenian, and Phaenarete will again marry Sophroniscus and give birth to him. Although they do not use the word 'resurrection', they certainly maintain the idea, when they say that Socrates will rise again after originating from the seed of Sophroniscus and will be formed in the womb of Phaenarete, and after being ubrought nurtured at Athens will become a philosopher; and somehow his previous philosophy will rise again and will similarly be identical to the one before. Moreover, Anytus and Meletus will rise again as Socrates' accusers, and the assembly of Areopagus will condemn him. And, what is more ridiculous than this, Socrates will put on clothes which will be identical with those of the previous period, and will be in identical poverty and in a city called Athens which will be identical with that before. Phalaris will be a tyrant once more, with a cruelty identical with that of the previous world, and will condemn men also identical with those before. But why need I particularize the doctrine about these matters held by the Stoic philosophers, even though Celsus does not laugh at it but probably even holds it in high regard, since he thinks that 'Zeno was wiser than Jesus'?<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *Cels.* IV, 67-68.

<sup>31</sup> Some later Stoics rejected this doctrine, namely, Panaetius (Diog. Laert. VII, 142; Cicero, *de Natura Deorum*, II, 46; H. Diels, *Doxographi Graeci*, 469) and Boethius (Philo, *de Aeternitate Mundi* 78ff). Clement suggests the correspondence with the Christian idea of resurrection (*Stromateis*, V, 9, 4); cited by H. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, p. 279, n. 6.

<sup>32</sup> *Cels.* V, 20.



Regarding the scriptural passages where the term *αἰών* is used in the plural, H. Sasse points out that they constitute an "obvious suggestion that the *αἰών* is not unique, but there is a series of *αἰῶνες* in which all things flow in eternal recurrence."<sup>33</sup> He affirms, however, that "the biblical view of the uniqueness of the course of the world, which is also a view of Persian religion, stands in antithesis to the pantheistic and astrological doctrine of recurrence with its confusion of God and the world, of eternity and time."<sup>34</sup> Origen does reject the doctrine of recurrence either. What Sasse does not explain is why the notion of many 'aeons' necessarily entails 'eternal recurrence'. He just postulates his view without providing any reasoning to sustain this. It will, however, be shown that this assumption of Sasse is not correct: a time which is understood to comprise many consecutive aeons does not necessarily entail any doctrine of eternal recurrence.

Origen then is sheerly opposed to the Stoic doctrine of recurrence of identical worlds. In the light of those passages then, we can accept similar ones in *Princ.* Therefore, the foregoing testimonies adduced by G. Butterworth,<sup>35</sup> which suggest some kind of connection of Origen's notion with the Stoic tenet on the subject, is unjustified and ungrounded; for even in *Princ.* these views are stated with equal clarity:

Moreover, as for those who maintain that worlds similar to each other and in all respects alike sometimes come into existence, I do not know what proofs they can bring in support of this theory. For if it is said that there is to be a world similar in all respects to the present world, then it will happen that Adam and Eve will again do what they did before, there will be another flood, the same Moses will once more lead a people numbering six hundred thousand out of Egypt, Judas also will twice betray his Lord, Saul will a second time keep the clothes of those who are stoning Stephen, and we shall say that every deed which has been done in this life must be done again. I do not think that this can be established by any reasoning, if souls are actuated by freedom of choice and maintain their progress or the reverse in accordance with the power of their own free will. For souls are not driven on some revolving course which brings them into the same cycle again

<sup>33</sup> H. Sasse, "Αἰών", *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 1, pp. 197-209; p. 204.

<sup>34</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 205.

<sup>35</sup> *FP*, p. 83, n. 1.

after many ages, with the result that they do or desire this or that, but they direct the course of their deeds toward whatever end the freedom of their individual minds may aim at.

What these men say, however, is the same as if one were to maintain that if a bushel of corn were poured out on the ground it could happen that on two occasions the grains would fall in exactly the same positions, so that each single grain would lie the second time next to that grain besides which it was thrown at the first, and the bushel would be scattered in the same order and with the same marks as formerly. Certainly this is an utterly impossible thing to happen with the innumerable grains of a bushel, even if they were to be poured out again and again for countless ages. It seems to me, then, impossible that the world could be restored again a second time with the same order and the same number of births, deaths and actions; but worlds may exist that are diverse, having variations by no means slight, so that for certain clear causes the condition of one may be better, while another for different causes may be worse, and another intermediate. What may be the number or measure of these worlds I confess I do not know.<sup>36</sup>

It is interesting that Origen does not confine his criticism of the opinion of recurrence of identical worlds only to the Stoics, but he extends this to other Greeks as well, namely to 'the Pythagoreans and Platonists',<sup>37</sup> who 'hold similar mistaken opinions'.<sup>38</sup> In addition, he states that 'the learned men among Egyptians' hold similar views.<sup>39</sup>

Furthermore, though the Pythagoreans and Platonists assert the world to be indestructible, yet they fall into similar absurdities. For when in certain determined cycles the stars adopt the same configurations and relationships to each other, they say that everything on earth is in the same position as it was at the last time when the universe contained the same relationship of the stars.<sup>40</sup> According then to this doctrine, it is necessary that when after a long period the stars come into the same relationship to one another which they had in the time of Socrates, Socrates will again be born of the same parents and suffer the same misery, and will be accused by Anytus and Meletus, and be condemned by the assembly of the Areopagus. Are then the scholarly men among the Egyptians who have similar traditions highly regarded and not laughed at by Celsus and his like?<sup>41</sup>

<sup>36</sup> *Princ.* II.3.4.

<sup>37</sup> *Cels.* V, 21.

<sup>38</sup> *Cels.* V, 21.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Plato, *Timaeus*, 39D.

<sup>41</sup> *Cels.* V, 21.

In the same work, namely *Cels*, not only Origen did rebuke those who hold the doctrine of recurrence of identical worlds, but also expounds his own opinion on the question:

As for us [we] say that the universe is cared for by God in accordance with the contingencies of the free will of each man, and that as far as possible it is always led on to being better, and we know that the nature of our free will is to admit various contingencies since it cannot achieve the entirely unchangeable nature of God.<sup>42</sup>

H. Sasse regards that the aforementioned passage of *Ecclésiastes nec-essarily* implies the doctrine of eternal recurrence, namely, 'periods of the world in their infinite succession'.<sup>43</sup> Origen, however, regards this scriptural portion as implying only the *succession* of worlds, which is not infinite, because time in itself is not infinite.

### *The cause of consummation*

This aeon will be consummated because there is 'evil' in it. This is the cause for this aeon, as well as any aeon, to be consummated. Authority is once more sought in his hero Paul, 'the wisest of the high priests and the most knowledgeable of the priests':<sup>44</sup>

The blessed Paul says, 'redeeming the time, because the days are evil'<sup>45</sup> (and if they are evil, then there is evil in them); and Jacob 'few and evil have my days been';<sup>46</sup> and Moses in the Psalm 'the days of our years in these years'.<sup>47</sup> And everywhere in the scripture the days of this aeon are called evil.<sup>48</sup>

Likewise, quoting Matt. 6, 34, he calls the present aeon allegorically 'present day', saying that the 'present day is one of being tormented and hard work and suffering hardship and pain'.<sup>49</sup> His belief is that "to the just this aeon is a winter",<sup>50</sup> adding this:

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>43</sup> H. Sasse, *op. cit.*, p. 205.  
<sup>44</sup> *Homilies on Leviticus*, 4.4.  
<sup>45</sup> Eph. 5, 16.  
<sup>46</sup> Gen. 47, 16.  
<sup>47</sup> Ps. 89, 10.  
<sup>48</sup> *Mat*, 134, quoting Matt. 6, 34.  
<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>50</sup> *contra Mat*, 17, 23.

This entire aeon is a night, it is darkness. Light is still withheld from you; you now see through a glass yet you will see the light in the future. Nevertheless this entire aeon is a night.<sup>51</sup>

Further he reiterates his view commenting on the same biblical work: "This entire aeon is a night. Light is withheld from you. What you take now as light, is just how you see it through a glass; 'And in thy light we shall see light'.<sup>52</sup> We shall see it in the future. Yet this aeon is a night; and since it is a night, there are many wars, many beasts going around."<sup>53</sup> this state of things is due to evil ruling over the present aeon; this "ruler of this aeon is allegorically called Caesar".<sup>54</sup> As to the real cause of consummation, Origen holds firm that the causes are moral:

Curse and lie are the cause of consummation; therefore, if they did not exist, anger and consummation could not exist, either.<sup>55</sup>

It is out of God's anger at evil having been accumulated in the world that consummation takes place. Referring to Ez. 5, 13 'Thus shall mine anger be accomplished' (καὶ συντελεσθήσεται ὁ θυμός μου) he comments thus: "This denotes that the anger of God will come to an end in the same way that world will be consumed."<sup>56</sup> Hence "we maintain that the cause of these events is the excessive torrent of evil which is purged by a flood or conflagration."<sup>57</sup> Further: "When, therefore, He is said to be a consuming fire, we inquire what is fit to be consumed by God; and we say that as a fire God consumes evil and the actions resulting from it".<sup>58</sup> So, "in this sense also 'rivers of fire' are said to be 'before' God, since he makes the evil which has permeated the whole soul to disappear."<sup>59</sup> And here is the conclusion:

<sup>51</sup> *scJob*, 35, PG 17.96; *enarrJob*, 35, PG 12.1044.

<sup>52</sup> Ps. 35, 10.

<sup>53</sup> *enarrJob*, 35.

<sup>54</sup> *commMatt*, 17, 28.

<sup>55</sup> *scPs*, 58, PG 12.1477. This is one of the more expressive statements for the need of a prolonged time. If, hypothetically, free moral action were the proper one, by everyone and at every moment, then there would be no need for a prolonged time comprising many aeons. Referring to 2 Cor. 5, 19, 'For in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself', Origen says that "the postponement of our conversion and the negligence of our amendment lengthen out the periods of this reconciliation and make them longer." *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 9.41.8.

<sup>56</sup> *scEz*, 5, PG 13.784.

<sup>57</sup> *Cels*, IV, 12.

<sup>58</sup> *Cels*, IV, 13.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*.

Accordingly, we do not deny the reality of the purifying fire and the destruction of the world to destroy evil and renew everything that exists,<sup>60</sup> since we say that we have learnt these things from the prophets out of the sacred books.<sup>61</sup>

The arrangement of the next world stems from the quality of free moral action. This conception refers not only to the arrangement of the world, but also to the *duration* of a certain cosmic period, namely an aeon. This period of time is not a constant natural datum, it is not pre-arranged by any natural law; it is related to moral action. This means that the duration of a cosmic period depends on the 'evil' (κακία) accumulated in the world during a certain aeon.

In *commJohn* a 'certain reason' is asserted to exist for the occurrence of 'cataclysm' (as in Gen. 6, 13ff); this reason is the purpose for the 'seed of Cain . . . to be extinguished'. In order to ground this assertion Origen again appeals to the Wisdom of Solomon,<sup>62</sup> as well as to Deuteronomy; the destruction of Sodom and Gomorah was 'a work of the good God'. Certain references to Psalms<sup>63</sup> about destruction occurred in Egypt are taken to suggest the same notion.<sup>64</sup> For it is taken for granted that 'it is not in accord with God's character not to stop the spread of evil and bring moral renewal.'<sup>65</sup>

The 'destruction' of the world then, which marks the end of an aeon and, thus, the duration of it, is not due to any natural determinism or cosmic law. This duration is determined by free moral action of rational creatures. Which means that this duration is determined by creaturely freedom. This is a point which considerably contrasts Origen's thought from any pagan conception of cosmic periods and this is set forth in his reply to Celsus:

Does not Celsus appear laughable when he supposes that 'evils could never either increase or decrease'? For even if 'the nature of everything is one and the same', the emergence (γένεσις) of evils is not by any means always the same. Although the nature of some particular individual man is one and the same, things are not always the same

<sup>60</sup> I translate the term *παντός* not as 'universe', but as 'everything that exists', in order to maintain Origen's conception of the world; anyway this term is used because it was Celsus who used it in his allegations.

<sup>61</sup> *Cels*, IV, 21.

<sup>62</sup> Wis. 10, 3; 10, 4; 10, 7. Also, Cf. Deut. 32, 32 and 33.

<sup>63</sup> Ps. 77, 47.

<sup>64</sup> *commJohn*, 20, IV.

<sup>65</sup> *Cels*, IV, 20.



so far as his mind, his reason, and actions are concerned. For at one time he may not operate according to reason, while at another time he acts with reason in order to do evil, and this varies in its extent either more or less. And sometimes he may have oriented himself to virtue and is makes more or less progress, and at times he attains to virtue itself, realized in more or less contemplation. So also even more may this be said of 'the nature of everything', that, even if this remains one and the same in genus, yet the events which happen to this 'whole' are not always the same nor of the same kind. For there are not periods of productivity or of famine all the time, nor always of heavy rain or drought. Similarly, neither are there determined periods of fertility or famine in the life of better souls; and the flood of worse souls increases or decreases. To those who want to attain an accurate knowledge, awareness of the doctrine about evils is necessary; for indeed evils do not always remain the same in number, on account of the providence which either watches over earthly affairs or cleanses them by floods or conflagrations, and probably not only earthly things, but also those of the whole world,<sup>66</sup> which is in need of purification whenever the evil in it becomes extensive.<sup>67</sup>

This 'whenever' indicates the fundamental correlation between free moral action and the duration of an aeon. Origen though does not fail to reject Gnostic as well as Neoplatonic views, according to which it is matter itself that is evil. In his thought evil is closely related to freedom: "ignorance of God is . . . among the number of evils, while one of the greatest evils is not to know the way to worship God and of piety towards him".<sup>68</sup> Also,

in our view it is not true that 'the matter which dwells among mortals' is responsible for evils.<sup>69</sup> Each person's mind is responsible for the evil that exists in him, and this is what evil is. Evils are the actions that result from it. In our view nothing else is strictly speaking evil.<sup>70</sup>

Hence, not only the notion of successive worlds and aeons, but also the idea of the limits marking the consecutive aeons realized through destruction and restoration of the world, are grounded on Scripture.

<sup>66</sup> I do not translate the expression *ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ* as 'universe'. I think, that the term 'world', in the sense already discussed, is more appropriate here. Origen does not refer to the visible firmament, but to the moral action of rational creatures of all ranks of life.

<sup>67</sup> *Cels.* IV, 64.

<sup>68</sup> *Cels.* IV, 65.

<sup>69</sup> S. also *Cels.* III, 42.

<sup>70</sup> *Cels.* IV, 66.

Nevertheless Origen is aware of the fact that this idea is found in the Greeks, too: the doctrine of cosmic destructions was held ever since Heraclitus down to the early Stoics and this was also sustained even by Stoics as late as Marcus Aurelius. However, his constant concern was to contrast his conception of successive worlds from that of the Greeks, contending that his own doctrine is not actually originated in Greek thought. He claims that the Greeks had taken the idea from the Hebrews, namely Moses, yet they 'misunderstood'<sup>71</sup> and falsified it to such an extent that the whole conception is unacceptable to him:

The Greeks also have a doctrine that the earth is periodically purified by flood or by fire, as Plato also says in one place as follows: 'And then the gods flood the earth, purifying it with waters, some in the mountains . . .'<sup>72</sup> and so on.<sup>73</sup>

In the same vein, he refers to "the *Theaetetus*, where according to Plato Socrates says: 'But neither is it possible for evils to be destroyed from men, nor for them to find a place among the gods'<sup>74</sup> and so on". Further, "the passage in the *Timaeus* which says 'And when the gods purify the earth'<sup>75</sup> has shown that when the earth is cleansed by water it has fewer evils than it had during the time before it was purified. And in agreement with the opinion of Plato we maintain that at times evils are less, on account of the passage in the *Theaetetus* that says 'evils cannot be destroyed by men'.<sup>76</sup>

Origen, therefore, is aware of the Greek views on the subject, yet he insists that it is from the Hebrews that the idea had been taken:

According to the opinion of some Greeks (probably drawing on the very ancient nation of the Hebrews) a purifying fire is brought on the world, and plausibly to each individual who needs judgement by fire together with healing. This fire burns, but does not utterly consume, those who have no matter which needs to be devoured by it, while it burns and does utterly destroy those who have built 'wood, hay, or stubble'<sup>77</sup> on the building (as this is through tropology called) by their

<sup>71</sup> *Cels.* IV, 12.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. *Timaeus* 22D; Cf. *Cels.* I, 19; IV, 11.

<sup>73</sup> *Cels.* IV, 20.

<sup>74</sup> *Theaetetus*, 176A; Cf. *Cels.* VIII, 55.

<sup>75</sup> *Timaeus*, 22D.

<sup>76</sup> *Cels.* IV, 62.

<sup>77</sup> 1 Cor. 3, 12.

actions, words, and thoughts. The divine scriptures say that the Lord 'like the fire of a smelting-furnace and like a cleaner's herb'<sup>78</sup> will call upon each individual who is in need, because they have been mixed with (*ἀναμειχθαι*) the evil flood of matter, as it were (*οἶονεὶ φοῦλῃν χυτὴν ὕλην*), which results from evil; and I say that they need fire which, so to speak, purges those mixed with 'copper', 'and tin, and lead'.<sup>79</sup> Those who wishes to know, may learn these things from the prophet Ezekiel.<sup>80</sup>

Because of Celsus' claim that the Christians "misunderstood what is said by the Greeks or barbarians about these matters",<sup>81</sup> he insists that it is the Greeks who have 'misunderstood' and, therefore, falsified the original conception. For Celsus,

failed to pay attention to the ancientness of Moses, who is reported by certain Greek writers to have lived in the time of Inachus the Son of Phoroneus. He is also admitted by Egyptians to be of far antiquity, and also by those who compiled Phoenician history. Anyone interested may read the two books of Flavius Josephus on the Antiquity of the Jews, that he may learn how Moses was more ancient than those who said that at long intervals of time there are floods and conflagrations in the world.<sup>82</sup>

Likewise it is pointed out that "Moses is much earlier than Homer and even than the invention of the Greek alphabet."<sup>83</sup> He argues then that it is the Greeks who 'misunderstood' the idea of 'destructions' of the world—an idea which is originated in the Scripture:

Moses and some of the prophets were men of far antiquity; they did not receive the idea of the world-conflagration from others. If one pays due attention to dates, the truth is that others miscomprehended (*παράκούσαντας*) them and reproduced inaccurate knowledge about these things; they thus created theories about periodic identical recurrences, which are indistinguishable from one another in both their individual characteristics and in the events involving them. We however do not assign either the flood or the conflagration to any cycles or periodic mutual places of the stars.<sup>84</sup>

I quoted all these with the objective of showing Origen's insistence on contrasting his notion of successive aeons with that of the Greeks,

<sup>78</sup> Mal. 3, 2.

<sup>79</sup> Ez. 22, 18.

<sup>80</sup> *Cels.* V, 15.

<sup>81</sup> *Cels.* IV, 11.

<sup>82</sup> *Cels.* IV, 11.

<sup>83</sup> *Cels.* IV, 21.

<sup>84</sup> *Cels.* IV, 12.

particularly the Stoics. Nevertheless, he does not hesitate to employ the Stoic terminology on the subject. For in fact it was Marcus Aurelius who first used the term 'aeon' in this sense, that is, to call each world-cycle an 'aeon'.<sup>85</sup> However, Marcus used the same term to indicate a notion rejected by Origen, namely that of infinite time. For he speaks of infinite time as proceeding from aeon to aeon.<sup>86</sup> Earlier Stoics used simply the term 'infinite time'. It was Marcus Aurelius who used the term 'aeon' in order to indicate both the infinite time of the universe as well as the time from the beginning until the end of a certain cosmic cycle.<sup>87</sup>

One may wonder why Origen is so insistent on contrasting his conception with that of the Greeks; why does he again and again appeal to the particular scriptural passages which are seen to buttress up this notion. The answer is that his deeper motive lies in his aim to denote his different conception of time. The question of recurrence is a principal one. For the attitude to it implies two radically different conceptions of time. The pagan opinion of identical recurrence of worlds entails some very significant consequences, such as the following:

1. Human freedom is dismantled from its actual content, to an extent that it makes no sense at all.<sup>88</sup>
2. Conflagration, as the 'end' of a cosmic period, is a purely natural phenomenon.
3. The span of time in which a 'period' is stretched is constant; among earlier Greeks, Heraclitus used to call this period 'Great Year' (μεγάλος ἐνιαυτός).
4. The world itself, in its motion in time, moves towards nowhere. This is what led some scholars to speak of 'cyclic' time in Greek thought.

Origen, on the other hand, is thoroughly opposed to all these fundamental implications. A cosmic period has no definite length of time. Consummation of a world stems from purely moral causes and

<sup>85</sup> *Meditations*, II.12; IV.63; VI.15; VII.19; IX.28; IX.32; XI.2; XII.32; Cf. J.M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy*, p. 284.

<sup>86</sup> *Meditations*, IX.28; Cf. J.M. Rist, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. J.M. Rist, *ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Cf. A.H. Armstrong - R.A. Markus, *op. cit.*, pp. 121ff.

the world is directed towards an end. It is then important to focus our attention on a phrase of *Princ*:

For souls are not driven on some revolving course which brings them into the same cycle again after many ages, with the result that they do or desire this or that, but they direct the course of their deeds toward whatever end the freedom of their individual minds may aim at.<sup>89</sup>

This in fact denotes a conception of time according to which the course of events is not a meaningless repetition, but a purposeful striving and course towards a goal and end.

The fundamental conviction of Origen is then that what is 'next' is intrinsically related to the freedom of rational beings. For they are not imprisoned in a depressive cosmic recurrence: rather it is their freedom, which actually determines the course of the world. This is why, in *deOr*, he declares that he does not know how the next world will be arranged by the divine dispensation (τῷ μέλλοντι μετὰ ταῦτα οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπως οἰκονομησόμενου).<sup>90</sup>

When, in *Cels*, he argues extensively against the Stoic doctrine of recurrence of identical worlds, his main argument is that such a conception actually abolishes freedom. If the Stoic doctrine is accepted, he says, "I do not know how our freedom of will be saved and how either praise or blame will be justified".<sup>91</sup> Freedom is the essential inherent element of moral action; and it is an axiom that "if you take away the element of free will from virtue, you also destroy its essence".<sup>92</sup> In *commJohn*, too, the view that the future arrangement of the world is contingent is reiterated: "and I do not know if similar things or even worse may happen in long recurring periods of time."<sup>93</sup>

Thus, he holds not a merely natural conception of time, but also a moral conception of it, since time acquires a deeper meaning related to moral action and freedom. It is not a natural law but free moral action that which determines the duration of an aeon.<sup>94</sup>

In the light of this, time has a meaning different from any of those of the Greeks. For what they had endeavoured was to cap-

<sup>89</sup> *Princ*, II.3.4.

<sup>90</sup> *deOr*, XXVII, 15.

<sup>91</sup> *Cels*, IV, 67.

<sup>92</sup> *Cels*, IV, III.

<sup>93</sup> *commJohn*, 10, XLII.

<sup>94</sup> *Cels*, IV, 12.



ture a scientific ideal; to know the cosmic process as a whole, to render nature wholly transparent to understanding. All particulars were to be understood in terms of natural universal law. This *natural* conception of the meaning of being into the world had a fundamental implication: in such an existential attitude man stands impartial in the natural process and what remains to him is to know what the cosmic process is. There is no evolution towards any final goal, there is only an endless repetition.

This is the fundamental notion that Origen rejects. To him there is a vision of an ultimate end, because this was promised. In order to attain to this end though there is a task to be accomplished: this task will be carried out and the goal will be reached only in time and through time, as I shall argue presently.

In this conception of time responsibility is not denied nor any notion of inherent triviality is accepted. This is how a radical break between Christianity and Classicism was established. Hence, although the notion of recurrence appears to have some similarity to the Stoic one, there is a thorough difference between them. The Stoics regarded prolongation of time as an established natural law from which they simply cannot escape. Marcus Aurelius had already claimed that there is nothing to be gained by *prolonging* life<sup>95</sup> and Seneca argued that perfection does not require prolongation, as life can be made perfect in a finite time, even if it is short.<sup>96</sup> To Origen, however, prolongation<sup>97</sup> is needed because perfection has an actual spatio-temporal content and prolonged life does not mean identically recurring life; this is part of a process towards a final *goal*.

What constitutes then the essential difference in the notion of prolongation between the Stoics (and other Greeks, too, such as Aristotle<sup>98</sup>

<sup>95</sup> *Meditations*, II.14; The same argument is found in earlier writers, namely, Lucretius and Cicero. Cf. Lucretius, *de Rerum Natura*, 3, II. 1087-94; Cicero, *Tusc.* I.39.94; cited by R. Sorabji, *op. cit.*, p. 180 and n. 14.

<sup>96</sup> Seneca, *Ep. Mor.* 32; 93, 7; 101, 8-9. cited in *loc. cit.*

<sup>97</sup> Plotinus also argues for recurrence by another argument: he maintains that there is only a finite number of seminal reasons (*λόγοι*); so, when there are as many creatures as the number of seminal reasons, a new period and a new cosmos will have to start, containing the same creatures. Cf. *Enneads* IV.7.1 (23-5); IV.7.3 (14-9).

<sup>98</sup> Aristotle did not accept the idea of a prolonged time either. In point of this, he argued against Plato that the Idea of Good would not be better through being everlasting, in the same sense that a white thing will not be whiter for lasting longer. (*Ethica Nicomachea*, I.6, 1096b3-5; *Ethica Eudemia*, I.3, 1218a10-15).

and Epicurus)<sup>99</sup> on the one hand, and Origen on the other, is a sheerly different conception of time. I shall take the opportunity to elaborate on particular facets of this crucial point in due course.

This analysis should be borne in mind in canvassing Origen's conception of 'consummation' (συντέλεια): He speaks of 'the destruction of the world, which our writings call consummation', during which 'changes in bodies occur according to ways that have been appointed' and 'world is constituted of these bodies'.<sup>100</sup>

The scriptural passages to which he appeals are not only Matt. 13, 39 and Heb. 9, 26 which H. Chadwick cites,<sup>101</sup> but also Matt. 13, 40, Matt. 13, 49, Matt. 24, 3 and Matt. 28, 20: On this, H. Chadwick points out that pagan writers do not use the term συντέλεια in this sense.<sup>102</sup> This is true; and it is precisely on this very fact that one should also see Origen's insistence on contrasting his own views with the pagan ones. The deeper distinction of his idea of consummation lies on his concept of cosmos, namely, a world comprising rational creatures, whereas the 'natural' environment of these particular 'worlds' is treated as an issue of minor importance. What is of significance is not the 'consummation' of the natural world itself, but that of rational creatures. The very term συντέλεια (consummation) is derived from the term τέλος (end) and is primarily perceived as the end of the existential status in a certain rank of life and judgment of action during the time of being there. Thus, either conflagration or cataclysm is regarded mainly as the *cause of end of a certain arrangement of rational life in various kinds of bodies*, whereas the question of the existence of the world as a natural reality is not treated in much detail.

This is why Origen's conception of συντέλεια should be regarded as different from the pagan one. After all he was above all a theologian, and was unwilling to involve himself in debates on questions of Physics. Nevertheless, in arguing against Celsus he expounds to a certain extent his view of 'consummation' in a natural sense:

Subsequently, since Celsus suspects or perhaps even himself knows (συνιδόν) the answer that could be given as a reply to the question

<sup>99</sup> Epicurus also held that life can be perfect in a lifetime, even if it is short; *Principal Sayings* 19 and 20; *Letter to Menoeceus* 126 (Diogenes Laertius 10.126 and 145).

<sup>100</sup> *Cels.* IV, 57.

<sup>101</sup> H. Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum*, p. 231, n. 2.

<sup>102</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 231, n. 2.

about those destroyed by the flood, he says: 'If he does not destroy his own offspring, where is he to cast them out of this world which he himself made?' We reply to this that He does not cast those who suffered in the flood out of the world, which consists of heaven and earth. Rather, he delivers them from the life in the flesh (τῆς ἐν σαρκὶ ζωῆς) and, as He removes them from these bodies, at the same time he removes them from being on earth, which in many places in the scriptures is usually called the world.<sup>103</sup>

Thus "those who suffer in the flood are not taken out of the world in an absolute sense", as the world is consisting of particular 'worlds', which although not seen are nevertheless included into the world".<sup>104</sup>

It is perfectly clear that 'consummation' is an occurrence affecting the entirety of the world, not only the earth. This is why "we do not deny the reality of purifying fire and the destruction of the world to destroy evil and renew the *whole* [world] (τοῦ παντός)."<sup>105</sup>

Besides, "floods and conflagrations" take place in order to purify "not only earthly things but the whole world" (οὐ τὰ ἐπὶ γῆς μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ) whenever evil in it becomes extensive".<sup>106</sup>

Although this assertion mainly pertains to rational creatures, it appears to resemble the Stoic one, at least in letter. This is why H. von Arnim included an extensive part of this section of *Cels* in his edition of the fragments of Early Stoics taking it that at this point Origen is quoting Chrysippus' views.<sup>107</sup>

It is obvious, therefore, that 'consummation' is of interest in as much as it has to do with the destiny of rational creatures, not with the natural status of the world, as it happened with pagan thinkers. Origen is certainly familiar with this kind of knowledge and deals with it only in case he is challenged to do so. This is what he does in the same work setting forth his concept of consummation. He expounds his views of the 'destruction of the world', of the 'nature of bodies' and of the nature of 'matter' on a natural basis spending an entire section<sup>108</sup> in order to make himself clear. But the conclusion of this section is indicative of his overall direction and objective:

<sup>103</sup> *Cels*, VI, 59.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *Cels*, IV, 21; s. also *Cels*, V, 43 and 44.

<sup>106</sup> *Cels*, IV, 64.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. *SVF*, II, 337, 33.

<sup>108</sup> *Cels*, IV, 60.

he feels that such a kind of debate is out of the purposes of his theology and beyond the scope of that particular work. Origen deprecated direct discussion with Celsus anyway; so he rather briskly puts an end to this through this statement:

But we are not going to discuss now the nature of the world when we reply to the accusations of Celsus (ἀλλ' οὐ ταῦτα νῦν πρόκειται ἀπαντῶσιν ἡμῖν πρὸς τὰς τοῦ Κέλσου κατηγορίας φυσιολογεῖν).<sup>109</sup>

This statement constitutes an expressive element of Origen's own existential presuppositions in expounding his thought and particularly his conception of time. This is why he deals with the question of consummation in a way different from the pagan one. His aim is to give emphasis to the theological, not the natural, implications of this concept. It is in the light of this aim that his notion of consummation (as his entire conception of time) should be understood.

### *The end of aeon and Judgement*

Due to this different view of time Origen holds a different conception of the end of each cosmic cycle. This end is not a mere moment in the continuous cosmic process: it is a moment of special significance. This marks not only the consummation of the aeon, but also the time at which God judges rational creatures on account of their action during the consummated aeon. This is also a point, which contrasts his entire conception of cosmic periods with the Stoic one.

While remaining unchanged in essence (μένων τῇ οὐσίᾳ ὅτρεπτος), He comes down on human affairs through his providence and dispensation (τῇ προνοίᾳ καὶ τῇ οἰκονομίᾳ). We adduce the divine scriptures saying that God is unchangeable through the words 'But thou art the same'<sup>110</sup> and 'I change not'.<sup>111</sup> But the gods of Epicurus, who are com-

<sup>109</sup> *Cels.* IV, 60. Origen uses the verb *φυσιολογεῖν* (to discuss the nature of the world) throughout his works in Greek: *Cels.* IV, 40; IV, 60; *frGen.* also, the noun *φυσιολογία* (discussion of the nature of the world) in *Cels.* IV, 77; V, 36; VIII, 21; *commMatt.* 13, 6; 17, 7 (which echoes Chrysippus. Cf. *SVF*, III, 74, 13, *apud Philo*); both *φυσιολογεῖν* and *φυσιολογία* in *frEph.* 29. He obviously took the term from Aristotle, and employed this in order to express his lack of interest in discussions about natural questions; Cf. Aristotle, *De Anima*, 406b26; *De Caelo*, 298b29; *Metaphysica*, 983b27; Aristotle used the term *φυσιολόγος* referring to the Presocratics, in order to denote their philosophical priorities.

<sup>110</sup> Ps. 101, 28.

<sup>111</sup> Mal. 3, 6.

posite made of atoms and liable to dissolution due to their constitution, are at pains to throw off the atoms which may cause their ruin. Furthermore, since the God of the Stoics is corporeal, at one time, when the conflagration is ongoing, consists entirely of mind (*γεμονικόν ἔχει τήν ὅλην οὐσίαν*), while at another time, when world-order comes, he becomes a part of it. They then have been unable to enunciate the natural conception of God's nature, as being sheerly incorruptible and simple and uncompounded, and indivisible.<sup>112</sup>

In addition:

The supervision and providence of God permeates all things, but not in the sense that the spirit of the Stoics does. Providence contains all those under ptovidence (*περιέχει τὰ προνοούμενα πρόνοια*), yet not as a containing body containing something material, but as a divine power which has embraced all those contained. According to the Stoics, who sustain that the first principles are corporeal, and thus hold everything to be destructible, venturing even to make the supreme God Himself destructible<sup>113</sup> (unless this seemed to them to be utterly outrageous), even the Logos of God, who comes down to humans and to the most insignificant things, is nothing other than a material spirit. According to us [sc. Christians], however, who seek to show that the rational soul is superior to any material nature and is an invisible and incorporeal essence (*καὶ οὐσίαν ἀόρατον καὶ ἀσώματον*),<sup>114</sup> the divine Logos is not material. Through him all things were made, and, in order that all things be made by the Logos, he stretches out not only to men, but also to things presumed to be unimportant and simply controlled by nature. Let the Stoics may destroy everything in a. But we do not concede that an incorporeal essence<sup>115</sup> is subject to a conflagration, or that the soul of man or the hypostasis<sup>116</sup> of angels, or thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers is dissolved into fire.<sup>117</sup>

On account of this Origen regards the end of an aeon not only as a consummation, but also as a moment of time in which judgement

<sup>112</sup> *Cels.* IV, 14.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. *SVF*, II, 308, 2934; II, 311, 23–32.

<sup>114</sup> I translate *οὐσία* as 'essence', that is, in its accurate correspondent in English. The rendering of *οὐσία* (essence) by the term 'being' should be avoided at this point, since soul alone is in no way regarded itself as a 'being'.

<sup>115</sup> Again, I translate *οὐσία* as 'essence', not as 'being'.

<sup>116</sup> I translate *ὑπόστασις* as 'hypostasis' since this Greek word has been employed in English, too; Origen at this point uses the term *ψυχή* for human beings; the term *ὑπόστασις* points to the incorporeal element of the beings of higher ranks of life. His tenet is that the term *ψυχή* applies to human beings only (*Cels.* VI, 71; VII, 38; *commJohn*, I, XXV). Therefore, the term *ὑπόστασις* should not be translated as 'being' for the same reason that *ψυχή* should be translated as 'being' either.

<sup>117</sup> *Cels.* VI, 71; s. also *Cels.* VI, 58.



takes place. This is why 'the fire that is brought on the world is purifying' and 'it is applied to each individual who needs judgement by fire together with healing'.<sup>118</sup> Consummation is not just a natural occurrence; it is closely connected with Judgement:

But if there will be a certain time when the world will be brought to the end, which it must necessarily have since it had a beginning, then there will be a certain end of the world and after that a righteous judgement of everyone.<sup>119</sup>

In *commMatt* there is extensive reference to the end of the aeon as the 'end of things . . . which is also called consummation of the aeon'; it is then that 'the angels of God, who have been ordered to do so, will collect the malicious doctrines grown in the soul' and will discard them into the purifying fire and it is then that judgement will take place.<sup>120</sup> It is then that 'God who is above everything will be the just judge of everyone for everything made during his life'.<sup>121</sup>

The end of an aeon as judgement is based upon two fundamental conceptions.

First, God is incorporeal and rational creatures have in themselves an incorporeal element which is susceptible of change, but not of destruction, during a consummation. As argued earlier, the incorporeal element of a rational creature is in no way held to live as an independent being. The dualism 'corporeal-incorporeal' (element of a rational creature) is only conceptual, not factual; it exists only in mind as an intellectual abstraction. This is why Origen comments on Matt. 10, 28 ('fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell') stating that what this passage teaches is that although 'the soul is incorporeal' it will be not punished without a body'.<sup>122</sup> This incorporeal element then is not a subsistent being in itself; it is only part of the outcome which emerges from the concurrence of those reasons and causes which result to the making of a rational being.

<sup>118</sup> *Cels.* V, 15.

<sup>119</sup> *Cels.* IV, 9. I translate the term *περί πάντων* verbatim, namely 'of everyone' or 'about everyone'. Translation of this as 'of all men', could be inaccurate, since nowhere does Origen speak of 'men' at all. To him 'judgement' applies to the entirety of the world, not only to the human rank of life; this is why he speaks of 'everyone' (*περί πάντων*), not just of human beings.

<sup>120</sup> *commMatt.* 10, 2.

<sup>121</sup> *Cels.* IV, 31.

<sup>122</sup> *selPs.* 1, PG 12.1097.

Secondly, there is a uniformity of nature of rational creatures. This notion stands beside that of continuity of time and discontinuity of space, since the whole world is held to comprise particular spaces totally separated from each other, yet "all rational beings are of one nature, and it is only on this ground that the justice of God in all his dealings with them can be defended, namely, when each contains within himself the reasons why he has been placed in this or that rank of life".<sup>123</sup> The same notion is found in passages preserved in Greek: "Thus the marvellous works done by God are as it were the rain, while the differing wills are like the tilled and neglected land, though as land they are both of one nature."<sup>124</sup>

The tenet about uniformity of nature of rational creatures is a fundamental one. For the perception of judgement, as well as of the outcome of it as *rearrangement* of bodies, are grounded on this notion. This is why he argues against the Gnostics who consider higher and lower rational creatures as being of different nature:

To those, however, who introduce [the notion of] diverse natures (τοῖς δὲ τὰς φύσεις εἰσάγουσι) . . . we must answer as follows: if they retain the doctrine that the lost and the saved come 'from one lump'<sup>125</sup> and that the Creator of the saved is also the Creator of the lost, and if he who makes not only the spiritual but also the earthly is good (for this follows from their reasonings), it is nonetheless possible for one who has become at the present time a vessel of honour in consequence of certain former righteous deeds and yet has not acted similarly here nor in a way befitting a vessel of honour, to become in another aeon a vessel of dishonour; just as on the other hand it is possible for one who by reason of acts older than this life has become here a vessel of dishonour to become, if he amends his ways in the 'new creation',<sup>126</sup> a 'vessel of honour sanctified and meet for the master's use, prepared unto every good work'.<sup>127</sup>

On account of the uniformity of creaturely nature, God is 'God of the daemons as far as their creation is concerned',<sup>128</sup> which suggests that God is not responsible for their quality as daemons: it is their free will, which is responsible for that.<sup>129</sup> He is God of the daemons

<sup>123</sup> *Princ.* III.5.4.

<sup>124</sup> *Princ.* III.1.10; Cf. *Princ.* III.1.10.

<sup>125</sup> Rom. 9, 20.

<sup>126</sup> Gal. 16, 15.

<sup>127</sup> 2 Tim., 2, 21; *Princ.* III.3.23; s. also *commMatt.* 10, 11.

<sup>128</sup> *selPs.* 135, PG 12.1656.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. *Cels.* IV, 65.

only in as much as they are *creatures*. In *commJohn* he rejects any claim that the 'essence of the devil is different from the essence of the other rational beings'.<sup>130</sup> He argues that 'it is impossible to admit that the essence of the devil is different and that the devil is not susceptible to moral improvement'.<sup>131</sup> At that point he develops his argument, stating that we cannot say that an eye which cannot see properly is of different essence from an eye which can see well; and if something happens to an ear and it cannot hear well, this is something accidental and does not introduce any difference in its essence of being an ear. Thus devil is responsible for his being evil and God 'is in no way responsible for evil'. Therefore, 'it is the most absurd of all absurdities to blame him who substantiated and created this being'.<sup>132</sup>

The devil then 'became' devil and there was a certain reality 'when he was flawless' (*ἄμωμος*).<sup>133</sup> So the conclusion is that "one is Son of the devil not because of his own structure, nor is someone amongst men called Son of God because has been created such; and it is clear that it is possible that one who once was a Son of devil may become a Son of God."<sup>134</sup> There are extensive analyses in order to ground the case against those who hold that "there are some creatures, which are Son of devil by reason of their creation itself".<sup>135</sup>

Thus the notion of God's radical transcendence, as well as his incorporeality, allow for the perception of God as a judge during a consummation. This is one of the reasons (though not the principal one) why it is through and through emphasized that God is incorporeal (and thus, transcendent to space) and timeless (that is, transcendent to time).

### *The outcome of judgement*

The tenet about the outcome of judgement is based on the view that the entire world is material and matter (either 'seen' or 'not

<sup>130</sup> *commJohn*, 20, XXIII.

<sup>131</sup> *commJohn*, 20, XXIV.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> *Princ.*, III.1.12.

<sup>134</sup> *commJohn*, 20, XIII.

<sup>135</sup> *commJohn*, 20, XV; s. also *commEph*, p. 404 and p. 407.

seen<sup>136</sup>) and susceptible of any alteration by the will of God: "it is possible for matter, which is underlying all qualities, to exchange qualities" (δυνατόν ἀμείβειν ποιότητας τὴν ὑποκειμένην πάσαις ποιότησιν ὕλην).<sup>136</sup> For matter is "by nature subject to change, alteration, and transformation"<sup>137</sup> into anything the Creator desires and is capable of possessing any quality which the Artificer wishes".<sup>138</sup> Hence "changes occur in the qualities of bodies" as "by God's will a quality of one kind is imposed upon this particular matter, but afterwards it will have a quality of another kind, one, let us say, which is better and superior."<sup>139</sup>

In view of these portions in Greek, the authenticity of certain points of *Princ* can be confirmed. Thus "bodily nature admits of diverse and various changes, to such an extent that it can undergo every kind of transformation";<sup>140</sup> the nature of rational creatures is "changeable and convertible by the very condition of its being created" and "bodily nature" is "capable of changing at the Creator's will, by an alteration of qualities, into everything that circumstances might require."<sup>141</sup>

This is the fundamental notion on which the conception of the outcome of judgement is grounded. In *selPs*, Psalm 1, 5 ("Therefore the impious shall not be resurrected in judgement") is commented on thus:

Judgement of the just creatures is the transition from the body of this life to the angelic realms; and (judgement of) the impious is the transition from the body of this life to dark and dim bodies. For the impious will be resurrected not in the forthcoming judgement, but in the second one.<sup>142</sup>

This transition takes place because it is possible for God to 'alter' the 'quality' of matter, since he 'is the creator of it.'<sup>143</sup> In *Cels* it is stated that during "the destruction of the world, which our writings call consummation . . . changes in bodies occur according to ways

<sup>136</sup> *Cels*, III, 41.

<sup>137</sup> A dictionary definition; Cf. *Doxographi Graeci*, 307a.2.

<sup>138</sup> *Cels*, VI, 77.

<sup>139</sup> *Cels*, IV, 57.

<sup>140</sup> *Princ*, II.1.4.

<sup>141</sup> *Princ*, IV.4.8.

<sup>142</sup> *selPs*, 1, PG 12.1092.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

that have been appointed" and "the world is constituted of these bodies."<sup>144</sup> In the light of this,

we also know that there are 'both heavenly bodies and earthly bodies', . . . as we believe in the resurrection of the dead, we affirm that changes occur in the qualities of bodies, since some of them which have been 'sown in corruption are raised in incorruption, and some sown in dishonour are raised in glory', and some sown in weakness are raised in power, and bodies sown natural are raised spiritual.<sup>145</sup>

Hence the outcome of judgement during a consummation of the world is a 'transposition', a change of body, a transition of a rational being to another rank of life. It is then possible for human beings to become angels.<sup>146</sup> For those who are 'resurrected' may become a 'regime of angels'<sup>147</sup> and in such a case their body will change completely and will become a body worthy of an angel, a body 'aethereal and luminous like the nature of the light';<sup>148</sup> for the angels who now are in the heaven were previously men who strived well in human bodies; and so did others before them.<sup>149</sup>

Likewise there is reference to those who, according to their merits (κατά τὴν ἀξίαν) enjoy (ἀπολαμβάνοντας) 'in the resurrection' (ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει) now being in the most pure and translucent 'spaces' (χωρίοις).<sup>150</sup> And it is better to live a life in 'aethereal body' (ἐν αἰθερίῳ σώματι) than to live a life 'in flesh and blood'.<sup>151</sup>

Accordingly, it is possible for human beings to become superior to angels, once the latter fall.<sup>152</sup> It is also possible for human beings not to change rank of life after a judgement, but to remain 'men saved in Christ',<sup>153</sup> since it is Christ who apportions the true heritage and shares his victory with his faithful followers. Finally, it is possible for men to be 'expelled' and 'condemned to go to a place which is without any light at all'.<sup>154</sup> In any event, those who are

<sup>144</sup> *Cels.* VI, 57.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. 15, 40-44; *Cels.* IV, 57.

<sup>146</sup> *commMatt.* 13, 28; *expProv.* 28.

<sup>147</sup> *commMatt.* 17, 30.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> *frJohn.* CXXXIX.

<sup>151</sup> *commJohn.* 1, XXVI.

<sup>152</sup> *commMatt.* 15, 27.

<sup>153</sup> *commMatt.* 10, 13.

<sup>154</sup> *commMatt.* 17, 16.



now human beings have been judged in a previous judgement and have been found neither to fall too much nor to commit such deeds as to become angels.<sup>155</sup> Thus any kind of transformation and transposition is possible as an outcome of a judgement. This is how the idea is expounded in a more general way.

It is, therefore, possible that one who is a seed of Abraham to become also a child of his, through diligence; and it is possible for one who is a child of Abraham to lose being his seed, because of negligence and uncultivation.<sup>156</sup>

In view of this it is pointed out that "it is possible" that "the soul . . . may either descend from the highest good to the lowest evil or to be restored from the lowest evil to the highest good";<sup>157</sup> and "in the day of judgement . . . the good will be separated from the evil and the righteous from the unrighteous and every individual soul will by the judgement of God be allotted to that place of which his merits have rendered him worthy".<sup>158</sup>

Subsequently, "during the consummation, those wicked on the earth will be shaken, while the saints, being mountains<sup>159</sup> will be translated in the same way as as Enoch was."<sup>160</sup> So God is regarded as "creator and wise and provident and judge". That he is "judge" is assumed from "the various bodies of rational creatures, and the various worlds" (διὰ τὰ διάφορα σώματα τῶν λογικῶν καὶ τοὺς ποικίλους κόσμους).<sup>161</sup>

In order to ground the notion of 'various bodies', Origen appeals to Paul<sup>162</sup> who affirms that 'God gives (δίδωσιν) to each a body as he pleased (καθὼς ἠθέλησεν)'.<sup>163</sup> He argues that "like seeds that are sown, so those who are sown in death, so to speak, and who, at the appropriate time, take up (ἀναλαμβάνοντων) the body which is appointed by God for each one in accordance with his merits, out of the bodies that are sown."<sup>164</sup>

<sup>155</sup> *commMatt*, 12, 30.

<sup>156</sup> *commJohn*, 20, V.

<sup>157</sup> *Princ*, III.1.23.

<sup>158</sup> *Princ*, II.9.8.

<sup>159</sup> Using the language of Ps. 45, 3.

<sup>160</sup> *selPs*, 45, PG 12.1433.

<sup>161</sup> *selPs*, 138, PG 12.1661.

<sup>162</sup> Quoting 1 Cor. 15, 35–38; s. *Cels*, V, 18.

<sup>163</sup> 1 Cor. 15, 38.

<sup>164</sup> *Cels*, V, 19.

The participle *ἀναλαμβάνοντων*, being in the Present Tense, is indicative of the concept of successive aeons. This in fact implies that 'taking up' of a body is an occurrence happening not just once, but regularly, at the end of each aeon. Paul's expression *δίδωσιν* (gives) is also quite fit for Origen to couch his concept: this is a form in Present Tense, which indicates an action which takes place regularly. In contrast, the expression *καθώς ἠθέλησεν* (as He pleased) is in the Past Tense, which denotes an action which *once* took place in the past: God established this 'eternal law'<sup>165</sup> *once*, because he *willed* so out of an act of volition. There is no timeless causality compelling him to do so, as I argue anon.

Therefore, the result of judgement is a rearrangement of rational beings in different ranks of life. The rank of life, which a rational creature will be granted after judgement, will be his space during the aeon to come. At the end of that next aeon another consummation will take place, also another judgement and another rearrangement of rational beings in the ranks of life will follow according to their merits.

In the light of this, R. Sorabji's representation of Origen as entertaining the hypothesis that only those who need *correction* will be reborn in successive worlds<sup>166</sup> is not correct. This claim overlooks a fundamental element of Origen's thought: it is not the relation between God-man that is studied, but the relation between God-rational creatures, namely, the relation of God to a world comprising *many* ranks of life and different spaces, separated from each other in terms of *quality*.

Hence the assertion that certain creatures "will not be reborn" makes no sense at all. In fact, R. Sorabji implicitly ascribes to Origen the Platonic conception a soul, which assumes a material body only in case punishment and correction is necessary. What Origen holds is that once a rational creature has been created, he will live throughout *all time*, always in a *body*: thus he will certainly be present in all the successive worlds in one rank of life or another, according to his merits. If R. Sorabji states "only those who need correction" in the sense of "to come into human life again", this is not correct. For a formerly human being may need correction and yet not to

<sup>165</sup> *contra* John, 20, XXXIX. Cf. Lev., 6, 15; Num., 15, 15; Is. 24, 5.

<sup>166</sup> R. Sorabji, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

be reborn in the human rank of life: he may be found to deserve transposition either to a lower, or a higher, rank of life.

According to this theory, the expected judgement at the end of the present aeon will not be a 'final judgement'. This is why there are references to a 'second' judgement,<sup>167</sup> implying that which will take place at the end of the next aeon. This is a conviction traceable at other points of writings in Greek. In *homJer* there is reference to 'the first resurrection' appealing to Rev. 20, 6, but also mention is made to 'one of the later' resurrections,<sup>168</sup> through statements such as this: "Who is he who is saved in a later resurrection? It is he who needs to be baptized by fire."<sup>169</sup> In the Seventh Homily on Jeremiah he implies the same notion speaking of 'future punishments',<sup>170</sup> since there are not only those for whom only one 'punishment' befalls in the 'consummation',<sup>171</sup> but also others who incur a 'second', even a 'third', nonetheless a 'fourth' and even a seventh one.<sup>172</sup> This latter is drawn from the passage in Leviticus 26, 21 ('I will bring seven times more plagues upon you') which is taken to "denote a certain mystery".<sup>173</sup> His view is that just as they "serve in a sanctuary which is only a copy and shadow of heavenly things",<sup>174</sup> so the people of Israel were punished for their sin as a copy and shadow of the real punishments; so all the punishments which have been written in the law and the prophets actually contain "a shadow of the real punishments".<sup>175</sup> So a punishment for sins committed in a certain aeon may occur not only in the subsequent one, but also in an aeon after that, which is a n idea grounded on Matt. 12, 32:

I understand that some are kept by their own sin not only in this aeon but even in the aeon to come; they are those about whom the Scripture says 'whosoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, he shall not be forgiven neither in this aeon nor in the aeon to come';<sup>176</sup> and indeed not only in the next aeon but also in the aeons to come.<sup>177</sup>

<sup>167</sup> *selPs*, 1.

<sup>168</sup> *homJer*, 3, 3.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> *homJer*, 7, 1.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> *homJer*, 7, 2.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> Heb. 8, 5.

<sup>175</sup> *homJer*, 7, 1.

<sup>176</sup> Matt. 12, 32; Mark 3, 29; Cf. Luke 12, 10.

<sup>177</sup> Using the language of Eph. 2, 7; s. also *commJohn*, 2, XI; 19, XIV.

On account of this, he refers then to "those people whose sins are not forgiven not only in this aeon but also during the whole aeon to come".<sup>178</sup> In *deOr*, Origen seems to have moved from this attitude of his youth, yet he is still uncertain:

If I may offer a conjecture on so great a matter, I think that, as the last month is the end of the year, after which the beginning of another month ensues, so it may be that, since several ages complete as it were a year of ages, the present age is 'the end', after which certain 'ages to come' will ensue, of which the age to come is the beginning, and in those coming ages God will 'shew the riches of his grace in kindness': when the greatest sinner, who has spoken ill of the Holy Spirit is under the power of sin throughout the present age as well as during the aeon to come from beginning to end, [whereas] how he [sc. God] will dispense things after that I do not know.<sup>179</sup>

Finally, in *commMatt*, a work of his theological maturity, it is stated that sin will not be unforgiven indefinitely in the 'aeons to come', but it will be kept only until the aeon to come. Commenting on the Psalm 76, 8 ('Will the Lord cast off in the aeons?', Μὴ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας ἀπόσεται Κύριος;) he says:

Speaking with greater daring, the Lord will not cast off 'in the aeons'; for it is already quite much that he casts off in one aeon; but certainly he will cast off in a second aeon, in the case that the sin is of the kind which 'is not to be forgiven neither in this aeon nor in the aeon to come'.<sup>180</sup>

On this point one might notice an evolution in the doctrine of retribution of sins, although the fundamental conception of prolonged time remains unchanged. The section of *commJohn* was written sometime around 231 and here he seems to be categorical. The passage in *deOr* (written in 232 or 233) represents a rather uncertain attitude on the point, whereas *commMatt* (written in Caesarea in 244 and 248) seems to expound his definitive attitude.<sup>181</sup>

<sup>178</sup> *homJer*, 12, 10.

<sup>179</sup> *deOr*, XVII, 15.

<sup>180</sup> Matt. 12, 32; *commMatt*, 15, 31. Even in *commMatt*, however, there are rings of his earlier attitude: Cf. *commMatt*, 14, 5: εἰ δὲ τις ὑπερβάς τὰ κατὰ τὸν κόσμον καὶ τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦτον ἀμαρτήσεται, ἐάν καὶ τοῦτο μικρόν ᾖ, οὐκέτι ἂν ἔχῃ εὐλογον ἀμαρτιῶν ἁφεσιν. . . . οὐκ ἐστὶ δὲ ἁφesis οὐδὲ ἀδελφῶ τῷ ὑπὲρ τὰ ἑβδομήκοντα καὶ ἑπτὰ ἡμαρτηκότι. Also *commMatt*, 16, 22: . . . φρονιζέτωσαν, μήποτε ἐλθὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐκβαλὼν αὐτοὺς ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ (τοῦ θεοῦ), ὅτε ὁ ἐκβεβλημένος οὐδέ ἐλπίδα τοῦ εἰσελθεῖν ἔχει ὅθεν ἐξεβλήθη.

<sup>181</sup> Cf. Marguerite Harl, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-1; also s. A. von Harnack, *Geschichte der aelchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius*, Leipzig, 1904; Teil II/2, pp. 26-57.

In any case, Origen's time is not terminated at the end of the present aeon. Hence it is possible to speak of an 'after' the consummation,<sup>182</sup> denoting the continuation of time after the consummation and judgement, in the aeon to come.

Thus the term 'end' may, in the first place, mean the end of the present aeon,<sup>183</sup> clearly implying that this is not an absolute end of time itself, but merely a moment of it. For each of the consecutive aeons is understood to be a part of the *one* continuum of time. This is why one should speak of *prolongation* of time. Time is continued throughout successive worlds and constitutes one reality of the world. Recurrence of (non-identical) worlds is understood to occur in this continuum; but although the 'worlds' are many, time is *one*. The time of a next aeon is not, as it were, another time. It is one and the same continuum. This is stretched out alongside with the structure of the series consecutive worlds. This is why Origen speaks of 'the order of the entirety of aeons' (περί τῆς ἐν ἅπασιν τοῖς αἰῶσιν διατάξεως),<sup>184</sup> and 'the extension of the whole time' (τοῦ διαστήματος τὸν ὅλον χρόνον).<sup>185</sup> Likewise, the notion of time comprising aeons, yet being *one*, is expounded as follows:

And certainly nothing has been or will be neglected by God, who at each time (κατὰ χρόνον) makes what he should be making in a world which is changeable and mutable. And just as at different seasons of the year a farmer<sup>186</sup> does different agricultural jobs upon the earth and its crops, so God dispenses all the aeons as if they were years, so to speak (οἷον εἰ ἐνιαυτούς τινας οἰκονομεῖ ὅλους τοὺς αἰῶνας). In each one of them he does what is reasonable for the whole, and the truth of this is clearly comprehended and accomplished by God alone since the truth is known to him.<sup>187</sup>

P. Plass suggests that Origen holds a notion of 'a higher time consisting of aeons'.<sup>188</sup> This mistake is relevant to his claim that Origen holds a notion of a 'sacred time', on which I commented earlier. Subsequently he makes the mistake to aver that beyond time there

<sup>182</sup> *commMatt*, 14, 12.

<sup>183</sup> Cf. *selJos*, PG 12.820.

<sup>184</sup> *deOr*, XXVII, 14.

<sup>185</sup> *commJohn*, 10, XXXIX.

<sup>186</sup> S. also *Princ*, III.1.14.

<sup>187</sup> *Cels*, IV, 69.

<sup>188</sup> P. Plass, *op. cit.*, p. 14.



is a 'changeless duration' which is something between God and time. This 'duration' is said to be 'changeless only while it lasts'. All these assertions are erroneous. In Origen there are only the distinct notions of time and timelessness, existing respectively in two realities, which are clearly distinguished from each other. The conception of 'aeons' simply depicts the idea of prolongation of time, and nothing beyond that.

On the other hand, J. Daniélou claims that 'the totality of time' in Origen is consisted of 'the jubilee of aeonian years'. He thinks that on this point also he had been 'anticipated by the Gnostics'.<sup>189</sup> Obviously J. Daniélou misconstrued a passage in *deOr*<sup>190</sup> where an allegorical exegesis of biblical temporal terms is provided.

On account of this conception of time, scriptural temporal terms such as 'years' or 'days' are quite often interpreted by Origen as signifying 'aeons', according to the perception of a prolonged historical process in the continuum of time.<sup>191</sup> This is why he so often entertains to terms such as 'today' or 'yesterday' the exegesis that they may be figures, which actually indicate 'aeons'. Thus, the term 'today' may mean the present aeon, whereas 'yesterday' may mean the past aeon.<sup>192</sup>

It is noteworthy that O. Cullmann also holds a notion of successive aeons in what he regards as biblical view of time. He holds that the infinite time is divided into three periods, which are also called 'aeons' according to scriptural terminology. He discerns a 'past aeon', which is the time before creation;<sup>193</sup> there is the 'present aeon', which is the time since creation onwards; and finally there is a third aeon, which is the 'aeon to come'.<sup>194</sup> The first aeon is beginningless and

<sup>189</sup> J. Daniélou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, tr. J.A. Baker, London, 1973; p. 496.

<sup>190</sup> *deOr*, XXVII, 16.

<sup>191</sup> Cf. *frMatt*, 396; *frMatt*, 400; *commMatt*, 15, 31; 15, 34. In *homJer*, 12, 10, it is stated not only that 'day' denotes the 'present aeon', but also that the end of the day will be 'darkness and night', because at the end of this 'day' there will be 'consummation' and 'punishment'; also *selPs*, 40; *selPs*, 41.

<sup>192</sup> *deOr*, XXVII, 13.

<sup>193</sup> O. Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, pp. 62 and 76; he draws the notion from the scriptural expression 'before the aeons' (πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων, 1 Cor. 2, 7) and postulates that this expression does not prove that what is 'before time' is timeless. Yet he does not himself buttress up this assertion at all.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*

was terminated when creation was made. The present aeon had a beginning and will have an end, which will mark the beginning of the endless aeon to come. In any case Cullmann is not sure as to how many aeons are indicated through the language of the New Testament. So he speaks of 'three aeons *at least*.'<sup>195</sup>

There is good reason for Origen to employ the notion of prolongation of time. On the contrary, Cullmann does not say why (what he claims to be biblical) time should be regarded as consisting of aeons. He just appeals to biblical passages where he finds the term 'aeon' or 'aeons'. His assertion that the passage in Revelation 10, 6 ('there should be time no longer') does not mean that time itself will be terminated, but just means 'there will be no more delay',<sup>196</sup> is as elective as its opposite could be. The same goes for his claim that time did exist before creation, since it is grounded on his contention that time is not a creature made by God.<sup>197</sup>

According to Cullmann, God is *in* time and so is creation. It is remarkable that, in our day (when there is little doubt that time proper is inseparably connected with space, both of them constituting *one* reality), Cullmann claims that time 'in its essence . . . is not connected with the creation' and time 'in its essence' has not 'first appeared with the creation' as a state of 'downfall'.<sup>198</sup> All these are postulated in order to avoid 'the danger' of a 'Platonic conception', namely, the danger to regard that divine being is 'timeless'.<sup>199</sup> Cullmann appears to be haunted by what he regards as 'danger' in Greek thought.

In contrast, Origen affirms the close and inseparable coherence between time and space and portrays this connection by means of a sophisticated terminology. This is why, in order to speak of prolongation of time, it was necessary to expound the notion of successive worlds. It is impossible to speak of prolonged time without speaking of the world connected with it. It is rather *through* speaking of the successive worlds in time that the notion of prolongation could be properly understood. To claim that it is possible to speak of

<sup>195</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 76.

<sup>196</sup> O. Cullmann, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>197</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>198</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>199</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 73.

prolongation of time without also speaking of the world attached to it, is tantamount to separating the *one* reality of space-time and to speak of time while neglecting space. This is why I wish to point out what is actually meant by references to the 'shape' of time, that is, cyclical or rectilinear time, or other theories about the 'shape' of time, which was partially discussed earlier.

When a certain kind of line is drawn in order to portray time, this line does not actually portray time proper. It rather indicates *space in time*. Each point of the line is but a certain position of *the world in time*. So the consecutive points, which are supposed to comprise this line, render a geometrical scheme which actually portrays the world in its consecutive positions into the continuum of time. Using Origen's sophisticated terminology, I can say this: the shape of time is only the ideational succession of the 'structure of the world' in its consecutive positions of motion *in time*. So, prolonged time and its meaning are studied through a study of the positions of the 'structure of the world' in time. *Time* proper cannot be represented through a designed scheme; it is only *spatial* positions, which can be portrayed through some kind of picture. It is through the movement of the world in time, through the perception of the incessant succession of positions in time that the *flux in time* is perceived and portrayed through a geometrical figure.

Thus it is only through the notion of the inseparable association of space with time that such a geometrical figure can make sense as a portrayal of time. This is why Cullmann actually contradicts himself when he represents time as a line. For once he does not accept the inseparable connection of time proper to space, there is no logical argument for him to ground the view that this line portrays *time*.

By reason of Origen's fundamental perception of space-time as an inseparable reality, in this chapter the topic of prolongation of time has been canvassed through his notion of successive worlds. Indeed the succession of worlds actually indicates the flux in a prolonged time. One might argue that, in the previous analyses, the notion of *time* could be substituted by a term such as 'history'.<sup>200</sup> I shall not object to that. Yet what really is *history*? Is it not a notion which

<sup>200</sup> Let us, for a moment, disregard the fact that *history* is a notion pertaining to the human rank of life, whereas Origen's conception of the movement of the world is something much broader than just human history.

intrinsically entails spatio-temporal implications? Is not history just the perception of the world's existence moment-after-moment in the flux in time? Hence, does not history itself, in the final analysis, imply the kind of time itself? As a matter of fact, history is but an observation and portrayal of the flux of the world in time. History is par excellence the notion which indicates the fact that space and time constitute *one* reality.

This is what eluded Aristotle (as well as the Stoics, not to mention the Epicureans and Sceptics) when they argued against the full reality of time. He regarded the present as extensionless, the past as not existing any more and the future as not existing yet. Thus there is nothing of time actually *existing*. The reasoning of Aristotle (as well as Zeno's paradoxes) puzzled philosophers for a long time thereafter. At the time of the closure of the Platonic Academy in Athens, in 529 A.D., its head Damascius was still working on them and philosophers (Damascius, Simplicius, et al.) continued their studies even after the closure of the school.

These arguments, however, are bound to be unresolved unless space-time is faced as *one* reality. The Stoics quite erroneously regarded as *real* what is *present*, namely what exists *now*. Accordingly, to Aristotle *now* does not actually exist, but it is only a *potential* reality which exists only once a point in a line is singled out—otherwise it does not exist; this is one of the notions through which Aristotle attempted to tackle with Zeno's paradoxes.

Hence, according to the assertion that *real* is only what is *present*, it could be argued that the reality of the battle of Thermopylae should be challenged because it is not a fact *present*. This kind of argument could certainly go too far. For what Aristotle did not do in treating time in *Physics* was to consider time *inseparably* from space. In the final analysis, his fundamental conception of time proper was an imagery of a line—and so it has been treated for a long time thereafter.

Quite rightly in late nineteenth century, H. Bergson argued that if we try to conceive time as a static geometrical line, we are really thinking of *space*.<sup>201</sup> In fact Aristotle was reflecting on time purely in

<sup>201</sup> H. Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (Paris, 1889), tr. into English by C. Bogson as *Time and Free Will*, London, 1910; pp. 90–1, 98–110.

terms of space. The Stoics, too, regarded as real (ὄν) only what *actually* exists and what *potentially* exists. To 'walk' actually (that is, at this very moment) is a different (in fact, 'fuller') kind of reality from the possibility of walking, namely, the ability to walk at any future moment or to have already walked. But the outstanding difference lies in the Stoic view of time as extension. Although the Stoics postulated time as a natural element in the make-up of the world (not merely as the 'number' of motion), they did not make much of their discovery.

This view comes to the fore only with Origen. It was with him that time is regarded *both* as an element of the creation existing in itself and closely linked with space, so that no account of time may be given apart from the notion of space. Origen treated space together *with* time. This is why the notion of *with* stands out in the term *συν-παρεκτείνων*. This is the fundamental and crucial element which, in the sharp end, is absent from many ancient accounts of time. And it is only on this misleading ground that the deductive arguments challenging the reality of time would stand.

In Origen's view, time is a *natural* dimension of the world alongside which this world exists. There is no question of ontological classification between *time* and *motion*—a question, which has been given so much discussion until our day.<sup>292</sup>

We have already seen that he does not identify *time* with *motion*. Also, he does not need to consider whether time is originated in motion, or vice versa. For the definition of time as *extension* and *dimension* constitutes an objectivistic view of time non-dependent upon motion. Here is what constitutes a step beyond the accounts of Greek philosophy: Platonists, Peripatetics, Epicureans and Neoplatonists had to give an account of the relation of time proper to motion. In them all (despite their different conceptions of time) *motion* appears as an intrinsic notion of their definition of time. To the Stoics time as *διάστημα* stands in an ontological priority to motion. Their treatment of the problem, however, left them rather vulnerable to criticism by other philosophers, as we have seen.

By contrast, motion is not a notion inherent in Origen's conception of time, because he defined it in a more sophisticated and

<sup>292</sup> Origen, however, does deal with the question of the relation of time and motion; s. Chapter 8, pp. 313ff.



objective manner: he introduced the term *συμπαρεκτεινόμενον*, which exerted so decisive an influence upon his successors. Origen's world is always *in motion*; to pose then hypothetical questions of a possible 'time without change'<sup>203</sup> is a pointless scholasticism. There is certainly an ontological priority of time to motion, yet that is all, as far the natural theory of time is concerned. Motion has a crucial and definite purpose and space-time exists as long as motion is necessary. Time is an objective reality, a dimension of the world. There is no reason to pose the question of a possible nonexistence of motion. For motion is not only a *datum* of the real world, but also is *necessary* for a final goal to be fulfilled. At any rate, Origen had no reason to treat the problem as to whether time *cannot* exist without motion, because time proper is a reality closely related to (but non-dependent upon) space, albeit co-existing with it. Once God is the creator of time, there is no reason not to assume that time without motion *could not* exist. But the actual point in Origen's conception of space-time with respect to God is that without motion time *need not* exist at all. The very existence of time proper has a crucial intrinsic meaning, character and purpose, namely, a *raison d'être*, which is indeed salvation understood as return to the divine reality and deification. To strive to reflect on a 'time without change', or time without motion, constitutes an intellectual exercise which Origen did not need at all. To him it would be a meaningless question, entirely out of the purposes of his theology, let alone that 'motion' is a permanent characteristic of his world, as we shall see in the next chapter. Through the conception of time as essentially being an *extension*, the reality of time is clearly affirmed and so is its close connection to space and, subsequently, to motion.

A point which should be elucidated, however, is whether *prolongation* is a notion which simply indicates the course *in* time, or it has further implications which eventually come to pertain to time itself. An account on this has by all means to be given. This question with respect to the notion of *causality* is what I am going to discuss next.

<sup>203</sup> Cf., for example, S. Shoemaker, "Time without change", *Journal of Philosophy*, 66 (1969), pp. 363-81.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### TIME AND CAUSALITY

#### *Categorizing motion*

Despite the fact that Origen is mainly interested in rational creatures of the particular spaces rather than the spaces themselves, he does not fail to refer to motion in general. In this section I shall discuss how he considers motion and particularly the *causes* of it.

Treatment of this question is supplied in Greek extracts of *Princ*, as well as in *deOr*. A study of these points shows that the classification of motion is dealt with in quite a systematic way. The points where these analyses appear could in no way be considered as incidental. For it is 'because the teaching of the Church includes the doctrine of the righteous judgement of God' that Origen makes the analysis of motion in *Princ*, in the beginning of Book III, Chapter 1, that is, at the outset of his exposition of his doctrine of free will.<sup>1</sup> It should be emphasized that the criterion for the classification of motion is the *cause* of it.<sup>2</sup>

Motion then, on account of the *cause* of it, is classified in the following categories:<sup>3</sup>

1. Motion which is caused from without:<sup>4</sup> this is the motion of inanimate things, like 'stones and pieces of wood, which are cut out of the quarry or have lost the power of growing', that is, things which 'are held together merely by their form'.<sup>5</sup> In the same category are included also those called 'portable things'<sup>6</sup> in general; that is, not inanimate things as above, but also living

<sup>1</sup> The title of that chapter is "Free Will".

<sup>2</sup> This point seems to have eluded J. Oulton and H. Chadwick in their *Alexandrian Christianity, (On Prayer, Exhortation to Martyrdom, Dialogue with Heraclides)*, London, 1956; p. 33; an otherwise good translation, of which I partially avail myself at this point.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *SVF*, II, 161, 25.

<sup>4</sup> *Princ*, III.1.4; *deOr*, VI, 1.

<sup>5</sup> *deOr*, VI, 1. *Princ*, III.1.2.

<sup>6</sup> *Princ*, III.1.2; *deOr*, VI, 1.

things, such as 'the bodies of living creatures, as well as portable plants'. What is in common in these motions is that all of them have their *cause* 'from outside' (ἐξωθεν)<sup>7</sup> them.

2. Motion due to 'the flux of bodies' (τὴν ῥύσιν τῶν σωμάτων). It is stated that this motion is not included 'in the present discussion', namely in *Princ.*<sup>8</sup> Still there is reference to this in *deOr.* this motion applies to things which 'are moved by virtue of the fact that all bodies are in a state of flux as they decay'. Therefore, 'this motion which they have is inseparably connected with their state of decay'.<sup>9</sup>
3. Motion in which the cause exists in the moving body. This pertains to those moved 'either by their own inherent nature or soul'.<sup>10</sup> These are things having the cause of motion 'in themselves' (ἐν ἑαυτοῖς).<sup>11</sup> This kind of motion applies both to inanimate things and living creatures alike. Thus the following sub-categories can be discerned in this case.
  - a. Motion of 'metals, and fire and even springs of water': where it can be said to 'have the cause of their motion in themselves' (ἐν ἑαυτοῖς δὲ ἔχειν τὴν αἰτίαν τοῦ κινεῖσθαι).<sup>12</sup> Origen states that 'they have the cause of their motion' 'with themselves' (ἐξ ἑαυτῶν).<sup>13</sup>
  - b. Motion of 'animates'<sup>14</sup> or 'living creatures',<sup>15</sup> which is called motion 'from within themselves' (ἀφ' ἑαυτῶν).<sup>16</sup> These 'living creatures' move 'from within themselves when there arises within them an image (φαντασία) which calls forth an impulse', springing from 'the imaginative nature setting the impulse in ordered motion'. This is a kind of 'natural' motion related to the nature of a certain animal. For instance, 'in the spider, an image of weaving a web arises and the impulse to weave it follows'; this 'impulse to weave' is related to this animal because this is the natural mode of its existence. The same happens

<sup>7</sup> *Princ.* III.1.2; *deOr.* V, 5; also, *deOr.* VI, 1.

<sup>8</sup> *Princ.* III.1.2.

<sup>9</sup> *deOr.* VI, 1.

<sup>10</sup> *deOr.* VI, 1; *Princ.* III.1.2.

<sup>11</sup> *Princ.* III.1.2.

<sup>12</sup> *Princ.* III.1.2.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. L. and S., p. 498. *Princ.* III.1.2; *deOr.* VI, 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Princ.* III.1.2.

<sup>15</sup> *deOr.* VI, 1.

<sup>16</sup> *Princ.* III.1.2; *deOr.* VI, 1.

with the 'bee' in which, too, 'an impulse to produce a honeycomb' arises. Nevertheless, animals 'beyond this imaginative nature . . . possess nothing else'.<sup>17</sup>

- c. Motion of rational creatures. This is different from the motion of any other living creature. For the 'rational animal . . . has something more than the imaginative nature, namely, reason which judges the impulses; some it rejects, others it approves of, so that the creature may be guided in accordance with these latter images'.<sup>18</sup> This is why the motion of rational creatures is regarded as motion 'by themselves' (*δι' αὐτῶν*).<sup>19</sup> Thus 'to decide to use what has happened either in this way or in that is the work of nothing else but the reason within us, which, as the alternatives appear, either influences us towards the impulses that incite to what is good and seemly or else turns us aside to the reverse'.<sup>20</sup> So the possibilities of contemplating good and evil are inherent in the nature of reason. It is out of following these contemplations and choosing freely whatever he wishes to choose that a rational creature is subject either to praise for choosing the good or to blame for choosing the evil.

It is Origen's view that external things do not lie within our power; but to use them in this way or another (since we have received reason as a judge and investigator of the way in which we ought to deal with each of them), is our task.<sup>21</sup> It is out of these considerations of motion, that the idea of Judgement makes sense. For what is mainly considered as motion stems from the freedom of rational creatures. On account of this, no rational creature can escape personal responsibility:

To throw the blame for what so happens to us on external things and to free ourselves from censure, is like declaring that we are like stocks and stones, which are dragged among by agents that move them from without, is neither true nor reasonable, but is the argument of a man who desires to contradict the idea of free will.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Princ.* III.1.2.

<sup>18</sup> *Princ.* III.1.3.

<sup>19</sup> *de Or.* VI, 1.

<sup>20</sup> *Princ.* III.1.3.

<sup>21</sup> *Princ.* III.1.3; III.1.5.

<sup>22</sup> *Princ.* III.1.5.

*Free moral action as motion*

If time is of importance in Origen's world, this is so because it is the extension where this *motion* takes place. For time, although fundamentally a natural element in the constitution of creation, is also regarded as the extension where the will of God and the will of rational creatures encounter each other. On the one hand, the unchangeable will of God is manifested at certain times; on the other, creaturely will comes to a dialectical relation to the will of God. This kind of creaturely *motion* is perceived as free moral action, and this is the kind of motion, which is the main theme of Origen's theology.

We see, therefore, that he holds a 'vertically' broader conception of the world (in the sense that there are ranks of life above and under the human one). He also holds a 'horizontally' broader conception of time (in the sense that time is extended before, as well as after this aeon). Accordingly, he holds a broader conception of motion considering this mainly as free moral action taking place in this broader space-time. Origen is aware of other kinds of motion also, as discussed in the previous pages. However, he is not interested in them in the same way that he is not interested in the natural environment of the particular spaces comprising the world. In the same vein, although he knows that time is a natural reality, he mainly considers the theological, not the natural implications of this reality.

This is why both 'horizontal' and 'vertical' arrangement of space-time are dependent only on this kind of 'motion' (namely, free moral action). For the continuum of time is arranged in consecutive aeons which have duration directly related to free moral action, as we saw in the previous section. Only this kind of motion is taken into account at the time of judgement. Therefore, this is the only kind of motion which determines not only the duration of an aeon, but also the arrangement of the next world (that is, the 'vertical' arrangement of space-time).

This is why Origen does not confine his conception of time to the limits of the Stoic thought. In the first place, he employs a Stoic terminology, yet the actual import attributed to the terms is quite different: motion is not so much the natural one; rather it suggests free creaturely action.



Certainly the connection between time and heavenly bodies is not ignored: time exists as long as heavenly bodies exist and vice versa.<sup>23</sup> This is the meaning of the term *συμπαρεκτεινόμενος*. Nowhere, however, is it asserted that time exists *out* of the movement of heavenly bodies; time co-exists with them, but this is an independent element, as it were, related to the 'structure of this world'. Nevertheless time is connected with motion, the term 'motion' meaning free creaturely action, and it is the means where this action can be realized. So time *should* exist because there is a motion to take place. It seems though that Origen perceived this question in a reverse manner as well: motion *should* exist since there is the extension of time for this to take place.

We already saw the criticism that Plotinus directed against the Stoics for defining time in relation to motion. His argument was that the Stoics could be unable to say anything about time if there were no motion at all.<sup>24</sup> Origen had no reason to deal with such a question; still he provides a personal opinion about it, without naming the problem explicitly. His view is that 'motion' is a faculty of rational creatures always active. By 'motion' at this point he means free action only. This is the context for the following portion of *Princ* to be understood:

No movement can take place in any body which does not possess life, nor can living beings exist at any time without movement.<sup>25</sup>

It is obvious that here he refers to free creaturely action; he states accordingly that 'the holy angels and other heavenly powers . . . are capable of feeling and of movement'; for 'what' 'is there in them' is 'rational feeling and movement'.<sup>26</sup> Also, 'It is certain that no living creature can be altogether inactive and immovable, but it is eager for every kind of movement and for continual action and volition; and it is clear, I think, that this nature resides in all living beings. Much more then must a rational being such as man be always engaged in some movement or activity.'<sup>27</sup> Again, "the will's

<sup>23</sup> *selPs*, 71, PG 12.1524, lines 3032.

<sup>24</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.8.

<sup>25</sup> *Princ*, I.7.3.

<sup>26</sup> *Princ*, II.8.2.

<sup>27</sup> *Princ*, II.11.1.

freedom always moves in the direction either of good or evil, nor can the rational sense, that is the mind or soul, ever exist without some movement either good or evil.<sup>28</sup> Given the particular meaning attributed to 'movement' (namely, creaturely free action in all ranks of life) at this point (without naming the question of time at all) he provides an answer to any potential criticism, such as that of Plotinus against the Stoic view of time. What does Origen mean by these statements? Taking into account that here 'movement' suggests 'free moral action', it is moral inactivity, as well as moral neutrality of any action, that is actually denied. Works in Greek, such as *commJohn*, can corroborate this.

It is clear that every man, endowed with reason, is either a Son of God or a Son of the devil; in other words, he commits sin or he does not commit sin, since there is nothing between committing sin and not committing sin (οὐδενός ὄντος μεταξύ τοῦ ποιεῖν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν καὶ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν μὴ ποιεῖν); and if he commits sin, he comes from the devil; if he does not commit sin, he has been begotten by God.<sup>29</sup>

Although this point would be taken as reminiscent of the Early Stoa,<sup>30</sup> here Origen stands outside the Stoic tradition, in the sense that he takes a Stoic thesis to the extreme. The notion of the 'intermediates' seems to have been introduced by Ariston, the pupil of Zeno and strong critic of his master, whose doctrines were not upheld by Cleanthes and Chrysippus. Later though this doctrine was a commonplace attributed to Stoicism. Thus, actions are distinguished into three categories: the 'good deeds' (κατορθώματα), the 'sins' (ἁμαρτήματα) and the 'neuters' (οὐδέτερα).<sup>31</sup> Origen knew the Stoic notion of 'indifferents' (ἀδιάφορα) and refers to that in *Cels*.<sup>32</sup> He also was aware of the notion of 'intermediates' (μέσων),<sup>33</sup> and uses the term κατορθώματα himself.<sup>34</sup> There is one case though where he uses the

<sup>28</sup> *Princ*, III.3.5.

<sup>29</sup> *commJohn*, 20, XIII; *commMatt*, 11, 12; *Cels*, IV, 15 and *passim*.

<sup>30</sup> The Old Stoa held the character of human existence as always being *active*, and hardly allowed for some intermediate position between the wise and the fool. Man had always a *choice* (ἐπιλογή) to make. Cf. *SVF*, III, 188 etc.

<sup>31</sup> Stobaeus, *Eclogue*, II, 96, 18 W; *SVF*, III, 136, 18ff.

<sup>32</sup> *Cels*, VI, 73. Cf. I, 61; IV, 45; VII, 30 (ref. to Sextus); V, 36.

<sup>33</sup> *Cels*, II, 59; *Princ*, III.1.18; *commJohn*, 20, XXII.

<sup>34</sup> *selPs*, 117; *Princ*, III.1.19; III.1.23; *commJohn*, 2, XIII; 13, XLIII.

term 'indifferent life, which is neither good nor bad; a sense in which the impious and animals are said to live'.<sup>35</sup> The notion that simply 'to live' is morally 'indifferent' is in fact a Stoic view.<sup>36</sup>

Origen has implicitly tackled the criticism of Neoplatonists against the original Stoic definition of time. Since everything apart from God is in time, there must be a kind of motion justifying, as it were, the existence of time in all ranks of life. This is the perpetual free creaturely action. This is why of all kinds of motion this is the one of major significance and attention.

### *Trial of motion in time*

Following from the manner, in which the Stoic term 'motion' is attributed the new import discussed above, 'extension' is the *milieu* where trial of free moral action takes place. Which means that, beyond the mere natural character of this extension, there is more to be considered about its character. In *homJer* it is stated:

From youth, he says, until our day, and we did not listen to the voice of the Lord our God.<sup>37</sup> We sinned and we did not listen until now; then once they returned, and begun conversion (ἐπιστρέψαντες), they say, 'We were sinning and we did not listen'. For it does not happen that to want to listen means that we simultaneously listen immediately; there is need of some more time (καὶ γὰρ ἔτι χρόνου δεῖ). For just as time is still required with a cure for wounds, so it is also with turning (τῆς ἐπιστροφῆς) maturely and purely to God for conversion.<sup>38</sup>

The use of terms such as 'returned' (ἐπιστρέψαντες), 'beginning' (ἀρχήν), 'for there is a need for some more time' (καὶ γὰρ ἔτι χρόνου δεῖ), 'for the return' (τῆς ἐπιστροφῆς) indicates that time is not simply an extension, but it is the means for free action to be realized.

Time is then the *milieu* for trial to take place, a trial that is a challenge to freedom. The outcome of this struggle is the reaction to the devil, which also acts within time:

<sup>35</sup> *commJohn*, 20, XXXIX.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *SVE*, I, 47, 24; III, 17, 20; III, 17, 21; III, 28, 6; Diog. 218, 16; Apollod. 261, 8.

<sup>37</sup> Jer. 3, 25.

<sup>38</sup> *homJer*, 5, 10.

The devil has been committing sins for so long a time (τοσούτῳ χρόνῳ), since the creation and the downfall (καταβολή) of the world, yet he does not suffer any fire or whip; for he does not deserve those punishments which come from God.<sup>39</sup>

Time is the battlefield of this trial; this is what finally shows what the result is. In *selEx*, the portion Ex. 31, 1 ('And the Lord spake unto Moses saying') is commented on thus:

It was a good forty days that the most wise God kept Moses waiting before giving him the law, although it was possible for him to give the Law in three days. But [he did this] so that the time of Moses' absence tries the impiety which was hidden in the depth of the Jews' hearts.<sup>40</sup>

Thus time constitutes the venue where free action is exposed to trial. It is the length of time, which often tests the validity of a certain attitude. Duration, length of time, constitutes a major challenge to action. But although length of time is a means for the quality of action to be tried, it does not in itself constitute an element of the essence of morality. It is not the length of time, during which a man is aware of the word of God, which is of the main significance; what is important is moral action itself throughout time. The passage Matt. 19, 30 ('many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first') is taken to suggest that those who accept the divine word later than others 'are not hindered by time' (ὥς οὐκ ἐμποδίζοντος τοῦ χρόνου τοῖς ὕστερον πιστεύουσιν).<sup>41</sup> Which means that the question is not how long one is a faithful, but how Christian belief is realized in action.

There is an extensive treatment of this point. There is also appeal to Heb. 5, 12 ('For when because of the time (διὰ τὸν χρόνον) you ought to be teachers'),<sup>42</sup> in order to aver that the duration of simply knowing the divine law is not a sufficient presupposition to be 'first'. What is of prime significance is the duration of action accomplishing this teaching as a concrete action in time:

And it is possible for those who want to extend their force and energy intensively on the work for less time within the vineyard, to have

<sup>39</sup> *selEx*, PG 12.261ff.

<sup>40</sup> *adnotEx*, PG 17.16ff.

<sup>41</sup> *commMatt*, 15, 26.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

carried out a work equal to that of those who began working since dawn; for they did not get as tired as those who began working since dawn.<sup>43</sup>

In *enarrJob*, the passage Job 2, 9 ('After time enough had passed his wife said unto him') is commented on thus:

Look at how malicious he is. It is after much time had elapsed that he attacks; for it is then that power is most weakened. Weakness was ensuing both from the fact that he who was suffering had become more weak because of the length of time and from the fact that his hope was near to fading.<sup>44</sup> . . . He was not overwhelmed either by the loss of money, or by the untimely death of his sons, nor by the unspeakable torture of his body, nor by so long a time.<sup>45</sup>

This is how time is considered as the extension for trial of free moral action: it exists as the indispensable means for freedom to be realized. This is also where the divine οἰκονομία is manifested.

As it happens with the terms 'motion' and 'extension', quite expectedly other Stoic terms are also assigned a different import befitting Origen's aims. Thus the Stoic notion of time as a natural 'measure of fastness and slowness'<sup>46</sup> is applied a significant purport which deserves to be canvassed.

### *The notions of 'fastness' and 'slowness'*

In the context of conceiving time as a dimension of life where a dialectical relation between creatures and God takes place, this is also regarded as a 'measure and criterion of both fastness and slowness', as the Stoics used to define it generally, in addition to their fundamental view of it as an 'extension of motion'.<sup>47</sup> Again we can see that Origen formally considers time in this Stoic way (which at this particular point is Aristotelian, too), yet in substance he attributes to this notion a different import: this is not a natural content, but a moral one. In *enarrJob* he comments thus:

<sup>43</sup> *commMatt*, 15, 34. Origen refers to the parable in Matt. 20, 1–16.

<sup>44</sup> *enarrJob*, 2, PG 17.61.

<sup>45</sup> *enarrJob*, 2; *loc. cit.*

<sup>46</sup> *SVF*, I, 26, 11–12.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *SVF*, I, 26, 11–12.



And if someone might ask why the friends were so late . . . One should know that the delay of arrival was some divine *oikonomia* . . . some divine *oikonomia* took place for the friends to be late and the disease to be prolonged; so that the just man will be exercised for more time and will more justifiably be raised up by God.<sup>48</sup>

Accordingly, in *Princ* it is stated that

sometimes it does not turn out to the advantage of those who are healed that they should be healed quickly (τάχιον), if, that is they have fallen of themselves into difficulties and are then easily released from the conditions into which they have fallen; for, despising the evil as being easy of cure and taking no precautions against falling into it, they will find themselves in it for a second time. In dealing with such persons, therefore, the eternal God, the perceiver of secret things, who 'knows all things before they come to be',<sup>49</sup> in his goodness refrains from sending them the quicker help (ὑπερτίθεται τὴν ταχύτεραν πρὸς αὐτούς βοήθειαν) and, if I may say so, helps them by not helping them . . . lest having quickly (τάχιον) turned and been healed by obtaining forgiveness they should despise the wounds of their wickedness as being slight and easy of cure and should very quickly (τάχιον) fall into it again. Perhaps, too, though they had paid the penalty for their former sins which they committed against virtue when they abandoned it, they had not yet fulfilled the appropriate time (οὐδέπω τὸν πρέποντα χρόνον ἐκπεπληρώκεσαν) . . . and then afterwards (ὕστερον) to be called to a more enduring repentance, such as would prevent them from quickly (ταχέως) falling again into the sins into which they had previously fallen . . . God is sometimes long and sometimes slow (μέλλει καὶ βραδύνει) in doing good to men.<sup>50</sup>

At another point there is an explanation of the way in which God's *oikonomia* is manifested towards men. This text is again full of temporal notions indicating that this '*oikonomia*' is manifested 'faster' (τάχιον), 'slower' (βράδιον), or 'not faster' (μὴ τάχιον), or 'after a long time' (ὕστερον πολλῷ χρόνῳ).<sup>51</sup> In *commMatt* it is pointed out that forgiveness of sins may come 'either slower or faster'.<sup>52</sup> At another point of the same work it is also stated that "forgiveness of sins reaches things and to those who committed the sins this forgiveness is bestowed

<sup>48</sup> *enarrJob*, 2; *loc. cit.*

<sup>49</sup> Daniel (Susanna), 42.

<sup>50</sup> *Princ*, III.1.17.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *frMatt*, 383.

according to justice, either this forgiveness comes later (βράδιον) or sooner (τάχιον)".<sup>53</sup>

What we see, therefore, is that not only free moral action takes place within time, but it also is in a sense judged according to time. Thus time is in fact a 'criterion' of 'both fastness and slowness'.<sup>54</sup> However, it is not the natural measuring of fastness or slowness themselves, but the faculty of appreciating moral action, which is considered. Therefore, this time is in principle an extension for moral action to be tried out. This is regarded also as a 'measure and criterion', not so much for measuring *quantity* (of time), but measuring *quality* (of creaturely free moral action). Time is the extension where freedom is tried out, since it is only within time that creaturely freedom can make sense.

Thus, the divine oikonomia is manifested in time. In realizing his oikonomia, God acts 'quickly or slowly'. Still Origen adheres to his view of God's timelessness stating that, although rational beings need time in order to realize their freedom, God does not need time in order to manifest his oikonomia. With respect to this, a portion of *commMatt* is worth quoting:

And no one should have any hesitation in accepting the saying that he who sold all his belongings and gave it to the poor, becomes perfect all at once (εὐθέως). The belongings may be given over much time, and much time is needed to give them to the above-mentioned poor, but the Logos is by no means hindered by time in order to give (in proportion to the things given to the poor), so that he who acted in such a manner become perfect. And it is clear that he who carried out these deeds will have a treasure in the heavens, becoming heavenly himself.<sup>55</sup>

So the Logos is in the world acting 'quickly' or 'slowly', yet his action is not subject to the natural confinements of necessity imposed on the temporal rational creatures. So the presence of the Logos in time is conceived in a way of its own: God, even in his temporal presence as Logos, dominates time by virtue of his being transcendent to time and the creator of it.

There is then one more difference between Origen and the Stoics. The latter held that 'all beings are in time'<sup>56</sup> and so was their god,

<sup>53</sup> *commMatt*, 14, 5.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. *SVF*, I, 26, 11–12.

<sup>55</sup> *commMatt*, 15, 18.

<sup>56</sup> *SVF*, I, 26, 13–14.

by reason of his being immanent in the world. The god of the Stoics is bound, as it were, with time. In Origen's view, on the other hand, 'all beings are in time' means that all *created* beings are in time. It is the notion of transcendence of God vis-à-vis the world that allows him to consider the relation of Logos to time in the way canvassed earlier. Creatures are 'in' time,<sup>57</sup> or 'under' time.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, the notion of time having been created by God, as well as the conception of a world broader than this visible firmament, allow to regard time in a more flexible way. As a matter of fact, Origen goes as far as to assert a notion of relativity in the perception of time, as we have seen.

Hence he is not interested either in the motion of inanimate objects, or in that of animals caused by impulses. Besides, he deems the movement of heavenly bodies as 'vanity'.<sup>59</sup> At any rate, it is not nature itself that he is preoccupied with. Nature is but a 'supplement'<sup>60</sup> forming the surroundings of moral action—which is the crucial issue. He makes it perfectly clear that there is only one kind of motion, which is of interest to him: this is motion, which is characterized by the correlated notions of personal freedom and responsibility.

### *God and creaturely freedom*

Thus each individual rational creature follows a personal direction which is determined by its own free action. In this course though, God is regarded as totally impartial. It is significant that Origen's conviction on this question is so strong that he speaks of 'the principle of impartiality' of God. The notion suggested is that God by no means interferes with creaturely freedom:

All these, down to the very least, God supervises by the power of his wisdom and distinguishes by the controlling hand of his judgement; and thus he has arranged the universe on the principle of the most impartial retribution (*aequissima retributione universa disposuit*), according as each one deserves for his merit to be assisted or cared for. Herein is displayed in its completeness the principle of impartiality, when the inequality of circumstances preserves an equality of reward

<sup>57</sup> *frMatt*, 487.

<sup>58</sup> *frJohn*, I; *frJohn*, CX.

<sup>59</sup> *Cels*, VII, 50; *selPs*, 143; *commJohn*, I, XVII, etc.; ref. to Rom. 8, 19–20.

<sup>60</sup> *commJohn*, I, XXV.

(aequitatis) for merit. But the grounds of merit in each individual are known with truth and clearness only to God, together with his only-begotten Word and Wisdom and his Holy Spirit.<sup>61</sup>

This kind of relation of God to temporal free action of rational creatures is a fundamental tenet, which can be traced at other points of his work as well: "So also must we understand in regard to the divine providence, that he treats all who descend into the struggles of human life with the most impartial care."<sup>62</sup> And further: "that all will take part in the struggle, but individuals will either be matched against individuals or at any rate will fight in such a way as shall be approved by God, who is the just president of this contest."<sup>63</sup> With regard to the function of angels in relation to men, this principle is portrayed thus:

Certainly we must suppose that all these duties are not performed by accident or chance, nor because the angels were naturally created for them, lest in so doing we should charge the Creator with partiality. Rather must we believe that they were conferred in accordance with merit and virtue and with the activity and ability of each individual spirit, by God who is the most righteous and impartial governor of all things.<sup>64</sup>

Hence "God does not offer possibilities to some beings so that they commit sins nor does he offer possibilities to others so that they carry out good deeds."<sup>65</sup> God's foreknowledge in no way affects creaturely freedom.<sup>66</sup> For 'although it may seem strange', occurrences happen 'not because they are foreknown, but they have been foreknown just because they were going to happen.'<sup>67</sup> Accordingly in *selEz* it is stated: "So it is upon our choice either to listen or not to listen, as if God had no foreknowledge at all; and our freedom of will is neither less if God has foreknowledge nor more if God has no foreknowledge."<sup>68</sup> This point is given particular emphasis in *Cels*:

<sup>61</sup> *Princ*, II.9.8.

<sup>62</sup> *Princ*, III.2.3.

<sup>63</sup> *Princ*, III.2.5.

<sup>64</sup> *Princ*, I.8.1. Cf. *Princ*, III.1.10.

<sup>65</sup> *homLuc*, 17.

<sup>66</sup> *commGen*, 3.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* s. also *Princ*, III.1.23.

<sup>68</sup> *selEz*, 2, PG 13.772.

Celsus thinks that something takes place by virtue of having been predicted by some kind of foresight. But we, do not allowing for this, say that he who foretold an event is not the cause of this coming to pass in the future, just because he foretold this. We grant that a future event will occur, even if this is not predicted. For it is this occurrence itself which provides the cause to a foreteller, so that he can predict this. And all this is present in the foreknowledge of the prophet; for if an occurrence is open to the contingency of either coming or not coming to pass, either of these contingencies may actually occur. We do not sustain that the one who has foreknowledge has the power of canceling the possibility of an event happening or not happening,<sup>69</sup> saying something such as this: This will definitely occur, and it is impossible for it to come about otherwise. This pertains to all foreknowledge of events depending on our free will, whether we are dealing with the divine scriptures or with Greek stories. And this which by the logicians is called an idle argument, which is a sophism, could not seem to be a sophism in Celsus's view, although it certainly is a sophism according to the principles of sound teaching.<sup>70</sup>

In *commGen* the same argument is adduced: "by no means is he who has foreknowledge the cause of what has been foreknown",<sup>71</sup> and "the foreknowledge of God does not impose any necessity upon those which have been foreseen."<sup>72</sup>

Origen has a clear perception of what constitutes God's *action* (τὰ γινόμενα) in the world.<sup>73</sup> Thus he classifies the divine actions in three categories: actions 'out of will' (κατὰ βούλησιν), 'out of benevolence' (κατ' εὐδοκίαν) and 'out of forgiving' (κατὰ συγχώρησιν). These are the three ways in which God acts in history. Obviously all three of them are related to the divine will. The first category though ('out of will') alludes to God's action into the world not in response but, as it were, by his own initiative. This divine action is distinguished from the divine 'foreknowledge' (πρόγνωσιν) which is understood not to be *action*. The way in which this distinction is couched denotes that the divine 'foreknowledge' (πρόγνωσιν) is not understood as related to the divine 'will' (βούλησιν). Thus 'foreknowledge' is not

<sup>69</sup> This is a Stoic argument, which Alexander of Aphrodisias rebuked as 'coined for the joke's sake' (παιζόντων), *de Fato*, 10. Cf. *SVF*, II, 279, 13ff.

<sup>70</sup> *Cels*, II, 20.

<sup>71</sup> *commGen*, 3; PG 12, 57; 12, 65; *Philocalia*, 23: 3, 8, 12; 25: 1, 3.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. *commRom*, Section 1.

<sup>73</sup> The term γινόμενα, used by Origen, is of Stoic origin expressing the notion of occurrences in the world; Cf. *SVF*, I, 26, 11-15.



related to any of the three categories of divine action. This distinction between 'will' and 'foreknowledge' of God is made more than once.<sup>74</sup>

It is then obvious that Origen throughout his entire theology maintains his view of the creaturely freedom, insisting that God's foreknowledge by no means introduces any restriction to this freedom. Evidently, the tenet means to rebut the Gnostic view of 'souls' being of a certain fixed 'nature', which abolishes not only freedom but also personal responsibility. Numerous are the points where the Gnostics are rebuked for teaching that 'there are different natures of souls and that they have been constituted by different creators',<sup>75</sup> espousing the argument that 'each of the members came to honourable or less honourable duties of the body by offering some grounds for this from themselves': It is indeed not 'without any causes' that 'each one has been delegated to be a honourable or less honourable member' of the body of Christ.<sup>76</sup> Therefore, if God dispenses things in this way in the present age, he will also do so in the future, as he in fact did in the past ages: He dispensed things 'in a similar way in respect to all rational creatures'.<sup>77</sup>

### *The conception of causality*

Nevertheless there is a notion of causality in this conception of time. Let us then see how this is perceived. In *commGen* it is asserted that foreknowledge by God is the knowledge of succession and evolution of actions according to a certain causality:

In the beginning of creation God has established the principle that nothing should happen without a cause; so, by his mind he goes along what is going to happen, seeing that it is because this happened that follows; and if this takes place subsequently, that follows; and once this happens, that will come to pass. And having proceeded in this way until the end of things, he knows all those which will come to pass, by no means being himself the cause for the occurrence of any of those which are known to him. It is like knowing beforehand that

<sup>74</sup> *frLuc*, 57—commenting on Luke 12, 6; *frMatt*, 212—commenting on Matt. 10, 29.

<sup>75</sup> *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 9.2.16.

<sup>76</sup> *op. cit.*, 9.3.2.

<sup>77</sup> *Loc. cit.*

someone who, because of his ignorance dashes recklessly on a slippery road, will slip down; yet he who knows that in advance is not the cause of slipping down.<sup>78</sup>

Perhaps this passage should be treated with some caution and certainly a *caveat* should be introduced: the passage does not suggest in a rather awkward manner that human action is but a chain of causative acts. To take it this way would be a simplistic and tricky notion impugning the real import of creaturely freedom and its possibilities. Anyway this text is an extract of the *Philocalia*, does not come directly from Origen himself. What we should keep from this passage is the notions of creaturely freedom and of natural causality.

### *Natural causality*

Thus Origen allows for a natural causality. He also concedes that actions may follow a causality of this sort known to God in advance. He conformably grants that human beings are subject to this causality, in the same way that other living beings are. For example, it is not within the power of choice to be subject to a certain external impression, which gives rise to an image of one sort or another.<sup>79</sup> Origen holds that in general external natural causes do not lie within the power of man's choice.<sup>80</sup> In simple words, this kind of causality means this: a man is free as regards his choice of moral action, still he is a part of the natural reality, and thus subject to the physical laws of nature. If he is on the fifth floor of a building and jumps out of the window, he will fall down and be wounded or killed. His freedom does not entail that he is 'free' not to be subject to the law of gravity. Thus Origen refers not only to the possibilities of human freedom, but also to what 'is not within our choice' (οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν).<sup>81</sup> To be a natural existence entails to be subject to the natural laws of this existence. It is significant that subjection to the natural laws applies even to the humanity of Jesus:

<sup>78</sup> *commGen*, 3, PG 12, 64; *Philocalia*, 23, 8.

<sup>79</sup> *Princ*, III.1.3.

<sup>80</sup> *Princ*, III.1.5.

<sup>81</sup> *commMatt*, 14, 8. about those οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν s. also *commGen*, 3, PG.12.69; *Princ*, III.1.5; *homLuc*, 20; *Dial*, 17; *Philocalia*, 21, 4; 21, 14; 23, 11.

It was not possible for him not to suffer pain from the torture inflicted upon him by his executioners. For pain is feeling outside the control of the will (ἀπροαίρετον γὰρ ὁ πόνος).<sup>82</sup> . . . Once he had assumed a body by birth he had assumed that which in its nature is capable of feeling pain and the dreadful distress which befall those who live in bodies.<sup>83</sup>

The inescapable subjection to the natural laws is then suggested through the notion of natural causality.

*Causality in rational action*

Another kind of causality pertains to what is understood as a reasonably expected course of events. This causality has no deterministic character. Since freedom is considered as a fundamental faculty of rational creatures, Origen allows for a contingency of the choices of free will:

And if someone says that the outcome may be this but it is contingent that it might be a different one, we grant that this is true. What is not contingent is that God may be false; contingency applies only to what is contingent on occurring and it is possible for anyone to think that certain things may or may not occur.<sup>84</sup> . . . our freedom of will is in no way affected by the fact that God knows what is going to be done by everyone.<sup>85</sup>

This causality exists *during* an aeon and does not stand *beyond* the freedom of rational beings, since all possibilities for free action are open.

<sup>82</sup> Those functions of the body stand beyond any notion of choice and responsibility. It is the things of the body (σωματικά) which Origen calls 'intermediates' (μέσα), that is, functions beyond ethical judgement. s. *Cels*, II, 59: τῶν μέσων καὶ σωματικῶν; similar in *commJohn*, I, XVII; 20, XXII; also *Princ*, III.1.18;

<sup>83</sup> *Cels*, II.23; the entire section is in fact an attack to Docetism.

<sup>84</sup> *commGen*, 3, *loc. cit.* It has been asserted that the singular and contingent does not interest the Greek philosopher (Cf. H. Puech, "Gnosis and Time", p. 43). I shall not discuss this view itself since it is beyond my scope. I only note that the singular and contingent *does* interest Origen. In fact this is one of the main preoccupations of his thought. This is why a rational creature is defined by its personal relation to God; this is also why God is stated as omniscient of any contingent act of any single rational creature.

<sup>85</sup> *commGen*, 3; s. also, *deOr*, VI, 4.

*Existential causality*

By contrast, there is another kind of causality which is realized at the end of an aeon, namely, during<sup>86</sup> a judgement. This causality appears to stand *beyond* the freedom of rational creatures.

The moment at which judgement will occur is a result of free action. For this judgement takes place during the consummation, occurring 'to the entire world, which is in need of purification whenever the evil in it becomes extensive'.<sup>87</sup> Yet there are certain occurrences which are not under the control of creaturely freedom.

First, this freedom, as moral action, may accelerate or delay the end of an aeon, yet the very moment of its occurrence belongs to God's choice alone. When the end of the aeon will occur is beyond our knowledge.<sup>88</sup>

Secondly, the very fact that a consummation takes place at the end of an aeon is an unquestionable datum in the course of the world. Thirdly, the fact that a judgement takes place at the same time is also beyond creaturely choice.

Fourthly, the rank of life, to which a rational being will be transposed, is for God to judge.

All these elements constitute a supreme causality which is virtually beyond the freedom of rational beings. For they cannot avert the 'purification' of the world; they cannot avert the fact that judgement and rearrangement of rational creatures in the various ranks of life takes place at that time. This causality is a datum in the make-up and process of the whole world and stems from the will of God only. This is as unquestionable as the very fact that this world exists as a 'downfall' (καταβολή). For once the Fall occurred, the existence of the world is beyond the choice of the will of rational beings; they can strive for salvation to come, but the realization of this expectation depends on God's judgement. This is not only a question of divine knowledge or choice of the moment; it is also a matter of divine help: this is why Origen states that 'human will is not sufficient in order to reach the end'<sup>89</sup> and 'God arranges the

<sup>86</sup> The word 'during' is here being used loosely, since judgement is regarded as having no duration at all.

<sup>87</sup> *Col.* IV, 64.

<sup>88</sup> *GMatt.* 485; 486; 487.

<sup>89</sup> *Princ.* III.1.19.

things of the world in the appropriate *kairoi* and he alone knows the reasons of what occurs at these times.<sup>90</sup>

Rational creatures cannot escape this supreme causality. Their freedom itself is the *cause* of this causality, while their existential status (that is, the rank of life in which they are placed) is the *effect*. The will of rational creatures is entirely free to act during an aeon and to come to a dialectical relation with the will of God. What cannot be escaped is that this will is judged according to God's impartial righteousness.<sup>91</sup> Hence, the very fact of judgement, although occurring at certain moments of the continuum of time, actually affects and determines the conception of *all* time. This is why Origen avers that this causality 'is a doctrine which should be regarded as an eternal law' (*νόμον αἰώνιον*)<sup>92</sup> and, therefore, this is a fundamental element in the entire structure of creation.

This causality itself presupposes the existence of time, since no relation between *cause* (as something *before*) and *effect* (as something *after*) could make sense in the absence of time. The entire world is temporal and it is only within time that creaturely freedom can make sense. For freedom presupposes the possibility of (at least) a dilemma, of reflection upon it, of decision and choice. All these faculties can make sense only as *successions* in time. For a rational creature *first* faces a multitude of possibilities, *then* considers them, *then* forms his will and *then* makes his choice. Thus the notion of *possibility* of a choice makes sense only as being *before* the choice itself.<sup>93</sup> This is the sense in which existential causality pertains to 'the entire rational creation'.<sup>94</sup>

### *The notion of pre-existent causes*

Holding this conception of time and motion, Origen goes ahead with developing his notion of pre-existent causes. This is precisely what underlines the existential causality, as well as his conviction about

<sup>90</sup> *Cels.* IV, 69; also *Cels.* V, 15.

<sup>91</sup> *Princ.* I.8.1. Cf. *Princ.* III.1.10.

<sup>92</sup> *commJohn.* 20, XXXIX; s. *supra*, p. 300, n. 165.

<sup>93</sup> Since the discussion here is about action of rational creatures, I need not refer to the case (discussed by Aristotle) of cause and effect being *simultaneous*, as it happens in the case of an eclipse.

<sup>94</sup> *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 9.41.5.



freedom of will. Beside all other reasons, there is a particular one leading him to assert the continuity of time throughout the aeons: in the extension of time causality is established and this causality is extended in more than one aeons. The arrangement (of the rational beings in the various ranks of life) existing in an aeon is directly related to both the previous and the next aeon. For this present arrangement is the *effect* of free action which was realized in the past aeon. At the same time, the 'movement' (that is, moral action) taking place during this aeon is the *cause* for the arrangement in the aeon to come.

The continuity of time allows for this notion to make sense. Besides, the continuum of time is not affected by the occurrence of rearrangement of rational creatures in the various ranks of life, since that moment (the moment of judgement) is regarded as having no duration at all. Thus there is no 'break' of the continuation of time at the moment when a rearrangement of rational beings in the ranks of life takes place. In this respect, the saying about this rearrangement taking place 'in the twinkling of an eyelid' is particularly useful to Origen. Hence, the existential status of rational beings during this aeon is the *result* of pre-existent causes. Again, scriptural authority is sought for this notion to be grounded:

It follows, I think, that we must also inquire what are the causes which lead the soul of man to be influenced at one time by good spirits and at another time by bad. I suspect that it is due to certain causes which are older even than our birth in this body, as John indicated by his leaping and rejoicing in his mother's womb when the voice of Mary's salutation sounded in the ears of his mother Elisabeth, and as is declared by the prophet Jeremiah who, 'before he was formed in his mother's belly' was known by God and 'before he came forth from the womb' was sanctified by him, and while yet a boy received the gift of prophecy.<sup>95</sup> On the other hand, it is clearly proved that some people are possessed right from their earliest years, that is, are born with an accompanying demon, while others are declared by the testimony of histories to have been under supernatural control from boyhood, and others still have from their earliest years been indwelt by a demon whom they term a Python,<sup>96</sup> that is, a spirit of ventriloquism.

In the face of these examples, those who maintain that everything in this world is governed by the providence of God, a doctrine which

<sup>95</sup> Jer. 1, 5-6.

<sup>96</sup> Acts, 16, 16.

is also part of our faith, can give no answer, as it seems to me, which will prove divine providence to be free from all suspicion of injustice; except to say that there were certain pre-existent causes which led these souls, before they were born into the body, to contract some degree of guilt in their sensitive or emotional nature, in consequence of which divine providence has judged them worthy of enduring these sufferings. For the soul always possesses free will, both when in the body and when out of the body<sup>97</sup> and the will's freedom always moves in the direction either of good or evil, nor can the rational sense, that is, the mind or soul, ever exist without some movement either good or evil. It is probable that these movements furnish grounds for merit even before the souls do anything in this world, so that in accordance with such causes or merits they are ordained by the divine providence right from their birth, yes, and even before it, if I may so speak, to endure conditions either good or evil.<sup>98</sup>

In the same context, it is stated that by reason of his merits in some previous life Jacob had deserved to be loved by God to such an extent as to be worthy of being preferred to his brother.<sup>99</sup> There are older causes to account for the 'vessel of honour' and the 'vessel of dishonour'; so the older reasons why Jacob was loved and Esau hated lie with Jacob before he came into the body and with Esau before he entered Rebecca's womb.<sup>100</sup> Hence

for antecedent causes a different position of service is prepared by the Creator for each one in proportion to the degree of his merit, which depends on the fact that each, in being created by God as a mind or rational spirit, has personally gained for himself, in accordance with the movements of his mind and the disposition of his heart, a greater or less share of merit, and has rendered himself lovable or it may be hateful to God.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> This is one more interpolation of Rufinus which undoubtedly must have played its part in the distortion of Origen's thought; it is also one more proof that Rufinus lacked the understanding of many crucial facets of this theology. Origen firmly held that a soul is never found without a body. This notion is in accordance with his perception of a rational being as an inseparable entity, despite the conceptual distinction between incorporeal and corporeal element. At this point the mainstream scholarship has miscomprehended Origen's thought. H. Crouzel only recently revised his older view of soul without a body and concedes the authentic view of Origen—yet not to a satisfactory extent; H. Crouzel, "Mort et immortalité selon Origène", *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique*, 79 (1978), p. 186.

<sup>98</sup> *Princ.*, III.3.5.

<sup>99</sup> *Princ.*, II.9.7.

<sup>100</sup> *Princ.*, III.1.22.

<sup>101</sup> *Princ.*, II.9.7.

The conclusion that epitomizes the conception of existential causality runs thus:

Each being, whether of heaven or earth or below the earth, may be said to possess within himself the causes of diversity antecedent to his birth in the body. For all things were created by the Logos of God and were set in order through the operation of his righteousness; and in his gracious compassion he provides for all and exhorts all to be cured by whatever remedies they may, and incites them to salvation.<sup>102</sup>

This causality underlines the substantial sequence of the aeons into the continuous extension of time. It also underlines that although in principle time is perceived as an element in the make-up of the world, and therefore a *natural* element, this is also deeply involved in *metaphysical* considerations, since this is the venue where the divine will (along with the creaturely one) is realized. Thus, the notions of 1) continuity of time, 2) 'vertical' discontinuity of space and 3) uniformity of nature of rational creatures—all play a significant role in the exposition of the conception of this causality and its deeper significance.

There are serious reasons for Origen to allow for this causality in time. I have already mentioned the first reason; namely, that in this way free action becomes meaningful, since it is oriented towards a goal. The second reason is to call attention to God's 'impartiality'<sup>103</sup> and 'righteousness'<sup>104</sup> in respect of creaturely freedom. The third reason is Origen's aim to establish a Christian conception of time contrasted to all Greek and Gnostic streams of thought.

Thus, as regards the past aeon, this causality *explains* the present existential status of rational beings, so that God's impartiality and righteousness remain unquestioned. Regarding the next aeon, free action is oriented to a goal and thus freedom is rendered meaningful by expectation and hope. There is a future end which attributes a deeper meaning to freedom and, therefore, to time. This is why terms like *prophecy*, *promise*, *hope*, *expectation*, *fulfillment*, *realization* are used. If there were no orientation towards the future and no hope, then freedom should be absolutely meaningless. Subsequently, time could lose its fundamental significance; it would just be a natural

<sup>102</sup> *Princ.* II.9.7.

<sup>103</sup> *Princ.* II.9.8.

<sup>104</sup> *Princ.* II.9.4.

element of the world, as it was to the early Stoics. In the Greek conception of recurrence of identical worlds, future has nothing to promise; moral action vanishes into triviality. This was the deeper meaning of Marcus Aurelius' frustration.

It is out of this conception of time that judgement is regarded as a 'kairos'<sup>105</sup> in which promise, expectation and hope are fulfilled. Yet it is out of God's goodness that this judgement is not the final one, nor is consummation the absolute end of the world. Creaturely freedom, expectation of an ultimate realization of hope, as well as the belief in God's goodness, lead to a conception of time comprising succeeding aeons. 'Consummations' and 'judgements' are fixed points in which causality is realized. Besides, the continuation of time through these fixed points has the meaning of giving to rational beings one more chance for improvement and salvation, in this way vindicating God's goodness.

*Time as the extension of freedom*

Thus time is not simply an element of the natural world, be it 'seen' or 'not seen'. It is the extension where freedom is realized. In contrast to the early Stoics who did not relate the question of time to morality (but considered it as simply a natural problem), in Origen this correlation is plain. In *homLuc*, the portion Luke 1, 80 is commented on thus:

'To grow' has a twofold meaning: it means to grow in body, where human freedom does not collaborate; it also means to grow spiritually, where freedom is the cause of growth.<sup>106</sup>

Time is an 'extension' and a 'dimension of life' where it is not simply the morally indifferent motion of natural world that takes place: this is also where freedom is manifested and realized in a crucial way. Referring to the disciples who were asking Jesus about who was the traitor foretold by him himself,<sup>107</sup> Origen states:

<sup>105</sup> *Princ.* III.1.14; *commMatt.* 17, 9; *commMatt.* 17, 9. s. also, *frJohn*, LXI; *commJohn*, 13, XLVIII; *commJohn*, 32, III.

<sup>106</sup> *homLuc.* 11.

<sup>107</sup> *Matt.* 26, 22; *Mark* 14, 19.

For they knew that, by reason of their being human, the choice of those still in progress is alterable and this choice is susceptible of willing the contrary to those willing before.<sup>100</sup>

Likewise in *commMatt*, quoting Matt. 7, 9–11:

Why did he call the disciples worthless? Because even though they followed freely, they still had the changeability of human mind. It is only the Son of God who is unchangeable both to his divine and human nature.<sup>109</sup>

In fact 'it is only animals which do not change from a lower gender to a more noble one or vice versa; but, as far as men are concerned, it is always possible to see people either just or evil; or to see them reaching virtue out of evil or quitting improvement towards virtue and falling into evil.'<sup>110</sup> For 'nothing is permanent in human nature.'<sup>111</sup> Accordingly, when Origen interprets the meaning of ἀρχή as 'beginning' of the extension of time, he relates this to movement, perceiving this movement as moral action.<sup>112</sup> Certainly the Stoics held that moral action is of utmost significance.<sup>113</sup> Marcus Aurelius, in contrast to the early Stoics, correlates morality to time, considering time itself as a moral question. Is there then a point of affinity between Origen and Stoicism?

The answer is no. For the way in which Marcus relates time to morality is totally different to the way Origen does it. To Marcus, time is the ultimate impasse and it is responsible for the 'destruction' of human feats, especially of human moral action. Marcus all over again personifies time. It seems almost to be the governor of the physical world and the source (or destroyer) of its reality. It swallows up all action.<sup>114</sup> So the fact that Marcus does not refer to the early Stoics cannot be coincidental. J.M. Rist conjectures that this might be coincidental; still he acknowledges that this is a strange coincidence, because the manner in which Marcus speaks of time would not square easily with these definitions.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>100</sup> *commJohn*, 32, XIX.

<sup>109</sup> *frMatt*, 141.

<sup>110</sup> *commMatt*, 10, 11.

<sup>111</sup> *Cels*, IV, 32.

<sup>112</sup> *commJohn*, 1, XIX; *commJohn*, 1, XVI.

<sup>113</sup> J.M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy*, p. 286.

<sup>114</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 288.

<sup>115</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 287.



How Origen relates time to morality stands in contrast to the manner Marcus does it. His stance towards time is in fact sheerly different. To Marcus time is the ultimate impasse. To Origen time is the means through which hope can be realized.<sup>116</sup> As time is the venue where rational creatures strive for their restoration, this is regarded as the means for the *realization* of this goal, not as a destroyer of the human deeds. It is clear that the deeper pessimism of Marcus is due to the inherent incapability of Stoicism for transcendence. The desire for redemption is distinguishable in Marcus more than in any other Stoic. Besides, this is a general symptom of his era. Origen met Stoicism at a time when this philosophy demonstrated symptoms of degeneration and impasse. His presuppositions, however, were different and so were the aims of his thought. This is why he was able to employ Stoic notions and yet to transform them so vigorously and radically, that they eventually come to stand in stark contrast to the Stoic thought.

In fact, Origen uses Stoic notions attributing to them a content stemming from his Christian faith. He regards time as an indispensable means towards realization of hope; it is his conviction that rational beings are endowed with free will; he holds a broader conception of the world and the notions of Causality and Judgement establish an intrinsic meaning on time. These are serious reasons for him to employ prolongation of time. So, although the notion itself sounds similar to the Stoic one, in fact it stems from sheerly different presuppositions and aims.

Existential causality is a guarantee that time is not a destroyer of moral action and action does not vanish into triviality. Time does not depress Origen. On the contrary, present time, the period of this aeon, is not enough to him—in contrast to Marcus Aurelius who did not regard prolongation of time as necessary. It is the faith to the goodness of God that makes Origen to hold that there is always time available to rational creatures, so that they act freely and return to Him by both his help<sup>117</sup> and their free action.

<sup>116</sup> The actual content of this *hope* pertains to Origen's Philosophy of History and Eschatology. He often uses the term 'hope' itself in order to portray not only the final goal, but also the direction of action in time; s. *Cels*, IV, 38; V, 10; VIII, 50; 16, 167.

<sup>117</sup> *deOr*, VI, 4.

There is though one point, which should be clarified. A facet of the simplistic distinction drawn between Greek and Hebrew thought, is to introduce the notion of *quality* of time.<sup>118</sup> According to this, in Greek thought the 'quality' of past time is the same with that of present time and thus 'time is homogeneous'.<sup>119</sup> In fact, however, the notion of quality of time is meaningless. Time *in itself* has no quality. This is a *natural* element in the make-up of the world and natural elements have no moral quality. Time has also a *metaphysical* significance because it is *in time* that the divine and creaturely will encounter each other. In that case, the notion of quality applies to free action *in time*, not to *time proper*. Regarding this action, time can have an intrinsic *meaning*—but no quality. Certainly expressions about 'quality of time' are used, yet they make sense *only* once this distinction is made. It is inaccurate to speak of 'quality of time' in a strict theological or philosophical sense, when one ponders upon the problematique of time proper.

It would be useful to consider Origen's notion of pre-existing causes in view of the theory that it was a characteristic of Greek thought to think *causally* and consequently in terms of natural science, whereas Hebrew thought thinks *finally* or *teleologically*. T. Boman, who made this claim, asserted this:

The one puts itself outside the events and looks backwards; the other puts itself into the events and thinks itself 'into' the psychic life of the man involved and how they directed themselves forward in thought and will. The one concerns itself with the *past*, the other with the *present and future*.<sup>120</sup>

Likewise, B. van Gronigen contends that the fundamental orientation of Greek thought was toward the past.<sup>121</sup> He argues that for the Greek the prevailing type of history was *actiological*, in which the inner dynamic or driving power in the historical process was sought in the *ἀρχαί*, which was understood not so much in the sense of 'beginning' as in the sense of 'causes' (αἰτίαι).<sup>122</sup> I shall not assess these assertions themselves, since such a discussion is beyond my

<sup>118</sup> Cf. T. Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared With Greek*, p. 94.

<sup>119</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 95; Cf. H. Puech, "Gnosis and Time", pp. 39–46.

<sup>120</sup> Italics mine; *op. cit.*, p. 170; Cf. also pp. 171, 184ff.

<sup>121</sup> B. van Gronigen, *In the Grip of the Past: An Essay on an Aspect of Greek Thought*, Leiden, 1953; pp. 2–12; s. also pp. 94–5, 107–8, 115–9.

<sup>122</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 28–9.

scope. I only say that such distinctions seem to me over-simplistic. My subject matter provides the opportunity of pointing out how these distinctions could hardly withstand a serious criticism.

Origen does establish an *aetiological* character in the process in space-time. He also has no hesitation in speaking about *αἰτίαι* and even *ἀρχαί*—in fact the latter appears in the title of *Princ.* Despite this, however, his thought is par excellence a *teleological* one, entirely preoccupied with the *future*, not with the past. The very notion of causality established in his conception of time constitutes a perception of the *eschatological* process in a manner underscoring creaturely freedom. Thus he can think both *causally* and *teleologically*.

To scholars such as Boman and van Gronigen, this affirmation would seem contradictory. The study of Origen's thought proves that it is not contradictory at all. It further proves that simplistic distinctions and contentions such as the above-mentioned, despite their appealing formulation, are weak and not intrusive in terms of philosophy of history.

At any rate, perpetual creaturely movement leaves all possibilities open to rational action. These possibilities can be realized through the causality imbuing this time. Thus 'the Son of devil' may become 'Son of God'; for 'a Son of devil is not a such by structure', but he has been what he is because his own action.<sup>123</sup> What currently differentiates rational creatures is only the *result* of their own free action. This is how Origen maintains his 'natural' view of his world relating it to metaphysical implications at the same time. Accordingly, he defines an 'aeon' as 'natural system, comprising various bodies and containing differences of reason, which stem from the difference in knowledge of God.'<sup>124</sup>

This definition points out 'aeon' as a reality, which is 'natural' and yet related to God. In the same definition the notion of causality is clearly suggested through the term *ἐνεκεν* (because of). The perpetual movement, as moral action, means that this existential causality is not a contingent one. This means that it cannot be said that *if* a cause arises then the effect appears. The cause does exist all the time. Here *cause* is free moral action itself, which in Origen's world is perpetual.

<sup>123</sup> *commJohn*, 20, XIII.

<sup>124</sup> *selPs*, 5, PG 12.1172.

So this causality, as fully existing in time, determines the conception of time itself and it is a constitutive element of creation. But once this was established, God is impartial. Thus, although the very existence of this causality is beyond creaturely freedom, both *cause* and *effect* are entirely dependent upon creaturely freedom. For cause and result appear to be determined by free moral action.

With respect to this point, I endorse H. Chadwick's opinion that "Origen is quite clear that the expansion of Christianity is not to be accounted for by any naturalistic explanations."<sup>125</sup> Surely this would seem confusing to T. Boman who contends that "to think *causally*" necessarily means to think "in terms of *natural science*."<sup>126</sup> In any case, this is another concept of causality, according to which it is only the cause that stems from the temporal creaturely will. The effect (namely God's response, in his relation to creaturely freedom) stems entirely from God's will. Therefore, although manifested into the world, it is originated in timelessness. Such is the case of prayer: in that case causality is not a relation existing fully in time; rather it is a relation involving both time and timelessness.

#### *Causality between time and timelessness*

In this subsection I want to consider a series of arguments intended to counteract negation of either divine or human freedom, and all having to do with History in one way or another.

The question of the relation between God and man through prayer is directly related to the question of free will. It is not incidental that the analyses about motion are expounded in *deOr*. The challenge is the question of whether or not it makes sense to pray at all, but the real issue is this: how can divine foreknowledge be squared with the contingency of future events?

Making no effort to escape the dilemma he deals with the views of those who deny the use of prayer, not because they deny the existence of God, but only because they place God above the universe and affirm Providence.<sup>127</sup> Their argument is based on two particular points:

<sup>125</sup> H. Chadwick, "The evidences of Christianity in the Apologetic of Origen", *Studia Patristica*, II, TU 64, 1957, p. 336.

<sup>126</sup> T. Boman, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

<sup>127</sup> *deOr*, V, 2.

First, they concede that 'God knows all things before they are';<sup>128</sup> of things that occur, He knows no one for the first time, as if they were not known before this. This is a view of Origen's, too. Yet those who deny the value of prayer adduce the argument that 'the heavenly Father knoweth what things' we 'have need of before' we 'ask him', as stated in Matt. 6, 8. Therefore, he who is the Father and Creator of the world, who 'loveth all things that are and abhorreth none of the things which' he 'hath made',<sup>129</sup> should dispense what is for the well being of each one without being prayed to. Just as the father does, who protects his babies and does not wait upon their request, either because they are unable to ask at all, or because through ignorance they often wish to receive things that are clean contrary to their profit and advantage; and human beings are much further off from God than mere children are from the mind of their parents.

There is also a second argument: those who deny the value of prayer aver that the future is not only foreknown to God, but also predetermined by him and nothing comes to pass which has not been predetermined by him. For if one were to pray that the sun should rise, he would be regarded as foolish fellow, for requesting that something should happen through his prayer, which would happen in any case without his prayer. Moreover, if 'the wicked are estranged from the womb'<sup>130</sup> and the righteous man has been determined from his 'mother's womb'<sup>131</sup> and 'the children being not yet born neither having done anything good or bad, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth',<sup>132</sup> there is one conclusion to be reached: since God is unchangeable and has predetermined everything that is, and abides in what he has pre-arranged, it is obviously inconsistent to pray with the idea of altering his plan by prayer or of entreating him as one who has not pre-arranged it but awaits each one's prayer. This would be to make prayer the reason why God arranges what is fitting for him who prays, and settles then what is deemed proper, as if it had not already been foreseen by him.

<sup>128</sup> Daniel (Susanna), 42.

<sup>129</sup> Matt. 6, 8.

<sup>130</sup> Ps. 57, 4.

<sup>131</sup> Gal. 1, 15.

<sup>132</sup> Rom. 9, 11-12.



Thus there is a twofold argument against the necessity for praying. Origen stated this through the same words that the problem had been posed to him:

First, if God knows the future beforehand, and it must come to pass, prayer is vain. Secondly, if all things happen according to the will of God, and if what is willed by him is fixed, and nothing of what he wills can be changed, prayer is vain.<sup>133</sup>

The question facing him at this point is not simply the value of prayer. The very question is whether or not the dialectical relation between God and creatures actually exists and makes sense; and further, whether a creature's action may *cause* a responding action from God. The point is then how to square our freedom with God's knowledge of the future.

Prayer is in fact only a particular case of the question whether an action taking place in time and referred to timelessness may *cause* a reaction from timelessness at a time subsequent to this temporal action. The very question, therefore, is whether Origen holds a notion of causality extended in both time and timelessness. I shall maintain that indeed Origen does hold such a notion, for the real question is that of *presentness* of God vis-à-vis rational creatures. We find the notion of presentness put to imaginative new uses, to show how God's knowledge is compatible not with his own freedom, but also with creaturely freedom, too.

As a matter of fact, the rationale is once more based on the freedom of will. He avers that 'from creation'<sup>134</sup> and since 'the foundation of the world'<sup>135</sup> God has known everything and therefore he has foreknowledge of what the choice of our free will be. He stresses once again that the foreknowledge of God is not the cause of all future events or of future actions performed by us out of free will and choice. God has arranged everything beforehand in accordance with what he has seen concerning each act of free will and what will be answered by his providence.<sup>136</sup>

Given this fundamental opinion, he enunciates his view of the relation between God and man through prayer. Since each act of

<sup>133</sup> *de Or.*, V, 6.

<sup>134</sup> Rom. 1, 20.

<sup>135</sup> Matt. 25, 34; Luke 11, 50; Heb. 4, 3; 9, 26; Rev. 13, 8; 17, 8.

<sup>136</sup> *de Or.*, VII.

free will is known to God it is reasonable to assume that he also knows what someone will pray for, his kind of disposition the nature of his faith and what he desires to happen to him. It is according to this knowledge that God disposes things somewhat as follows:

I will hear this man who will pray prudently, for the very prayer's sake which he will pray; but this man I will not hear, either because he will be unworthy to be heard, or because he will pray for things which are neither profitable for him who prays, nor proper for me to grant; and for this prayer (let us say) of so-and-so I will not hear him; but for that I will hear him.<sup>137</sup>

Also,

I will grant this or that to this man who will pray, because it is meet for me to do this for a man who will pray, blamelessly and will not prove careless in the matter of prayer; and when he shall pray for a certain time, I will bestow this or that upon him 'exceeding abundantly above' what he 'asks for'<sup>138</sup> for it is meet for me to overpass him in good deeds and to supply him with more than he has been able to ask for.<sup>139</sup>

Thus Origen develops his argument by putting his own conception of the mind of God into words as if spoken by God himself.<sup>140</sup> It is significant here that God is regarded as responding on grounds of *causality*. Thus there are expressions like 'because of the prayer itself' (δι' αὐτήν τὴν εὐχήν),<sup>141</sup> 'because he is unworthy of being heard' (διὰ τὸ ἀνάξιον αὐτὸν ἔσεσθαι τοῦ ἐπακουσθήσεσθαι),<sup>142</sup> 'because he has prayed these things for' (διὰ τὸ ταῦτα αὐτὸν εὔξασθαι),<sup>143</sup> 'because it is meet for me to do this for a man who will pray blamelessly and will not prove careless in the matter of prayer',<sup>144</sup> 'for it is meet for me to overpass him in good deeds' (ἐμοί γὰρ τόνδε πρέπει νικᾶν ἐν ταῖς εὐποιΐαις).<sup>145</sup> What these expressions illustrate is that the relation between man and God in prayer is conceived as a *causative* relation.

<sup>137</sup> *deOr*, VI, 4.

<sup>138</sup> Eph. 3, 20.

<sup>139</sup> *deOr*, VI, 4.

<sup>140</sup> Origen adopts the same method in *deOr*, XIV, 1; XV, 4; XXIX, 14.

<sup>141</sup> *deOr*, VI, 4.

<sup>142</sup> *deOr*, V, 5.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> *deOr*, VI, 4.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

The *cause* of this relation is the prayer itself and is originated in time; the *effect* is God's response and it obviously comes from the divine timelessness.

Thus each of the two parts (cause-effect) of this causality lies in realities different with respect to time. This causality, therefore, may be seen either from the point of view of time or that of timelessness. The first is quite simple, since this relation is realized in time: the result of prayer (whatever this may be, that is fulfillment of the petition, or not) is understood to come *after* prayer. But to see this relation from a timeless point of view is extremely difficult, indeed impossible.

According to a certain theory, Origen holds that God has answered all prayers before all time or pre-eternally.<sup>146</sup> This, however, is virtually a denial of the very fact that the dialectical relation between God and man takes place at the moment of the prayer onwards. I should point out nevertheless that this proposition makes sense only if it is seen from a temporal point of view. For in timelessness it makes no sense to distinguish between 'before all time' and 'now', since these notions make sense only within a temporal context.

However, once Origen's expressions are studied meticulously, some conclusions might be drawn. These expressions make evident that what God holds before time is not the *response* itself, but his *knowledge* of the response. This means that God, regarded from our point of view, acts at the time of the prayer; the dialectical relation between God and him who prays is fully real at that time; this is why Origen portrays the state of prayer as follows:

He whose mind is set on prayer is in some sense profited merely by the settled condition involved in praying, when he has disposed himself to approach God and speak in his presence as to one who watches over him and is present.<sup>147</sup>

Origen adopts the method of putting his own conceptions of the mind of God into words as if spoken by God himself. It is characteristic that he represents God to speak in the Future tense: 'I shall hear' (ἐπακούσομαι), 'I shall not hear' (οὐκ ἐπακούσομαι), 'he will be unworthy of being heard' (διὰ τὸ ἀνάξιον αὐτόν ἔσεσθαι τοῦ

<sup>146</sup> R. Sorabji, *op. cit.*, pp. 247ff, 257ff.

<sup>147</sup> *de Or.*, VIII, 2.

ἐπακουσθήσεσθαι), 'I will grant this or that' (τάδε μὲν τινα ποιήσω), 'I will bestow' (δωρήσομαι).<sup>148</sup> Certainly, it is Origen who says, "when- ever verbs are applied to timelessness, the temporal implications of these verbs should not be taken in a strict sense"; yet at the same point he remarks that the Future tense denotes what "will exist in the future".<sup>149</sup>

From a timeless point of view, there is no 'future'. Still what Origen indicates is that the action of God is actually realized in dialectical relation to prayer, at the time of prayer. This means that the response of God is regarded as an *action*, which (from the creaturely point of view) takes place at *that* time. This becomes clearer from the manner in which this divine action is related to time. In the same work God is presented to think as follows: Moreover, to such an one, who will become such as this, I will send this ministering angel, to be his fellow-worker from this time onward (ἀπὸ τοῦδε ἀρξόμενον τοῦ χρόνου), and to continue with him until such a time (μέχρι τοῦδε), while to another "who after (μετά) embracing higher teaching is about to grow somewhat weaker and turn backwards to worldly things, from him I will remove (ἀποστήσω) this mightier fellow-worker".<sup>150</sup> This is why Origen states that "he who . . . prays will hear while he is yet speaking, perceiving, by the power of him who 'hears in heaven'<sup>151</sup> the 'Here I am' having cast aside, before he prayed, all dissatisfaction concerning Providence."<sup>152</sup>

This means that God responds (that is, *acts*) at the time of prayer. What exists before is his *knowledge* of this act, in the same sense that God has foreknowledge of everything that will happen in the world. Any notion of *prior*, therefore, does not pertain to God's act (or, *response* to the prayer), but to his knowledge of what will happen in the 'train of future events' (κατὰ τὸν εἰρμόν τῶν ἐσομένων).<sup>153</sup> This divine knowledge has to do with his providence and the expressions presenting God as 'electing' someone (such as Paul, for example) are based on the fact that God is he 'who knows the future events' and, therefore, 'chooses' Paul before knowing what Paul, due to his own

<sup>148</sup> *deOr*, VI, 4.

<sup>149</sup> *frJohn*, I; *frJohn*, CX.

<sup>150</sup> *deOr*, VI, 4.

<sup>151</sup> 1 Kings, 8, 30.

<sup>152</sup> *deOr*, X, 1.

<sup>153</sup> *deOr*, VI, 3.

free will, will do during his life.<sup>154</sup> Thus 'God tries people out not because he does not know the outcome of their trial but in order to give them the opportunity to do what they want because of their freedom of choice'.<sup>155</sup> In view of that, 'prophecy is a prediction of future events', yet an occurrence 'took place not because it was said' but 'it was said because it was going to take place'.<sup>156</sup>

It is out of the manifestation of God in the world that 'we all have some conception of God and form some notions of whatever kind about him'; thus 'we see his holiness as he creates, foresees, judges, chooses, forsakes, receives, turns away from, deems worthy of honour, punishes each one according to his deserts'.<sup>157</sup> Through conceptions such as these, creatures have an apprehension of God and come in a dialectical relation with him. In these notions 'fore-seeing' is included also; yet this is not understood as a kind of *action* of God in relation to creatures. This foreknowledge refers rather to God's knowledge of the appropriate time (καιρός) which he will choose for his action. This perception is stated in a Greek portion of *Princ.*

For souls are, so to speak, innumerable and their habits are innumerable and equally so are their movements, their purposes, their inclinations and their impulses, of which there is only one perfect superintendent, who has full knowledge both of the times (καιρούς) and the appropriate aids and the paths and the ways, namely the God and Father of the universe.<sup>158</sup>

In *Cels.* however, particular emphasis is put on securing creaturely freedom of will:

Since man is able to consider everything and to arrange everything in order, it should be conceded that he is working together with providence (συνεργούντα τῇ προνοίᾳ ἀποδεκτέον), does works which are the product not merely of the natural instincts with which he is endowed by the providence of God, but also of his own thought (καὶ οὐ μόνως τῆς προνοίας Θεοῦ ἔργα ἐπιτελοῦντα ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ).<sup>159</sup>

<sup>154</sup> *de Or.* VI, 5.

<sup>155</sup> *selEx.* PG 12.281ff.

<sup>156</sup> *frMatt.* 21.

<sup>157</sup> *de Or.* XXIV, 2.

<sup>158</sup> *Princ.* III.1.14.

<sup>159</sup> *Cels.* IV, 82.



The notion of causality between time and timelessness is perceived not only in relation to the creaturely function of prayer, but also with regard to any aspect of the dialectical relation between God and rational creatures. Indeed Origen goes as far as to affirm a sort of *contingency* in God's action towards men. In *homJer* he portrays this contingency by commenting on the saying

*If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from evil, then I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. . . . If it does evil in my sight, that it does not obey my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.*<sup>160</sup>

Origen feels it necessary to 'explain the notion of God's repentance. For to repent seems to be a blemish and unworthy not only of God but even of a wise man', since repentance usually applies to what has not been considered well. As God has a foreknowledge of future events he cannot be said that he has not considered things well and therefore he repents.<sup>161</sup> This is a question to which extensive analyses are devoted. The conclusion is that these are figures of speech employed by God in his relation to men. This is like speaking to 'babies' and thus he 'pretends' not to know the future things,<sup>162</sup> so that 'self-determination is free'<sup>163</sup> and cannot be put in question.<sup>164</sup> Since, therefore, 'God foreknows everything, neither does he become angry nor does he repent': 'repentance' means God's 'casting off a former thing and metathesis (μετάθεσις) to another dispensation (οἰκονομία) of things'.<sup>165</sup> Thus 'repentance of God is said to be the metathesis (μετάθεσις) of the divine dispensation (οἰκονομία) from one thing to another'. In fact 'the alterability of human choice cannot be applied to God. It is us, and because of ourselves, who provoke the changes of the divine dispensation by proving ourselves unworthy of the honour gifted by God'. Thus when God says 'I have repented for having ordained Saul as a king',<sup>166</sup> this is said instead of 'I want to bestow the power of reigning to another one and sus-

<sup>160</sup> Jer. 18, 8-10; *homJer*, 18, 5.

<sup>161</sup> *homJer*, 18, 6.

<sup>162</sup> *homJer*, 18, 6.

<sup>163</sup> *homJer*, 18, 3.

<sup>164</sup> *homJer*, 18, 6.

<sup>165</sup> The arguments in the ensuing discussion are from *frReg*, IV, V.

<sup>166</sup> 1 Kings 15, 11.

pending him from being powerful'. It is as if God said that 'Saul made himself unworthy of being a king, so if I had a nature susceptible of repenting I could repent about him. Then why he was ordained? Because at that time he was worthy. But, by changing his mind he has become unworthy'.<sup>167</sup>

This reasoning is indicative of how strongly Origen feels about the dialectical relation between God and rational creatures. There is no need to challenge his arguments on a strictly logical basis; there is no need to ask why God made this choice in the first place once he foreknows that Saul would be unworthy, in the same sense that he 'chooses' Paul by foreknowing what Paul would become by his own free will.<sup>168</sup> Faith in 'divine dispensation' involves conviction about its benevolent goal, although it is not 'easy' for men to know 'the reasons of dispensation'.<sup>169</sup> The old Stoic tenet is particularly helpful at this point.

What is of importance in these statements is that the divine and creaturely will encounter each other in space-time and come to a dialectical relation. This means that the responsibility, which of necessity accompanies creaturely freedom is perceived in the context of causality established between the time of the world and divine timelessness.

God, therefore, has foreknowledge of the causative dialectical relations between him and the creatures; yet the causality *itself* is realized at a certain time. I should, nevertheless, emphasize again that the distinction between *foreknowledge* of a causative relation and a *realization* of it makes sense regarded only from a temporal point of view. For in the final analysis it is time that this distinction itself is based on.

From a timeless point of view, however, this distinction makes no actual sense, on account of the absence of time. In a causality where both time and timelessness are involved, we cannot expect the conventional temporal succession, as in a merely temporal causality. For example, in a temporal causality the cause is always *prior* to the result or, at most, simultaneous to it (as in Aristotle's example of the eclipse). But in a causality of the kind considered here this is not implied

<sup>167</sup> *homJer.* 18, 6.

<sup>168</sup> *deOr.* VI, 5.

<sup>169</sup> *Cels.* III, 38; s. also *Cels.* IV, 69; VI, 79.

necessarily. Thus, Origen regards the future event as the *cause* of God's foreknowledge of it.<sup>170</sup> This means that the divine foreknowledge is the *result* of the fact that an event will take place in the future. Hence, in this case the cause is *posterior* to the result. However, the term 'future' applies only to a temporal point of view and this causality (where the succession of cause and result is reversed) is regarded from a temporal point of view, too. God knows the future, but from a timeless point of view 'succession' makes no sense. It is a temporal point of view from which it is said that God foreknows the future: He knows it, yet not *as future*. This is why many 'prophecies about Christ have been stated in a form as if they 'had already come to pass', namely Past Tense.<sup>171</sup> Trinity sees them as already having come to pass' (αὐτὰ ἤδη γεγονέναι), by virtue of the fact that they 'have been contemplated' (λελογίσθαι) by God.

If such a statement would seem strange and unconceivable a hundred years ago, it should not seem so in our day. Twentieth century marks a radical change of a world-picture which (with comparatively minor alterations) lasted for two and a half thousand years. A vast number of works of modern scholarship on time should be disposed simply because they insist on treating the question on the premise that the universe is the Newtonian one. Certainly the Theory of Relativity is not easily readable nor its 'paradoxical' notions and claims are accessible to the layman. The fact is, however, that this theory is being by and large vindicated for almost one century now. Therefore, Philosophy should again return to its Chapter I, and this chapter is the study of the world-picture according to the twentieth-century perception. This is not the proper place for developing this argument further, yet Einstein's statement that the distinction of time in past/present/future is only a human illusion is a good starting point for reflection.

So, returning to my particular point, I say this: even in regard of our visible universe, that the notion of *simultaneity* makes no sense is nowadays commonly agreed upon. Our 'now' has not any objective correspondent 'now' in a place of a few thousands light-years away. The arguments about prayer since Antiquity are based upon this premise: it is taken for granted that God's 'now' is objectively the

<sup>170</sup> Cf. *Cels.*, II, 20.

<sup>171</sup> *selPs.*, 2.

same with the earthly 'now'. In view of the fact that even in this visible space (not to mention other, non-Euclidean, spaces studied intensively, particularly during the last decades in connection with the problem of Cosmology) there is no simultaneity, the contention that God's 'now' is the same with the earthly 'now' is just absurd. As I argue in the Conclusion, the notion of *simultaneity* makes no sense even in this visible universe. In the light of Theory of Relativity, statements such as 'any moment of time is the same in all places' (P. Gassendi) or 'every indivisible moment of duration is everywhere' (Newton) are not valid any more. Modern scholars, so many years after the constant verification of the Theory of Relativity should dissociate themselves from the Newtonian world-picture.

In view of that, R. Sorabji's opinion,<sup>172</sup> that Origen wavers on whether God's changeless will should be viewed as timeless or existing in advance, does not actually represent what the theologian really held about the divine will. Appealing to *deOr* 5-6, he takes it that Origen plumps for the latter, namely, that God's will exists in advance. But this is not the case at all. The divine will exists timelessly and is manifested in time in dialectical relation to creaturely freedom. Thus, from a temporal (that is, historical) point of view, God's will, quite paradoxically, appears to be formed *in time* and indeed *at the time when* a certain creaturely act takes place. This is why Origen speaks of God's 'repentance'. Still he makes a very fundamental point, which should be paid serious attention:

Speaking of God, the [notion of] repentance is not a predicate of God himself, but [it is a predicate] of the external things, which the repentance is referred to.<sup>173</sup>

On the other hand, if God's will is regarded from a timeless point of view, then the notion of 'in advance' simply makes no sense at all. Thus the case is not as simple as the distinction between what is *timeless* and what is *in advance*. The actual distinction is whether God's will is regarded from a temporal or an atemporal point of view. In the first case, divine will does not exist in advance or timelessly, but it is perceived as *formed at the time* when a certain dialectical relation between God and creatures takes place. What exists

<sup>172</sup> R. Sorabji, *op. cit.*, pp. 240-1.

<sup>173</sup> *homjer*, 20.

timelessly is God's *knowledge* of events, not his will. But from an atemporal point of view, these distinctions make no sense. Once, therefore, we (as temporal beings) regard God from a temporal point of view, *his will does not exist in advance* even though his *knowledge of his will* exists timelessly. As a matter of fact, the question is about the divine knowledge with respect to the entirety of time. There is reference to the richness of God's knowledge of the things past and present and future yet this knowledge is contrasted with his activity in the world as Logos.<sup>174</sup>

In point of this, Origen actually did not face any dilemma of the sort that R. Sorabji describes.<sup>175</sup> In *deOr* he speaks of what God *knows*, not what God *does* or *wills*. Everything related to the notion of will is actually the *knowledge* of his will at the time when this comes to a certain dialectical relation with a man's will. So the case is not that everything is determined in advance, as R. Sorabji remarks. The case is that God knows everything timelessly and his will itself is involved only when an occurrence takes place. Thus Origen denies the notion of *change of knowledge*. However, he does not hesitate to attribute to God a notion of *willing a change*, according to a creature's merits; this does in fact suggest a *change of will*, which is timeless. After all, *willing a change* does not really entail *changing one's will*.

This interplay is understood in the context of God's dialectical relation with creatures. This is why this is the case of *causality* between time and timelessness.

Celsus thinks that something takes place by virtue of having been predicted by some kind of foresight. But we, do not allowing for this, say that he who foretold an event is not the cause of this coming to pass in the future, just because he foretold this. We grant that a future event will occur, even if this is not predicted. For it is this occurrence itself which provides the cause to a foreteller, so that he can predict this. And all this is present in the foreknowledge of the prophet; for if an occurrence is open to the contingency of either coming or not coming to pass, either of these contingencies may actually occur. We do not sustain that the one who has foreknowledge has the power of canceling the possibility of an event happening or not happening.<sup>176</sup>

<sup>174</sup> *expProz.* 18, PG 17.204.

<sup>175</sup> R. Sorabji makes the same inaccurate allegations about Origen's views at another point, too; Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 257.

<sup>176</sup> s. *supra*, n. 69, Alexander of Aphrodisias upbraiding this Stoic argument.



saying something such as this: This will definitely occur, and it is impossible for it to come about otherwise. This pertains to all foreknowledge of events depending on our free will, whether we are dealing with the divine scriptures or with Greek stories.<sup>177</sup>

In any event Origen does not hold that God has a changeless plan for a sequence of events, as R. Sorabji<sup>178</sup> and P. Plass<sup>179</sup> and many others claim. Such a view could compromise his fundamental doctrine of creaturely freedom, which plays a prominent role in his entire conception of time.

R. Sorabji maintains also that God not only knows but also intends the sequence of events. Yet Origen holds such an opinion only with respect to God's own actions, not to the creaturely ones of which God has only knowledge. In contrast to Sorabji's opinion, Origen *does* hold that God thinks in token-reflexive terms and this is exactly what constitutes the cruciality of this time. This is why he affirms that even those which appear to be completely unimportant are ruled by God's providence (καὶ τὰ ἄχρηστα νομιζόμενα προνοία Θεοῦ διοικεῖται).<sup>180</sup> And through him all things were made, and in order that all things may be made by the Logos, he extends not only to men but also even to things supposed to be insignificant and are controlled by nature.<sup>181</sup>

Providence supervises and is involved not simply in the macroscopic function of the world, but also in individual operation of each creature. In fact, divine supervision is concerned even with what seems unimportant to human consideration.

All these, down to the very least, God supervises by the power of his wisdom and distinguishes by the controlling hand of his judgement.<sup>182</sup>

The erratum of R. Sorabji concerning Origen lies in the assertion that God established certain general principles in the world and thereafter he does not need to care about creatures *in particular*. The care of God for the world is regarded as just a care for the world

<sup>177</sup> *Cels*, II, 20.

<sup>178</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 260.

<sup>179</sup> P. Plass, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-7.

<sup>180</sup> *frMatt*, 211; *Matt*, 10, 29-31.

<sup>181</sup> *Cels*, VI, 71.

<sup>182</sup> *Princ*, II.9.8.

as a whole.<sup>183</sup> But this is exactly the opposite of Origen's real views, found in statements such as the following:

But God cares not only for the whole (τοῦ ὅλου), as Celsus thinks, but he par excellence (ἐξαιρέτως) takes particular care of every rational creature (μέλει . . . παντός λογικοῦ).<sup>184</sup>

This in fact suggests the importance granted to each individual person. At a time when the human individual (particularly a Christian) was socially unimportant, Origen urges his hearers to feel that each one of them is, in the eyes of God, as important as the entire universe:

Understand that you are another world in miniature and that there is within you the sun, the moon and the stars. . . . This world has the Son of God. It has the Holy Spirit, as the prophet says, By the Word of the Lord the heavens were formed and by the Spirit of his mouth all their strength.<sup>185</sup> And in another place, in like manner, The Spirit of the Lord has filled the earth.<sup>186</sup> Hear also what Christ says to you: And behold I am with you always even to the end of the age.<sup>187</sup> About the Holy Spirit, it is said, And I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh and they will prophesy.<sup>188</sup>

So the conclusion about the importance of every individual human being before the eyes of God comes quite promptly: "You have everything that the world has",<sup>189</sup> says Origen to his congregation, which means that individual human action is in no sense unimportant. The Logos made us out of nothing and once we were made, he keeps us being, and every day *provides for us*, both as *a whole* and each one *individually*, and covertly and overtly, and even without us being aware of it.<sup>190</sup> This providence, however, does not imply his will (τὴν βουλήν) but only his foreknowledge (πρόγνωσιν) which is distinct from the notion of his will.<sup>191</sup>

<sup>183</sup> The question of God having created a set of principles for the world will not be discussed at this point. The issue here is whether there is a divine attention and care for the particular creature at all times.

<sup>184</sup> *Cels*, IV, 99. Cf. *frJer*, 2, 2; *Philocalia*, 10, 2; *Cels*, VII, 68.

<sup>185</sup> Ps. 32, 6.

<sup>186</sup> Wis. 1, 7.

<sup>187</sup> Matt. 28, 20.

<sup>188</sup> Joel, 2, 28.

<sup>189</sup> *Homilies on Leviticus*, 5.3.4.

<sup>190</sup> *selPs*, 144, PG 12.1672; italics mine.

<sup>191</sup> *frMatt*, 212.

Moreover, in contrast to Sorabji's conclusion at the same point, Origen holds that God *is* omniscient and has full knowledge of even the last detail of what happens in the world. What R. Sorabji asserts here (though not unqualifiedly) is that a conclusion which might be drawn from the *de Or* is that God does not need to think in token-reflexive terms and, therefore, a strict omniscience is not *needed* by God.<sup>192</sup> What he suggests is that all God did in the world was to establish certain principles and contingencies and he thereafter does not need to know every detail of what happens in the world. Thus he propounds a solution according to which conditionality could be introduced into what God wills: "he wills that *if* I pray *then* my prayer will be answered".<sup>193</sup>

Such a view, however, is alien to what Origen holds. In fact this could diminish the cruciality of free moral action in time and the immediate and continuous dialectical relation between the divine and creaturely freedom. On the contrary, he speaks of τὸ λεπτομερές τῆς προνοίας, namely, the immediate particular care of God for even what seems to be of non-importance.<sup>194</sup>

In view of these statements, when Puech portrays the Christian view of time through the opinion that Providence is conceived as in every instance particular,<sup>195</sup> he actually (yet quite unconsciously) echoes Origen. Ironically though, at the same point of his paper, he points out Origen as a representative of (what he takes as) a Greek attitude even on this particular point.<sup>196</sup> In any case, to Origen God's knowledge is extended down to the last detail of what exists in space-time. And most certainly God is the sole omniscient of a detailed knowledge of all time, namely past and present and future (Αὐτός γὰρ μόνος γινώσκει τὰ πρόην καὶ τὰ ἐνεστώτα καὶ τὰ μέλλοντα).<sup>197</sup> The notion of repentance is one of those which par excellence underline the *crucial* and *dramatic* character of time. As opposed to this C. Lewis states:

<sup>192</sup> *loc. cit.*; italics his.

<sup>193</sup> R. Sorabji, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

<sup>194</sup> Cf. *frMatt*, 212: τὸ λεπτομερές τῆς προνοίας καὶ ἡ μέχρι τῶν τυχόντων γνώσις. Likewise, s. *frLuc*, 57: τὸ λεπτομερές τῆς προνοίας καὶ ἡ μέχρι τῶν λεπτῶν γνώσις. Also, *Homilies on Luke*, 32.3. s. *supra*, p. 349 and n. 180.

<sup>195</sup> H. Puech, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

<sup>196</sup> H. Puech, *op. cit.*, p. 49ff.

<sup>197</sup> *expProv*, 18; s. also *expProv*, 28; *Princ*, III.1.13. Further elaboration on this question requires a detailed discussion of Origen's conception of πρόνοια which beyond my scope.

To God (though not to me) I and the prayer I made in 1945 were just as much present at the creation of the world as they are now and will be a million years hence. God's creative act is timeless and timelessly adapted to the 'free' elements within it; but this timeless adaption meets our consciousness as a sequence of prayer and answer.<sup>198</sup>

There are two main misconstructions of Origen's thought at this point. Firstly, the crucial distinction between *knowledge* of God and *will* of God eluded Lewis. Secondly, the relation of divine will and human will in time is not just a matter of consciousness of either God or man. Origen is absolutely indifferent to such a question. The question is the dialectical relation, which is underlined by the *encounter* of these two *wills*. God has a timeless knowledge of it, but this encounter, *as a real historical occurrence*, cannot be stated as present in God. For such a claim destroys the cruciality of time and the full reality of the dialectical relation between God and man.

In fact, on this question Origen's thought is exactly the opposite of a notion about a fixed transcendent plan of history in a timeless Platonic overworld which provides the basis for a sophisticated typological interpretation of history.<sup>199</sup> This is a widespread, yet fallacious, allegation about Origen's thought. If he held such a concept he would never have articulated notions such as that of recrucifixion of Christ in the future *pace* Heb. 6, 2. If the course of history *as such* was present to God, then Christ would not be regarded as suffering and re-crucified because of a creature's falling again into the same sins. If history is present in Christ then there is no reason for him to be regarded as suffering. He would rather be regarded as indifferently observing the course of history, which is fixed according to a transcendent plan. This is what Origen vigorously rejects. For what actually lies on the basis of this rejection is the *dramatic* character of time and the crucial importance of the encounter of divine and creaturely will in it.

The question is not as simple as to make the distinction between what is present in God or what happens simultaneously with respect to both human and divine life. If the question of what is present in a remote place of the visible firmament needs some treatment to receive an answer, the question of what is present to God is far more difficult. At any rate, such questions are no more susceptible of simplistic answers nowadays.

<sup>198</sup> Cited in E. Jay, *Origen's Treatise on Prayer*, London 1954, p. 101.

<sup>199</sup> P. Plass, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-7.

Regarding this relation from a temporal point of view, there is a distinction which imbues Origen's thought and actually elucidates his conception of this relation: *Knowledge* by God is implicitly regarded as a rather *passive* state. It is a characteristic of God to know everything. The *will* of God, however, implies a perception of God being in an *active* state, namely, in active dialectical relation with creatures. No doubt this distinction is but a conceptual one, perhaps somewhat awkward. This is why Origen does not express it explicitly. Although somewhat rough, it helps since it provides human intellect with a portrayal of the conceptual distinction between the divine *knowledge* (even the knowledge of His will in its dialectical relation with creatures) and the divine *will* itself.

If this distinction is not made, then Origen's conception of this issue is bound to be misunderstood, as indeed it currently is. The basis for a positive approach to his thought on this point is the fact that God is perceived as *really* involved in this dialectical encounter of his will with creaturely will in time. In the final analysis, the basis for a comprehension of this point is the conception of the *dramatic* character of time, which arises from this divine/creaturely dialectical encounter.

It should also be emphasized that in Origen it makes no sense to speak about any pattern of history whatever. R. Markus maintained that there could be no Christian philosophy of history in the pattern-making sense. There is no Christian pattern; indeed Christianity is the very negation of pattern.<sup>200</sup> If this is to be accredited, then it can be said that in Origen this negation of pattern is established in the strongest terms possible.

Certainly the topic of the relation between foreknowledge and freedom has been an outstanding question of debate ever since Antiquity and the bibliography on this is tremendous. My view is that in order to sustain that divine foreknowledge (or, timeless knowledge) constitutes a restriction to creaturely freedom one has to make a dialectical jump. For there is no logical basis for the *knowledge* of the future to be related to the future *itself*. A prediction of future actions (certainly on grounds of rationality) is possible in everyday human affairs. *Why* or *how* this prediction should be held responsible or affecting one's foretold actions is something which simply cannot be grounded

<sup>200</sup> A.H. Armstrong - R.A. Markus, *op. cit.*, p. 132.



on reason or dialectics. Thus the allegation that prediction indicates a limitation to freedom is but an arbitrary corollary, reached only through a logical jump.

I think that the distinction between timeless knowledge and foreknowledge applied to the *timeless* God is only artificial and makes not real sense. It stems from a Newtonian world-picture of scholars who simply do not put into use the fact that this picture has collapsed. Nelson Pike,<sup>201</sup> J.R. Lucas,<sup>202</sup> G. Iseminger,<sup>203</sup> and R. Sorabji<sup>204</sup> are some of those who argue that *fore*-knowledge would restrict human freedom, whereas they concede that *timeless knowledge* would be in a sense regarded as not restricting freedom. J. van Gerven asserts that God's timeless knowledge would not restrict human freedom was not yet even recognized by Augustine,<sup>205</sup> but R. Sharples argues that this was recognized by Boethius.<sup>206</sup> On this question there is an enormous bibliography indeed.<sup>207</sup> In my view though the arguments developed have two fundamental weaknesses.

Firstly, they are developed on the premise that the actual make-up of the world is a Newtonian one. In fact they are all based on

<sup>201</sup> Cf. Nelson Pike, "Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action", *Philosophical Review*, 74 (1965), pp. 27-46; also, by the same author, *God and Timelessness*, London, 1970, esp. pp. 104-7.

<sup>202</sup> Cf. J.R. Lucas, *The Freedom of the Will*, London, 1973; Ch. 14.

<sup>203</sup> Cf. Gary Iseminger, "Foreknowledge and Necessity", *Summa Theologiae* Ia, 14, 13, 2, *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, vol. 1 (eds. P.A. French, T.E. Uehling Jr., H.K. Wettstein), Morris Minnesota, 1976; pp. 5-25.

<sup>204</sup> Cf. Richard Sorabji, *Necessity, Cause and Blame*, London, 1980; pp. 112-3.

<sup>205</sup> Cf. J. van Gerven "Liberté humaine et prescience divine d'après S. Augustin", *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, 55 (1957), pp. 317-30.

<sup>206</sup> Cf. Robert Sharples, "Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De Fato*: some parallels", *Classical Quarterly*, 28 (1978), pp. 243-66.

<sup>207</sup> A question which has been posed is this: If God's knowledge is either timeless or changeless, can he know truths which depend on the flow of time? Cf. Nelson Pike, *God and Timelessness*, London, 1970, Ch. 5; Arthur Prior, "The formalities of omniscience", *Philosophy*, 1962, reprinted in Ch. 3 of his *Papers on Time and Tense*, Oxford, 1968; Normann Kretzmann, "Omniscience and Immutability", *Journal of Philosophy*, 63 (1966), pp. 109-21; H.N. Castaneda "Omniscience and indexical reference", *Journal of Philosophy*, 64 (1967), pp. 203-10; Nicholas Wolterstorff, "God everlasting", in Orlebeke and Smedes (eds.), *God and the Good*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1975; E. Stump & N. Kretzmann, "Eternity", *Journal of Philosophy*, 78 (1981), pp. 429-58; etc. On the question whether *power* can be changeless or timeless, Cf. A.J.P. Kenny, *The God of the Philosophers*, Oxford, 1979, Ch. 8; Peter Geach, *Truth, Love and Immortality*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1979, p. 102; E. Bevan, *Symbolism and Belief*, London, 1938, p. 98. However discussion of such questions is outside of my present scope.

axioms such as those already mentioned: any moment of time is the same in all places (P. Gassendi) and every indivisible moment of duration is everywhere (Newton).<sup>209</sup> Secondly, they are based on the artificial distinction (attributed to God) between *fore-knowledge* and timeless knowledge. In the final analysis, this distinction makes the arbitrary assumption of attributing time to the *timeless* God. For this distinction can in no way make sense applied to God himself: this is rather a relative conception of God regarded from a temporal point of view.

The conclusion is that Origen holds a conception of causality between time and timelessness. He grounds this upon the notion of freedom of rational creatures, as well as on the fact that their will comes to a dialectical relation with the will of God. This causality is realized in time because it is there that the divine and creaturely will encounter each other; but, since it stems from this dialectical relation, this causality is extended both in time and timelessness.

### *Timeless causality?*

By the so-called Fragment 19, Koetschau embodied in his edition of *Princ* a Greek passage from Justinian's *libOr*, which reads as follows:

And if what has been subjected to Christ shall in the end be subjected to God, then all will lay aside their bodies; and I think that there will then be a dissolution of bodily nature into non-existence, to come into existence a second time if rational beings should again fall.<sup>210</sup>

In accordance with this passage, Jerome, in *epAv*, ascribes to Origen this view:

If all shall be subjected to God, then all will lay aside their bodies; and then the entire universe of bodily things will be dissolved into non-existence; but if necessity should demand it a second time, it would come into existence again in the event of the fall of rational beings.<sup>211</sup>

In the same edition Koetschau included also the so-called Fragment 40, which is again a passage of Justinian from *libOr*, and reads thus:

<sup>209</sup> Cf. M. Capec (ed.), *The Concepts of Space and Time*, Dordrecht, 1976, p. xxxv and lvi, n. 4.

<sup>210</sup> Fragment 19, Koetschau, from Justinian, *libOr* (Mansi IX.529), in *Princ*, II.3.3.

<sup>211</sup> Jerome, *epAv*; cited in *FP*, p. 86, n. 6.

It must be that the nature of bodies is not primary, but that it was created at intervals on account of certain falls that happened to rational beings, who came to need bodies; and again, that when their restoration is perfectly accomplished these bodies are dissolved into nothing, so that this is ever happening.<sup>211</sup>

Koetschau put in one more passage from the same writing of Justinian:

[rational creatures will] rise again to the state in which they formerly were, completely putting away their evil and their bodies. Then again a second or a third or many more times they are enveloped in different bodies for punishment. For it is probable that different worlds have existed and will exist, some in the past and some in the future.<sup>212</sup>

Such allegations have been made to express Origen's views and played their role in the Anathemas decreed by the Council of Constantinople in 553. G. Butterworth, in his English translation of *Princ.*, notes that although these Anathemas cannot be taken as literal extracts from the *De Principiis*, they express the teaching of this work, doubtless for the most part in Origen's own words.<sup>213</sup> Such a claim, however, is all too far away from the truth of the matter.

Justinian regarded the creation of worlds as taking place in a sort of intervals (ἐκ διαλειμμάτων). This means that there should be timelessness, and then time, then timelessness, then time again, and so on. The idea of successive worlds is related to a notion of succession of incorporeality-corporeality-incorporeality—and so on for ever (ἀεὶ).<sup>214</sup> Justinian, as well as Jerome, virtually allege on this issue that Origen held a notion of timeless causality. Accordingly, he ascribes to him the opinion that God has a timeless will according to which *whenever* a fall takes place a material world should appear.

What should be noted in the first place is that nowhere in his works does Origen imply such a notion. What he calls *κοσμοποιία* (creation of the world)<sup>215</sup> is *one* and unique event. We can find his expression the beginning of creation of the world (ἀρχὴ τῆς κοσμοποιίας).<sup>216</sup> His entire theology refers to the world from that begin-

<sup>211</sup> Fragment 40, Koetschau, from Justinian, *libOr* (Mansi, IX. 532) in *Princ.* IV.4.8.

<sup>212</sup> From Justinian, *libOr* (Mansi, IX.512E) in *Princ.* II.8.3.

<sup>213</sup> *FP*, p. 125, n. 7.

<sup>214</sup> Cf. *supra*, Fragment 40, Koetschau, from Justinian, *libOr* (Mansi, IX. 532).

<sup>215</sup> *commMatt.* 15, 27; *Cels.* I, 19; II, 9; V, 59; VI, 27; 28; 50; 51; *frJohn.* I, XCV; etc.

<sup>216</sup> *commGen.* 3, PG 12,64; *deOr.* VI, 5; *frLuc.* 104; *Philocalia.* 23, 8.

ning until the end of things.<sup>217</sup> Nowhere is there even the slightest implication that this creation is a manifestation of some kind of unchangeable will of God or that this is an occurrence which has taken place before this creation or that it will ever happen again. The previous analyses on the relation of God to the world demonstrate that what he held was sheerly different from what has been attributed to him through the foregoing passages.

If the Fall is taken as not a unique event, it follows straight off that God is *himself* involved in a timeless causality. Therefore creating should be applied to God himself as something *compulsorily* accompanying his own being. Thus creation is not the product of God's own freedom; this is not made as an act of volition. Rather this is the product of the freedom of some rational beings before the Fall assumed to live a life of their own. But the notion of rational beings before the Fall is alien to Origen, falsely assigned to him by Jerome and Justinian.

Hardly could a concept be more remote to Origen's authentic views than that. For what we have seen is that creation is a product of God's free will and benevolent decision; it came into being out of non-being '*once*' (ὅτε) Wisdom willed and wanted to establish a relation to the future beings.

At this point we should recall the analyses about the significance of the past tense used in couching these statements: past tense suggests that this decision of God occurred *once*. If Origen held a notion of timeless causality he would have said that the Wisdom of God wills and wants that *if* a fall takes place *then* a creation should emerge. But he does nothing of the kind. On the contrary, he clearly states that God created by his own free and benevolent decision. He does not say that the Wisdom of God wills or wants the establishment of a relation to the future beings: he says that she willed and wanted to do so.

What this actually means is that God is not Creator by essence. If there was any kind of necessity or timeless causality by reason of which God *should* create the world, this could entail a certain *established relation* between God and the world. This very causality would be the point at which the being of God and the being of the world

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

are *of necessity* related to each other. But this is exactly what Origen strongly rejects: creation is a contingent occurrence and this thesis immediately stems from his notion of radical transcendence of God to the world and the radical hiatus between the divine being and the existence of the world. That God willed to create this world is a *unique* product of his freedom—a product, which came into being out of non-being. Although God remains radically transcendent to the world, he established a creative relation with it out of his goodness, not out of any necessity or causality.

This, in the final analysis, means that, hypothetically, God would have never created the world. He would have either acted in another way (certainly unconceivable), or even he might not have acted at all in any way. Had he not willed, he could have never assumed the function of Creator. The meaning of this hypothesis (and, subsequently, the meaning of use of past tense by Origen) is that there is no timeless causality—not even one established by the will of God. Origen refers to the decision of God using terms clearly denoting that this creation is an event stemming from a *unique* decision of God, which is sheerly irrelevant to any notion of causality.

The question of probability of some next creation is indeed out of Origen's main interest since he is entirely preoccupied with this world throughout time. But if one by all means wishes to find some allusions related to this question, then the conclusion should be that he believes that no other fall will occur. Besides, this point is explicated in the Latin rendering of the *Commentary on the Romans*.<sup>218</sup>

Thus the allegations by Justinian and Jerome that ascribe a notion of timeless causality to Origen are false. He held precisely the opposite of what is attributed to him: the world was created out a unique benevolent decision of God. He is not Creator because of any causality compelling him to create. God created *once* because he willed to do so out of his goodness. This is why the distinction between the notions of *God Himself* and *God as Creator* is so vital. The fundamental conviction that the world was made out of a free benevolent and *unique* decision of God plays an important part in that distinction. Thus, to say that God is creator in Himself is a notion, which has

<sup>218</sup> Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Books 1–5, tr. T. Scheck, Washington, 2001; pp. 374–378.



no room in this concept of time. Due to key presuppositions of his theology, Origen could have never applied to God any timeless causality of the kind discussed above; as a matter of fact, he never did that.

When Justinian and Jerome attribute to him the idea that corporeality emerges and dissolves into nothing intermittently, they do so because they also ascribe to him the notion of a beginningless world. The former allegation is actually subsequent to the latter. What they virtually imply is that there is an eternal world of individual and personal incorporeal souls, or minds, and this world may exist either in a mode of corporeality or incorporeality. In any case, this world is thought to be without beginning or end. What changes is the *mode* of its existence, not the existence itself as an eternal fact; and this mode of existence (that is, either corporeal or incorporeal form) depends on the moral status of these incorporeal rational minds, which are without beginning or end. However, it has been already solidly proven that Origen's authentic views have no relevance with such a frame of thought.

Therefore, to the question raised in the section heading, whether is there a timeless causality, I answer with an unqualified 'no', after having explained what I mean: there is no concept of timeless causality. The creation of the world is not part of any causative scheme of intermittent appearance or disappearance of bodily nature. There is *one* creation which *once* came into being *ex nihilo* out of *one* and unique decision of God.

### *Conclusion*

Origen employed the fundamental Stoic perception of time as extension, yet he treated it in a way appropriate to his own thought. The Stoics regarded time as a purely natural element. This way of treating time was understandably consequent to both their lack of any notion of transcendence and their materialism. Origen, on the other hand, did hold a notion of transcendence; besides, the notion of materiality applies not only to the visible firmament but also to other worlds which are material and yet not seen, due to the quality of their matter. He also held a notion of incorporeality applied solely to the divine being. Not only is the real existence of this incorporeality not put into question, but also this is regarded as a reality

of higher quality. All these presuppositions fundamentally determine his conception of time.

Thus the notions which constitute the Stoic definition of time have in Origen's thought a quite different import. Time is indeed held to be a fundamentally natural reality. Yet there are also significant theological implications related to time proper. At any rate, the conjecture of J. Check<sup>219</sup> that Origen did not conceive of time as a problem which had to be solved abstractly is wrong. The case is not that Origen did not conceive, but that he *did not wish* to expound an *ad hoc* theory of time, because he regarded this problem as a basically natural one. But he *did* form a concept of time of his own for the purpose of his own theological aims. This conception is decisively present throughout his entire work. Origen's conception of time is far more advanced than any composition of the Christian view of time made by contemporary theologians. For he had a good command of the *problematique* of time in itself—the lack of which is obvious in many modern scholars.

Whereas the Stoics spoke simply of *extension*, Origen clearly defines the relation of this extension to space, by introducing the term *συμπαρεκτείνων*, which in fact portrays the reality of space-time. The Stoic predication of time as *παρακολουθοῦν* the movement of the world is discarded, because it does not depict the relation of time to space accurately; this may also be misleading (as indeed it was for some people) on the strict relation of time to space, namely, as to whether time is older or younger than space. The terminology introduced by Origen excludes the possibility of such dilemmas.

Accordingly, the relation of this extension to the *world* has a different meaning on account of the different conception of the world. Time is a reality accompanying the entire world, it is related not only to what is visible, but also to what is not seen. Thus, although both the Stoics and Origen firmly relate time to the world, Origen's view is that time applies to a reality far broader than the Stoic one does: time exists not only in the visible world, but also in the other spaces in which rational creatures live.

Origen affirms that everything in the world is *in time* yet it is only in letter that this expression appears to be the same with that of

<sup>219</sup> J. Check, *Eschatology and Redemption in the Theology of Origen*, Drew University, 1962, p. 275.

Zeno's. For the notion of to be *in the world*, and thus *in time*, in Origen is far different from the Stoic views, by reason of the different import applied to the *world*.

Likewise, the notion of *motion* related to time has a different import. Although natural motion (which is what the Stoics meant in their definition of time) is not neglected, this predication applied to the conception of time is mainly understood as *free moral action* in all ranks of life. By the same token, whereas time is also regarded as a *criterion of fastness and slowness*,<sup>220</sup> in Origen this predicate is mainly applied to the *trial of free creaturely action* in time.

Besides, Origen regards time as a dimension. This term seems to place this near to Plotinus' statements about time. However, there is no relevance to any Platonic or Neoplatonic concept. For time is not any sort of moving image, it was not at rest with the eternity in real being where it kept quiet before is moved down to the world. Time came into being out of non-being and it did not exist before the creation of the world. In the Platonic view, time is portrayed as an image exactly because it is perceived as establishing a kind of *affinity* between the world and the Beyond. On the contrary, in Origen, not only does time not establish any affinity between the divine life and the world, but also it is regarded as an element in terms of which the radical chasm of essence between God and the world is portrayed. The perception of time as *dimension* (both etymologically and essentially) actually stems from it being regarded as an *extension*.

The Stoics did not regard time as a dimension of life because they mainly considered the natural character of cosmic motion and they did not have any eschatological ideas. On the other hand, Plotinus treats the Stoic notion of time as extension contemptuously. He grounds his arguments on dialectics and the lack of elaboration of the Stoic definition. His objections though really arise from his contempt for materialism and from the fact that the Stoics determine time only in relation to the visible material world and their definition excludes any notion of transcendence.

Origen is immune to this kind of dispute, since he held both notions of *materiality* of the entire world and a notion of the divine *transcendence*. This is why he can use Stoic as well as Neoplatonic predications and yet to apply to them a different import befitting

<sup>220</sup> *SVF*, I, 26, 11–15.

his own thought, which was later employed by the Cappadocians and a vast number of Christian writers.

This conception of Origen is what Augustine picked up in order to form his theory of time. In the light of my discussion in this section, the originality of Augustine's theory of time should be thoroughly reassessed. For what is currently alleged as his personal contribution to a theory of time is simply a repetition of Origen's original perceptions as well as articulations. With regard to points on which (for one reason or another) he was unable to follow Origen's radical transformations, Augustine remained a mere echoer of substantial aspects of Plotinus' concept of time.

Origen employs prolongation of time for his own purposes. In contrast to pagan thought, motion in space-time is not just a natural change of position, but a meaningful free moral action. There is nothing of the pessimism and despair of Marcus Aurelius. While for the Gnostics the world is an abortive product, for Origen time is not a destroyer: it is rather a source of consolation and hope in a world perceived as a downfall (*καταβολή*).

The notions of Judgement and Causality established in time underline a particular conception of it. In *commGen* the reason of faith and the advent of Christ and the whole dispensation through the law and the prophets and the toils of the apostles in order to establish the Churches of God through Christ is grounded on the fact that there will be a judgement by God. As it is pointed out there, *if judgement and resurrection is not established in time* then all these events took place in vain,<sup>221</sup> and faith is futile also.

This belief to judgement fundamentally imbues this conception of time. Its role is so decisive that if, hypothetically, this did not exist, then this view of time is shed from crucial characteristics of it. In such a case one has to speak of a *totally different* concept of time, which could not be Origen's view of it. For one thing, it is the conviction about the impartiality and righteousness of God—two notions, which are regarded as principles. For another, freedom constitutes an essential existential characteristic of rational creatures. Thus time is understood as a reality created by God for freedom to make sense, since freedom can make no sense in the absence of time.

<sup>221</sup> *commGen*, 3; PG, 12.52; *Philocalia*, 23, 1.

So, although it cannot be sustained that the notions of Judgement and Causality pertain to the essence of time, it can be argued that they constitute fundamental characteristics of a particular concept of time. This means that if Judgement and Causality are disregarded or abolished, then what remains is *another* conception of time, which indeed would be very close to some Greek school of thought. This is why Origen consciously contrasts his own ideas to the Greek ones, especially at points where misunderstandings are likely to emerge.

This is why it is mainly in terms of observation of the *movement* of the world that the notion of prolongation of time has been considered. What we see is that prolongation by no means suggests identical recurrence, which would entail sheer indifference to this possibility. Within this context this recurrence is pointless, since not only commendable accomplishment but also everything contemptible will recur. What is the point for living repeatedly a life of which no detail will be changed? This is Origen's main point against the Old Stoa and this is his reaction to Marcus' dispair at the possibility of endless recurrence. Prolongation is not a purposeless natural phenomenon, but a meaningful process: what is the point for living once again a life once all the struggles were in vain, and one would relapse into the condition which he had left with such effort? This concept of prolongation is intended to overcome the frustration and the sense of pointlessness, which is inescapable in a Stoic environment. There is an 'eternal law' fulfilled in the existential causality, but there is nothing of the Stoic mechanistic fatalism which Origen has good reason to attack, and so he does in order to defend a consequential historical process.

Although it is only in an attenuated sense that an irregular version of recurrence implies *determinism*, it is true that determinism differs from fatalism in allowing that certain outcomes may be due to the efforts we make, or we fail to make. With memory and anticipation removed, no one could feel any concern about future recurrences. Here memory is indeed removed, but anticipation exists because the principles of process are known. This awareness of the rules of causality sets the rules of personal conduct, and this is the factor that bestows upon time and temporal flux a critical import.



a transcendent timeless personal God, who is beyond any notion of creation and yet he comes to a causal relation to this creation, conceived as a product of his benevolent will. This causality notwithstanding, God Himself is immutable. The idea that every particular causal relation integrally involves change was tempting in itself, and might readily be suggested to any reader due to existing impressive and influential analyses at the time. What I believe Origen's exposition shows is that this tempting idea is false. On this point at least, the Platonist example was on his side.

The scriptural reference to 'beginning and end and middle of times', as well as the whole context at that point of the Wisdom of Solomon, are regarded as pointing to *natural* knowledge,<sup>1</sup> which is not treated with any hint of contempt at all. He insists, however, that the actual aim is the knowledge which 'saves' and this is the teaching of Jesus Christ. At any rate, all kinds of knowledge can be found in the Scripture: Ecclesiastes contains *natural* (φυσικήν) knowledge; in the Proverbs it is *moral* (ἠθικήν) one which can be found, whereas the deepest, the *theological* (θεολογικήν) one is hidden in the Song of Songs.<sup>2</sup> The first is a 'practical' (πρακτικήν) teaching, the second is the 'sophistical' (σοφιστικήν) and the third is the 'theological' (θεολογικήν) one.<sup>3</sup> No kind of knowledge is treated with contempt. After all they are found in the Scripture and can be comprehended by those who have 'cleansed' themselves,<sup>4</sup> according to his constant anti-Platonic attitude on the relation between Praxis and Knowledge. Still, the conviction that theological knowledge is the most sublime and worthwhile stands out in his entire work. His ultimate concern and aim is neither the 'wisdom of the world', nor the 'wisdom of the rulers of this world': it is the 'wisdom of God'.

Origen therefore was a theologian who ascended the steps of natural, as well as moral knowledge. Once this fundamental fact, together with his meticulous usage of critical terms, is taken into account, one could discern his views of both natural and moral problems. For they are indeed explicitly or implicitly expounded throughout his writings.

<sup>1</sup> Wis. 7, 17-18, *frMatt*, 140; *frMatt*, 506; *frLuc*, 50.

<sup>2</sup> *expProv*, 22; PG, 17.220.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

Hence, although it has not been my purpose to expound the whole of Origen's theology, I have considered the study of all the aspects of it as an indispensable presupposition for understanding crucial facets of his thought. For, as I emphasized in the Introduction, how a thinker conceives of time is actually a reliable manifestation of his entire thought. The concept of time stands in close relation to one's entire way of perceiving the whole of reality, in natural, philosophical and theological terms. A certain view of time is formed according to them and it is a factor which decisively affects the formation of these standpoints. So the notion of time both *determines* and *is determined* by all the aspects of a certain philosophy, or theology, or attitude to life in general.

Those are the fundamental presuppositions on which I have approached Origen's thought in order to expound my subject matter. The first thing is to underscore the new terminology which comes in with Origen. This is not all too easy, since his most penetrating reflections are delivered in passing, in works where his principal purpose was theological and pastoral at the same time. For all his works were *pièces d'occasion*, written to meet pressing pastoral or dogmatic needs, in moments snatched from other duties. Origen appeared when Christians were challenged to give a reasoned defence of their faith, and not just the simple proclamation of their message (κήρυγμα) which the Apologists had done. He appropriated philosophical conceptions to fit in his thought, especially when he was addressing pagan audience. His purpose was to elicit an active faith in God building on his hearers' existing beliefs and notions.

One of the main points made in this book is that he formed a completely new concept of time, profoundly determined by the Christian attitude to life and history. Stoic or Plotinian terms can be found in his nomenclature of temporal notions. At his era, however, the question of time was not just a problem of Physics. This is why he does not rest content with the early Stoic treatment of it. In giving his own account, therefore, he had to eschew the pristine Stoic failures. Besides, he had to elaborate the notion of time from a Christian point of view. But the conceptual transformations, as well as the terminology, which he established in speaking of time, are so radical, that it is in fact very difficult to speak of influence upon him. Origen ploughed his own way towards the formation of a Christian view of time. It is my conclusion and thesis that he did accomplish his aim.

longer be so lightly dismissed, after the defences sustained Chapter 4.

Origen's answer to the question of time has aspects, which are natural, moral and theological. In principle, time is regarded as a natural reality, as an element in the make-up of the world. He employed the early Stoic conception of time as 'extension' (διάστημα), but the extent to which he would be regarded as indebted to the Stoics goes no further than that. He affirms that time is fully and unequivocally real and is also a continuum and a dimension of reality.

His ontology of time is apposite to his entire theory of creation. Time is a real creature which emerges in the same sense that the entire natural world does. This means that it comes forward according to the *logoi* created at the Providential Creation. This stands for an evolutionary concept of coming to being. In Platonic tradition, to make the Forms living was even more tempting for Plato's successors, once they had made Forms to be thoughts in the mind of the divine intellect, and had taken over the Aristotelian idea that this living intellect is identical with its objects. In Origen the *logoi* are neither 'thoughts' nor are they 'identical' with God.

That the object which God created 'in the beginning' is the *logoi*, or principles, suggests that God created the *solfa*, not the entire *music* of the cosmic drama which was to evolve. It is plain that music really *exists* when it is *played*, not when just written on paper. God knows the entire 'music' which is to be played until the end of the world, still he is not the sole author or player of it. What happens, and is to happen, in the world is the result of the dialectical relation between God and rational creatures. Thus, for the whole of time to exist it is not necessary that the whole should be accomplished at one go.

In couching the relation of space proper to time proper, he introduced a terminology which directly and profoundly influenced Christian authors of the later centuries. He established a virtually anti-Platonic view: time *does not move*. It is a continuum *along* which the world moves it is a dimension of the world. Subsequently, time proper is not movement. The Cappadocians, particularly Basil, said about time nothing more than Origen did. Basil simply repeats what the Alexandrian established as a Christian view of time. And, in the light of my analyses in this book, Augustine's originality regarding his theory of time has to be thoroughly reassessed. For there seems to be much less, if anything, said by him, which had not been already set forth by Origen. At any rate, discussion here has provided the

answer to the long-standing question about the source of Augustine's theory of time: I have showed that it was Origen's views, which were employed by Augustine. Space-time is the central notion in Origen's natural conception of the world. Time is also finite; it came into existence out of non-existence, as a creature of God, along with space. It will also come to an end, which will be the end of the reality of space-time as a whole.

The notions of timelessness and temporality are clearly enunciated. God is timeless whereas the world is temporal. The finiteness of space-time is also clearly propounded. There is no notion of any 'sacred time', or God's 'time', or any infinite time. Time had a beginning, there is a reason for this to exist and it will come to an end when this reason will cease to exist. The distinction between atemporal and temporal realities appears just because time came into existence as an element of the make-up of the world, which will have a finite duration. 'Before' or 'after', so to speak, this duration there is only timelessness.

The conception of time is an essential element of this thought, which determines (and is determined by) how he comprehends God, the world, and the relation between the divine reality and creaturely life. His thought must be considered on the fundamental premise that Origen is above all a theologian, an exponent of the message of Scripture. As such, he is certainly not oblivious to his secular background, be it natural science or philosophy—a background sound, extensive, as well as deep. What is admirable though is that he did not allow his conceptions to be influenced all along by this background, even though he made wide usage of the technical nomenclature available to him. On the contrary, whenever non-Christian philosophical terms are employed, they have undergone such a profound and radical transformation, that it is only in name that they resemble their pagan homonyms. The transformation of the Stoic definition of time as *διάστημα*, as well as the radical difference of time as *διάστασις* from the homonym term of Plotinus, are eloquent examples of Origen's inspiration. The conception of time, and the pertinent terminology initiated by him, exerted a profound influence upon subsequent Christian thinkers. Even so, however, these authors did not always prove able to follow all over his radical dissent from pagan conceptions.

Augustine follows Origen's original perceptions, but he was unable to follow him in the radical transformations of the Neoplatonic



conceptions of time related to a kind of *motion* of soul, as well as to the different purport that time as *διάστασις* had in Origen. On the question of time at least, Augustine has been regarded, not unfairly, as having succumbed to the influence of Neoplatonism.

Besides, regarding the conception of *αἰών*, Origen's successors employed his terminology verbatim—but not his conceptions all the way. Thus, although he enunciates that *αἰών* is a *natural* reality, Gregory of Nazianus and John of Damascus postulated *αἰών* as the timeless divine life. In stark contrast to Origen's views, what those writers postulated as *αἰών* was in fact the Platonic and Neoplatonic conception of it; and yet, it is Origen who is regarded as influenced by these pagan schools of thought.

If Origen holds a notion of atemporality, this is not because any stream of Greek thought did influence him. After all, the Greek schools which hold the notion of atemporality regard the world as everlasting, not finite as Origen does. He upholds the notion of atemporality because there is a thoroughly significant reason for time to exist: this is the natural element of reality, which renders creaturely freedom meaningful. This freedom could make no sense in the absence of time. It is *through time* that the world will return to God. This is its *raison d'être*. It exists for a *purpose* to be fulfilled and this is why time has a dramatic character and movement in this has a teleological direction. This is also the reason for employing a prolonged time, comprising many aeons, yet a finite time. The idea of recurrent worlds provided solace to almost no one in the ancient world. The theory was not a source of consolation, but often an additional source of horror and the reason in plain: the notion of freedom in time, the dialectical relation with a personal God, the finiteness of time and the idea of a purpose to be fulfilled, all these were absent from the pagan conceptions of time. Origen avoided the pagan horn of the dilemma, by settling for a finite succession of worlds, which in fact he had to do on the grounds and presuppositions of his own theology. Otherwise, the crucial character of the encounter of rational creatures with God would be removed. Moral action renders the subject of it a crucial center of responsibility, considering the horror that some people experience when they think of the infinitude of time, and feel their own brief existence dwarfed by it. In that case it might be urged that despair would overwhelm the moral subject and his dislike of future non-existence not surprisingly would disintegrate into passive fatalism of a Far Eastern character. This is indeed



how an infinite time robs action of its significance, and reduces any sense of freedom and responsibility into inert tameness.

This consideration shows that time (although in principle a *natural* element) has also serious, indeed dramatic, *metaphysical* implications. Time is where the divine and creaturely will encounter each other and come to a dialectical relation. Creatures learn what the will of God is through God's own manifestations in the world in the various *kairoi*. Yet they are free to conform to it, or not to do so; they are free to obey or to disobey. On account of this freedom, the duration of an aeon, of those which comprise the entirety of time, is not constant or predetermined. It is not determined either by *cosmical laws* or by any *ontological fatalism*, but it is the outcome of this *dramatic relation* between God and the world.

Origen lived in a political and spiritual environment in which he was faced with all kinds of challenges. While devoted to his pastoral and edifying care, he also strove to provide a formulated dogma of the new religion. This, at a time when the anti-Christian sentiment was on the rise, the Roman State levelled furious attacks against Christianity, intimidation was continuous and persecution not rare, with pagan philosophers having made the case against the Christian writers very sharp.

Besides, there were additional difficulties concerning the issue of the abstruse notion of time. For the intensive debate about it never ceased raging since Antiquity. What is more, Origen acted in a period when Greek philosophy was not yet dead or even moribund or scholastic, even though different schools of thought were jostling each other and eclecticism and syncretism were under way. Which means that the possibility of cross-fertilization between paganism and Christianity was constantly present.

It is against this background that Origen's feat of pioneering a radically new view of time should be considered.

His background was profitably and fruitfully brought into the formulation of the concept of time. Still he made transformations, which constitute genuine innovations, not mere advances however massive. For the kernel of his achievement was not the initial employment of the Stoic ontological conception of time. The determining factor was the dramatic breakthrough, which he himself accomplished: it was the penetrating new use in which he put existing philosophical terms. And, nonetheless, it was the inspired introduction of the necessary new terminology in the philosophy of time, handled not in

an off-putting manner, but in a readable way. This is why the Neoplatonic censure against the Stoics does not put any onus on Origen, who is in fact immune to this kind of criticism. For although echoes of Stoicism are audible in his references, on the cardinal issues of the ontology of time Origen parts company with Stoicism. This was an enormous stride towards formation of a Christian view of time.

It is beyond my scope to deal with Origen's 'orthodoxy' or 'non-orthodoxy'. Regarding his concept of time though one could note this. A rather simplistic rule has prevailed among scholars about the relation between Greek and biblical thought: the Greek is supposed to be concerned with space and nature, while Biblical thought is taken to be preoccupied with time and history. The critics of Origen underscore what they see as 'Greek' characteristics of his thought. Others, who regard themselves as sympathizers of Origen, strive to play down (to a point of exclusion, if possible) what they consider as 'Greek' characteristics and to overstress what they regard as 'biblical' ones. The former focus their attention on Origen's considerations concerning *place*, whereas the latter want to see only treatment of *time* (in fact, everlasting time) and temporal notions in his works. What they all neglect is that the position of either *space* or *time* in a certain conception of reality has no antagonistic character—and this is what happens in Origen's thought. In the final analysis, space and time constitute *one* reality. The very definition of the relation of time to space clearly shows that he had the *feeling*, if not the conscious conception, of this fact. At any rate, the notion of space-time is outstandingly present in his works. The compendious term 'co-extended alongside with' (συνπαρεκτείνων), in itself a philosophically apt term, passed into the ordinary currency of theological language. In this manner unity of space and time was contained in one circumscription, and the enormous influence of this idea was indeed brought out.

This is the fact which modern scholars want to disregard, simply because they do not want to see that the world-view in our century has entirely changed. During the last hundred years it is constantly proven that the world in which we live *is not* the Newtonian one. During the last decades the mathematical Theory of Tensor Calculus, which deals with different spaces, has begun to consider the problem of different spaces (other than the three- or four-dimensional ones) in direct relation with Cosmology. Certainly, the theory deals with other spaces in themselves, not with any possible beings 'dwelling'

in them.<sup>5</sup> However, the problems which arise are already obvious. Even if one overlooked the theory of other spaces, there are significant facts, which could hardly be denied.

Firstly, the notion of *simultaneity* throughout the entire universe (this visible universe) makes no sense any more. In the light of the Theory of Relativity, statements such as 'any moment of time is the same in all places' (P. Gassendi) or 'every indivisible moment of duration is everywhere' (Newton)<sup>6</sup> are not valid any more. For in fact the Relativity Theory discredits the notion of presentness, because it relates to an observer's frame of reference the question of which distant events are now present. Modern scholars, so many years after the Theory of Relativity, and despite its overall verification, do not want to (or, cannot) dissociate themselves from the Newtonian world-picture. But this perception of the world is an irrevocable past. Many unnecessary debates (particularly in the philosophy of time) could have been avoided if scholars were less slow in realizing that the premises of reflecting on crucial problems have thoroughly changed. That the Theory of Relativity is not easily readable or comprehensible does not make the fact of the radical change less real—it only produces material, which is obsolete already before being printed. If in Plato's era it was necessary to receive lessons on Mathematics before those of Philosophy, this was so because the old mythological conception of the world had radically changed after the inspired ideas of the Presocratic philosophers. A new disciplined approach was necessary and Mathematics was a good means for conforming with the emerging necessities of scientific methodology.

I believe that our day has the same characteristics and reflection on metaphysical problems has begun to have pre-requisites similar in quality with those of a distant era. For the stability of the conception of the world has been profoundly shaken, since the conception of reality mainly in terms of *space* has radically changed. The simple, stable and easily apprehensible conception of the world has been shattered. This is the actual *next* step after twenty-five centuries. Subsequently, it is no more possible to reflect on time independently from space. It is my view that Origen's thought, approached in the

<sup>5</sup> Cf. D.F. Lawden, *An Introduction to Tensor Calculus, Relativity and Cosmology*, 3rd edition, New York, 1986.

<sup>6</sup> M. Čapek, *op. cit.* pp. xxxv and lvi.

light of the new presuppositions, *can* withstand these developments and, even, the challenges which only now begin to loom. Towards this direction much research is still necessary and I believe that the findings of such a research will be of utmost interest.

Secondly, it becomes increasingly hard to maintain that human beings are the only rational creatures in the visible universe (and, again, I do not mention other spaces). What about the saving consequences of the incarnation of Christ? Some centuries ago, the problem for 'orthodoxy' was quite simple: whether the earth is the immovable center of the universe, or not, was a matter of a *yes* or *no*. The ancient affirmation became negation, and the whole problem was surmounted. However, the challenges, which arise from the evolution of our new world-view, are not so simple. How will these rational creatures be saved? Were they already saved before human beings? And, if so, how was God's dispensation manifested?

Modern science tells us that the visible matter of the universe is only a small fraction of the entire real matter existing in this; in fact this is only five per cent of the entire cosmic matter. The remaining ninety five per cent (called 'dark matter' and 'dark energy') is invisible to humans, still this is real matter and the physical consequences of its presence are more and more frequently detected. It seems that human beings are made of (and can see) a matter which is only five per cent of the existing matter. It seems that we, as well as all the visible universe, are not made of the same material as the rest of the really existing universe. What does the rest of cosmic matter make up? Other worlds within the world? Other beings? Be that as it may, Origen's distinction between what is 'not seen' and what is 'invisible' should be recalled.

Certainly it would be unrealistic to expect Origen to fit neatly into the categories of subsequent periods. We live, however, in an intellectually revolutionary era, when too many of the traditional notions, convictions and certainties are collapsing. In this rearrangement and disarray, there are questions to which long-standing answers seem no more sound and convincing. To such questions Origen seems to have some answers to provide: The world comprises many particular spaces. The divine-creaturely relation is not conceived in terms of *God-man*, but in terms of *God-rational creatures* in various spaces. In a future work I intend to show how Origen confirms that the incarnation of Christ took place once and for all and enlightened history from its beginning to its end. It was the entirety of



rational creatures, not only human beings, which were saved out of that unique event.

The problems, which only now begin to loom (and current orthodoxy will have to address them sooner or later) Origen has provided his answers many centuries ago. Whether such views are to be taken as answers for the future, remains to be seen in the process of historical life and in view of the future actual content of human knowledge.

There is no need either to underrate or accentuate the temporal or spatial aspects of his thought, just for the sake of following misleading and, nonetheless, obsolete criteria. This thought has always been, and still is, a highly controversial one. In this work I have argued that a main reason for this is that Origen's work has not been studied as a whole. Some Latin portions create rather than solve problems: after the evidence for a creation of time, it is disconcerting to find that some of the passages speak as if there was after all time before the creation, and indeed to find expressions as if time were carrying over the divine being. As noted in the Introduction, *Princ* is shot through with words implying that there was an *earlier* time. After having determined Augustine drawing on Origen concerning the concept of time, the question that has sometimes crossed my mind is whether the Augustinian opinion about different kinds of time (a cosmic and an angelic one) is the misguided product of the Latin rendering of *Princ* instilled into his writings. After all there is a number of points showing Augustine's views as a crystallization of his predecessors' ideas.

On the other hand, and Greek language has ceased to be a universal one long time ago. Too many modern monographs on Origen were written with virtually no engagement with the vast bulk of his Greek writings—which writings however took the herculean labours of this *Adamantius* to be composed. No authoritative assertion can really be made of this theologian, without consultation of this voluminous work.

To sum up, from a Greek point of view Origen's theory of creation and time constitutes an utterly bold theory, entirely unknown to any Greek school of thought. In order for a Stoic to go along with this concept of time, something more on his part needs to be conceded—which however is far beyond the principal Stoic doctrines. Much the same goes for a Neoplatonist. For the sheer range of arguments, which bolster up Origen's views are fully found and understood only within the context of his theology.



Origen's stipulations on the ontology of time, and the launch of crucial refinements and definitions of the subject, constitute a major catalyst and a massive transformation in the development of the Christian view of time. Yet they have not been appreciated thenceforth. Still he has been the forebear of a very important anticipation concerning a certain perception of time proper, as well as its relation to space. His remarks were sharper than any of those of his successors and his innovations have never been superseded. Some of the accounts afforded by later Christian writers were more extended, but they were not fuller. Others just fell short of being even a mere authentic echo of his views. For although they utilized the vocabulary initiated by him, they fell foul of the entire conception expressed through this terminology.

If later theories influenced by Origen moved close to Platonism, or succumbed to Neoplatonism, this occurred because indispensable factors of Origen's conception were absent from them. In fact they were impoverished accounts of his views and they normally introduced affinity with Platonism or Neoplatonism at points where Origen has instituted a sheer dissimilarity. For he conspicuously moves in a vein radically different from pagan philosophy.

Origen's ontology of time, as a whole, actually constitutes a radical break with Platonism. Still the fact is that an anathema was imposed on him, in A.D. 553. The main blame against him was Platonism. This is a tragic historic bias still accompanying him as a motif in scholarship, which persistently entertains the idea of Origen's theology being Platonism and Neoplatonism in Christian garment. I argue in this book, however, that, on the issue of Ontology of Time and Creation *at least*, the inveterate verdict about Platonism in Origen is subject to serious criticism and lends itself to rebuttal buttressed up with his own texts.

Thus far everyone is unaware of the fact that Origen for the first time produced a really new theory of time. A brilliant accomplishment, rarely equalled and never excelled by his successors. An accomplishment, for which he never received the credit he deserved. But, in the light of the distortions and bias against his thought as a whole, which led to the anathemas on him, the universal unawareness of this inspired deed is not the worst which has happened to this tragic figure of Early Christianity.

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- διαγράφει τῷ λόγῳ . . . οὐκοῦν . . .  
οὐδεμίαν ἔξει χώραν ἄπειρον  
ἐννοεῖν τὸ διάστημα, ἀλλὰ  
πεπερασμένῃ τινὶ κατὰ πᾶσαν  
ἀνάγκην τὸν μονογενῆ τοῦ πατρὸς  
διαστήσουσι . . . ὁ λόγος οὗτος οὐκ  
ἐξ αἰδίου εἶναι τὸν ἐπὶ πάντων  
Θεόν· ἀλλ' ἀπὸ τινος ὁρισμένου  
σημείου τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐσχηκέναι  
κατασκευάσει. ὁ δὲ λέγω, τοιοῦτον  
ἐστὶ . . . τὸ μετὰ τι γενόμενον διὰ  
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εἰρημένη πολιτεία καὶ ἐστὶν καὶ  
γενήσεται γε, ὅταν αὕτη ἡ Μοῦσα  
πόλεως ἐγκρατὴς γενήσεται. οὐ  
γὰρ ἀδύνατος γενέσθαι, οὐδ' ἡμεῖς  
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χρόνος ἢ οὐ, ἀπορήσειεν ἂν τις·  
ἀδυνάτου γὰρ ὄντος εἶναι τοῦ

- ἀριθμήσοντος ἀδύνατον καὶ ἀριθμητόν τι εἶναι, ὥστε δῆλον ὅτι οὐδ' ἀριθμός· ἀριθμός γὰρ ἢ τὸ ἡριθμημένον ἢ τὸ ἀριθμητόν. Εἰ δὲ μηδὲν ἄλλον πέφυκεν ἀριθμεῖν ἢ ψυχὴ καὶ ψυχῆς νοῦς, ἀδύνατον εἶναι χρόνον ψυχῆς μὴ οὐσης, ἀλλ' εἰ τοῦτο ὃ ποτε ὄν ἐστιν ὁ χρόνος, οἷον εἰ ἐνδέχεται κίνησιν εἶναι ἄνευ ψυχῆς. Τὸ δὲ πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον ἐν κινήσει ἐστίν· χρόνος δὲ ταῦτ' ἐστίν ἢ ἀριθμητὰ ἐστιν, 188-9.
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