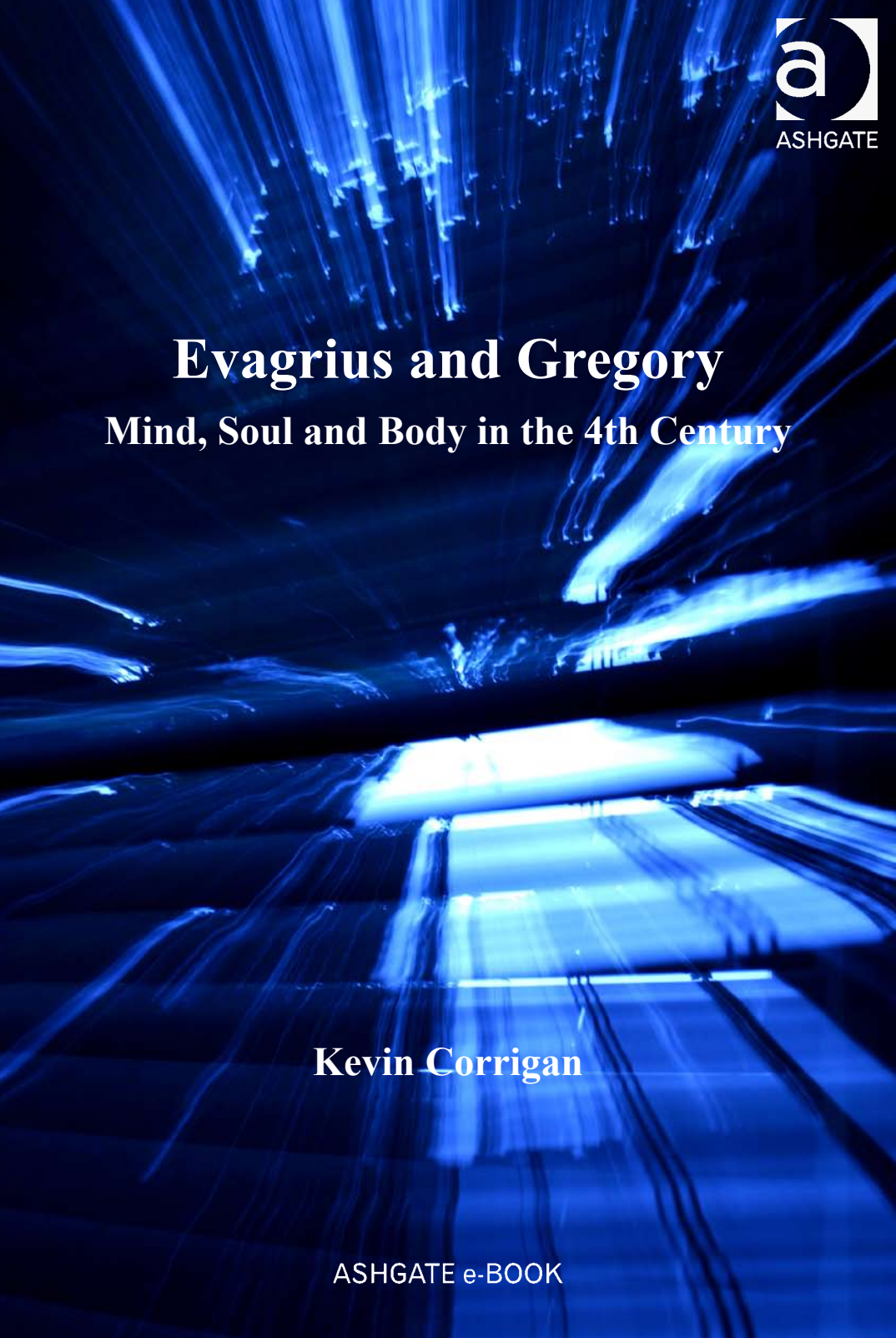

Evagrius and Gregory

Mind, Soul and Body in the 4th Century

Kevin Corrigan

ASHGATE e-BOOK

EVAGRIUS AND GREGORY

Evagrius of Pontus and Gregory of Nyssa have either been overlooked by philosophers and theologians in modern times, or overshadowed by their prominent friend and brother (respectively), Gregory Nazianzus and Basil the Great. Yet they are major figures in the development of Christian thought in late antiquity and their works express a unique combination of desert and urban spiritualities in the lived and somewhat turbulent experience of an entire age. They also provide a significant link between the great ancient thinkers of the past – Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, Clement and others – and the birth and transmission of the early Medieval period – associated with Boethius, Cassian and Augustine.

This book makes accessible, to a wide audience, the thought of Evagrius and Gregory on the mind, soul and body, in the context of ancient philosophy/theology and the Cappadocians generally. Corrigan argues that in these two figures we witness the birth of new forms of thought and science. Evagrius and Gregory are no mere receivers of a monolithic pagan and Christian tradition, but innovative, critical interpreters of the range and limits of cognitive psychology, the soul–body relation, reflexive self-knowledge, personal and human identity and the soul's practical relation to goodness in the context of human experience and divine self-disclosure. This book provides a critical evaluation of their thought on these major issues and argues that in Evagrius and Gregory we see the important integration of many different concerns that later Christian thought was not always able to balance including: mysticism, asceticism, cognitive science, philosophy, and theology.

ASHGATE STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHY & THEOLOGY IN LATE ANTIQUITY

Series Editors

Dr Mark Edwards, Oxford University, UK
Dr Lewis Ayers, Emory University, USA

The *Ashgate Studies in Philosophy & Theology in Late Antiquity* series focuses on major theologians, not as representatives of a 'tradition', whether Christian or classical, but as individuals immersed in the intellectual culture of their day. Each book concentrates on the arguments, not merely the opinions, of a single Christian writer or group of writers from the period AD 100–600 and compares and contrasts these arguments with those of pagan contemporaries who addressed similar questions. By study of the political, cultural and social milieu, contributors to the series show what external factors led to the convergence or divergence of Christianity and pagan thought in particular localities or periods. Pagan and Christian teachings are set out in a clear and systematic form making it possible to bring to light the true originality of the author's thought and to estimate the value of his work for modern times. This high profile research series offers an important contribution to areas of contemporary research in the patristic period, as well as providing new links into later periods, particularly the medieval and reformation.

Other titles published in this series:

Origen Against Plato
Mark Julian Edwards

Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition
Despoiling the Hellenes
Sarah Klitenic Wear and John Dillon

Evagrius and Gregory

Mind, Soul and Body in the 4th Century

KEVIN CORRIGAN

ASHGATE

Published by
Ashgate Publishing Limited
Wey Court East
Union Road
Farnham
Surrey, GU9 7PT
England

Ashgate Publishing Company
Suite 420
101 Cherry Street
Burlington
VT 05401-4405
USA

www.ashgate.com

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Corrigan, Kevin.
Evagrius and Gregory : mind, soul and body in the 4th century. — (Ashgate studies in philosophy & theology in late antiquity)
1. Evagrius, Ponticus, 345?–399. 2. Gregory, of Nyssa, Saint, ca. 33–ca. 394. 3. Soul—History of doctrines.
I. Title II. Series
270.2'0922—dc22

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Corrigan, Kevin.
Evagrius and Gregory : mind, soul, and body in the 4th century / Kevin Corrigan.
p. cm. — (Ashgate studies in philosophy & theology in late antiquity)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-7546-1685-6 (hardcover : alk. paper) 1. Evagrius, Ponticus, 345?–399. 2. Gregory, of Nyssa, Saint, ca. 335–ca. 394. I. Title.
BR65.E926C67 2009
270.2092'2—dc22

2009011254

ISBN 978-0-7546-1685-6 (hbk)
ISBN 978-0-7546-9287-4 (ebk.V)

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
MPG Books Group, UK

Contents

This page has been left blank intentionally

Preface

This book is really two packed into one. It compares the lives and thought of two major figures of the 4th Century, who have never been seriously compared before: Evagrius of Pontus and Gregory of Nyssa.

The first two chapters examine their lives and present some of the necessary background to the 4th Century, particularly the figure of Origen and some of the major theological issues that dominated the period. If the reader already knows a lot about the 4th Century, then I advise starting with Chapter 3 that presents an introductory overview to the thought of both Evagrius and Gregory in the overall context of body-soul-mind conceptions from early to late antiquity. Chapter 4 examines the somewhat forbidding question of "impassibility" or imperturbability that, for both, characterizes the accomplished ascetic life and argues that this should not be understood as austere insensibility or world renunciation.

Chapter 5 examines – in a new key – the origins, meaning and structure of Evagrius' eight "reasonings", or forerunners of the seven deadly sins' tradition, and Chapter 6 presents the rather similar view of negative or empty thinking and materiality in Gregory. Chapters 7 and 8 form part of the center of the whole work. Chapter 7 examines Evagrius' strange theory of the sensible and intelligible bodies in relation to the scientific eye of the soul/mind and provides a preliminary, positive evaluation of his overall metaphysics in the context of ancient and modern debates about Evagrius' "heretical Origenism" and monism. Chapter 8 examines Gregory's Trinitarian and anthropological thought, particularly, his interest in medicine and bodily structures, together with his own version of the intelligible body and his groundbreaking view of the mind/soul-body relation, and argues that, despite problems, Gregory's anthropology is more consistent and compelling than has often been appreciated and that Evagrius' supposedly monistic anthropology should be understood more in the light of Gregory's work than from the condemnations of two later councils in 553 and 660–81. Finally, Chapters 9 and 10 situate the work of each in the context of their respective mystical theologies/practices.

Because of limitations of space, much had to be cut out – especially an in-depth overview of the mind/soul-body question from Homer to late antiquity, though I have adapted a very brief version of this in Chapter 3. I have also had to omit any serious treatment of Christology, a fascinating and complicated issue in both Evagrius and Gregory. My own view of this the reader will be able to infer roughly after reading through Chapter 8. Limitations of space have also led to the use of more abbreviations than usual. I therefore ask the reader to keep the Abbreviations page well thumbed as you read.

During preparation and writing, I have benefited from the help of many people. Columba Stewart helped me considerably in the early stages and Andrew Radde-

Gallwitz, who wrote an excellent thesis on Divine Simplicity at Emory University, reintroduced me to Basil and Gregory in new ways. A chance meeting with William Harmless proved invaluable, as did the book on Gregory and the soul sent to me by Igor Pochoshajew. I owe thanks to both. I also thank my friends for their support: Rosemary Magee, Ron Grapevine, Ray Ganga (for the book on virtue he gave me and for his polymathic spirit), Ken Fenster, Bob Fox, Steve Henson, Gary Kazin and John Lewis. I am grateful for the friendship and encouragement of my colleagues in the Graduate Institute of the Liberal Arts (especially Walt Reed, Elizabeth Goodstein, Michael Moon, Sander Gilman, Bobby Paul and Cris Levenduski) as well as my colleagues in Classics, Philosophy and Religion, at Emory University; for the congenial year I spent at the Fox Center for Human Inquiry (Emory); and also for early funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. In the past year, three of my children have completed theses and my wife, Elena, is currently finishing a book. The house, it is fair to say, has been bursting with thought, anxiety and deadlines. So I am particularly grateful to all for their understanding, friendship and love throughout this period – and especially to my son, John, who – in the midst of his own heavy research commitments – took the time to read this book through and improve it, as well as to Sarah, Yuri and Oksana Gomas (and family) for help with the bibliography. Maria's encouragement was invaluable – as also that of Francis, Tess, James, Madeline, Edward and Brendan Corrigan. My friend and colleague, Michael Harrington, read the manuscript at the last minute and I am deeply thankful for his insight and suggestions. Needless to say, the faults are all my own.

Finally, I am especially grateful to Irina Pasternak in Kiev, Ukraine, (together with Kostya and Alyosha Sigov-and the help of my wife, Elena) for designing the book cover. Sarah Lloyd and Ann Allen at Ashgate Press have been very supportive throughout the process of preparation. I dedicate this book to the good company of these friends, colleagues and family, and especially to the loving memory of my parents, Margaret Mary and John Corrigan.

Abbreviations

AA	*Ad Ablabium (Gregory)*
ACW	*Ancient Christian Writers*
AG	*Ad Graecos (Gregory)*
AJP	*American Journal of Philology*
AM	*Ad Monachos (Evagrius)*
AP	*Apophthegmata Patrum*
Cant.	*Commentarius in canticum canticorum (Gregory)*
CCSL	*Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*
CCSG	*Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca*
CE	*Contra Eunomium (Gregory)*
CL	*Canonical Letter (Gregory)*
CS	*Cistercian Studies*
CSCO	*Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*
CSEL	*Corpus scriptorium ecclesiasticorum latinorum*
CWS	*Classics of Western Spirituality*
DAR	*De anima at resurrection (Gregory)*
DHO	*De hominis opificio (Gregory)*
DM	*De Mysteriis (Iamblichus)*
DP	*De Perfectione (Gregory)*
DSS	*De Spiritu Sancto (Gregory)*
DV	*De Virginitate (Gregory)*
8TH	*Eight Thoughts (Evagrius)*
EN	*Nicomachean Ethics/ Ethica Nicomachea*
Eul.	*Eulogius (Evagrius)*
Fds	*Foundations (Evagrius)*
GCS	*Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der (drei)ersten Jahrhunderte*
GL	*Great Letter/Letter to Melania (Evagrius)*
GN	*Gnostikos (Evagrius)*
GNO	*Gregorii Nysseni Opera*
GRSB	*Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*
HE	*Historia Ecclesiae(Socrates and Sozomen)*
HM	*Historia Monachorum (Rufinus)*
ICR	*In Christi Resurrectionem (Gregory)*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
KG	*Kephalaia Gnostica (Evagrius)*
Lampe	Lampe, G. W. H., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*

LCL	*Loeb Classical Library*
LF	*Letter on Faith (Evagrius-38 in Basil, Letters)*
LH	*Lausiac History (Palladius)*
LSJ	Liddell, H. G., and Scott, R., *A Greek-English Lexicon*
MS	*Monastic Studies*
NPNF	*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*
OC	*Oratio Catachetica (Gregory)*
OCP	*Orientalia Christiana Periodica*
OSAP	*Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*
PG	*Patrologia Graeca*
PL	*Patrologia Latina*
PO	*Patrologia Orientalis*
PR	*Praktikos (Evagrius)*
Pr.	*Prayer (Evagrius)*
RAM	*Revue de l'ascetique et de mystique*
Refl.	*Reflections (Skemmata) (Evagrius)*
REG	*Revue des études grecques*
SC	*Sources chrétiennes*
SE	*Scholia on Ecclesiastes (Evagrius)*
SM	*Studia Monastica*
SP	*Studia Patristica*
Spir.	*De Spiritu Sancto (Basil)*
SVF	*Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*
TH	*Thoughts (Evagrius)*
TS	*Theological Studies*
VA	*Vita Antonii/Life of Antony (Athanasius)*
VigChr	*Vigiliae Christianae*
VM	*Life of Moses/Vita Moysis (Gregory)*
VSM	*Life of Saint Macrina/Vita Sanctae Macrinae (Gregory)*
VV	*On the Virtues and Vices (Pseudo-Aristotle)*

Chapter 1
Evagrius and Gregory: Ascetic Master, Pastoral Father

1.1 Why Evagrius and Gregory?

Evagrius and Gregory are unlikely companions. When one reads their works, there seems almost no correlation, but their thought is deeply connected. Something similar is true about their lives. They knew each other, shared significant theological opinions, but the connection appears not as significant as those between Evagrius and Basil or Evagrius and Gregory of Nazianzus, whom Evagrius claimed as his teacher. Yet Evagrius and Gregory are strangely related: each represents major strands of the legacy of the 4th century in the birth and development of cognitive psychology and ascetic practice, in the development of Christian anthropology, as well as of sacramental and mystical theology. Both were exceptional diagnosticians of the human soul, heart and mind (along with Augustine, their younger contemporary). They were, like Origen, great biblical exegetes. They opened and mapped out the range of scientific insights from psychology and ethics through biology and physics to theology, prayer, and the mystical life; and they charted the pathways of mystical experience for future ages. At the same time, they were apparently heretical in their adherence to views generally labeled today as "Origenist." They were saved from themselves by clever women; and so unwittingly, they summed up in their own lives the forceful but hidden presence of women in the making of history. One, Evagrius, was a town boy with a flair for people who ended up in the desert and the other, Gregory, was perhaps stay-at-home material with little taste for administrative or political life who nonetheless ended up in the public limelight. Although Gregory of Nyssa was born into one of the most committed Christian families of Cappadocia, a family tested by persecutions, he showed no real commitment until, at about the age of 40, he reluctantly accepted appointment as bishop of the insignificant see of Nyssa from his brother Basil. Later, after Basil's death in 379, when Gregory became one of the foremost champions of Christian orthodoxy against Arianism, he remained a not particularly distinguished administrator, who could grumble about his lot in life to his older sister, Macrina, on her deathbed.[1] Yet this somewhat unprepossessing figure distilled the thought and spirit of both Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus into the creative philosophic-theological transmission of a Cappadocian legacy for the future of Christianity. Let us take Evagrius first.

---

[1] For the *Life of Macrina* (VSM), see *GNO*/VIII/i, 347–414; *PG* 46, 960–1000; and for translations, Woods Callahan, 1967; Maraval, 1971; Corrigan, 1987.

1.2 Evagrius

Evagrius' achievement was similar to that of Gregory, though nobody would have predicted it in the early 380s and few knew anything of it in the West until the 1950s. Condemned with Origen by the Council of Constantinople II in 553 as a heretic, Evagrius virtually disappeared: his practical works were retained in Greek, but the metaphysical works disappeared into Syriac and Armenian copies or assumed canonized form under the names like St. Nilus of Ancyra. Only in modern times did scholars begin to realize that John Cassian, whose writings helped to shape Benedictine spirituality, was deeply indebted to Evagrius. Cassian never mentions Evagrius, but Evagrius pervades his thought.

According to his disciple, Palladius, in the *Lausiac History*, and from indications in other ancient historians (such as Socrates, Sozomen, and Gennadius), Evagrius was born (perhaps in 334, but possibly earlier by five years) in Ibora in the province of Pontus, above Cappadocia and near the Black Sea, in contemporary Northern Turkey.[2] He was the son of a country bishop (*chorepiskopos*) whom Basil ordained lector and then priest. About the time of Basil's death (377 or 379) and after, Evagrius served as Gregory Nazianzus' archdeacon in Constantinople and became an important spokesperson for the Nicene cause in the Trinitarian debate at the Council of Constantinople in 381, where Gregory "left him to the blessed bishop, Nectarius, as one most skillful in confuting all the heresies. He flourished in the great city, confuting every heresy with youthful exuberance" (Palladius, *LH*, section 2). Palladius was Evagrius' friend, but we are able to judge for ourselves since *Letter* 8 in the collection attributed to Basil, expounding a Nicene view of the Trinity, was written by Evagrius.[3] After Basil's death and Gregory Nazianzus left the Council, Evagrius and Gregory of Nyssa must have spent time together, but no details have been preserved.

Evagrius' talent, however, was in danger of being destroyed: he fell in love with a married woman "of the highest social class." The possibility of scandal was great – and the political consequences to the Nicene cause would have been even greater. Evagrius wanted to break off the affair but could not do so; neither could she. Dream, trauma, and sickness came to play an archetypal role in Evagrius' life. One night he dreamed that he had been arrested by the governor's soldiers, chained without knowing why: yet he knew why in his conscience and thought the woman's husband had arranged it. Suddenly an angel, in the guise of a friend, appeared and asked him to swear on the Gospel to leave town and take care of his soul on condition of freedom. In the dream, Evagrius swore the oath and when

---

[2] For Palladius, Socrates, Sozomen, and Gennadius, see bibliography (Evagrius). See also *The Coptic Life* in Vivian, 2004; Rufinus, translator of *The History of the Monks in Egypt*, trans. Norman Russell, *CS* 34, 1981; introduction, A. and C. Guillaumont, 1971; Bamberger, 1972; Harmless, 2004; Sinkewicz, 2003.

[3] See Courtonne, 1957, 22 n.1; English, Deferrari, 1950, 1, 46–93 (known as the *Letter on Faith – LF)*.

he awoke, he decided immediately "even if this oath was made in my vision, nevertheless I did swear it" (*LH* 4–7). He packed his goods and clothes of which he had plenty and took the first ship to Jerusalem.

Evagrius' experience of dividedness was not easily discarded. In Jerusalem, he entered the remarkable monastic community of Melania the Elder and Rufinus at the Mount of Olives, a community that in its experience and bilingualism (Rufinus) was able to link the Latin-speaking to the Eastern world's experiences in monasticism and theology, from Pachomius to Origen.[4] Here, he slipped back into his old ways: cleverness, clothes, and pleasure. As the *Coptic Life* puts it:

> … his heart doubted and became divided; and on account of his boiling youthfulness and his very learned speech, and because of his large and splendid wardrobe (he would change clothes twice a day), he fell into vain habits and bodily pleasure. But God, who always keeps destruction from his people, sent a tempest of fever and chills upon him until he contracted a grave illness that persisted until his flesh became as thin as thread (*Coptic Life*, section 8).[5]

Nobody could diagnose the problem until Evagrius confessed his affair in Constantinople to Melania. He promised to adopt the monastic life, rapidly recovered, "got up [and] received a change of clothing at her hands" (*LH*, section 9). This sounds as though Melania acted as monastic superior formally investing him with monastic garments. As Gregory of Nyssa acknowledges his older sister, Macrina, to be his superior and teacher, so Evagrius' admission to the monastic life has the powerful, symbolic quality of occurring through a woman of superior station and intelligence. He left immediately for Egypt under the auspices of Melania who had several years before visited an experimental monastic colony at Nitria, just south of Alexandria, where a remarkable city was established on the edge of the Libyan Desert.

For two years, he lived in Nitria, forty miles southeast of Alexandria on the edge of the Nile delta, a settlement that, according to Palladius, had about 5,000 inhabitants, some in cells, others in pairs, and others in larger groups. Most of the monks earned their living by weaving rope, the manufacture of linen, winemaking, and gardening. There were seven bakeries to supply Nitria and the 600 monks who lived in solitary conditions at its remote settlement of Kellia.[6] Discipline was hard,[7] yet the colony's hospitality was great. Rufinus paints a vivid picture of a rather unique community to welcome the weary traveler:

---

[4] Pachomius (c. 292–346), reputed to be the founder of monks living in organized communities (cenobitic monasticism). Origen (c. 185–254), of Alexandria, one of the great theologians of Christianity.

[5] Vivian, 2004, 78.

[6] See Harmless, 2004, 279–83.

[7] Cf. Palladius, *LH* 7.3.

> So as we drew near to that place and they realized that foreign brethren were arriving, they poured out of their cells like a swarm of bees and ran to meet us with delight …, many of them carrying containers of water and of bread …. When they had welcomed us, first of all they led us with psalms into the church and washed our feet and one by one dried them with the linen cloth with which they were girded, as if to wash away the fatigue of the journey, but in fact to purge away the hardships of worldly life with this traditional mystery. What can I say that would do justice to their humanity, their courtesy, and their love; each of them wanted to take us to his own cell, not only to fulfill the duties of hospitality but even more out of humility, in which they are indeed masters, and out of gentleness and similar qualities which are learned among them according to the graces that differ but with the one and the same teaching, as if they had left the world for this one end.[8]

For two years, Evagrius disappeared into this community whose daily order we do not know except for the "divine psalmody issuing forth from each cell" around the ninth hour (three o'clock in the afternoon) (*LH* 7.5) and liturgies on Saturdays and Sundays presided over by eight priests. The most senior alone presided at the Eucharist and preached. The diversity of monastic experience is worth noting: Nitria was an experimental form of monasticism very different from the common-life or cenobitic model of Pachomius with its written rules and non-clerical hierarchy, different again from the community of Melania and Rufinus on the Mt. of Olives or from the household community of family and freed slaves initiated by Macrina, the older sister of Gregory of Nyssa,[9] and different again from the extreme anchoritic life of Antony, and even more so from the life of Syncletica who lived in a tomb outside of Alexandria for over forty years and whose *Life*, preserved in the portfolio of Athanasius, reveals a woman of very good sense whom crowds of people must have come to visit.[10] In Athanasius' famous dictum, the desert was turned into a city in very different experimental ways.[11]

After two years, Evagrius moved to the more solitary location of Kellia, twelve miles south of Nitria – to "the Cells" that lay, according to Rufinus, in the "interior desert," a "vast wasteland" in which "cells are divided from one another by so great a distance that no one can catch sight of another nor can a voice be heard," situated partially underground in small walled compounds, according to archaeological evidence after Antoine Gillaumont discovered their buried ruins in 1964.[12] A priest-monk, aided by a council of elders, presided over this community. Its "huge silence and great stillness"

---

[8] Rufinus, *HM* XXX.1, 3–1, 6; trans. Russell, *CSS* 34:148.

[9] See *VSM*, *PG* 965d (Corrigan, 1987, 7).

[10] For translation, see Bongie, 1996.

[11] *Life of Antony* (*VA*) (ed. Bartelink, 1994), 14, *SC* 400, 174; trans. Gregg, 1980, *CWS*, 65.

[12] For an account of archeological discoveries and photographs, see Miguel, 1993; Guillaumont, "Kellia" and "Nitria" in *The Coptic Encyclopedia* (ed. Aziz S. Atiya), 1991, 5: 1396–410 and 6: 1794–6.

(*silentium ingens et quies magna*)[13] was broken only when the monks gathered in Church on Saturdays and Sundays. Here Evagrius worked as a calligrapher for the next fourteen years, learning the Coptic of the monks and apprenticing under two of the greatest desert fathers, Macarius the Egyptian and Macarius the Alexandrian.[14] The historian Socrates tells us: "Evagrius became a disciple of these men and acquired from them the philosophy of deeds whereas before he only knew a philosophy of words."[15] The ideal of experiential philosophy as a form of lived spiritual experience sounds strange to modern ears, but it goes to the heart of Christian monastic life catching the etymological meaning of the term "philosophy," that is, love of wisdom, as evinced in Socrates' characterization of philosophy as the "practice of dying" in Plato's *Phaedo*, or again in Iamblichus' later insistence upon theurgy, that is, "god-work" or "god-deed," as opposed to theology: that is, god-talk or speaking about god.[16] Gregory of Nyssa places a similar insistence upon philosophy as a way of life that transforms all the details of ordinary experience when he speaks of Macrina raising "herself through philosophy to the highest limit of human virtue" or of the community sitting down to eat of "the table of philosophy."[17] Like Jesus or Socrates, "the monk should always live as if he were to die on the morrow but at the same time … he should treat his body as if he were to live on with it for many years to come."[18] This balanced life is what Evagrius claims he learned from Macarius the Egyptian "our holy and most ascetic master." To seek Macarius' advice, Evagrius made the dangerous desert trek from Kellia to Scetis,[19] located some forty miles south of Kellia in some of the most difficult conditions the planet has to offer.[20]

Desert fathers/monks could be painfully honest, and Evagrius' visit to Macarius is no exception. Arriving in the heat of the day, Evagrius asks Macarius for water to slake his thirst, but Macarius tells him to be content. Many others have no water, Macarius instructs, driving the point home with ascetic example:

> Then as I struggled about temperance with him, wrestling with my thoughts, he told me: "Take courage, my son. For twenty years I have not taken my fill of bread or water or sleep" (*PR* 94).

---

[13] Rufinus, *HM* XXII. 2. 1–4; Harmless, 2004, 281.

[14] On Macarius the Egyptian (c. 300–390) who founded the monastic settlement of Scetis, see Palladius, *LH* 17, *AP*, Macarius; A. Guillaumont, 1980 (Dictionnaire *de Spiritualité*), 10, 11–13; and *Irénikon* 48, 1975, 41–59. And see Evagrius, *PR* 29 and 93. For Macarius the Alexandrian, see Palladius, *LH* 18; Evagrius, *PR* 94; Vivian, 2004, 102–65 (for both Macarii).

[15] *HE* 4.23; Harmless, 315.

[16] See Hadot, 1987 (Eng. trans., 1995). For Iamblichus, see DM and Shaw, 1995; Finamore, 1985.

[17] *VSM*, *PG* 46, 997a (*GNO*/VIII/i/411; Corrigan, 1987, 35); for Evagrius' similar usage (as in Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus), *Eul.* 30.

[18] Evagrius, *PR* 21.

[19] Cf. Harmless, 2004, 315.

[20] *LH* 35; 23.

Evagrius is direct about his own weakness:

> The demon of fornication bothered him so oppressively, as he himself told us, that he stood naked throughout the night in a well. It was winter … and his flesh froze (*LH*, section 38.11).

As an educated intellectual among illiterate Coptic monks, Evagrius experienced displacement. But this should not be overemphasized, since it is fundamental to the Gospels that the "first shall be last" and that any real wealth involves giving everything to the poor. So it is striking that in *PR*, Evagrius recounts the following tale:

> A certain member of what was then considered the circle of the wise once approached the just Antony and asked him: "How do you ever manage to carry on, Father, deprived as you are of the consolation of books?" His reply: "My book, sir philosopher, is the nature of created things, and it is always at hand when I wish to read the words of God." (*PR* 92, trans. Bamberger)

The contrast between the deeper wisdom of Antony stripped to its bare, but richest essentials and the apparent wisdom of the worldly wise fits Athanasius' portrait of Antony,[21] but also goes to the heart of Evagrius' view of a poverty that turns appearances topsy-turvy and sees in nature the creative handwriting of God (*GL*[22]), for five sections later in the *PR*, Evagrius tells the story of a brother who owned only a book of the Gospels, but sold it and gave the money to the poor: "He made a statement that deserves remembrance: 'I have sold the very word that speaks to me saying: Sell your possessions and give to the poor'" (*PR* 97, trans. Bamberger). So Evagrius' attitude to learning was subtle, yet simple; only the word that comes from God is to be upheld and this can be found everywhere, sometimes in the most unexpected places. At the same time, in the desert, the relative newcomer from the city remains a stranger. Evagrius was accustomed to express his views forthrightly, but on one occasion at the assembly of Kellia, one of the priests replied: "Abba, we know that if you were living in your own country, you would probably be a bishop and a great leader; but at present you sit here as a stranger." Evagrius apparently accepted the rebuke, quoting Job 40.5: "I have spoken once. But I will not do so a second time."[23] There is humility in Evagrius' reply, but a

---

[21] For authorship disputes on the *VA*, see Bartelink, 1994, 27–35; Stewart, 2000, 2, 1088–101; for the letters of Antony see Rubensen, 1995, who makes a strong case for their authenticity, though this also has been disputed. A different Antony appears in the *AP PG* 65; trans. Ward, *CS* 59, 1984.

[22] *Great Letter*, also known as the *Letter to Melania*, but since its addressee is male at three points, this is debated, see Bibliography (2).

[23] *AP* Evagrius 7; *PG* 65, 176; trans. Ward, *CS* 59, 64; Socrates, *HE* 4, 23, *PG* 67, 521; *NPNF* 2, 2, 109.

hint of someone who knows his own power even when rebuked. As Harmless puts it, there is a hint of the future:

> while Evagrius accepted Egypt, Egypt did not accept Evagrius. In 399, on the feast of the Epiphany, Evagrius was near death. He had to be carried to church to receive the Eucharist and died soon after. He was fifty-five – comparatively young, given the long lives that desert literature normally accords its leaders. That year, the patriarch of Alexandria, Theophilus, embarked on a ruthless persecution against Evagrius' friends and disciples. They were accused of the heresy of Origenism and forced to flee Egypt. Death spared Evagrius the bitter experience of exile and condemnation.[24]

Evagrius died in 399 at 55 or 60 (according to the *Coptic Life*).[25] He barely escaped being run out of Egypt together with his friends and disciples. Evagrius was condemned 150 years later and most of his works from then on circulated under the names of others. On the surface, then, his was not a successful life, and yet Evagrius' influence was immense, as we have only begun to appreciate in the last 50 years.

So who was he? A pioneer of monastic theology; the creator or developer of the seven deadly sins tradition; a father of cognitive psychology; an upholder of Nicene Orthodoxy who also loved the tradition of Origen and ultimately suffered some of its fate; and a formulator, as this book will show, of an authentically desert-tradition anthropology and of a mind-soul-body structure that is a classic, original, and unique blend of important Scriptural, pagan philosophical, Patristic, and Desert thought. In some ways, Evagrius represents the upheavals of 4th-century thought: insight and failure, loss of nerve and yet the finding of courage, the crucial though hidden role of women in major events, and the apparent death and obliteration of the "seed" belied by the fecundity of its long-sleeping potential. Like Gregory of Nyssa, he crystallizes a living tradition and hands it on to others. Alone, he is surrounded by others. Like Gregory, he loves to talk. Gregory and Macrina discuss the resurrection and the soul on her death-bed.[26] Gregory, a bishop, represents himself as apprentice to his older sister who was the teacher and authority he experienced in growing up.[27] Evagrius also thought of himself not as holy, but as a man who failed to achieve true holiness. Yet he became "a wise and learned man who was skilled in the discernment of thoughts, an ability he had acquired by experience," as the author of the *Historia monachorum*, who had met him at Kellia described him.[28]

---

[24] Harmless, 2004, 316.

[25] Vivian, 2004, 79.

[26] In the *DAR PG* 46; translation Schaff and Wace, *NPNF*, vol. 5, repr. 1994 and also Roth, 1993.

[27] *VSM*, *PG* 46, 965a ff. (*GNO*/VII/i/376 ff.; Corrigan, 1987, 6).

[28] *HM* XX.15; trans. Russell, *CS* 34, 107.

Evagrius became a spiritual director, who, despite what he says in his writings (see below), was utterly open with everyone, "He never hid anything from his disciples"[29] and had a gift for friendship. Palladius paints an unforgettable picture of what Evagrius' anchoritic, yet strangely communal experience was like. As with Antony, it embodied voluntary exile (*xeniteia*), mindfulness, attention (*proseche*), Gospel vigilance, and complete thoughtfulness for the other: on the one hand, silence, attention, and endurance undergirding (*hupomone*) the ascetic struggles (*ponoi* – the term used by Basil and the two Gregories) with "thoughts"; on the other, manual labor, psycho-physical integrity, and compassion for others:

> This was his practice: The brothers would gather around him on Saturday and Sunday, discussing their thoughts with him throughout the night, listening to his words of encouragement until sunrise. And thus they would leave rejoicing and glorifying God, for Evagrius' teaching was very sweet. When they came to see him, he encouraged them, saying to them: "My brothers, if one of you has either a profound or troubled thought, let him be silent until the brothers depart and let him reflect on it alone with me. Let us not make him speak in front of the brothers lest a little one perish in his thoughts and grief swallow him at a gulp". Furthermore, he was so hospitable that his cell never lacked five or six visitors a day who had come from foreign lands to listen to his teaching, his intellect, and his ascetic practice.[30]

Some thoughts are so troubling that they will destroy the child within us – the "little one" of the Gospel – and swallow the human being in grief if they are not given the appropriate dialogue of person, time, and place. This is a constant theme in so many stories about the desert fathers (and mothers). Their apparent extreme asceticism engendered not rebuke, righteous anger, or fierce individualism, but understanding, compassion, and love. For Evagrius, as we shall see, the ascetic life is not a goal in itself. It has as its aim the birth of love in the wider context of Divine Love for all creation.

1.3 The Character of Evagrius' Writings

How do we possess Evagrius' writings at all? What did Evagrius see himself doing in his writing, what is the character of his writing, and what are his major works? Evagrius was a prolific writer whose works were widely disseminated in Antiquity. Jerome complained (in *Letter* 133.3 written in 414)[31] that many in both East and West read Evagrius because of Rufinus' translations, so one of the first points of dissemination for his works must have been the monasteries of Melania and Rufinus

---

29 *Coptic Life* 24, Vivian, 82.

30 *Coptic Life*, Vivian, 83–4.

31 Jerome (c. 347–420), *Epistulae* (ed. Hilberg) *CSEL*, 55–6, Vienna, 1910–18.

on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. Not long afterwards when Theophilus, the patriarch of Alexandria, accused Evagrius' friends and disciples of Origenism, Palladius and others were forced to flee to Constantinople to take up refuge with John Chrysostom. With these condemnations at the end of the 4th century, then again at the beginning of the 5th century by Theophilus, Jerome, and Epiphanius of Salamis, and finally in the 6th century by the Second Council of Constantinople (in 553), those works considered most infected dropped out of circulation in Greek and were preserved primarily in Syriac and Armenian versions. Nonetheless, at the end of the 5th century, Gennadius of Marseille was able to list Evagrius' major works and he made translations into Latin of the *Gnostikos* and *Antirrhetikos*. From the 10th century onwards, it was the monks of Mount Athos who preserved and transmitted Evagrius' works. Byzantine monasteries continued this tradition, but sometimes passed on these works under the name of Nilus of Ancyra. Since Nilus was influenced by Evagrius, it has proven difficult to determine in modern times what belongs to Nilus and what is authentically Evagrian. However, on the basis of early modern editions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the Jacques-Paul Migne edition of the *Patrologia Graeca* series of Evagrius (in volume 40, 1863) and Nilus (in volume 79, 1865) as well as through the pioneering work of Antoine and Claire Guillaumont in contemporary times, the body of Evagrius' writings is now reasonably settled, but there is no complete English translation for the whole corpus. However, an English version of the thirteen works in the Greek ascetic corpus (except for the *Biblical Scholia* and the *Gnostikos*, which does not have a complete Greek text) appeared for the first time in 2003.[32]

Although Evagrius was open-handed in discussion with colleagues and disciples, his work is consciously gnomic, almost devoid of ornamentation; collections of short, pungent, proverb-like sentences formed in brief, and on the surface, disconnected clusters or paragraphs, chapters or *Kephalaia*. In fact, Evagrius is the inventor – as far as we know – of the carefully numbered series of chapters up to 100 forming the new genre of the *century*. His chapters force the reader to think on several different levels at once and thus to meditate upon the inner word/world not only disclosed, but also concealed by the particular chapter; to work through the implicit connections or disconnections between chapters as well as those of the century or part-century that makes up the whole. What under another hand might be disparate bits of pedagogy turn out with Evagrius to possess a sort of holographic luminosity so that the whole comes to be mirrored in each of the parts and yet each part is complete in itself. Evagrius' chapters read like proverbs, others like dictionary definitions,[33] still others like pungent meditations or one side of a dialogue or address, others like admonitions, parables, apophthegms (as paradigms of the later *AP*), like little Gospel interludes or the

[32] Sinkewicz, 2003.

[33] Cf. Harmless, 2004, 317; For other possible precedents, including the *Sentences of Sextus* and the Nag Hammadi *Teachings of Silvanus*, with evaluation, see Driscoll, 2003, 196ff and 197n85.

fragments of Heraclitus. Each requires to be filled with thought on different levels since they appeal to intellect or the heart (*nous* or *kardia*) to interpret them with intellect and feeling. About the precise numbering Evagrius is clear:

> I pray the brothers who come upon this book and wish to copy it not to join one chapter to another, nor to place on the same line the end of the chapter just written and the beginning of the one about to be written but to have each chapter begin with its own beginning according to the discussions which we have marked also by numbers. In this way the ordering of the chapters can be preserved and what is said will be clear.[34]

Openness and clarity belong only to those who are able to see and, therefore, the cryptic nature of the chapters is a necessary part of writing for Evagrius. At the very end of the *Prologue* preceding his request above, he writes:

> We are now going to discuss the practical and the gnostic life, not so much as we have seen or heard, but what we have learned from them (sc. the elders) to say to others. We have condensed and divided up the teaching on the practical life in one hundred chapters and on the Gnostic life in fifty in addition to the six hundred (on this see Bibliography (1): the *Kephalaia Gnostica*). We have kept some things hidden and have obscured others so as "not to give what is holy to dogs and throw pearls before swine" (Matt. 7.6). But these things will be clear to those who have embarked upon the same path.[35]

Here, Evagrius sees himself not as a luminary, but as a transmitter of a tradition older and wiser than himself. For him, this is just good sense: "It is a very necessary thing also to examine carefully the ways of the monks who have traveled, in an earlier age, straight along the road and to direct oneself along the same paths" (*PR* 91). Dialogue between past and present is the on-going process of verification. In one chapter (25) of his work *Thoughts* (*TH*),[36] Evagrius has this to say about proof. People invariably produce proofs on the basis of what they have seen or contemplated: "My own proof in most cases is the heart of my reader, especially if it possesses understanding and experience in the monastic life." That is, the dialogical element or that element of in-betweenness that provokes the reader to enter into a multi-layered dialogue so that a genuine reflexive contemplation comes to birth, linking the reader to the wisdom of the past and the present and yet turning back upon itself to show the reader to himself in what he reads. Something of this way of reading Evagrius is already present in the vivid description of his work we have from the hand of the Nestorian Babai the Great:

---

[34] *PR*, immediately after Prologue, Sinkewicz, 2003, 97.

[35] *PR*, prologue 9, Sinkewicz, 2003, 96.

[36] For commentary and translation see Géhin/Guillaumont, Claire/Guillaumont Antoine, 1998; Sinkewicz, 2003.

> [Evagrius] does not write in a discursive or rhetorical manner but he cites each chapter in itself and for itself, condensing it, gathering it together, enclosing it, delimiting it in itself and for itself, with a profound and marvelous wisdom. Then he abandons the subject of this chapter, as though to rest himself in some other dwelling place, and he begins another subject, composing another chapter in the same way. He then returns to the first [idea, but] under another form. Then he leaves it in order to begin another one of them, then to return to the preceding one, treating sometimes divinity, sometimes creation and creatures, all in order to return again to providence. He … then once more returns to the first, turns himself back toward the last, in order to return to the intermediate, briefly, in a manner never the same and always different.[37]

The in-between or intermediate is where the margins join the center and the center the margins: to return always to the same place but never in the same way. Evagrius invented a new way of writing, but one profoundly in tune with the parables of Jesus, as well as the apophthegmatic tradition of Heraclitus, the dialogues of Plato and the layered biblical exegesis of Origen.

1.4 Gregory's life

Gregory of Nyssa was born in the same area as Evagrius into a distinguished family whose rank as landed elites made them eligible to assist the governor in provincial assemblies. The family estate was located in the coastal region of Pontus incorporated into Cappadocia from the time of Trajan. Gregory was probably born at the capital, Caesarea, in or around 335/336, though his birth is sometimes dated earlier between 331/40. The family background was distinguished, wealthy, and staunchly Christian. Yet, like Evagrius, he was a reluctant champion of the Christian faith and one who, on his own testimony, owed everything to a woman, his eldest sister, Macrina.[38]

Macrina was the eldest of ten children, born probably in 327, of a family that had been tested in the persecutions of Diocletian when her grandparents had fled for safety – before she was born – to the mountains of Pontus. Her maternal grandfather had lost his possessions and ultimately his life because of opposition to the emperor. Macrina's paternal grandmother was St. Macrina the Elder who had been converted to Christianity by the legendary St. Gregory Thaumatourgos, "Wonderworker", who, with his brother, Athenodore, had studied under Origen in

---

[37] Babai the Great (7th century), *Commentary*, Frankenberg, 46; trans. Harmless, 2004, 317.

[38] In the *VSM* and *DAR*. See also on Macrina, Elm, 1994; Albrecht, 1986; Wilson-Kastner, 1979, 105–18; generally, Clark (G.), 1993, 1995; Stewart, 1985; Brown, 1988; Cox Miller, 1983.

Caesarea in Palestine before coming to Neocaesarea in Pontus.[39] Something of the heritage of Origen was undoubtedly passed down from Macrina the Elder to her son, St. Basil the Elder (a rhetorician of distinction), to whom she taught the Christian faith using a creed that had been written by Gregory Thaumatourgos for the church at Neocaesarea. The family of Macrina, Basil the Great, and Gregory of Nyssa's parents – St. Basil the Elder and St. Emmelia – also probably had relatives among the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste since Emmelia built a tomb for their relics. Although their father died at a comparatively early age (in 340 when Macrina was only twelve years old and Gregory was between five and nine), the witness of his caring for the poor, hospitality, purity of life, generosity to the church and devotion to prayer was to live in his family and the lives of his children, particularly, Basil the Great.[40]

Of the ten children, five were boys and five girls. About the other sisters we know nothing. Of the boys, one we know nothing about, but three were to become bishops: Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Peter of Sebaste. Peter founded a monastery by Macrina's convent on the banks of the river Iris; Basil's monastery was probably located on the opposite bank. A fourth brother, Naucratius, at 21, rejected a career in rhetoric and withdrew to a remote location where he lived a life of prayer and poverty caring for the aged and the sick until he was accidentally killed while hunting for food for those in his care.[41] Gregory was, if anything, the most retiring of the four since if Basil and Peter were destined to found a monastic tradition and to be leaders of monastic communities, Gregory, like Evagrius, was a late developer. He remained unbaptized for many years and came to make a public profession of Christianity partly because of a dream in which the Martyrs of Sebaste beat him for his indifference. So he became a church reader, but his love of rhetoric got the better of him and he soon gave this up for the profession of rhetorician. There is good but disputed evidence to suggest that he married a certain Theosebeia at this time, who until her death remained his wife even after he became bishop, a practice definitively repudiated only later in the time of Justinian (527–65).[42]

---

[39] For this see Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, 6, 30; 7, 14; 7, 28, and Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of St. Gregory Thaumatourgos*, *PG* 46, 893–958.

[40] See, for example, *In laudem Basilii Magni*, *GP* 36, 505a, *In laudemn Fratris Basilii*, *PG* 46, 808b, and Aubineau, 1966, 37. For good accounts of the 3 Cappadocians and of Gregory of Nyssa see Meredith, 1995 and 1999; Kelly, 1977; for Basil see Fedwick, 1981; Rousseau, 1994; Harmless, 2004, 428–32. Among Basil's many achievements were his establishing hospitals for the poor and hospices for Christian pilgrims; a tour of monastic sites in Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt; the creation (together with Gregory Nazianzus) of the *Philokalia*, an ascetic anthology of texts from Origen; and the formation of the *Asceticon*, a collection of treatises proposing his own view of monasticism, a major section of which is called the *Long Rules*.

[41] *VSM*, *PG* 46, 968d; *GNO*/VIII/i/379–80; Corrigan, 1987, 9; Woods Callahan, 1967, 169.

[42] Gregory Nazianzus appears to refer to her in *Letter* 197 (Gallay, vol. 2, 164).

Amidst this constellation of "saints," we should also mention at least three of the family's friends: Evagrius and his father, no doubt; and Eustathius, from Armenia, another son of a Christian bishop, who began organizing ascetic communities sometime in the 330s and was reputed to be the real founder of monasticism in the region. Eustathius was later to become, in 356, bishop of Sebaste, and his emphasis on virginity and the founding of monasteries and hospices for the poor had a major influence upon Basil and Macrina who was the first in her own family – before Basil or Peter – to establish a monastic community in her own right. The third of the family's friends, best friend of Basil's student years, was Gregory Nazianzus, who was to become (if only for a short time) bishop of Constantinople and who, together with Basil and Gregory, and Athanasius in Egypt, would be the major defender of the Nicene faith and an independent theologian in his own right against the overwhelming power of the Arian heresy in the 4th century[43] (on which see below). A better connected family in so remote a part of the empire in the 4th century would be hard to find. But what it was actually like to live through those times we can experience from a different perspective in Gregory's slightly idealized, but touching portrait of his sister, Macrina, in the *VSM* that he devotes to her memory and the deathbed dialogue he preserves, or creates, *DAR*, in order to celebrate the power of her life, intellect and faith. But for these two works, Macrina's name, with her major contribution to the family and the development of monasticism, would have gone unrecorded.[44]

1.5 Origins of Basilian Monasticism

When Basil the Elder died unexpectedly in 340, Macrina, though only twelve years old, took over the running of the house. Although Basil does not speak of her (like his father, he died early at the height of his fame), Gregory, though only four years Macrina's junior, calls her teacher (*didaskalos*) and recounts that when Peter was born, Macrina personally took his education in hand and became everything for the child: "father, teacher, guide, mother."[45] Macrina evidently embodied the best of both male and female roles for the family; and this inclusive ideal was to have a definite significance for Gregory's anthropology, as we shall see. Her resolve had been demonstrated even before her father's death, after the unexpected death of a boy to whom she had been betrothed, according to the custom of the time; against her parents' wishes, something unique in early accounts of saints' lives, she decided to remain unmarried, never to separate from her mother, and to live the

---

[43] For Gregory Nazianzus see McGuckin, 2001; Meredith, 1995, 39–51.

[44] Basil acknowledges to his friend and mentor, Eustathius of Sebaste, the traditional character of the faith transmitted to him by other family members: "that I received from my blessed mother (Emmelia) and from my grandmother Macrina" (*Letter* 223).

[45] *VSM PG* 46, 972c; *GNO*/VIII/i/383, 21–2; Corrigan, 1987, 12; Woods Callahan, 1967, 172.

ascetic life.[46] She started to recite the psalms at appropriate times during the day, became skilled at the genteel task of spinning, and insisted upon performing the servile task of preparing bread for her mother, Emmelia, "with her own hands."[47] This is the girl who persuaded her mother to turn their home into a monastery at Annisa by the Iris (probably in 352): "to share a common life with all her maids, making them sisters and equals instead of slaves."[48] When her mother died in 370, Macrina gave all her possessions away.

In Macrina, therefore, we glimpse a force almost shocking for its own times once it reached into the ordinary lives of the Cappadocian gentry. Yet Macrina's actions reflect deeper currents throughout the Eastern and Western worlds that were already operative. Macrina was the impetus for the development of Basilian monasticism, which we could never have suspected, had Gregory not written the *VSM*. But the influence of Eustathius of Sebaste (mentioned above) upon both Basil and the family was also important, for Eustathius and other ascetic bishops had already founded monasteries and hospices for the poor in the region.[49] Nonetheless, we meet the living force an individual woman could exert upon complete families despite major social inequalities. Macrina also expresses in her own actions much broader social trends. Melania in Jerusalem exerted a similar influence upon Evagrius. Pachomius entrusted his sister with the direction of a convent sometime after 329.[50] According to Athanasius, the sister of Antony was in charge of a monastery in Egypt.[51] Even Antony was not the founder of Egyptian monasticism, as so often supposed, for Antony apprenticed himself at first to an old man who lived at the edge of the village and who had practiced "the solitary life … from his youth."[52] What Athanasius perhaps intimates is that Antony was the first to move into the desert: "There were not yet many monasteries in Egypt, and no monk knew at all the great desert, but each of those wishing to give attention to his life disciplined himself in isolation, not far from his own village."[53]

In fact, the problem of origins does not stop here, for the word "monk" (*monachos*) appears to predate or be roughly contemporary with Antony (if Antony was born in 251 and died in 356, as Athanasius claims), as a recently

---

[46] *VSM PG* 46, 964c ff.; Corrigan, 1987, 5–7; Woods Callahan, 1967, 966–8.

[47] *VSM PG* 46, 965a; *GNO*/VIII/i/376, 10–11; Corrigan, 1987, 6; Woods Callahan, 1967, 966–8; and on the importance of manual labor for Basil, *VSM* 965c and see Basil's *Longer Rules* 37.1.

[48] *VSM PG* 46, 965d; *GNO*/VII/i/378, 4–5; Corrigan, 1987, 7; Woods Callahan, 1967, 168.

[49] See Sozomen, *HE* 6, 34 (*PG* 67, 1397; *NPNF* 2, 2, 371); Basil of Caesarea, *Letter* 31 and 94.

[50] See Elm, 1994, 281; *Bohairic Life*, 27 (*CSCO* 89, 27; trans. Veilleux, *CS* 45, 30).

[51] See Laporte, 1982; Corrigan, 1987, note 5. Athanasius, *VA* (*PG* 26, 921); and generally Laporte, 1982, 77–81.

[52] *VA*, 3.

[53] *VA*, 3. 3; Gregg, 1980, 32.

discovered papyrus dated to June 324 indicates.[54] Athanasius' *VM* was published later, around 358. There is also a bigger problem: there are too many Antonies for us to determine which is which. As William Harmless puts it:

> And if one looks at the full range of desert literature, one finds many Antonies. There is the demon-wrestling anti-Arian Antony of the *Life*, the wise Abba Antony of the *Apophthegmata*, the hospitable Antony of the *Lausiac History*, and the Origenist Antony of the *Letters* – to name a few.[55]

So the origins of male monasticism are intensely problematic, quite apart from the vexed questions of which areas were really the first to establish monasteries, Syria, Egypt, Palestine, or Cappadocia; of the sheer diversity of ascetic lifestyles; and of whether monasticism may have come from outside Christianity, namely, in Judaism or Manicheanism, influenced by Mani's apparent conviction that he had to complete the unfinished work of other religious traditions, including Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Zoroastrianism. These are questions almost impossible to resolve, but I mention them to give a sense of the problem.[56]

The case of women's roles in monasticism is even more problematic, since their lives and deeds have generally been unreported. Of the 120 Abbas (fathers) listed in the *Apophthegmata*, there are only 3 *Ammas* (mothers): Theodora, Sarah, and Syncletica. Syncletica's *Life*, consisting of her eminently wise sayings (for someone who lived in a tomb outside Alexandria for 48 years!) was traditionally, and wrongly, attributed to Athanasius, who had long been dead by the 5th century.[57] Nonetheless, in a letter of Jerome – not always a reliable witness – we read that, in Rome around 350, a widow, Marcella, transformed her house into a convent; and similar things happened elsewhere, in Palestine, Spain, Gaul, Africa and Italy.[58] Indeed, Pachomius' sister, mentioned above, was sent to a group of ascetic women, and such groups – presumably in many different forms – already existed in and before the 330s. Women were already playing key roles and the origins of this trend, as of monasticism in all its diversity, are shrouded in mystery.[59]

In short, according to Gregory's testimony, Macrina was *the* major influence upon Basil's and his own life. Macrina straightens Basil out when he comes home from university believing he already knows everything: "so swiftly did she win him to the ideal of philosophy that he renounced worldly appearance … and went over of his own accord to the active life of manual labor, preparing for himself by means of his complete poverty a way of life which would tend without impediment

---

54 Judge, 1977, 72–89.

55 Harmless, 2004, 419.

56 See Harmless, 417–63.

57 Bongie, 1996.

58 See Maraval (introduction to the *VSM*) 1971, 53–4 note 3.

59 For a comprehensive account see Harmless, 2004, 417–69.

towards virtue."[60] Gregory's account is surely that of an eye-witness, a younger brother who cannot altogether mask his pleasure in seeing his older brother bested by his sister or refrain from spilling the "real goods" about the "great Basil" whose fame "eclipsed all those who were illustrious for virtue" and "would need a lengthy narrative and a lot of time to tell."[61]

Above all, Macrina exerted the greatest influence upon Gregory's own life. Basil pursued formal studies in Antioch and then Athens, where he met Gregory Nazianzus, then returned to Cappadocia to become a champion of the Nicene cause, publishing, first, a refutation of the work of a Neo-Arian, Eunomius of Cyzicus, and becoming, in turn, assistant to Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, in 365, and then finally, in 370, bishop of Caesarea himself. While Basil developed into a major forensic figure, Gregory apparently received no formal education, except for what he learned from Macrina and Basil, had no particular taste for the church and was even apparently indifferent to the family heritage as descendants of martyrs. One of the great mysteries of Gregory's life is how it was possible for someone brought up in such a staunchly Christian environment, an environment that actively disdained "profane learning" – as Macrina makes clear in the *VSM*, to obtain the profound education in both Scripture and the pagan classics that is evident on almost every page of Gregory's writings? And where did Macrina get such an education if the picture Gregory paints of her powerful command of pagan thought is true? The whole picture has been thought to be fictional, yet it remains – with all its inner tensions, for example, Christian versus pagan learning – throughout Gregory's works and there is no reason to dismiss it. With the other influences – tutors, visitors and others – that must have existed in such a house, Macrina transmitted to a very bright younger brother a profound, comprehensive grasp of both scripture and pagan learning. This boy wanted to think for himself and did not receive anything uncritically for he was someone capable of rebelling against the family legacy, of being irritated by Basil or the unconscious superiority of his eldest sister, but also of loving them despite those qualities. Gregory learned from Macrina, but he must also have resisted her, until finally through Macrina's influence, he withdrew from the world to pray and study at Basil's monastery, from which he was summoned, against his vigorous protests, by Basil to take up the tiny bishropic of Nyssa in about 370.

By temperament, Gregory was a gentle, retiring spirit who preferred study and reflection to the life of action in the often vicious arena of church politics. He was not only reluctant but hopelessly naïve, according to Basil,[62] and cast into a political net emphatically not of his own choosing. This was the struggle for control of Cappadocia. The emperor Valens, unlike his orthodox predecessor, Jovian, was a committed supporter of the anti-Nicene or Arian cause. In order to weaken Basil's authority at Caesarea, Valens divided the civil diocese of Cappadocia, reducing

[60] *VSM*, *PG* 46, 965b–c; *GNO*/VIII/i/377; Corrigan, 1987, 6–7; Woods Callahan, 1967, 167–8.

[61] Ibid.

[62] See Basil, *Letters* 58, 100, 215.

the number of sees under Basil's influence.[63] Basil responded by creating new sees, appointing Gregory to Nyssa and Gregory Nazianzus to Sasima. The Arian faction naturally challenged Gregory's ordination. Valens supported the challenge and dispatched his emissary, Demosthanes, to bring charges of embezzlement against Gregory. Valens prevailed and in 376, after six inglorious years of political turmoil, Gregory was banished to Seleucia for three years. Something of what this must have meant to him, together with its turbulent aftermath, Gregory tells his sister in the *Life*:

> And I told her all about the personal troubles I had, earlier when the emperor,Valens, had driven me into exile for the faith and later when confusion reigned in the churches and drew me into disputes and wearisome effort.[64]

But Macrina is not very sympathetic, although one might also argue that having effectively brought Gregory up, she might also be aware of what he needs to hear in the overall context of the family fortunes and his own earlier reluctance to assume any Basil-like responsibility:

> Will you not put an end … to your failure to recognize the good things which come from God? Will you not compare your lot with that of your parents? … Our father was well thought of in his day for his education … but his reputation only extended to the law-courts of his own land …. But you … are known in the cities … and the provinces. Churches … call upon you as ally and reformer, and you do not see the grace in this? Do you not realize the true cause of such great blessings, that our parents' prayers are lifting you on high, for you have little or no native capacity …?[65]

There are several ways to read this. Gregory is being self-deprecatory, while painting a picture of his sister's strength of character in which his own importance gets subtly undermined or underlined. Or we see something of the tension between family life and the urban political scene in the 4th century. Or, yet again, this is the way older sisters tend to put younger brothers straight when they can't see the wood for the trees and Gregory is honest enough to record it, with a hint perhaps of amusement together with a sense of her loss in a world of political sharks dressed in ecclesiastical garb: "While she was saying this, I kept wishing that the day could be lengthened so that she might not cease to delight our hearing; but the singing of the choir was calling us to the evening thanksgiving prayers, and the great Macrina sent me off to church too and withdrew herself to God in prayer."[66]

---

[63] See the account of Warren Smith, 2004, 6.

[64] *VSM*, *PG* 46, 981a–b; *GNO*/VIII/i/393–4; Corrigan, 1987, 20–21; Woods Callahan, 1967, 178.

[65] Ibid.

[66] *VSM PG* 46, 981c; *GNO*/VIII/i/395; Corrigan, 1987, 21; Woods Callahan, 1967, 178.

At any rate, in Gregory's account of his sister and teacher, there is something of the tension he must have felt himself – particularly after the deaths of his mother, then Basil, and Macrina – between the goodness of close family and the confusions of public affairs. The irony of Gregory's life by comparison with that of Evagrius may be this: while Evagrius seems to have had an urban sensibility, was gregarious by nature, but was forced by need and circumstances to live the solitary life, Gregory seems to have preferred the solitary life, but was compelled by family situation to become a major player on the urban-ecclesiastical political scene, yet to have felt no particular talent for it.

1.6 Messalianism: Gregory and Pseudo-Macarius

The connection between Gregory and Evagrius is perhaps stranger still, since Gregory was familiar with desert sensibility, particularly an extreme form known as Messalianism. Messalianism comes from the Syriac *mesalleyane* which meant "those who pray" (*euchites* in Greek) and refers to ascetics who insisted on praying to the exclusion of other practices such as manual labor and the sacraments. Gregory had written his *De Virginitate* to espouse a more moderate form of asceticism, open to rules of life such as those of Basil's monasticism. A Messalian-influenced series of writings known as the Macarian homilies, together with the Great Letter supposedly by Macarius, were attributed to Evagrius' teacher, St. Macarius of Egypt (c. 300-c. 390). However, it is generally agreed that the author of the Macarian writings was not Macarius, but a Syrian writing in Greek. As Columba Stewart has shown, the vocabulary and imagery of Pseudo-Macarius is Syrian and so the homilies are to be dated to the 380s and were probably written in Mesopotamia or Asia Minor.[67] The Homilies and Great Letter were never condemned as Messalian and so, whoever Pseudo-Macarius was (H. Dörries attributed authorship to a Symeon of Mesopotamia, a Messalian monk living in Northeast Syria in the 4th century),[68] he was more moderate than some of his brothers (the Pseudo-Macarian corpus is full of good sense which is probably why it survived), influenced perhaps by the views of Basil and Gregory against extreme, solitary forms of asceticism.

In the case of Macarius' *Great Letter*, there has been much dispute whether this is a copy of Gregory of Nyssa's *De Instituto Christiano* or a genuine writing, by either Pseudo-Macarius or a disciple, that Pseudo-Macarius asked Gregory to edit to give it a more philosophical, polished basis with less evidence of Messalianism. The first view, that it is a copy of Gregory's work, was argued by Werner Jaeger, but this has been substantially disputed by others[69] who argue that the *De Instituto Christiano* is a later attempt to translate Pseudo-Macarius' ideas into a literary, philosophical frame. Canévet has argued that on the basis of differences in

---

67 Stewart, 1991.

68 Dörries, 1978.

69 Jaeger, 1954; Staats, 1968; Canévet, 1969; Desprez, 1980.

vocabulary, exegesis of scriptural texts, and theology between the *De Instituto Christiano* and other works by Gregory, the best explanation is that Gregory reworked the Pseudo-Macarian original to make its ascetical-mystical teachings, which he personally admired, more attractive to a wider audience.[70] The question, if decidable at all, requires a broader comparison of all Gregory's works with the Pseudo-Macarian writings. For our purposes, a close connection with Gregory is not disputed, and the influence between Pseudo-Macarius and Gregory is, on some matters, probably mutual. In both, for instance, we find the following:

1. A spiritual exegesis along the lines of Origen
2. An insistence upon the development of the spiritual senses
3. A theological vision in which the human being is created in the image and likeness of God
4. The idea of continual growth in the spiritual life and life to come; infinite progress, tied to the incomprehensibility of God, on the one hand, and yet rendered accessible through grace, baptism of the Spirit, intimate union with Christ, on the other
5. The idea of the lived experience of the Holy Spirit in the transforming light of the risen Christ, which allows Christians to share Christ's transfiguring light on Mt. Tabor. The mystical darkness is absent in Pseudo-Macarius.[71]

So Gregory helped to reinterpret an ascetic desert tradition through Pseudo Macarius whereas Evagrius physically set out to live the desert life. Gregory buried Macrina in the chapel at Annesi and stepped out of the shadow of his older brother and sister into the spotlight of church affairs. As Basil had foreseen and Macrina observed, he started to become an eminent authority and teacher acknowledged far beyond Cappadocia. The people of Ibora in Pontus wanted him as bishop, but Gregory managed to avoid this responsibility and, instead, continued to develop the unfinished legacy of Basil. In his early work, *On Virginity*, he outlined a philosophical theology to support the ascetic life practised in Basil's monastery and codified in Basil's monastic rules. He took up the task of completing Basil's *Hexaemeron*, on the creation of the world and of humanity, especially, in two great works, *DHO* and *DAR*, and of continuing Basil's refutation of Eunomius of Cyzicus in the collection *CE*.[72] At the same time, he was called upon to reform the churches of Arabia, Babylon, and Jerusalem – to his dismay, since he often found them so corrupt that reformation seemed impossible. In the case of Jerusalem, he appears to have been so outraged by the exploitation of pilgrims that he denounced the moral dangers to which they were typically exposed – especially in the case of women. So Gregory saw at first hand the corruptibility of church institutions, but his influence, together with that of Gregory Nazianzus, continued to grow, for

---

70 See Wilmart, 1920, 361–77; Canévet, 1969, *REG* 404–23.

71 See the introduction in *Pseudo-Macarius*, Maloney, 1992, 7–11.

72 On Eunomius see Meredith, 1995, 63–6.

when Theodosius I summoned the great Council of Constantinople in 381 (the Council at which our present contemporary version of the Nicene Creed was finally established), the two Gregories were among the 150 bishops invited. Gregory of Nyssa brought an installment of his *CE* on the Trinity and the Incarnation that he first read to Gregory Nazianzus, Jerome, and others, and then to the assembled Council. So his influence at the Council, together with that of Gregory Nazianzus and Evagrius, was felt insofar as the Council altered the earlier Nicene Creed to follow the Cappadocian formula: "one substance (*ousia*) in three hypostases."[73] When the presiding bishop, Meletius of Antioch, died unexpectedly, Gregory Nazianzus was picked to succeed him, and Gregory of Nyssa delivered the funeral oration. So both Gregories, supported by Evagrius, played major roles in shaping the Orthodox, pro-Nicene interpretation of the Trinity.

After Constantinople, Gregory returned to the relative quiet of pastoral life in Nyssa, but was invited by Theodosius I to give funeral orations, first, in honor of the Emperor's wife, Aelia Flacilla, in 383, and of his daughter, Pulcheria, in 385. In 385, Gregory took up a new controversy stirred up by the writings of Apollinaris over the question of whether Christ possessed a fully human soul. Gregory's late writings on this matter have produced generally negative assessments in contemporary times, for he seems to start his reply to Apollinarius by dividing the natures in Christ, divine and human, but ends up uniting them so completely as to emphasize the single nature of Christ (that is, in the terminology of later debates, he starts life as a Nestorian but ends up as a Monophysite[74]). But the point to notice is this: Gregory, like Evagrius, is important to posterity not simply because of his political acumen or ecclesiastical activities, however significant his participation might have been, but because his writings transmitted a major creative legacy that underlies Church doctrine. Even here he is, like Evagrius, a child of his age and sometimes not so convincing as his friend Gregory Nazianzus and not as dynamic as his brother, Basil. Nonetheless, the cumulative effect of his major works was remarkable, particularly, of his greatest speculative works, *Cant* and the *VM*, probably written somewhere between the late 380s and his death around 395.[75] Unlike Macrina who apparently wrote nothing, there is no one to chronicle the passing of Gregory. Palladius can tell us of his master, Evagrius. All we have in Gregory's case are his works.[76] But his death is commemorated in the Western church on 9 March and in the Eastern on 10 January.

---

[73] See Basil, *Letters* 210, 52, 125, and 214. For Gregory see especially 3 major works, *CE*, *Letter* 38 (ascribed to Basil but now assigned to Gregory) and *AA*.

[74] According to Völker, 1955, 57, note 2; see also Bethune-Baker, 1903, 251 and Grillmeier, 1965, 367–77; and for comment, Meredith, 1999, 147, notes 40–45. In this, he resembles Evagrius who is thought to run the gauntlet of Nestorianism, on the one hand, and Monophysitism, on the other; see Refoulé, 1961, 253.

[75] At least, we may suppose that he was still living in 393 since Jerome mentions him as if he were still alive in *On Famous Men*, a work written in 393.

[76] For chronology of Gregory's works see Daniélou, 1966, 159–79; May, 1971, 51–67; Cortesi, 2000, 9–22.

Chapter 2
Christian Upheavals

2.1 Background to the Upheavals of the Third and Fourth Centuries: Arianism

Almost everything we think we know about the upheavals and debates/heresies of the third to the fourth centuries is disputed. Our data are often scanty or one-sided. Just ask: how do we know anything at all about the 4th century? The answer is that we put a picture together with difficulty from the documents that survive, from archaeological evidence, and from papyri fragments recently unearthed. Sometimes the archaeological evidence and papyri fragments contradict the usual picture we get from surviving documents; and, again, this reminds us that surviving documents tend to have been written by the people and groups who won out over the course of protracted debates and kept accounts of their winning record. Typically in such cases – as with Evagrius – the orthodox winners destroyed the documents of those they anathematized and so the losing positions get obliterated – except for echoes in the winning texts. This is not to impute bad motives to the preservers of official records, but only to recognize the limitations of human nature and frailties of recorded history. Even a major figure like Athanasius (c. 296–373), who has typically been regarded as the much-wronged champion of the Nicene cause and a Patriarch of Alexandria who spent 15 of his 45 year tenure in exile, accused by rival groups of so many things that he plainly was not responsible for – even such a figure has been charged recently, like Cyril of Alexandria after him, with having created an "ecclesiastical Mafia" and having been a slippery, gangster-like customer who always managed somehow to come up smelling like roses.[1] So nothing is quite as simple as it seems. With this in mind, let us try to give a provisional sketch as an answer to several questions: what were the major disputes of the 4th century? Who were the major players? How do Evagrius and Gregory fit into this sketch?

The major theological debate of the 4th century was the Arian controversy that started as a local debate about Christ's Godhead, but soon mushroomed into a much bigger struggle that included in the 360s the same problem in relation to the Holy Spirit.[2] The legacy of Origen of Alexandria was also part of this debate from the beginning. But later in the century and on into the 5th century, the Trinitarian debate became a Christological debate about the nature, or two natures, of Christ

---

[1] See Barnes, 1981, 230, and for defense see Arnold, 1991; see generally Harmless, 33–8, 44.

[2] In the subsequent section, I have consulted Hanson, 1988; Kopecek, 1979; Harmless, 2004; also Kelly, 1972; Williams, 2002.

and the related question whether Mary was the "Mother of God" (*Theotokos*) or "mother of the Man" (resolved at two ecumenical or world councils in the 5th century: Ephesus in 431 and Chalcedon in 451). These questions may seem arcane, but they go to the heart of Christianity: is Jesus God or man? If Jesus is God and the Father is also God, then how can Christians avoid polytheism: either two Gods, Father and Son, or three Gods, Father, Son and Spirit? So how is it possible, on the basis of all the scriptural evidence and with sound logic, to speak of God as both one and three without destroying Christian monotheism?

The 3rd century had produced three approaches to this question, two of which had been rejected and the third uneasily tolerated because of its authority. One was the *adoptionist* approach, associated with the bishop of Antioch, Paul of Samosata (in the 260s), according to which Jesus was not really God, but a "mere man" adopted as Son by God. The second was the *Sabellian* or *patripassianism* "Father-suffering" approach, associated with a Libyan teacher, Sabellius, who lived in Rome, and also connected with the name of Marcellus of Ancyra (d. 374), according to which the Father and the Son were identical so that it was actually the Father, as a "Son-Father" who had suffered and died on the cross. Both of these extremes were rejected as heresies. But there was a third much more subtle approach that gained wide acceptance, despite obvious problems associated with it, namely, Origen's view that Christ the Son was truly God, eternally begotten from the Father, but in some sense subordinated or derived from the Father. These *subordinationist* tendencies would have to be worked out somehow in the 4th century. Origen's influence cannot be overestimated, as we have already seen, not only upon Evagrius and intellectual circles in the desert, Athanasius himself, and even Antony, if the *Letters* ascribed to him are authentic, but also upon Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, and Ambrose. Sometime after 357, for instance, Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus had studied Origen and composed an ascetic anthology, the *Philokalia*, of texts from his works (*On First Principles* and *Against Celsus*) on a variety of topics, for example freedom; the nature of God and understanding of scripture, designed to show the usefulness of pagan wisdom for Christians. The effects of Origen's thought, particularly, his characteristic biblical exegesis, are to be found everywhere in Gregory of Nyssa's writings.

Enter a North African – possibly Libyan – presbyter, Arius, in 318. Arius was the respected pastor of a church near the Great Harbor of Alexandria, apparently a considerable biblical scholar with a gift for putting theology into little verse songs that could be sung by his congregation. Scholars have been able to reconstruct an outline of his theology from some surviving letters and fragments of a philosophical poem, *Thalia* (*Banquet*). Arius appears to have maintained the following:

1. Only the Father is God. Arius is the strongest monotheist, unwilling to ascribe divinity – even a derived divinity, as in Origen – to Christ. Any attribution of divinity to Christ, such as we find in passages of the New Testament, is unjustified or to be explained as improper use of language.

A fragment of *Thalia*[3] argues that "the Word is not true God (even if he is called God) but he is not true God: by sharing in grace (just as others do), he is God in name only."

2. Christ was created and *made* out of nothingness. If Christ is not true God, then he must have been created by God, not out of pre-existent matter (as Platonism supposed), but radically out of nothingness. Arius therefore appears to have rejected the subordinationist divinity and pre-existent matter view associated with Middle Platonist thinkers who held generally a two God theory in which the second God is derived from the First and remains a subordinate Deity. In a letter, Arius writes: "We are persecuted because we say 'the Son had a beginning, but God is without beginning.' This is really the cause of our persecution; and, likewise, because we say that he is from nothing."[4]
3. "There was a 'when' when the Son was not." Arius held that God is without beginning and that Christ, while created, was "not as one of the creatures" (see Hanson, *Search* 20); this seemed to commit him to the view that Christ was a kind of intermediate figure through whom, as in John's Gospel (1.3), all things were made. Christ therefore had some role in the creation of the universe and, while not without beginning, his createdness must mean that his beginning was before the beginning of the universe. So the 'when' when the Son was not was not a when in time: "God, being the cause of all things, is unbegun and altogether sole but the Son being begotten apart from time by the Father, and being created and found before ages, was not before his generation."[5]

It is not too fanciful to see in Arius' uncompromising monotheism and his denial of the divinity of Christ a strong challenge against the Platonizing of Christianity. Certainly, the Council of Nicaea several years later in 325 has been viewed in its response to Arius as a "crisis for early Christian Platonism."[6] If this challenge were to be overcome, it would require a complete rethinking about the unity of the Trinity, the person of Christ, and our humanity in that relation. At any rate, Arius clashed publicly with his bishop, Alexander of Alexandria, accusing him of believing in "two eternals." Alexander excommunicated and condemned him at a council of Egyptian bishops. Arius fled to Palestine, where he gained the support of two famous bishops, Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 264–339), known today for his famous *Church History*, and Eusebius of Nicomedia (who died in 341). Through them, Arius managed to drum up support so that a local squabble became an international debate dividing the Greek East.[7]

---

[3] Quoted in Athanasius, *Contra Arianos* 1.6 (*PG* 26, 24; trans. Hanson, 1988, 13).

[4] Arius, *Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia*, trans. Stevenson (*A New Eusebius*, ed. Frend, London: SPCK, 1987).

[5] Letter to Alexander of Alexandria, trans. Stevenson, *A New Eusebius*, 326.

[6] Ricken, 1969, 321–41; Louth, 1981, 76.

[7] Sozomen, *HE* 1.15; Harmless, 2004, 28.

The irony of this affair was that only five years earlier in 313, after Christianity had suffered prolonged persecutions, particularly under Diocletian (284–305), Constantine became emperor of the Western half of the Roman Empire (after defeating his rival, Maxentius, at the Milvian Bridge) and agreed with his Eastern co-emperor, Licinius, to put a formal end to the persecution of Christians. Peace should have followed, but instead the Church was hopelessly divided. Constantine's partnership with Licinius soon disintegrated and in September 324 he defeated Licinius on the Bosphorus and became the first sole Christian emperor. The very next year he summoned the Council of Nicaea, the first ecumenical or world council, and over 300 bishops from around the empire attended with the young Athanasius present as deacon and secretary of Alexander of Alexandria. Constantine was determined to overcome the squabbling and what finally emerged was the Nicene Creed that set out the one-in-beingness of Father and Son, left the Holy Spirit dangling, and concluded by anathematizing the positions of Arius.[8]

All but two bishops signed; the creed should have been definitive. Instead, Athanasius and his supporters were all in exile ten years after Nicaea, and Arian or anti-Nicene bishops such as Eusebius of Nicomedia had the ear of the emperor. Eusebius baptized Constantine on his deathbed in 337. Supporters of Arius flourished. In fact, between Nicaea in 325 and the Second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople in 381, there were so many councils that, according to pagan historian Ammianus Marcellinus, traveling bishops were clogging up the rapid transit system of the empire to which they had been given free access by the emperor;[9] and during this period at least twelve different creeds appeared.

So Nicaea did not resolve the issue, but it clarified the extremes that now tended to be rejected as formal positions, namely, the uncompromising monotheism of Arius that rejected Christ's divinity and the adoptionist view of Sabellius and Marcellus of Ancyra that saw the Father as the only real actor and effectively denied real independent existence to Son and Spirit. In particular, the term *homoousios* became troubling, according to the 5th-century church historian, Socrates,[10] probably because it did not explain what one-in-substance or being meant – parts of a single stuff or one-in-number, numerically identical, as in Sabellianism – and partly because it was not a scriptural, but a technical term of

---

[8] We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things, visible and invisible, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance (*ousia*) of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, one-in-being (*homoousios*) with the Father, through whom all things come into being … And in the Holy Spirit. But as for those who say, "There was 'when' he was not", and, "Before being born he was not", and that "he came into existence out of nothing", or who assert that the Son of God is of a different hypostasis or substance (*ousia*), or is subject to alteration or change – these the catholic and apostolic church anathematizes. For Greek text and analysis, see Kelly, 1972, and Hanson, 1988.

[9] *Res Gestae* 21, 16, 18; Loeb 2, 184; Harmless, 2004, 32.

[10] *HE* 1, 23; trans. *NPNF* 2, 2. 27.

the Valentinian Gnostics,[11] even perhaps derived from pagan philosophy, as in the terminology of Plotinus, Porphyry, and Iamblichus (where it is used – despite common belief to the contrary – of the unity of incorporeal substance) and even more, contextually (though, the term *homoousios* is never employed here) in the case of their intellectual triads, such as being-life-thought, that allow for a trinity of prominent and distinguished aspects within an overall unity of substance.[12] But the problem remained: how could non-scriptural pagan terminology end up formulating Christian orthodoxy?

Out of this context in the 350s there arose not so much neo-Arian positions as three different political-ecclesiastical groups opposed implicitly or explicitly to the Nicean formulation: the *Anomoians*, the *Homoiousians*, and the *Homoians*: *The Anomoians* held the Son was unlike (*anomoios*) the Father, "different-in-being" (*heteroousios*). The Father is the Unbegotten or Primal One. Champions of this view were Aetius (d. 367) and Eunomius of Cyzicus (d. 384), against whom both Basil and Gregory wrote refutations.

The Homoiousians held the Son was neither of the same substance as the Father (as in the Nicene Creed) nor of unlike substance (as with Aetius and Eunomius) but "like-in-substance or being." The leaders of this group, all bishops – Basil of Ancyra, Eustathius of Sebaste, Basil's mentor – accepted Christ's divinity but felt the Nicene *homoousios*/one-in-being formula blurred the distinction between Father and Son. They maintained that Father, Son, and Spirit were distinct, though unequal. Basil himself was associated with this group at a council held in 360 at Constantinople, but later broke with Eustathius in the early 370s, by which time Basil had become a committed Nicene and worked out a Trinitarian theology to include the Spirit whom Eustathius refused to call "God."

The Homoians, finally, held that Christ was only "like" (*homoios*) the Father, and they disliked applying Greek philosophical language of being (*ousia*) to relations within the Godhead. Consequently, they called Christ "our God" or "a second God" and the Father "the God of our God." Their leaders were Acacius of Caesarea (d. 364) and many other bishops with close ties to the imperial court.

For the next 25–30 years, under Constantius II (337–61), then with brief interruptions, first, of Julian the Apostate, a born-again pagan glad to exploit Christian disunity (361–63), of the Nicene Jovian (363–4), and then the anti-Nicene Valens (364–78), the Homoians seemed to be carrying the day until, after Basil's death, Theodosius, a pro-Nicene Spanish general, became emperor

---

[11] See, for example, Theodolus, *Excerpt* 42; Edwards, 2002, 44.

[12] Plotinus' usage, like that of the Gnostics, plainly envisages that the trace of divinity in soul implies a consubstantiality and kinship with the divine (*Ennead* IV, 7, 10, 19) or, against such a conception, in Iamblichus for instance, that there can only be consubstantiality of souls (*DM* 3, 21). So Edwards' assessment that "… no Platonist would have used the word 'consubstantial' (*homoousios*) to signify the unity of incorporeal natures" (Edwards, 2002, 5) is misleading. Porphyry's famous noetic triad, father (*pater*) – power (*dynamis*) – intellect (*nous*), is arguably an even closer consubstantial parallel.

(379–95) and called the Council of Constantinople that eventually became recognized as the second ecumenical or world Council after Nicaea. Here, under Gregory Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, and others (among them Theophilus and Evagrius), the divinity of the Spirit was included in Trinitarian doctrine. The Creed approved at Constantinople removed the anathemas of Arius' positions that had concluded the Nicene Creed and integrated the Spirit more fully into Trinitarian doctrine, asserting that the Spirit is "the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who together with the Father and Son is worshipped and glorified."[13]

On the surface, this Creed looks like complete success, but the reality was more complex. The Council adopted some of the terms espoused by Gregory Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa (especially the view of the former that Father, Son and Spirit as one in substance and glory must receive a single and undivided worship – *Oratio* 42, 15, *PG* 36, 476 – Creed: "Who is worshipped together with the Father and the Son). But while this Creed has typically been read through the lens of the Cappadocians as the vindication of Athanasius and his party in confessing the divinity of all three Persons, nonetheless, it looks like a compromise to get as many bishops as possible to sign, for it does not unambiguously give the title God to the Holy Spirit, nor does it explicitly make the Spirit *homoousios* with Father and Son, nor can it be said to give *equal worship* to the Spirit: The Spirit is – ambiguously – to be worshipped "together with" Father and Son. Gregory Nazianzus, plagued by political intrigues and illness, resigned his see of Constantinople and left long before the Council concluded its business. As McGuckin suggests in his magnificent biography,[14] one Gregory must have been mightily displeased with the other.

So what was really at stake here and how is a debate about the Trinity related to questions about mind, soul and body that will concern us in this book? Both questions can be answered together. If humanity is made in the image of God, then one's anthropology will necessarily reflect one's Trinitarian views and Christology, as became increasingly evident to both Gregories in their debates with Apollinarius after the Council of Constantinople. Basil had argued (in *Letter* 213) that concerning the Trinity both community of substance (*ousia*) and distinction of person (*hypostasis*) had to be maintained simultaneously, and he had applied

---

[13] See Kelly, 1972.

[14] McGuckin, 2001, p. 356: "Gregory of [Nazianzus] was surprised at how few were willing to sympathize with him. Again he covers over names of individuals with a discreet veil, but the references to men [in his *De Vita Sua*, vv. 1750–58, 1766–70], those who were pressured into agreement with the conciliar policies, and friends who begged him to be reasonable …, all point to a certain criticism of Gregory of Nyssa, who advocated the policy of the Council as a way of establishing the Nicene cause in the East. Gregory [Nazianzus] felt, on the contrary, that the theological policy was a mixing of "dung in the incense" and hostile to the faith evidenced at Nicaea."

a relation drawn from Aristotle's *Categories* to illustrate it (in *Letter* 236 – both letters were written in 375):

> The distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis* is the same as that between the general (*koinon*) and particular (*idion*); as for example between the animal and the particular man. Wherefore in the case of the Godhead we confess one substance, so as not to give a variant definition of existence, but we confess a particular *hypostasis* in order that our conception of Father, Son and Holy Spirit may be without confusion and clear.[15]

So the analogy between divinity and humanity via the categories of Aristotle helped to frame Basil's approach, together with the notion of an order within divinity, namely, the Son and Spirit have their being in some sense derived from the Father but without this diminishing their substantiality and Godhead.

Gregory Nazianzus, in his five *Theological Orations* delivered in 380 in the church of the Resurrection in Constantinople, takes Basil's notions of sharing a common nature and of derivation from a single source, illustrates his model by means of analogies of rivers, light, and the unity, yet self-relatedness of mental processes, like mind, word, and breath (*Theological Oration* 12.1) and, moving away from the idea of membership of a class, develops these into the less material notion of mutuality or relationship (in *Theological Oration* 5, section 14): "It is as though there were a single intermingling of light, which exists in three mutually connected suns;" and (in *Theological Oration* 3, section 17), in terms of a pure *relation* (*schesis*): "The Father is not the name either of a substance or of an action, but … of the relation, in which the Father stands to the Son and the Son to the Father." For Gregory, no image drawn from thought or materiality is proper to the Trinity, but the Trinity is progressively revealed throughout history: in the Old Testament, the Son's divinity is progressively revealed; and the revelation of the Spirit can only take place when the divinity of the Son has been properly established (*Theological Oration* 5). Gregory concludes passionately: "Thus do I stand on these issues. Thus may I ever stand, and all those I love; all of us able to worship the Father as God, the Son as God, the Holy Spirit as God: Three distinctions in person, and one Godhead undivided as is honor or glory or substance or dominion" (*Oratio* 31, 28; *PG* 36, 164). This was the issue for Gregory Nazianzus: progressive revelation and the Trinity are, of course, distinct, but for him the divinization of humanity was at stake. "The Spirit is not prayed to in the scriptural record, since it is in and through the Spirit that all prayer takes place."[16] Gregory could only watch the debates and inevitable compromises with dismay.

So we can see here that a major part of Gregory of Nyssa's thinking was developed out of his debates with the anti-Nicenes, particularly Eunomius, who rejected the consubstantiality of Son with the Father on the grounds that this

---

[15] Meredith, 1995, 105.

[16] McGuckin, 2001, 307.

contradicted the impassible substance of God. This heritage Gregory shared with Evagrius as we can see from the *LF*. So how is it possible to speak about or know God if the God we worship is really unknowable and all we can say is the Father is un-begotten? For Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, "unbegotten" is a negative term improperly predicated of God. While God's infinite and eternal substance is unknowable, nonetheless the Godhead is known through its self-revelation in its creative and redemptive activities. Therefore, positive terms – simple, good, light amongst others – are more indicative than negative terms of God's *ousia* without making God knowable or composite. Consequently, Basil, Gregory and Evagrius try to develop a language or grammar of speaking about God[17] in such a way as to take account of all the Scriptural evidence and to confront the real problems of language and thought in the face of such mysteries.

As a result, other pressing questions arise: how can humanity, so necessarily finite and limited, participate in an infinite and unknowable God, and what does this progressive participation mean in the very structure of humanity and in the ordinary lives of ordinary people? If the Trinity is impassible, that is if God is without experience of passion, how does this relate to the Incarnate Christ and the resurrected body in whose death and resurrection all of humanity is included? What is the relation between Christ's two natures and our humanity? And if God is passionless, how are human beings to become passionless and what role do our thoughts, emotions, feelings and passions play in this purification? Does feeling matter or have any spiritual meaning? What can it mean for human beings to be passionless? Is it an experience of loss and purgation or of community/relatedness?

Evagrius provides a desert ascetic answer to these questions and Gregory an equally ascetic, but ecclesiastical answer. For both, a negative purgation and yet a more positive purification, that is the purgation of passion and yet the development of love, entail a separation of soul/mind from body, in the precise focus of the wayward passions, and yet simultaneously a much closer union and integration of the two, both in the incarnate state and through the resurrected body. Not only does this result in classic new formulations of the mind/soul-body unity, but Gregory – in his Trinitarian (and Christological) thought – outlines an entirely new way of thinking about "humanity" and human individuals. Sometimes this gets both of them into problems of orthodoxy, as they develop a particular line of thought also to be found in Origen (on which see below), for both Evagrius and Gregory believe in the universal restoration of all creation to God: hell is not eternal and even the devil will be reconciled. This universalist view is only condemned later at the Synod of Constantinople in 543, but perhaps it helps to separate out Gregory of Nyssa from the association referred to as "the Cappadocian Fathers;" for on the basis of his *Theological Orations*, in particular, Gregory Nazianzus was known in the East as the "Theologian" and ranked together with Basil and John Chrysostom. As we have seen above, Gregory Nazianzus was an original thinker in his own right with a subtle rhetorical style, and a powerful symbolical imagination: "the greatest stylist of the

[17] Cf. Ayres, 2004, 14–15; 258–9.

patristic age."[18] Gregory of Nyssa's reputation as theologian was perhaps diminished for Byzantium later by his universalist view, yet this brings him closer to Evagrius and helps us avoid the mistake of lumping the Cappadocians into some monolithic trinity of the age. They were each innovative in their own ways and Evagrius was earlier more connected with Basil and Gregory Nazianzus than with Gregory of Nyssa.

Yet Evagrius and Gregory's lives and legacies bear comparison insofar as they sum up some of the major features of 4th-century life and because both develop in ways different from Basil or Gregory Nazianzus' highly subtle psychologies and anthropologies, Evagrius appearing as the founder of the 7 deadly sins tradition (in the form of eight reasonings) and as a genuine pioneer of practical cognitive psychology, as this book will argue, and Gregory developing from Basil's unfinished work a new scientific and integrative view of the soul-body relation. Both also transmit to posterity a major legacy of ascetic, speculative and mystical thought/theology, Evagrius' legacy being felt more directly in the works of John Cassian (died after 435) and Maximus the Confessor (7th century), and Gregory's influence appearing in the sacramental, ecclesiastical, and mystical theology of Pseudo-Dionysius (late 5th/early 6th century). However, the resonances between them are much stronger than commonly supposed, and the frequent contrast between a supposedly extreme ascetic, intellectualist Evagrius, on the one hand, and a more balanced, affective Gregory, on the other, is not warranted by the evidence.

2.2 Origenism, Hellenism, and Platonism

Finally, several interrelated issues require some comment since they have a bearing upon the ways we read Evagrius and Gregory: the figure of Origen, the question of Origenism, the problem of Platonism generally (Origen and the Cappadocians are commonly called Christian Platonists), and the central question of biblical exegesis.

Origen (185–254) has in modern times been blamed for the following series of failures (among others):[19]

1. For contaminating Christianity with Hellenism and Platonism (he has usually been identified as Origen the Platonist who studied with Plotinus under Ammonius Sacchas).
2. For a whole series of heretical views condemned in fifteen anathemas by the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 (from the pre-existence or souls, transmigration, to the restoration or *apokatastasis* of all created beings finally to God).
3. Finally, even in biblical exegesis for a Platonist-type elimination of the literal sense in favour of allegory.

---

[18] McGuckin, 2001, xxi.

[19] For Origen generally see Trigg, 1983; Crouzel, 1998; Edwards, 2002; and for a useful collection of his writings Trigg, 1998.

All these reproaches can be disputed.[20] While Platonic elements play a major role in Origen's writings, Origen is not a Platonist in any straightforward sense, but a Christian of powerful intellect capable of using a common intellectual and imagistic language in his own times, often with entirely different intent and meaning from either the supposed "Plato" of the dialogues or "Middle Platonists" (as a large, diverse group helpfully collected for us by John Dillon). Mark Edwards has cogently argued that if "Platonism" is given a set of doctrinal equivalents, Origen was generally thought to have entertained in late antiquity [viz., (1) Eternal Forms versus fleeting particulars; (2) the physical world, which has no temporal beginning, is created by a demiurgic intellect, namely, a second mind by participation in the Form of the God itself; (3) soul is captive of and should escape body; (4) transmigration of souls; and (5) allegorical interpretation, as in Neoplatonic interpretations of the often obscene myths of Hesiod and Homer displacing literal interpretation] – if these are hallmarks of Platonism, then Origen should be read as an anti-Platonist since he held none of them to be true.

Edwards insists that we read Origen in terms of Origen's own spirit of interpretation rather than from any preconceived notions of Platonism: (1) Origen doesn't believe *simply* in Platonic Forms; (2) his God is finite and reveals himself through the Logos; (3) pre-existence means only an instantaneous pre-existence in the hand of God before embodiment; (4) "he does not admit that souls pass from one body to another" but only "that our characters may become more bestial, or more angelic, as our souls descend or rise on the scale of virtue;"[21] and, finally, (5) Origen holds a threefold interpretation of scripture (body, soul, spirit) in which "the literal sense is purged, but not discarded when we detect the latent spirit, just as the body is purified but not lost on the final day when it becomes transparent to the inner man" (161). Edwards also argues that Origen the Platonist who studied with Plotinus under Ammonius Sacchas, according to Porphyry in the *Life of Plotinus*, is not the same Origen of Alexandria any more than his supposed teacher needs to be the same Ammonius.[22] Origens were common in Egypt, and Ammonii more common still.

Whether or not Edwards is right, he reminds us forcefully that we need to approach Origen with open minds and to question what we mean by "Platonism." Edwards brings Platonism down to a set of doctrinal constants, but we should remember that "Platonism" can mean many different things: yes, a set of doctrines – the tendency of most analytic philosophy in our own times, or the "unwritten teachings" of Plato, according to the modern Tűbingen school, or the "Old Academy," Middle Platonism, or Neoplatonism, or maybe just the "dialogues" read in as many diverse ways as there are interpreters. Or again, dialogues read

---

[20] For a history see Stewart, 2001, 177, note 20; cf. Refoulé, 1961, 261–2: "Origène est un auteur complexe, ou plus exactement il y a plusieurs Origènes".

[21] Edwards, 2002, 161.

[22] Ibid., 54–5.

with considerable freedom, dialogues in which "Plato" never appears – except for two references to himself, and in which everything is to be questioned (as in the *Seventh Letter*). This sort of "Plato" is perhaps what Alfred North Whitehead had in mind when he explained (in his major work *Process and Reality*) what he meant by his celebrated assessment that the European philosophical tradition was a series of footnotes to Plato; Whitehead excludes "the systematic scheme of thought which scholars have doubtfully extracted from Plato's writings" and instead sees Plato's heritage not as a thing or substance or conglomerate of ideas but rather as a reservoir of possibilities: "I allude to the wealth of general ideas scattered throughout them. His personal endowments … his inheritance of an intellectual tradition not yet stiffened by excessive systematization have made his writing *an inexhaustible mine of suggestion.*"[23]

I suggest that this is a useful way of understanding "Plato" or "Platonism" in the case of Origen and his successors, especially, Evagrius, Gregory of Nyssa, the Antony of the *Letters* and Ammonas, his disciple, some of whose letters we possess today. None of these figures (though they sometimes speak in quaint quasi-Platonic ways for example Antony: "brothers in your intellectual substance") – including the Cappadocians – are Platonists in the sense that they hold to a particular set of Platonic doctrines or a particular school. To call them Christian Platonists is misleading if not *false*, for it implies that their Christianity is adjectival to their real philosophical enterprise. They are not even "Platonist Christians" since this subject-attribute model does not describe the freedom of their enterprise or capture the many perspectives they bring simultaneously to any text. "The Good itself," "the beautiful itself" – phrases that occur very often in Gregory (as in Evagrius' *LF*) *do not mean* for Gregory what they meant for Plato, even if we could know what they meant for some originary "Plato" – and even then, could we know in any straightforward sense, when they come from the hand of someone who by his own admission in the *Seventh Letter* (if genuine) is aware of the problematic quality of expressing truth in any text?[24]

But can we really refuse to call them Platonist in some sense when anyone who reads Gregory will see Platonic elements everywhere and when the question of Platonism has been, in Gregory's case, a major part of scholarly enquiry in the past hundred years? Harold Cherniss, in *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa* (Berkeley, 1930), argued, against Karl Gronau's earlier (1914) view that Gregory relied upon the Stoic Posidonius,[25] that Gregory simply forced Platonism into a Christian mold to the detriment of both. By contrast, Jean Danielou, in his *Platonisme et theologie mystique* (Paris, 1944), argues effectively that Gregory's Platonism is no longer Platonic and that his mysticism has to be judged primarily on its Christian features, especially Gregory's theory of *epectasy*, that is of the soul continually being drawn

---

[23] *Process and Reality*, 63, my italics.

[24] *Seventh Letter* 344c–d.

[25] See also W. Jaeger, 1914; K. Reinhardt, "Poseidonios" (in Pauly-Wissova, *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, XLIII, 1953, 721 ff.).

out into God, a theory that has scriptural roots in St. Paul. Walther Völker, in *Gregor von Myssa als Mystiker* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlay, 1955), saw Gregory as someone who effectively transmitted the classical mystical tradition to Christianity; and Jaroslav Pelikan, in *Christianity and Classical Culture* (New Haven: Yale, 1993), thought that Gregory and the Cappadocians represented the culture of the 4th century precisely *because* they engaged with Hellenism. Werner Jaeger understood and appreciated, perhaps above all, Gregory's attempt to balance Greek educational formation (*paideia*) and Christian dogma, but even he thought that Gregory's use of Platonic notions and motifs in the soul's ascent to God was problematic and led to a kind of semi-Pelagianism (long before the actual debates between Pelagius of British origin and Augustine of North African) in his account, namely, a kind of middle-of-the-road view between the sufficiency of good works (Pelagius) and the priority of divine grace (Augustine), that is, asserting the priority of free will over grace, while acknowledging that this cannot happen without God's help (*Two Rediscovered Works*, Leiden: Brill, 1954, 85–99). What tends to lie behind negative assessments of Gregory's Platonism, even though this is not true of Jaeger, is the following series of interpretations: a) either Platonism actually gets in the way of true Christianity and, as with Origen, contaminates what should remain intact; or b) pagan thought generally is only a thin disguise for Gregory's real focus on Scripture (Dörrie); or, the opposite, c) Scriptural imagery and language are only a thin disguise for Gregory's real interests in classical philosophy and anthropology (Charamboulos, 1986, 261); or d) Gregory's thought is a syncretistic amalgam of ultimately incompatible elements (Cherniss).

One of the most famous exponents of some such strands of interpretation has been Anders Nygren,[26] who argued that Gregory is partially responsible for confusing the uniquely Christian notion of love or charity as *agape* with the pagan notion of love, desire or lust as *eros* (430–46). The two loves, in his view and that of others (for example Karl Barth), are mutually incompatible. This is simply untrue (as even a cursory glance at Plato's use of these terms will confirm), but the charge tends to stick and prevent further exploration. There is, however, a whole string of other important, (generally) positive works on Gregory's Platonism – such as A. H. Armstrong (*Dominican Studies*, 1968), John F. Callahan (Dumbarton Oaks Papers 12, 1958) and Charalambos Apostolopoulos (*Phaedo Christianus*, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1986); and Anthony Meredith, in *The Cappadocians* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, New York, 1995), has argued convincingly that while the Cappadocians moved in a 'platonic universe,'[27] what Platonism meant for them was something much more complex that included significant modifications.[28]

Despite the fact that 'modification' does not really do justice to the creative innovations of both Evagrius and Gregory, this is a balanced approach: to specify

---

[26] In *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip B. Watson, New York, 1969; for contrast Daniélou, 1953, 211–20.

[27] To use Brown's phrase, 1989, 300.

[28] Meredith, 1995, 124.

what one means by Platonism and then to accept a modified version perhaps. Nonetheless, terms like Hellenism and Platonism have unfortunately tended to restrict creativity, foster hostility, and prevent our reading texts freely, multi-dimensionally, and inter-textually. And the same tends to be true for Evagrius, except that his case is already prejudiced by apparently well-founded charges of Origenism. So let us go back to Origen for a moment to develop our view here on these questions.

What is characteristic of Origen is that he learned to read the Bible under a Jewish-Christian master as a multi-layered text "which, like the mind of the Creator, could embrace the thoughts of men without prejudice to its own authority, a book which therefore functioned at the same time as an incontestable document of history, an immutable guide to conduct and an inexhaustible reservoir of truth."[29] This is the legacy that gets passed on in part through Gregory Thaumaturgos to Evagrius and the Cappadocians. In Origen's *Philokalia*, excerpted by Basil and Gregory Nazianzus under Gregory Thaumaturgos' tutelage, Origen himself makes clear the openness and freedom with which, in the light of biblical revelation (like Philo and Clement before him), Christians can employ Greek philosophy for their own purposes:

> For this reason I would urge you also to appropriate from Greek philosophy such encyclical disciplines and preliminary studies as can be turned to a Christian purpose, and also those elements of astronomy and geometry that will be profitable for the exposition of the sacred writings …. Perhaps it is something of this kind that is hinted at obscurely when it is written in Exodus, in the person of God, that the children of Israel were told to beg vessels of silver and gold, together with garments, from their neighbours and fellow-sojourners, so that, having spoiled the Egyptians, they might have matter for the construction of the things that they were taking with them for the worship of God (*Origen. Philokalia*, 13, 1–2, J. A. Robinson).

The literal meanings – the "matter" – are not eclipsed; their destiny is to be transformed. This is not Platonism as a set of doctrines, but a playfully serious Christianity worthy of a playfully serious "Plato" who – according to the *Seventh Letter* – held that "barely when names, definitions, sights, perceptions have been rubbed against each other *in well-meaning refutations by means of questions and answers without envy*, – only then, do wisdom and intellect really shine out …" (344b). What could be more appropriate than to see "Plato" as a reservoir of possibilities through which notions, images can be tested and, if necessary, refuted precisely as paths toward a vision of something greater? Middle Platonic and Neoplatonic texts also fit this mould, especially Plotinus, who, according to Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*, "did not just speak straight out of … books, but took a distinctive personal line in his consideration" (14, 1–18). This broad view

[29] Edwards, 2002, 18.

of appropriation, internal and frequently implicit dialogue, opening up thought and ideas as windows upon a larger vision, and inbuilt refutation is the view we adopt in this book. Evagrius and Gregory, like Clement, Origen, and others, are not simply Platonists. Neither are they invariably anti-Platonists or Platonizing Christians. A deeper implicit dialogue with the dialogues of Plato and the doctrines ascribed or not to him can sometimes be detected within their works. Sometimes there are attempts to bridge the gaps between different forms of thought and lived experience – even incommensurable gaps. But, as in Origen's case, the terms used and thoughts expressed have already been so continually transformed into new usages that it makes little sense to restrict them to one meaning or absurd, non-intertextual context.

At the same time, the world is full of real factions and unpleasant factional discoveries. Jerome (347–420) had translated sermons of Origen into Latin earlier in his life when he was convinced that Origen was the Church's "greatest teacher" since the Apostles.[30] His view changed drastically as he came to see, especially in his translation/counter-translation battles with Rufinus (c. 345-c. 410), a long list of Origen's errors that also fit the Evagrius of the *KG* and perhaps more Evagrius than Origen. In a letter to Avitus, written in 410, Jerome itemizes the following errors: (1) Father, Son, and Spirit are unequal in majesty and power; (2) rational creatures, originally incorporeal, fell into bodies because of an original negligence; (3) rational creatures can change into one another, demons becoming human or angelic and humans or angels becoming demons; (4) bodies become more rarified as creatures ascend until they disappear into incorporeality altogether (a notion that denies any real resurrection of the body); (5) a plurality of worlds, some before and others after this present world; (6) hellfire is psychological, not physical; (7) a transmigration of souls; and (8) Christ will become a demon for the salvation of the demons.[31] Jerome admits not all of these things are said explicitly by Origen, but as Elizabeth Clark has shown,[32] what lies behind both Jerome and Rufinus, whom Jerome continued to call "grunting piggy" even after his death (see *Letter* 125, 18), are rival networks of allies, friends and patrons, who only exacerbate the emotional instability of the whole. The real target here, as Harmless suggests, was not so much Origen as desert Origenism, namely, "the bold speculative Origenism of Evagrius and his friends,"[33] which resulted after Evagrius' death in the persecution and banishment of his friends. Evagrius' strong espousal of prayer without images, supported by Theophilus, the bishop of Alexandria, in 389 (the year of Evagrius' death) in his annual letter that set the date for Easter and warned that an incorporeal God should not be conceived in anthropomorphic or

---

[30] Jerome, *Preface to the Book on Hebrew Names*, quoted by Rufinus, Apology against Jerome 2.19, *CCSL*, Turnholt, 20, 97.

[31] See Harmless, 2004, 363; Jerome, *Letter* 124, 1–16; see also on the influence of Origen – through Rufinus' translations – Evagrius and others, *Letter* 133, 3.

[32] *Origenist Controversy*, 1992, 11–42.

[33] Harmless, 2004, 363.

materialistic images, caused a furor among many of the monks, who conceived of God in very down-to-earth, anti-Origenistic terms. All these currents, ideas, and political complications brought about a major Origenistic controversy that led to attacks on Rufinus and Melania in Jerusalem, the Tall Brothers[34] (Dioscorus, Ammonius the Earless, Euthymius, and Eusebius) in Nitria, and the banishment of Palladius from Egypt – perhaps John Cassian with him. In short, the view I take here is not that heresies are unreal or that they do not have real effects but rather that many complicated factional elements go into their gradually becoming detected, labeled, and anathematized. So often, however, the complex strands of thought that go into the making of such normative entities as heresies remain entirely free of the later constructions imposed upon them, precisely because people are capable of thinking many different, and perhaps incompatible things in the space of a few eye-blinks, and perhaps also because creative thought thrives upon a universe of differences in order to express the unbearable simplicities of ordinary and not so ordinary things.

In the case of Evagrius, however, the situation is more urgent than with Gregory since the question of Origenism has come to define recent Evagrian scholarship. Gabriel Bunge has argued generally against the view that Evagrius can usefully be regarded as "Origenist" since he never mentions Origen by name, his work is not explicitly Origenist, he is never named as Origenist by his contemporaries, and the charges leveled against him later are either misunderstandings or directed against monks of the 6th century in whose world-view some Evagrian elements were incorporated (1986, 23–5). Antoine Guillaumont had established the connection between Evagrius' speculative metaphysics and the Origenist heresy, revealing a thinker who gave Origen's thought a bold and attractive form for subsequent monks (1962; cf. Refoulé, 1961; 1963). For Bunge, by contrast, the center of Evagrius' thought lies in his ascetical and exegetical writings and not in the *KG* (and *GL*) that were speculative musings on issues undefined by Church doctrine (1986, 24–5; O'Laughlin, 1992, 528–31). Evagrius therefore emerges, on this reading, as an orthodox Trinitarian theologian who deserves to be situated with the Cappadocian and other Nicene 4th-century writers, who used Origenist elements primarily for their anti-heretical value and who was involved in combating Eunomianism, Apollinarianism, Arianism, and also Gnosticism (Bunge, 1986, 45–7). One of the problems with this assessment, as Michael O'Laughlin has pointed out, apart from the fact that the absence of Origen's name and of strict adherence to Origenism are hardly decisive, is that the Christological passages in the earlier version of *KG* discovered by Guillaumont are quoted explicitly in the Fifth Ecumenical Council's condemnation of 553. Nonetheless, unorthodox elements are simply part and parcel of Patristic thought, especially in the case of Evagrius who seems to have been an open-ended and daring thinker working his way through problems and issues that were not officially decided matters (O'Laughlin, 1992, 532). To shift the focus decisively away from the *KG* is to obscure an important part of his thought in this

[34] So called because of their great height!

context (as Guillaumont has shown). The present work takes the view: that the term "Origenism" is not useful in clarifying this debate (with Bunge); that Origen is evidently important to Evagrius and Gregory, but the whole of Scripture and of ancient pagan thought (particularly Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus) are also part of the deep structure of Evagrius' complex adaptation of 4th-century Alexandrian and Cappadocian theology (in which he is explicitly orthodox on the question of the Trinity, as the *LF* shows) to the special requirements of a developing ascetic style of Christian life; and that in this adaptation for illiterate and literate alike, gnosis (that is both the accurate diagnosis of psychological health and pathologies and close attention to cosmological structures) became of crucial importance to combat other forms of gnosis, particularly Gnostic ones (either Arian-Gnostic fusion or the compelling Platonic/Biblical structures of the *Nag Hammadi* texts) and to present an antidote to the complacencies of ignorance and anti-intellectual forms of eremitical practice such as Messalianism.

Chapter 3
Mind, Soul, Body: an Overview of Evagrius' and Gregory's Thought

3.1 Opening up the Question: Ancient Terms, Contemporary Problems

What are the major features of Evagrius and Gregory's thought, and how can their views about mind, soul and body make sense to us? At the outset, we should keep in mind the diversity of different views in the ancient world. In the case of mind (Greek: *nous*; Latin: *animus*, *mens*, *intellectus*), this diversity includes a tradition ranging from Anaxagoras (Cosmic Mind as all things), Plato (mind as the highest function of soul), Aristotle and the Peripatetics (passive and active mind; Divine Mind or Unmoved Mover as pure energy/activity) to Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus (for whom mind is ultimately the Divine Intelligible world of which our minds and the material, sense world are images). In the case of soul (Greek: *psyche*; *anima* in Latin; the Latin words *anima/animus* are probably derived etymologically from the Greek *anemos* or wind), this diversity includes a complex tradition ranging from Homer (psyche is life-breath as well as the shade-soul in Hades), Heraclitus (psyche as a base for development and an inner landscape), Plato (soul is ultimately immaterial, simple and immortal, though also tripartite, sometimes bipartite and so on), Aristotle and the Peripatetics (soul is the form of the organic body) to the Christian Fathers (especially, Irenaeus, Clement and Origen), on the one hand, and to Plotinus (who held that part of the human soul remains in the spiritual world and is not fully descended into the body) and Iamblichus (who held that the soul is fully descended), on the other hand.

But this is only part of the picture, since the Biblical tradition is primary for Evagrius and Gregory. In one of his scholia on Proverbs, Evagrius gives 24 scriptural expressions for *nous* and 25 for *psyche* (Géhin, 1987, 317), which is a forceful reminder that the spoken and written biblical word not only signifies an inter-textual world of both sacred and pagan texts, but also hands on a compressed meditation from a desert father or mother to anyone who asks for a "word." In the case of many biblical terms for soul, body, mind, there is only a rough match with Hellenic counterparts: for example, *nephesh*: "soul", but sometimes throat,[1] stomach, seat of emotions, life-force, or self (though to use such a term as self is

[1] At least, in the older Hebrew strata. If we follow Onian's (1951) argument that the seat of thought in Homer is the *phrenes* which he identifies with the lungs, this would be similar to *nephesh*, that is the thinking organ is that which speaks.

anachronistic; closest Greek equivalent: *psyche*);[2] *Ruach*: "breath of life," "spirit," susceptible of both biological and spiritual energies (Greek: *pneuma*); *Basar*: "flesh" (closest Gr.: *sarx*), body as a whole (Gr.: *soma*), never corpse; *Qereb*: "the inner parts," "bowels," yet expressing spiritual and ethical impulses; *Leb*: "heart" (Gr.: *kardia*), not so much the pumping organ as the source of thought, will, decision, and the seat of wisdom – the whole person. In each case, these terms seem to refer to a single indivisible human being or to a part thereof, never to anything immaterial in itself, or to the life-force given by God, at least in the early period, but the picture is always more complex since this is a long tradition that ranges from the early Hebrew Bible through the Intertestamental period to Pauline and non-Pauline literature.

Many different viewpoints come together then for Evagrius' and Gregory's complex view of mind/soul/body, but most of them point to an integral self/soul/spirit that includes various psycho-somatic capacities or to the view that soul/mind is both an immaterial substance and the animating form or energy of a body, a kind of mixture of Platonic and Aristotelian perspectives. All of this creates problems for the contemporary reader.

The disappearance of the term "soul" in modern times, together with the rejection of traditional arguments that the soul is an immortal substance and the prevalent contemporary view that consciousness is wholly or significantly brain-dependent, can make Evagrius and Gregory difficult. The many different kinds of materialist, monist, double-aspect monist, or emergent property theories[3] available today may seem preferable to a tradition that is in part responsible – through its emphasis upon the nobility of autonomy – for many forms of discrimination and control (slavery, subjugation of women, exploitation of nature), a tradition that stigmatized disease and called chemical imbalances in the brain demonic visitations. In an evolutionary world, consciousness and personality are rooted in the brain and culture, not in some immaterial substance, and we can more economically identify mental states with brain states rather than suppose some mind-substance.

Is there any reply to this? A sustained reply is not possible but this is enough to open up the question. Whether or not a complete mapping of mental states onto brain states will ever be possible, evidence seems to favor a more holistic view of neuroscience that allows for both localization and holistic agency as well as for psychophysical interactionism (physical activity producing mental activity and vice-versa). What seems to be involved is not a closed brain-system so much as a mind-brain interrelation of enormous complexity. Such interrelation does not

---

[2] This depends, however, on the comparative time period. For a useful account, Cooper, 1989, 41–7.

[3] A useful resource is Paul Edwards, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 8 vols, New York, 1967. For a balanced introduction to the body-mind issue in philosophy that also includes a chapter on biblical anthropology, see Reichenback, 1983; and compare Cooper 1989; and for the whole range of ancient thought from Heraclitus to Galen, see Everson, ed., 1991.

rule out more traditional views any more than it decisively eliminates materialism, monism, or emergent property theories. The question is: which theory (some, all or none) makes better sense of the evidence? This question is very much open. Just because chemical imbalances can cause apparitions does not mean demonic experience is not real. And like us, Evagrius is thoroughly distrustful of apparitions, while taking demons seriously. Furthermore, whether the mind can continue to exist without brain functioning is something, not surprisingly, we have no hard evidence to support, but this does not mean it is impossible or that we are not composed of two, three or more elements: mind/soul-body, one or more of which might be capable of independent functioning. Difficulties may diminish somewhat if mind and body are not regarded as two "things" (as in Descartes),[4] and if instead we take psychic energy to be a major feature of the physical universe, of which physical energies, as we know them, are manifestations or traces, however unique, in determinate settings, whereas the nature of the universe as a whole remains a much more complex psycho-somatic nexus of prismatic relations. This view may be closer to the range of ancient thought from Plato to the 4th century than any modern mind-body division. Furthermore, if physical and psychic energies are so interwoven in the universe and organically matched to one another that we cannot tell which is which until we learn to read them holistically at the appropriate level of significance, such a view is different from modern dualistic thinking and closer to that of Gregory of Nyssa, as we shall see. We can at least then admit the openness of these questions. Let me first in this chapter give an overview of Evagrius and Gregory's thought, against the background of modern critical assessments. We can then go on to explore, first, the healthy functioning of mind-soul-body in Chapter 4 and, second, their pathologies in Chapters 5 and 6, namely, the deadly sins' tradition or, as Evagrius puts it, the " reasonings" (*logismoi*) that allow the passions to de-structure the healthy soul.

3.2 Critical Context: Evagrius and Gregory

Evagrius' metaphysics and mystical theology, together with his anthropology and view of the mind-soul-body relation, have proven problematic for modern readers (and ancient church authorities). Despite the more positive evaluations of some scholars such as Karl Rahner, John Eudes Bamberger, Antoine Guillaumont, Michael O'Laughlin, Gabriel Bunge, Columba Stewart and others,[5] the earlier negative assessments of Irenée Hausherr and especially Hans Urs von Balthasar

[4] Descartes, *Meditations*. See also Ryle, 1966, particularly what he calls "Descartes' myth," namely, the view that the university (such as Oxford University) is somehow taken to be more than the sum of its parts or colleges (13–25). This, for Ryle, is a category mistake that leads to the postulation of a ghostly thing – mind – lurking behind appearances – the ghost in the machine.

[5] See bibliography.

have continued to cast a large shadow. Von Balthasar concludes that Evagrius' mystical teaching stands closer to Buddhism than to Christianity. His guiding principle in "Metaphysik und Mystik des Evagrius Ponticus" is this: "we can be sure that when a particular idea is found in Evagrius, it is the conclusion of some basic principle that has been pushed fanatically to an extreme."[6] Accordingly, von Balthasar sees Evagrius' thought as "the loose, flowing and changing system of Origen" fanatically sacrificed "to an iron-clad system,"[7] one, moreover, in which "the corporal world and individuality" are "mere illusion," and the highest aim of life is knowledge. For von Balthasar, therefore, Evagrius makes a travesty of "the basic concepts of Christianity."[8] "Evagrius remains standing at the stage of world-denial, at the pre-Christian stage of thought".[9] The discovery of the earlier undoctored version of the *KG* (by Antoine Guillaumont) seems to support von Balthasar's view of a pre-Christian "heretical" Evagrius, despite Gabriele Bunge's defense of Evagrius' orthodoxy.

Furthermore, the cosmic metaphysics of the *KG* and Evagrius' supposed intellectualist view that at the summit of the mystical ascent, bodies disappear and the mind achieves or returns to its true nature (rather than going out of its mind as in affective mysticism) are problematic.[10] This view was later condemned by the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 and the Council's anathema 14 appears directed explicitly against it: "If anyone shall say that all rational beings will one day be united in one, when the hypostases as well as the numbers and the bodies shall have disappeared … moreover that in this pretended *apokatastasis*, spirits only will continue to exist, as it was in the feigned pre-existence, let him be anathema."[11] The problem is that Evagrius' view looks unattractive and esoteric. Even Bamberger, who is fair to Evagrius, notes the switch from Paul's use of the word (*kardia*) (in II Cor. 3.3.) to Evagrius' use of *nous* "to express his intellectualist emphasis, and his bias toward contemplation … For Evagrius man is not, essentially, a creature composed of body and soul, but a nous, that is, an intelligence whose proper activity is religious contemplation."[12] A further remark of Bamberger might suggest a way out of this dilemma: "it is rather in his speculations than in his observations that he is too absolute and extreme" (41, note 70). We can read Evagrius for his observations and forget about his cosmological speculations, but the difficulties remain.

The situation for Gregory is better, but problems here threaten the coherence of his thought. Generations of commentators have found his anthropology riddled with inconsistencies or, at least, with different perspectives, for example, human

---

6 Von Balthasar, 1939, 183.

7 Ibid., 183–4.

8 Ibid., 193.

9 Ibid., 195.

10 Cf. *KG* 1, 26; 1, 29; 1, 58; 2, 17; 2, 62; 3, 66' 3, 68; also *GL*, Frankenberg, 616–20 esp. 618, 27; Parmentier, lines 158–231.

11 Translation in Edwards, 2002, 4.

12 In Bamberger, 1971, *Pr.*, p. 53, note 7.

nature as a monadic entity found in all members of the species or as the totality of all human individuals, as Balás[13] has argued. The problem for some commentators is partly Gregory's own limitations,[14] partly natural difficulties inherent in applying tools drawn from the Greek intellectual tradition in service to Christianity, modifications of Origenist or Apollinarian theory, for instance.[15] The double creation theory in Origen[16] is similar in Gregory (and Evagrius) but with minor corrections that create, in Zachhuber's view, major problems: Gregory's originally created human nature, as a nature prior to individuality (and therefore prior even to Adam), cannot properly be said to "fall." "Consequently, the creation of sensible substance becomes an addition of sensible substance to that *physis*. At the same time, the providential act in Origen of providing human beings with a means of surviving within the physical world comes in Gregory's account very near to a punishment for a sin that has as yet not been committed, a punishment, moreover, that is likely to engender further trespasses."[17] So the question whether there is any defensible view of human nature in Gregory is pressing. Is human nature a sensible accretion, something apparently illusory, as in Evagrius, according to von Balthasar? Or is it complete in its creation by God *prior* to instantiation? How does gender division figure into the overall picture of God's providence? And how does this relate to what we human beings are now, between sensible and intelligible reality?

3.3 Introductory Overview

The Trinity – the triadic relation of community and individuality in unity – is definitive for understanding everything in Evagrius and Gregory. In his *LF* (written in Constantinople c. 379–80), Evagrius emphasizes (against Arius and with Athanasius, Basil and Gregory Nazianzus) the uncreated consubstantiality of the three Persons by contrast with the created realms of the intelligible (or spiritual) and physical worlds. What does this mean? Like Basil, Evagrius argues that the Trinity's simplicity cannot be grasped by qualitative reckoning or quantitative counting (therefore it is neither "like" nor "unlike" nor made up of material units). Instead, its unity is of its own kind, which means it cannot be grasped from outside its own nature,[18] but only pointed to by the meanings of scriptural words. With Origen, Evagrius calls the Trinity "henad and monad" and his cosmology has many

---

[13] Balás, 1966, 1976, 1979.

[14] See Cherniss 1930, 33.

[15] As Zachhuber, 2000, argues.

[16] A first creation of rational creatures before the fall and a providential second creation after the fall; cf. *De Principiis* II, 1.

[17] That is, according to Gregory's own argument against pre-existent souls, *DHO* 28, *PG* 44, 232b–c; Zachhuber, 2000, 173.

[18] See *Refl.* 18.

of the features of Origen's account. In the original creation, all rational spiritual beings (*logikoi*) were made equal as pure minds to know God as Trinity in what Evagrius calls "substantial knowledge." This may look like individual monads contemplating the big triadic Monad, but we can interpret it differently. Minds are essentially dialogical in that they are made to share in divine community and each other. This suggests, instead, an intimate, self-reflexive and dialogical model of mind, in which thought, at its best, is not really a function of one mind, but of all minds in God. It is therefore not "thought" in the way we tend to understand this today.

Because of the Fall – which occurs because of mind's misuse of freedom and lessening of contemplation (as opposed to Origen's "satiety" or Plotinus' "boredom") – inequality and the disintegration of mind's original unity take place, and mind falls through a thickening extension of itself into soul "attached" or "linked", s*yndedemenē* (*SE* 2.10.8; cf. 6.52.17–18) to a body. There is no reason this should involve literal pre-existence of the soul since Evagrius and Origen are aware that space and time cannot be strictly applied to meta-historical realities. Thus, angels, human beings, and demons come into being, to the measure of their forgetfulness or ignorance of God. All three have bodies adapted to their spiritual natures: angels have bodies of fire, relatively unthickened by matter and rational; human beings bodies of earth, moderately dominated by passion or desire and therefore thickened by earth in their descent; and demons, most immersed in matter, bodies of air, ice-cold since devoid of light and characterized by anger. As the *logikoi* fall, they assume soul and body, that is, they take on a movement into multiplicity that indicates the state or level of *nous* within them, which is also an aid to the recovery of that original contemplative union with God through Christ. Even evil human beings possess a "dense" or "thick" form of contemplation (*pacheia*). This does not help them have much insight into the real meanings of things (the *logoi* which Christ alone fully knows);[19] nonetheless, all can be helped

[19] What is *logos*/*logoi*? Evagrius and Gregory do not mean the abstract essences of things or little account-books explaining what things mean; *logoi* are the inner principles of things that really make them what they are and which we can grasp in definition (*logos*), express in word (*logos*). The beauty of the word is partly its versatility even in Heraclitus' day, but by the time of Evagrius and the Cappadocians, *logos* was a word that belonged as much to St. John, Philo, Clement, and Origen as it had done to Heraclitus, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics. However, it is this shared heritage, shared again with his teacher, Gregory of Nazianzus, that seems most important about Evagrius' usage. The Guillaumonts note, for instance, in *GN* 15 that the couple *logos/nomos* in that chapter is Stoic, but in fact it can also be found in Plotinus (*Ennead* III, 2, 4, 29) as well as Athenagoras (*Res*. 24, 77, 31), Clement and Origen (Young, 69, note 37). *Logoi*, for Evagrius, are, as Robin Darling Young puts it, "the ontological principles that form the reason and reasoning of created beings" (*JECS*, 9, 1, 2001, p. 60) or the forming-principles according to which they are made, immanent in them. Just as in Heraclitus and the Stoics, it is by virtue of logos that we can share understanding and not live entirely private, fragmented lives. For the Stoics, things grow by virtue of the *spermatic logos* germinating future development within them. So logos is a

by the influence of divine grace and by that of pure spirits to return to unity with the Trinity – not only angels and human beings, but also demons.[20]

This potential reintegration is so important that, unlike Clement for whom mind, not the body, is made in the image of the Trinity (*Strom*. 2.19.10.6), Evagrius seems to hold that in some sense the body too is included in the image of God:

> But the bond of peace (cf. Eph. 4.3) is to be sought … also in your body … your spirit (*pneuma*) and … your soul. When you unify the bond of your trinity by peace, then unified by the commandment of the divine Trinity, you will hear "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God (Matt. 5.9)." (*Eul*. 5–6)[21]

On the soul question, Evagrius makes the tripartite soul of Plato's *Republic* (*Phaedrus* and *Timaeus*) central to his psychology (Gregory too, but less so), though the human being can also be represented as a combination of *nous-psyche-soma* or *psyche-pneuma-soma/sarx* (as in *Eul.* 6) or the inner/outer man (as in Paul, Plato, Plotinus). In *Republic* 4, Socrates introduces the distinction of "parts," "forms," "kinds" of soul – the rational, spirited, desirous (*logistikon*, *thymos*, *epithymetikon*) – to explain psychological conflict or dividedness, to map out the different psychic drives and to indicate the need to integrate these drives in the just individual or city. For Evagrius, the monk's spiritual struggle is to overcome the passions of these parts and to establish the virtues/powers – or healthy conditioning – of the whole soul. The two lower parts, spirit and desire (*thymos/thymikon* and *epithymetikon/epithymia*; Evagrius often uses post-Aristotelian terms), are the passionate/passible part of the soul whereby the soul is joined to the body. The rational part as an extension of the fallen mind is the "impassible" or noble part, whereby the monk or nun can overcome passion and be reunited with substantial knowledge through Christ in contemplation of the Trinity. What this means we will examine in Chapter 4 and following.

---

seed principle actually in things that comes in higher-order development to be expressed as meaning, rationality, speech, and thus to share in the Divine Logos-Fire, Word, and so on, in Stoic thought (as well as in Philo, Origen, and later Patristic usage). As in Aristotle, *logos* as definition is thought's encounter with *logos* as a principle really active in the world; so too, in a different way, the *logos* is the word of God uttered from all eternity and to be found in all its manifestations ranging from word, meaning, inherent intelligibility, and expression to proportion, rationality, language and reasoning, for it is by virtue of the *logos* that we can speak or reason at all. For *logos* in late antiquity, see Corrigan, 2004, 112 ff. For *logos* in Evagrius, see Chapter 7, n.20, and in Gregory see Chapter 9. Generally, Fattal (ed.), 2003. For Heraclitus' usage see Guthrie, 1965, vol. 1.

[20] On the grand lines of Evagrius' metaphysics see Guillaumont, 1962, 37–9; also Bamberger, intro., 1968; McGinn, 1994, 144–57; Louth, 1981, 100–113. See also Chapter 7 below generally.

[21] Cf. *GL* 6, p.12, 193–8.

At first sight, this looks like an austere Origenist version of Platonism, but the picture is more subtle and many details never get noticed. Four details can be emphasized here. First, the tripartite division comes not from Plato, but from Evagrius' own teacher (perhaps Macarius or Gregory Nazianzus); the text where Evagrius makes this claim is demonstrably based on the Pseudo-Aristotelian treatise *VV*. Does this betray the generally uncritical attitude of Christian thinkers or does it only mean that a lot has happened in between Plato's *Republic* and the 4th century *CE* and that ideas do not belong to their supposed originators? I favor the latter view. Evagrius also attributes his ascetic and gnostic teaching to his desert Abbas and much of it must have been transmitted in this way (no matter where it might have come from). Second, an unnoticed detail must be addressed. Both Evagrius and Gregory use two versions of the tripartite soul: the *Republic*, book 4 model-reason-spirit-desire; and another version in which desire is the middle term-reason-spirit-desire. Is this sloppiness or significant? I think it must be significant, because, as I shall argue, it is part of a tradition of Plato-interpretation, hitherto uncovered (see Chapter 5). Third, if each soul-part possesses its own virtue/excellence that the monk develops, then Evagrius' notion of the healthy psyche/mind must include self-awareness, reflexivity and ordered feeling. The soul/mind is not an isolated object, but a subject recognizing itself in community – even in the desert. This is why the heart is important for Evagrius' notion of mind, despite the opposite impression sometimes given. Finally, while to be in body or linked to body is for Evagrius a troubling matter, it is nonetheless "through the body" that one "obtains impassibility of soul" and in this process the incarnate Christ is the model of the proper use of the "flesh" (cf. *AM* 21).

This overall understanding of the soul and body forms the basis for the broad distinction between practice and knowledge in the spiritual life and, specifically, for Evagrius' three progressive but interrelated ways: *praktikē*, *gnostikē* and *theologia*. *Praktikē* is the concern to purify the passionate part of the soul. For this one has to overcome the force of evil thought tendencies (*logismoi*) in the soul, to each of which there corresponds a demon. Evagrius identifies eight such thoughts in ascending order: gluttony, fornication, love of money, sadness, anger, listlessness (*akedia*), vainglory, pride (*PR* 6). Why this order? Gluttony, fornication and love of money probably map onto the desiring part of soul. Together with anger, they come from our animal nature (*Refl*. 40; *TH* 16). Sadness and anger, in turn, are pathologies of the spirited or irascible part. While listlessness or boredom embraces the whole soul, vainglory and pride may be pathologies of the rational part, though Evagrius does not say so precisely.[22] Sadness, vainglory and pride are said to come from our human nature; *akedia* from both our animal and human sides (*Refl*. 40).

We shall explore the significance of this order and try to determine why there are 8 (and not 7 as in the deadly sins tradition) in Chapter 5. But already in *praktikē*, knowledge is crucial to determine what actually happens in different

[22] The phrase "horse of vainglory" at *TH* 15 may suggest a different view.

temptations and to devise antidotes against each. So though physically isolated, one cannot live meaningfully in isolation from God or from the world-problem. Von Balthasar is therefore wrong to suppose that Evagrius holds a virulent form of Gnostic world-rejection. In *gnostikē*, the monk must uncover and contemplate the reasons (*logoi*) by which the Logos, Christ, has made the world – something like the genetic patterns and significances in bodies, times and worlds. Such natural (*physikē*) contemplation (or second natural contemplation) also reveals the incorporeal or intelligible world with its own *logoi* (first natural contemplation), whose significance must be understood. Thereby the monk comes to realize that the immaterial reality of the mind responds naturally to intelligible realities because it is made for communion with the immaterial Trinity in prayer or *theologia*, namely, the highest form of intimate knowing in which there is no more division.

Evagrius sees these different forms of knowledge as a kind of chain by which the monk or nun may ascend. Here one may get the impression of excessive schematization, as Evagrius' modern readers sometimes have. For example, the knowledge that discovers reasons in the material world is called knowledge, contemplation or reasons of the corporeal. Deeper understanding why the worlds and times are so and why God has assigned fallen minds to certain types of bodies is called contemplation or reasons of worlds and eons and contemplation of the judgment respectively. Since God has made such assignments mercifully as a means of return, this aspect is called contemplations or reasons of providence, and the discovery of the intelligible world and its *logoi* brings other levels of contemplation and so on up to the Trinity. Determining the right level of significance in life, as in scripture, is therefore crucial to the whole ascent, but for Evagrius this is no mechanical process. Three considerations may help to make this more concrete:

First, Christ (body and soul) is the leaven throughout the entire process in a sacramental way that goes beyond simple philosophical expression. Christ is a power, indwelling in the virtues themselves, against demons and a power against ignorance in the monk's mind as Logos or Wisdom. Evagrius sees *praktikē* and *gnostikē* as functions of the Eucharist: "Flesh of Christ, practical virtues; he who eats it will become impassible. Blood of Christ, contemplation of created things; he who drinks it will become wise by it" (*AM* 118–19). As soul is to body and *gnostikē* to *praktikē*, so is blood to Christ's flesh in the Eucharist and so too is the purified passible soul to the mind or rational part.

Second, Evagrius is a child of his own times. We know he was involved in combating the highly imaginative metaphysical and cosmological structures of Gnosticism, Arianism and Eunomianism. As part of the logic of thought and practice, therefore, he had to have a cogent *Christian* picture of such structures. Evagrius' cosmology/soteriology is accordingly restrained, even appropriate when put beside many less restrained details in Gnostic visions.

Third, Evagrius chose to live primarily in an oral culture and to put his literary, philosophical and theological gifts at the service of a living desert tradition that provided a series of "words" to his brothers and sisters that they could easily remember, upon which they could hang an understanding of the world and

which might nourish and keep them sane, *cognitive* beings in difficult, isolated circumstances where purely *affective* mysticism of a radical Messalian type could easily take hold. This cognitive emphasis, then, is more an achievement than a defect, and the steps or lists we find in the *KG* and elsewhere might better represent the necessity of scientific, repeatable, observational experiment in trying circumstances than arid intellectualism.

At first sight, Gregory looks so different from Evagrius. However, the same distinction, as in Evagrius, between Uncreated and created cuts across Gregory's Platonic "intelligible" and "sensible" worlds. God is intelligible, Uncreated Being, whereas angels are intelligible created beings. Human beings are poised in between intelligible realities and the material world, unified in a single human nature by virtue of the creation, but divided and fragmented by the Fall, in which they assume "tunics of skins" (Genesis) and "fleshly" existence (I Cor. 3.3; Heb 2.14). By these skins Gregory seems to mean not body as such, but a soul-body focus upon passion, in which the "Adversory" and his "legion" of demons (cf. Mark 5.9; 1.24; Luke. 8.30; 4.35) play a less elaborate role than in Evagrius.

Like Evagrius, Gregory develops his Trinitarian theology in the context of Origen, Athanasius, Basil and Gregory Nazianzus, in their ongoing dialogue with scriptural testimony and the Patristic philosophical tradition. What we find in Gregory – because of his long work against Eunomius and his other Trinitarian pieces – is a much more sustained development of Basil and Gregory Nazianzus' legacy than is possible in Evagrius' more limited letters and condensed apophthegms; and so his Trinitarian theology is more decisive for the rest of his thought, as we shall see in Chapter 8.

We may think of Gregory's writings as full of inconsistencies stemming from an uncritical adherence to his Platonic sources with their emphasis upon the primacy of soul as opposed to the Christian view of body as good and essentially connected to the soul, as some scholars have done. But this is not the only view we can adopt. Gregory is a multiperspectival thinker who maps out different views of the mind-soul-body relation depending on the way that relation is lived. This feature, almost entirely overlooked, is central to his thought. There is no single static soul-body relation. The relation is always perspectival and dynamic; freedom and morality are pivotal for the ways it can be lived.

From one perspective, the whole human being is made in the image of the Trinity – mind, soul and body (unlike Clement). Like Evagrius, there is an ambiguity. How can the corporeal be made in the image of the Incorporeal? By a kind of extension, the corporeal is drawn into the governing presence of the mind-soul so that in its form (*eidos*) it participates in its likeness to the archetype as an "image of the image" (cf. Origen and Plotinus). This is not derived from Plotinus' incorporeal view of lower matter[23] – which would be absurd – but a characterization of corporeal *form* itself, as we shall see.

[23] Cf. Bouteneff, 2000, 409–20.

From a slightly different perspective, the human person is constituted equally of both soul and body so that both have a single beginning in historical reality just as they do in the fore-knowledge of God. The body is not an afterthought, or inferior to the soul, but its expression, *logos*. From another perspective entirely, it is necessary to separate the soul from the body – not simply as body, for that does not belong in our power, but from attachment to passions (as in Evagrius, *PR* 52) insofar as these characterize desire as desire and not our true nature or the *logos* of our being. Are passion and the parts of the soul only external additions to our being, then? Yes and no. As passions, they are external (*DAR* 55d–6a). In themselves, they are neither good nor evil, but to the degree they oscillate between both, they are still outside the divine image (*DAR* 57c–d). On the other hand, these "motions," when steadfastly turned to the "better" (*DAR* 65d–8a), make a contribution to our real being. Our moral nature is the determining feature. From another perspective, even soul, not only body, can suffer a kind of death (as in Plato's *Phaedo* and *Ezekial* 18, 4 and 20). Yet, on the other hand, "the desire for the beautiful and the good is *equally consubstantial in both natures*, and the Master of the world has equally made both free of all necessity" (*De or. dom*. 4, *GNO* VII/ii/49, 15–20).

Finally, from another perspective, in the resurrection, while passion, death, sin and the coarse, potentially sinful functions of the body are eliminated, body is united integrally with soul, and it is not a different body, but the same body purified and "lighter." We shall examine these different perspectives in more detail in subsequent chapters. For the moment, we can observe that this elasticity of perspective allows Gregory to weave together a Christian scriptural view with sustained creative reflection upon everything useful in Greek philosophy. He can therefore speak across boundaries and show that the various sophisticated philosophies of the late ancient world are not self-sufficient. The logical outcome of Platonism is not more Platonism but Christianity. Gregory lets the reader decide. In addition, mind, soul and body are not, finally, discrete entities; they constitute a dynamic co-extensive continuum of different potential relations or configurations, a continuum in which it is not always easy to tell where one stops – if at all – and another starts.

Much of this bears comparison with Evagrius, and though Gregory is more eclectic than Evagrius, Gregory makes the tripartite soul central to his thought (especially in *DHO* and *DAR*), gives both versions of tripartition, as in Evagrius, and speaks of evil thoughts (*logismos*, *noēma*) in a similar way. This suggests a common heritage rather than the completely new usage in Evagrius that has been supposed.

Perhaps uncritically, Gregory regards the tripartite structure as equivalent to the Aristotelian sequence of soul-faculties (nutritive, sensitive, rational) and the Pauline schemata: body, soul, pneuma or spirit (*DAR* 145c–d) or heart (*kardia*), soul (*psyche*), mind (*dianoia*) (*DAR* 145d–8a) or, again, in terms of the carnal (*sarkinon*), natural-psychic (*psychikon*), spiritual (*pneumatikon*) human beings (*DAR* 148a). We shall decide if this identification is really uncritical in Chapter 5. For the present,

Gregory's view of body is similarly complex, and in the *DHO* (and elsewhere) he demonstrates considerable medical knowledge, following his brother's medical interests and Galen's mapping of the tripartite soul onto the body's three principal systems (after Hierophilus and Erisistratus): the brain and the nervous system; the heart and the arteries; the liver and the veins. In one of his notes on *Ecclesiastes* (72), Evagrius links *thymos* to the heart and desire (*epithymetikon*) to the flesh, a kind of scriptural counterpart to Gregory's medical analysis. In sum, Gregory allows simultaneously for a physiological basis for psychological functions, a localization of different psycho-somatic operations, and yet a holistic, non-local activity of mind-soul as a whole (as does Evagrius in a different way).

These triadic psychic structures also map onto Gregory's three ways. Like Origen, Gregory's three paths into the infinity of God's love are *ethikê*, *physikê*, *enoptikê* (respectively, the ways of ethics, of physical or natural contemplation, and of in-vision or insightfulness, that is, the mystical way), and they are linked, as in Origen, to stages of spiritual development, prefigured in the Scriptures, which pass through infancy (Proverbs), youth (Ecclesiastes), to maturity (Song of Songs).[24] For Origen, the soul is prepared, in the first way, by the practice of virtue for contemplation, and the power of contemplation is gradually developed in the second way to the point that soul's contemplation reaches full maturity in the third way. In Gregory, the soul successively enters light (*phôs*), cloud (*nephelê*), and darkness (*gnophos*):

> Moses' vision of god began with light; afterwards God conversed with him in a cloud. Then becoming higher and more perfect he saw God in darkness. (*Cant.* XI, 1000 d; *GNO*/VI/322)[25]

For Gregory (as for Evagrius), there is an active and a contemplative aspect to each moment of the soul's ascent, and in the first way this is a passage from darkness into light, followed by a truly contemplative or more attentive awareness of intelligible realities:

> … a closer awareness of hidden things (*prosechestera … katanoêsis*), which is a leading of the soul by the hand through appearances to the invisible nature, like a cloud casting all appearance into shadow. (1000d; *GNO*/VI/322, 15–18)

Whereas for Origen the soul enters into increasing light, for Gregory the soul travels deeper into darkness and, in some passages, light. Mystical darkness is important, but it can be overemphasized:[26] "she enters within the inner chambers of divine knowingness, where she is cut off on all sides by the divine darkness" (ibid.; *GNO*/VI/323, 3–4). So there is a slightly different emphasis in Gregory

---

[24] See further Chapter 10.

[25] Trans. Musurillo, 1962.

[26] See Chapter 10.6.

from that of Origen, one similar to Evagrius' "intellectual" mysticism or to his union of infinite *gnôsis* and infinite ignorance in *thêoria theologikê* (theological contemplation).[27]

These paths form chains or steps interwoven with iconic figures – Macrina, Moses, Solomon (or Gregory himself as the "lesser" interlocutor in the *DAR*) – who guide the reader to greater practical and mystical understanding. Gregory's favorite word *akolouthia*, sequence, emphasizes the importance of following out the logical chain of arguments or the physical sequence of causes or the meta-historical sequence of events (such as Christ's death as a sequence that leads by his resurrection to the indissoluble uniting of body and soul). In the *DAR*, the sequence of arguments and *dramatis personae* (Macrina and Gregory) permit us, from where we are, to enter into the mystery of soul, death and resurrection, very much in the manner of Plato's middle dialogues with their glittering and flawed figures and ladders of ascent (in the *Symposium*), and their chains of arguments, interludes and pauses (in the *Phaedo*). *Akolouthia* has a long prehistory in ancient thought, but its usage in Gregory assumes new scientific importance just as Evagrius' practice of chains provides compressed intertextual icons or mnemonic tokens of the blessed and the divine.

3.4 Conclusion

What then are some of the major features of mind-soul-body in the 4th century we need to keep in mind? First, unlike contemporary notions of mind, 4th-century mind includes ordered feeling (the heart (*kardia*) within mind) as part of its concrete activity. Evagrius has striking images for this: "knock on the door of Scripture with virtues for hands; then impassibility of heart will rise up for you and you will see a star-form mind in prayer" (*TH* 43, 5–7).[28] This is not navel-gazing. *Praktikē* opens the self up, beyond preference and passion, as we shall see in Chapter 4, to the reality of *all created things*. So if *praktikē* is the threshold of cognitive psychology, *gnostikē* is the method of empirical science, which anticipates what actually happened over a thousand years later in the most mystical of all traditions, the Franciscan, which gave birth to the beginnings of empirical science (in such thinkers as Grosseteste, Bacon and others).[29] Mind *includes* experience and feeling as fundamental to its proper function.

In addition, such a mind for Gregory and Evagrius is where material boundaries begin to disappear, and so the thought constitutive of mind is not just concept-thinking or chains of reasoning or something taking place only in my or your head,

---

[27] On the problem of knowledge or ignorance or both in Evagrius, see Chapter 9.4. Cf. *Refl.* 20 with 18.

[28] *Noun asteroeidê*, an epithet found only here, though *phôtoeidês* occurs in *KG* 5, 15 and *Refl.*25.

[29] See generally J. McEvoy, 1982; T. Crowley, 1950.

but an activity which is not really *in* my head at all, an activity "in between" minds, as it were, for this "in-betweenness" is constitutive of any genuine idea, thought, or understanding, in that it does not belong exclusively to any material formation, no matter how complex, but that it be a *participation* in something bigger than its own formation.[30] Gregory's theory of participation is not fully comprehensible if we don't recognize this radically different meaning of *nous*. And Evagrius' theory of *noêmata* and concept-less prayer (see Chapters 5 and 7) follows from this.

These multiperspectival approaches of Evagrius and Gregory, introduced here, are striking. Body is co-extensive with soul, in the sense that as a form (upheld by mind-soul) in Gregory and as indispensable means of purification in Evagrius, it has an implicitly intelligible nature (see Chapters 7 and 8), on the one hand; as the locus of passions, on the other, together with the soul's passible parts, namely, a soul-body focus exclusively upon self-gratification/pleasure, even the soul, that is the principle of life, may be capable of experiencing a sort of death insofar as it becomes completely entrapped by its own web of desire. But for one who wears the monk's goatskin mantel, the "death of Christ" is the "muzzling of the irrational passions of the body and the vice of the soul" (Evagrius, *PR* Prol.6) or the "*nekrosis*" of the sinful flesh (Gregory, *VM* II 187; *PG* 44 385d; *GNO*/VII/i/97, 4–5). For this, one has to "separate" the soul from the "body" or "flesh," that is, from attachment to passion. The significance of the separation motif, a motif both Platonic and scriptural, has been lost in modern scholarship which mistakenly regards it as Platonic dualism. Separation of soul from its uncritical slumber in the body, however, is *the* precondition for authentic integral relation or, in Christian terms, for intelligent incarnational living. This hybrid biblical usage of the separation motif is also fundamental for the monastic and desert traditions, as one can see in the Rules of Basil or the letters of Antony and Ammonas. Modern assessments of an antithetical difference between Biblical, Intertestamental, Pauline and non-Pauline literature, on the one hand, and Hellenistic philosophy, on the other, do not reflect the practices of either the Cappadocians or the desert tradition. And generally, since mind and soul have biological functions, while bodily organs are also bases for higher conscious capacities in Evagrius and Gregory, the widespread modern view of an incarnational biblical anthropology opposed to a dualist otherworldly Hellenism is profoundly misguided.

Consequently, there is no single soul-body relation, but many possibilities of different lived relations nestled distressingly, and often unconsciously, in a nexus of possible moralities or the lack of them. This nexus, mostly overlooked by modern scholarship, is a striking feature of Plato's *Republic* (and the five ways of living the soul-body relation, psychologically and sociologically: aristocratic, timocratic, oligarchic, democratic, tyrannic) and of Plato's different and conflicting accounts of the tripartite, bipartite or simple soul in the *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Phaedrus*, *Timaeus* and *Laws*. It is also a feature of Plotinus' view of the soul-body relation,

[30] For "in-betweenness" in Gregory and living at the boundaries of human nature (*methorios*) see Daniélou, 1961, 161–87.

essential for understanding Gregory, as we shall see, which already, according to one contemporary scholar, breaks the opposition between the Platonic "dualistic" polarities of soul and body and the entelechism of Aristotle by developing new ways of integrating both.[31]

Finally, there is pronounced interest in the medical structures of the body and in the question how the mind-soul maps onto those structures (in Gregory especially). In a discussion of how we are to understand the physical interrelation between body and mind (*DHO*), Gregory insists upon a physical basis for thought as well as upon the obvious facts of experience, namely, that the discursive faculty of soul (*to dianoêtikon*) is often disturbed by the greater power of passion or that reasoning gets blunted "from its natural activity" because of some bodily condition (*DHO*, *PG* 44, 156c–7c); but he also argues that bottom-up causality of this kind is no proof that the "ruling principle" (*to hêgemonikon*) has to be entirely localized in the heart, liver, or head even if Scripture might seem to favor the heart (160d). Rather, we should ascribe these physical or psycho-physical affections to "the qualified conditions of bodies" and consider that "mind (*nous*) is in equally honorable relationship with each of the (bodily) parts according to the *logos* of the mixture that cannot be put into words" (160d). Grief and laughter have a physical basis made possible by the particular structures and qualities of physical organs, but *nous* should be free to animate the whole body and is, therefore, not really localizable at all. *Nous*, or soul in this focus, is not a body or part of a body, or even seated primarily in one organ of the body, but omnipresent so that *all parts of the body* are given equal "honor;" thus, it remains immaterial, but intimately present to the whole body. Despite Stoic-sounding language like *to hegemonikon* (the ruling principle), the thought is in tune with Plotinus' view of *nous*,[32] and we find a similar view of the concrete omnipresence of soul/*nous* in the writings of Evagrius, earlier in the *Letters* associated with Antony (and probably in fact by him) and later in the early writings of Augustine.[33] So Gregory's medical interests, influenced by Galen and Basil, build upon the discovery of the nerves and the function of blood in the body as a basis for higher order activity, and allow for psychic brain, heart and liver localization, without doing away with the holistic, functionally integral, mind-soul activity itself. As we shall see, this is compatible with an instrumentalist theory of mind that should not be regarded uncritically as equivalent to a Cartesian "ghost-in-the-machine" view. 4th-century views belong to their own time even if we cannot separate them entirely from our contemporary stories.

---

[31] Igal, 1979, 315–46. On Gregory's knowledge of Plotinus, see Aubineau, 1966; Daniélou, 1967; Meredith, 1982, 120–26; Rist, 1981, 216–18; for a more general comparison between Gregory and Plato, Plotinus, and Porphyry on the soul and anthropology, Pochoshajew, 2004, esp. 83–220; and E. Peroli, 1993, 157–221 (with the emphasis on Porphyry).

[32] See *Enneads* VI, 4–5, IV, 1, 2, 3–4 and I, 1; also Porphyry, 261F, Smith.

[33] For Antony, see Rubensen, 1995; Augustine, *On the Immortality of the Soul*, 15–16 and Corrigan, 2006, 59–80.

This page has been left blank intentionally

Chapter 4
The Meaning and Scope of Impassibility or Purity of Heart in Evagrius and Gregory

4.1 Introduction

We shall examine soul's positive functioning in this chapter and its pathologies in the next. What does it mean for soul to be healthy? And how does health make the soul expand? According to Evagrius, "impassibility" or freedom from passion is the soul's health (*PR* 56). According to Gregory, philosophy is the medicinal art of the soul (*DV PG* 46 408b; *GNO*/VIII/i/335, 15), and we need diverse therapeutic methods because there are so many kinds of psychic illness (*CL PG* 45 224a–225b; *GNO*/III/v/1–2). Are these different approaches? Evagrius appears to hang everything on the monk being free from emotions. Gregory espouses different paths under the rubric of philosophy or the love and practice of wisdom. This fits with much contemporary judgment. For von Balthasar, as we have seen, Evagrian anchoreticism involves extreme withdrawal from the world. For Rowan Williams, this involves "extirpation" or the "reduction of the human subject." For Daniélou, Gregory's use of *apatheia* is positive by contrast with its negative meaning in Evagrius and the hesychasts, where *apatheia* signifies, as in Plotinus apparently, the negative elimination of impurity or *ataraxia* (lack of disturbance). Accordingly, scholars trace *apatheia* primarily to the Stoics, contrast it strongly with John Cassian's translation into Latin as *puritas cordis* (purity of heart), and give it primary significance in Clement of Alexandria and Evagrius by contrast with its minor importance in the Cappadocian fathers. These problems are compounded by modern usage. The very idea of not being affected by anything as a spiritual ideal does not sound promising. Is *apatheia* a *lack* of feeling (as the alpha privative: *a-patheia* might suggest), like modern "apathy," or a spiritual invulnerability we might today associate with something removed from ordinary experience?

One answer to these problems is that for Evagrius and Gregory impassibility is a positive path of love, or purified feeling, rightly translated "purity of heart" from Evagrius by John Cassian. For Evagrius in the desert, freedom from destructive passions is crucial. Gregory agrees, but he has other ways of laying out the path of Christian life for city and desert dwellers alike. So where Evagrius places *apatheia* in a progression or chain of virtues, starting from faith, fear of God, observance of the commandments, *praktikē* (the ascetic life), impassibility and ending in love (*PR* 81), Gregory can omit impassibility from some of his own progressions (*De Instituto Christiano*, for instance, *GNO*/VIII/i/77, 15–78, 21: simplicity, obedience, faith, hope, justice, service, humility, gentleness, grace, love

and prayer). Nonetheless, when Gregory asks how does one "remake one's heart," his reply includes, along with grace, Christ, and the sacraments, an unpacking of the indwelling image of God in us: body and soul, namely, our self-governing incorporeal mind to which the structure of the body is conformed, and our capacity for virtue or healthy functioning: justice, purity, blessedness, goodness, impassibility and love,[1] together with our knowledge of the truth given to us as a saving medicine (*pharmakon*) by God. In this broader context of progression or deepening of the healthy functioning of the soul, let us briefly examine the history of *apatheia*, then outline Evagrius' and Gregory's positions, and finally get a more concrete understanding of the healthy soul's expansion.

4.2 *Apatheia*: the Broader Background

Apatheia is usually traced, in the first instance, to the Stoics, where it had a long history from the pitiless impassibility of the Stoic sage (or *spoudaios*) in Zeno of Citium, to the more moderate ideal in later Stoicism, for instance, in Seneca who rejects pity as a passion, but allows the sage "in a more honorable way" to "show mercy, be considerate and rectify."[2] So impassibility does not mean insensibility or callousness and can include mercy and gentleness. Jerome (in his letter to Ctesiphon and in the prologue to his work against the Pelagians, in 414 and 415 respectively) brands the doctrine of "impassibility and nonsinfulness" part of the heresies of Pythagoras and Zeno taken up by Origen and his disciples (Evagrius included), and thinks it impossible to free a human being completely from the passions. But *apatheia* was early applied to Christ by Ignatius of Antioch[3] and Athanasius.[4] Origen speaks sparingly of *apatheia*[5] while Clement of Alexandria makes it the cornerstone of his ascetical theology. For Clement, while *apatheia* does not extinguish all emotion, it rather brings about "the full possession, under the influence of divine contemplation, of the affective faculties, so that disordered passions are resolved into a state of abiding calm," which, in Bamberger's view, is

---

[1] Gregory does not distinguish, as other Patristic authors do (for example, Irenaeus) between God's image in us as created and God's likeness that is our ultimate assimilation to God in Christ. On the image of God see Warren, Smith, 2004, 22–7; Hart, 2003, 111–32.

[2] *SVF* III, 453; cf. III, 452, 443, I, 54a, e and f. The Stoics distinguished between passionlessness and apathy as insensibility: "they say that the wise man is passionless (*apathê*) because he is not liable to fall into such passion. But they add that in another sense the term 'apathy' is applied to the inferior person, when it amounts to saying that he is callous and relentless" *SVF* III, 448.

[3] Kleist, *ACW* 1, 1946, 63 (bibliography (3) Clement).

[4] Newman, Oxford, 1877, 449 (bibliography (3) Athanasius). See also *Lexicon Athanasianum*, Berlin, 1952, 107–8.

[5] Cf. Bouyer, 1963, 297–8; for Antony, Meyer, 1950, 77; for the biblical basis of *apatheia*, Rousseau, 1958, 40–41.

an exaggeration of man's achievement in this area.[6] Just as Christ was "the teacher and model of perfect *apatheia*," so must the Christian who wishes to be a "friend of God" endeavor to become *apathês* like him.[7]

So, in their use of the term *apatheia*, Evagrius and Gregory are going back to Clement and Ignatius (and Basil),[8] as well as to Stoic usage, but the story of *apatheia* goes back to Plato and Aristotle, whose considerations of this question, together with Plotinus' analysis much later, are decisive for subsequent meanings of the term.

4.2.1 Plato

The Stoic sage is modeled, in part, upon the figure of Socrates, especially the Socrates of the *Phaedo* who looks upon death with calm imperturbability, giving expression to a theory of virtues that matches the dialogue's dramatic presentation of his own person. Socrates argues that virtue in the sense of real wisdom cannot be a mere exchange of "pleasures for pleasures, pains for pains and fears for fears," as if virtue were to be generated out of its opposite (68e–9c). The presence of real courage, moderation and other qualities in the soul is a form of *katharsis*, purgation and purification, which cannot be *caused* by their opposites, but which constitutes a self-dependent dimension of human life, represented by Socrates himself. What is this dimension? In the *Phaedo* and other dialogues, it is the life of the soul, that is, the soul separable from the passions even in the muddied business of embodied existence. In discussing pleasures and pains later in the *Philebus*, Socrates broaches the possibility of an impassible life for the soul alone in embodied existence. Yes, the soul herself is the battlefield of expectations and fears (*Phil*. 32 b ff.), but is there perhaps another state (*diathesis*), since there is "nothing to prevent [someone] living the life of wisdom in this way" (32e–3b)? Such lives would be "the most divine," Socrates then argues (33b–c), involving forgetfulness of bodily passions (cf. 34b) or the "extinguishing *pathêmata* (affections) in the body before they reach the soul, leaving the soul unaffected … by the vibrations of the body" (33d–4a).

4.2.2 Aristotle

Aristotle develops this notion significantly. For Aristotle, we must distinguish what we mean when we apply predicates to bodily or body-soul compounds and to soul or else run the risk of saying the soul blushes or turns pale (*De Anima* 408b 11–15). Undergoing an affection can mean different things. Normally, we speak of qualitative change, but in the case of thought or contemplation this is "either not qualitative change (*alloiôsis*) or a different kind of qualitative change" (*De*

---

[6] Bamberger, 1981, lxxxiii–iv; see also Lorie, 1955, 123–4, discussion of Clement, *Stromata* VI, 9, 71–2.

[7] *Stromata* VI, 9, 71, 2–76, 2; cf. Lilla, 1971, 111; Clark, 1977, 31.

[8] See Longer Rule 17, Holmes, 2000, 248 ff.

Anima 417b2–9), presumably associated rather with Aristotle's notion of activity (*energeia*). So if anything is going to be impassible, then it will be thought (*noêsis*, the activity of a *nous*) that has a kind of doubleness to it: on the one hand, active and impassible; on the other, receptive or "capable of receiving the form of an object" (429a 15–18; 430a 14–19). These *De Anima* chapters have been interpreted very differently in antiquity and later.[9] But Aristotle points to a sphere of human life in which impassibility is essential, namely, the sphere of soul as active thought, transformed by its active rather than its receptive function. This activity is impassible in the sense that, though every activity depends upon embodied existence, it is self-directed activity rather than being a passion-generated movement from some external influence terminating in the soul. To be an animal with a mind, therefore, is to have a nature capable in some limited fashion of such impassibility.[10] Aristotle thinks it difficult to achieve such self-dependence, but possible to actualize a higher composite existence in which soul is transformed by *nous* into a formal, rather than a material compound (*EN* X, 7, 1177b 26–8a4). He emphasizes that this intellect/soul-composite life is an *activity* (*energeia*) to be ranked on the level of something divine in the human. From this perspective, it is a higher composite life in a rather ambiguous sense, for what is divine in us seems to go radically beyond us and yet at the same time to define who we really are as self-organizing moral agents "since it is the authoritative and better part". Is such a life, then, devoid of pleasure or purely intellectual? Like Socrates in *Republic* 9,[11] Aristotle judges it, the *life kata ton noun*, to be "happiest" and "sweetest for each" (*EN* 1178a 6–8). God's life is the purest pleasure and God is always in that state which we enjoy for only a short time. In fact, human activities are pleasant precisely *because* they are dependent on God's life (cf. *Metaphysics* 1072b 13–18). Aristotle then speaks, side by side, of God's thinking and human thought. The latter becomes thinkable, intelligible, by *participation* in the intelligible object, touches its object of thought as itself and thereby possesses or has it, but the divine element in thinking is the *active* possession rather than the becoming or reception (1072b 22–8).

This forms essential background for understanding Evagrius' use of the term *apatheia* (and Gregory's too), even if Evagrius brings a new Christian view to the question. We can compare Gregory's view here: "freedom consists in becoming like that which is without a master and to what is in its own control that has been given to us from the beginning by God" (*DAR* 101c–d).[12] Such self-dependence,

---

[9] For analysis see Nussbaum and Rorty, 1992 and for two different contemporary interpretations see Wedin, 1988, and Irwin, 1988.

[10] This is a central issue in the development of the argument of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. See Joachim, 1951, and Lear, 1988.

[11] *Republic* 9, 581c ff.

[12] Cf. also *OC* 5 (*GNO*/III/iv/15 ff); *DHO* 4, *PG* 44, 136c; 16, 184b; *Cant.* 5 (*GNO*/VI/160, 17); and compare Plato, *Republic* 617e; and Plotinus, II 3, 9, 17; IV 4, 39, 2; VI 8, 5, 31; 6, 6. Even Gregory's characteristic insistence upon freedom has a resonance elsewhere in a long tradition that includes Epicurus, *DL* X, 133.9, Plutarch, *Moralia* 740d2, Alcinous, *Didaskalikos*,

exactly as in Plato and Aristotle, but with a Christian difference, involves living a higher composite existence: "Thus [the soul] … imitates the superior life, being conformed to the properties of the divine nature, so that nothing else is left to it but the disposition of love, as it becomes attached in its nature to the beautiful" (*DAR* 93c–6a). In this passage, simplicity and uniformity are compatible with higher formal composition, as in Aristotle, but freedom as self-dependence is situated in between the soul's own activity and its passive orientation to what is above it (in the tradition of Paul, Philo, Origen, and Plotinus). Thus, the soul is "being conformed to … the divine nature;" she "imitates," "becomes attached," "participates," "attaches herself to it and combines with it through the impulse and operation of love." Freedom and unaffectedness from what can enslave the soul awake a deeper source of feeling and compassion in order to become adequate to the whole of reality rather than the much smaller frame of one's own preferences.

Let me sum up the results so far: 1) Impassibility or unaffectedness is the awakening of the soul's own life and the apparent extinction or forgetfulness of the body's seismic jolts when the soul becomes self-gathered in relation to her own nature and to the divine. For Plato, such a state is both purgative in an ascetic sense, that is, it involves setting the soul free from its accretions and purificatory in that it involves a positive awakening of a higher form of existence. 2) Impassibility, in Aristotle, is connected with *energeia* or activity, by contrast to potency, development, or movement. As an activity of life, it is to be situated precisely in the compound experience of the soul transformed by intellect or *nous*, and to the degree that this composite relation is characterized by activity, rather than motion. In Aristotle, the practical-ethical life leads into, and requires, insight into reality and participation in the divine life. In Evagrius, *praktikē* leads into, and requires, *gnostikē*, contemplative insight into reality and, finally, the life of prayer. In other words, for Aristotle, impassibility is inherently *positive*, the highest quality of self-understanding, moral self-directedness and integration, that is, the moral and intellectual virtues integrated in the light of *phronêsis*, practical wisdom in human affairs, and *sophia*, a still broader wisdom in relation to the whole of being.[13] Such a state goes beyond the eternal cycle of bodily and soul-body composite pleasures and pains, but is not in itself devoid of pleasure or, again, purely intellectual in our sense of the term, for intellect in this perspective *includes* a more integrative life of pleasure and wakes up a broader band of joy in the soul simplified in this way and opened up to participation in the divine life (cf. 1072 b20: our *nous*, by contrast with the divine *nous* (b18–19), thinks by participation (*kata metalêpsin*) in the intelligible object). Plato and Aristotle, when viewed in this light, take us directly to Evagrius and Gregory, however much Evagrius is profoundly influenced by Scripture, Clement, Origen and others. The Stoic notion by itself, therefore, is not determinative except in this broader context.

Chapter 27 (179.10 ff.) and 31 (184.37–40). See later Proclus, *In Rempublicam* 2.276, and Olympiodorus, *In I Alcibiadem*, 226.25 ff. On this topic generally see Romano, 1999, 151–91.

[13] See especially Aristotle *EN* 6, 7.

4.3 Evagrius and Gregory: from Stillness to Purity of Heart

Evagrius' and Gregory's views resonate within this broader picture. First, withdrawal from the world or *xeniteia*, attention to oneself, stillness, self-knowledge, mindfulness, endurance, and yet also manual work (*Eul*. 10) and care for others are necessary for the stability by which one is able to live in the world without belonging to it. There is a sequence to this in Evagrius' *Fds*. and *Eul*: "… stand free of material concerns and the passions, beyond all desire, so that as you become a stranger to … these, you may be able to cultivate stillness properly" (*Fds.* 3; 6; *Eul*. 1–2); "Love is bond of impassibility and expunging of the passions" (*Eul*. 21, 23); "Serve God with fear and love: in the first case, as master and judge; in the second as one who loves and nurtures human beings" (*Eul.* 11, 10). Withdrawal or separation in love is a precondition of authentic care for others. At the end of his *VM*, Gregory says: Moses "made *stillness* the teacher of high learnings, and so his *thought* was illuminated by the light … from the bush, and then he hastened *to share* with his countrymen the noble things that had come to him from God" (*PG* 44 425c; *GNO*/VII/i/140, 2–6). The word *apatheia* does not appear, but Gregory describes a similar progression: stillness or withdrawal opens the door to gnostic study in which thought, *dianoia*, is transformed (becomes fixed, impassible) by a higher focus (both natural and divine: the burning bush); and the result is not isolation, but compassion (exactly as in Basil's *Rules*).

Second, what precisely is the stable state of impassibility? It is a reconfiguration of being human. Instead of a body-soul material focus, we get a formal focus where the body-soul-mind trajectory is shaped along a higher self-dependent axis. "By true prayer a monk becomes equal to the angels" (*Pr.* 152; cf. Luke 20.36). What does Evagrius mean? Spiritual knowledge, of which prayer is the highest expression, involves a transformation of being from the human to the angelic: "impassibility is the health of soul, and its food is knowledge which alone habitually joins (*synaptein ... eiōthen*) us to the holy powers, since the union (*synapheia*) of incorporeals naturally results from a similar disposition" (*PR* 56). By the (Platonic) principle of like to like, likeness produces a new synapse in the human being. What binds this synapse? "Love is the union/bond (*synapheia*) of impassibility" (*Eul*. 21.23). Two conclusions can be drawn here: the possibility of living a higher compound existence is a human disposition by virtue of God's love; and, an important point for understanding Evagrius, there is no impassibility without love.

Gregory's view is similar. In his *Cant.*, he observes that even "in the flesh" we should not be "conformed" (Romans 12.2) to this world, for "even though they conduct life in this field they look to the [holy] powers, imitating angelic purity through impassibility" (*Cant. PG* 44 856d–7a; *GNO*/VI/134 ff.). In other words, human beings are shaped not simply as material compounds, but by a higher form of existence, and impassibility is the stable disposition of this dynamic participation. The thought is Pauline; it also reflects Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus.

At the same time, an implicit dialogue of difference from "pagan" thought is often operative. Humility, for instance, is a distinctly Christian virtue, as are

simplicity, obedience, and observing the commandments, though simplicity is also fundamental to Plotinus' view of the One. Evagrius' characterization of the birth of the virtues is a subtle instance of difference from a pagan view:

> The fear of God strengthens faith, my children, and endurance in turn strengthens this fear, and perseverance and hope make endurance unswerving and from these is born *apatheia*, whose offspring is love; love is the door to natural knowledge to which theology and final blessedness succeed.[14]

According to Evagrius, this is a generative process "from these is born", symbolized in the monk's habit (that is, the scapular in the form of a cross is a symbol of faith, the bolt signifies the rejection of impurity and the elimination of vices by communion with the good, and the staff gives "secure footing to those who hold on to it"). But *praktikê* is something beyond the exclusive business of monastic life: "The good must be pursued for its own sake, not for some other cause" (*PR*, prologue),[15] and faith is an indwelling good naturally existing "even in those who do not yet believe in God" (*PR* 81). So the broader sense of *praxis*, namely, ordinary affairs, is not excluded in the consideration of monastic *praxis*.

As in Proverbs 1.7, fear or reverence of the Lord gives birth to wisdom, that is, an openness to the created world. The child of this openness is *agapê*, love, that is divine love and human love from a divine perspective. There is a biological, organic process at work here reminiscent of Plato's *Symposium*, but the contrast is striking. According to Diotima's account of the birth of love, love is the child of Plenty (*Poros*) and Poverty (*Penia*), a great *daimon* who has inherited the qualities of both his father and mother and who, as a consequence, is both resourceful and needy in turn.[16] In Evagrius' account, love is not a *daimon* (given Evagrius' demonology associated with the passions), but a feminine quality in the soul born from a passionless mother who is the progeny, on the human, material side, of faith, fear of God, continence, patience and hope. Diotima's *Penia*, who acts like a human, passionately desirous principle, becomes identified later with the material principle which in Plotinus is *apathês* in the sense that it cannot genuinely take on the forms entrusted to it, but is only the medium in which they are reflected and thus is always desirous of what it cannot grasp, since it remains "impassible."[17] For Evagrius by contrast, genuine impassibility is not a function of matter (which *would* result in something resembling insensibility), but the birth of a quality most opposed to insensibility, namely, inclusive love: *agapê* guards the door to *gnosis* of everything in the created universe, that is, genuine gnostic perception and *closeness* to the world. *Apatheia*, therefore, is born of soul and God, not matter.

---

[14] *PR*, prologue 47–51.

[15] Cf. *Republic* 2, 362d–7e.

[16] Cf. *Symposium* 203b–204c.

[17] Cf. *Enneads* III, 5; II, 4, 16.

Apatheia is not insensibility, but the birth of a deeper layer of intelligent being in which feeling comes into new focus.

4.3.1 Gregory and Plotinus

On the other side of the equation, Daniélou distinguishes Gregory's notion from that of Evagrius (whose principal aspect for him is interior repose or *ataraxia*[18]) and from Plotinus (for whom it means "peace and quiet," ridding the soul of contact with the body "tout negative"[19]). But Gregory, in fact, builds on Plotinus' subtle treatments of this question. He is aware that "*pathos* (affection) in the case of incorporeals (*epi tôn asômatôn*) is *apathês* (unaffected)" (*PG* 44, 772a; *GNO*/VI/23, 10), a statement unintelligible for the Stoics (cf. Daniélou, 1953, 99), but which captures the view of Plotinus in his treatise "On the impassibility of incorporeals," that is, soul, and the whole of intelligible reality and matter, *Ennead* III, 6. By impassibility, Plotinus does not mean incapacity for feeling or that soul is the source of unfeeling; people and things are occasions of our feeling for or against them, and we feel because we are animated or ensouled beings in a rather complex way, for our bodies are compounds of form and matter and we are compounds of soul and body, but for Plotinus (as for Plato and Aristotle), the soul in the compound is not all that soul is – even for me in my restricted state. The whole of soul, and of *nous*, still remains open to me since my being is already inscribed in the broader perspective of spirit, like a vast reservoir of energy which is the ground not only of my own being, but of all beings.

Consequently, the attribution of physical changes or psycho-physical changes to the soul is misleading, for the passage from potentiality to actuality in the case of immaterial things is not accompanied by qualitative alteration (cf. *Ennead* III 6, 2, 46–52, as Aristotle had also originally suggested at *De Anima* 417b5–18). Affections and changes, therefore, should be attributed to the compound or to the body rather than to the soul herself, for otherwise "we run the risk … (of saying) that the soul blushes or turns pale" (III 6, 3, 7–11; cf. *De Anima* 408b 11–15). The part of soul which is affected is not soul-power as such, which remains unmoved and even makes perception and feeling possible, but the form or soul in the compound (cf. III 6, 4, 31–2). In other words, what is moved, strictly speaking, is the organism, either more or less of it, not the soul-power itself, and this does not make perception any less realist than any other account of perception, since the soul is not something added to the organism or some ghostly substance lurking impassively behind the eyes, but what the organism really means as a structure animated for communication and for the reception of intelligibility on every level. So the soul in its own nature is impassible and self-directive; affectedness in different degrees belongs to soul in the compound, where physical, psycho-physical, and mental changes are to be situated. This, of course, does not mean that

[18] Daniélou, 1953, 101.

[19] Ibid., 100.

all mental activities or soul-experiences are simply psycho-physical or physical. I can *see* the nobility of spirit in another person and be so filled with joy that I am shaken to the depths of my being. Sometimes, this is a genuine experience of the pleasures of soul and sometimes it belongs to the soul-compound, since alterations and intense perceptions do occur in the soul and we cannot always tell them apart. The Platonic purification of the soul means, for Plotinus, waking the soul up to the fact that it is not a physical nature, but an intelligible reality bathed in the rays of a light which come from above:

> But if there is turning … to the things above … it is surely purification, and separation too, when it is the act of a soul which is no longer in body as if it belonged to it, and is … like a light which is not in turbid obscurity. And yet even the light in obscurity remains unaffected. But the purification of the part subject to affections is the waking up from inappropriate images and not seeing them, and its separation is affected by not inclining much downwards and not having a mental picture of the things below. (III 6, 5, 15 ff. Armstrong)

Plotinus is much closer to both Evagrius and Gregory here than Daniélou supposes, and particularly to Evagrius' notion of imageless prayer (Chapter 9 below). To be "a soul which is no longer in body as if it belonged to it" is to belong instead to soul and the entire world above, that is to be "of" that world, but it is also to be more fully present to *this* world (even during embodied existence) since it is not presence by being only a part, but presence by being a part of an intelligible whole.[20] This sort of presence to the world is what Evagrius envisages for the monk: "The monk is one who is separated from all and united to all." "Blessed the monk who sees the salvation and progress of all with great joy, as it were his own" (*Pr.* 121–5; see Chapter 7.4).

4.3.2 Degrees of Impassibility and Purity of Heart

Finally, impassibility is not an all-or-nothing, absolutist morality; it involves degrees, gradual advances, even a certain vulnerability, positive compassion and purity of heart. Evagrius distinguishes between perfect and imperfect *apatheia* (*PR* 60) and speaks, in *TH*, of a "little impassibility" (15, 1) and of the movement to "the greatest and first impassibility" (10, 5). Impassibility then does not end with *praktikē*, since after the demons who attack the passionate part of the soul are overcome, demons still beset the rational part as "the enemies of contemplation" (*PR* 84; cf. *PR* 57). It is worth noting Evagrius' piercing remark (doubtless on the basis of his own experience as well as the testimony of Scripture): "it is easier to purify an impure soul than to recall back to health one purified, though wounded again, for the demon

[20] The classic statement of *apatheia* in Plotinus is in the context of the activity of the World Soul in IV 3, 6: "for it is a mark of greater power not to be affected in what it makes; and power (*dynamis)* is from remaining above."

of sadness does not agree but is always leaping onto the pupils of the eyes and bringing forward the image of the sin at the time of prayer" (*TH* 36, 13–17).

Privative *apatheia*, or impassibility as *lack*, is a dangerously ambiguous condition that requires the deeper, positive state to provide perception of reality so that the monk can "see more sharply the raids" made upon him by the demons (*PR* 57). This continuing positive operation is also necessary for the contemplation of corporeal and incorporeal things, so that from a self-controlled vision the real state of affairs can be clearly seen. We recognize this healthy state of soul by paying attention to the evidence of our own psychology, both our thoughts during waking life and our dreams at night. In an important anticipation of Freudian psychotherapy, Evagrius notes that proper integration of dream – and work – life are indications of a healthy soul (*PR* 55–6).[21] How are demons able to imprint our directing faculty while we sleep, Evagrius asks in the same work?[22] They utilize the body's experiences and work in the memory through the passions, for the absence of such dreams is a sign of impassibility. Like Gregory, Evagrius has two views of memory. While generally he is cautious about memory in its lower registers (*Eul.* 9.8; 26, 27; but compare 14, 14; 15, 16), there is the possibility of awaking a higher memory, or recollection, a faculty we repress by excessive passion (cf. *PR* 93; *TH* 4). So "there is also a simple movement (*kinêsis*) of memory which occurs either by our own agency or by holy powers in which we meet holy people in our sleep and talk and eat with them" (*TH* 4). Here even dreaming indicates a new form of composite existence, partly human, partly angelic, the awakening of a higher imagination.[23] Evagrius then reminds us that the images the soul receives together with the body, the memory puts into movement without the body, and this we often experience in sleep. Just as it is possible, therefore, to remember water with or without actual thirst, so it is possible to remember gold with or without desire for it (cf. *PR* 67; 64; 34). The goal of Evagrius' observation here is clear: the simple movement of memory in sleep is not something outside our normal experience; what is really in question is a more deeply integrated focusing of attention in order to recognize our capacity to decide for ourselves and to see what is needful. This is where the health of soul begins in both wakeful life and sleep, and where a deeper conscious integration between the two becomes possible by paying attention to ordinary psychological experience.[24]

Here the soul's health is fed by contemplative knowledge and greater spiritual union emerges: "Evidence of impassibility when the mind (*nous*) begins to see its own light, and stays still (*hēsuchos*) in front of the images in sleep and serene as it looks at things" (*PR* 64). This union of soul and *nous*, then, brings self-dependence into new focus, rooted simultaneously in the good and in constant excellent habitual action:

---

[21] See also *TH* 4, 27–9.

[22] See Chapters 5.3; 5.4.4; 5.7.

[23] For both good and bad memory, see *Refl.* 62; *Eul.*10; 12; 15; *Fd*s. 9; *Pr.* 144; *PR* 33.

[24] Further re the Jesus prayer see Chapter 8.4 and note 31.

> A person who has established the virtues in himself and is entirely permeated with them no longer remembers the law or commandments or punishments, but says and does those things which the best state requires. (*PR* 70)

This may suggest that such a state is beyond the law, but it should be understood in its Christian and Platonic sense: the law is not the goal of *ascesis* but a "second best" measure, necessary for the regulation of ordinary life, and not the ideal. In Plato's *Politicus*, for instance, we prefer the personal attention of the doctor, when we are sick, to the prescriptions she leaves behind.[25] In this sense, *apatheia* is not law but living intercourse with God, an activity "both pleasant in the highest degree and spiritually profitable" (*Pr*. 49):

> The state of prayer is an impassible, steady disposition, that by the highest love (*erôti akrotatô*) snatches to the intelligible height the mind (*nous*) that loves wisdom, the spiritual (*pneumatikon*) mind. (*Pr.* 52)

In other words, *apatheia* is a developing state of *agapê*, *erôs*, and *pothos* (longing),[26] a self-dependent, yet dialogical union between the divine and the human, in which the reality of the universe can be more deeply contemplated (that is the second stage of *gnostikê*); and self and reality contemplated are already permeated or infused by the divine life, the final stage of *theologia* (cf. *Pr.* 62–3). On the one hand, the human being remains vulnerable, for *apatheia* does not necessarily link one to God. One may still be distracted by a kind of theoretical curiosity:[27]

> It is not the one who has hit upon impassibility who already truly prays, for it is possible to be among simple concepts and be distracted by enquiry into them, and to be far from God. (*Pr.* 55)

Constant vigilance and sensitivity to the complexity of psychological experience are necessary in both practical and contemplative lives. *Praxis* and *theoria* are interdependent. On the other hand, *apatheia* in prayer and in contemplation is a direct participation in the life of the Trinity itself in which the soul is acted upon in a quasi-erotic way (cf. *TH* 42, 5–8).[28] Is *apatheia* pleasurable then? Despite all appearances to the contrary in Evagrius, and despite the long debate about pleasure as good, or *the* good in antiquity, pleasure exists in this higher axis. "The person without possessions enjoys the pleasure (*hēdonē*) of a life without cares," Evagrius observes (*Eul*. 12.1). And Gregory, echoing Plato's emphasis on the pure pleasures of the soul in the *Republic* and *Philebus*, observes: "there are two sorts

---

[25] *Politicus* 295b–6a.

[26] As also with *epithymia*; see, for example, *TH* 26, 17: *pneumatic epithymia*.

[27] See also Augustine, *Confessions* 10, 54–7.

[28] Compare Gregory on the one (good) eye of the soul (*Cant.* 949c–52d; *GNO*/VI/257–60; translated in Daniélou/Musurillo, 1995, 219–21).

of pleasures, one which acts (*energoumenēs*) in the soul through impassibility, the other in the body by *pathos*" (*PG* 44, 993c; *GNO*/VI/313, 17–19). Both are necessary and inherently good.

How does Gregory's approach compare? For Gregory with slightly different emphasis, impassibility (*apatheia*), frankness or freedom of speech (with God) (*parrêsia*),[29] freedom (*eleutheria*), prayer (*proseuchê*) and love (*agapê*) are the major notes. There is no real insight into the truth of things without purification of life, and this path follows a similar pattern ranging from fear, through hope and endurance, to love and familiar conversation in kinship (*suggeneia*) between God and the image of God in us.[30] *Apatheia* is necessary to shed the "clothing of skins" made after the fall by God for Adam and Eve (cf. Genesis, 3.21; *VM* II, 22 ff.; *PG* 44 332d ff.). But Gregory is thoroughly realistic about moral excellence and recognizes in-between states where there is a switch from a "poor use of *nous*" to reason controlling the emotions (*kinemata*), in which case "each of them gets transformed into a form of excellence, for anger makes courage, terror caution, fear obedience, hate aversion from vice, the power of love (*hê agapêtikê dunamis*) desire (*epithymia*) for the truly beautiful. Pride of character lifts us up above the passions (*pathêmata*) and protects the thought (*phronêma*) from being enslaved by evil" (*DHO* 44, 193b–c). This passage shows how important the proper integration of the faculties or parts of soul really is. Vice evacuates the natural meaning of each faculty, particularly, reason and *nous*, whereas the organization of virtue brings out the full, perhaps unexpected power even in anger and hate. A*gapê* possesses a similar ambivalence. Despite this, the ideal of impassibility has real physical effects. Gregory observes in *Cant* how the bride of the *Canticles* is called sister by the angels:

> The character of the image (*eikôn*) shining in the same way in both her and the angels led her up to the community (*suggeneia*) and sisterhood of the incorporeals, which *straightens up the impassible in the flesh* … you are our sister by community of *apatheia* (*PG* 44, 948a–b; *GNO*/VI/254, 1–4)

So even in the embodied life, Gregory claims, one can *see* the divine quality of *apatheia* for itself as part of our experience of seeing the invisible by the reflective quality of our intelligences:

> The rays of that true, divine virtue shining out in the purified life through the *apatheia* flowing out (*apporeousês*) of them makes the invisible visible to us, and the unapproachable graspable inscribing the sun in our mirror. (*Cant.* 44, 824c; *GNO*/VI/90, 12–16)

---

[29] For *parrêsia* in Evagrius see *Antirrhetikos* VIII, 10, Frankenberg; Guillaumont, *Traite Pratique*, II, 605.

[30] A very ancient theme in Greek thought; see, for example, Pépin, 1971; see also on this section Daniélou, 1953, 90–123, 211–20.

In the above passages, then, there are several related degrees of *apatheia*, namely, impassibility of the divine community, impassibility of the flesh, and the visible impassibility of purified existence.[31]

So the path toward impassibility is very much a human path and something one can *see*. Such freedom is then the visible awakening of a higher morality, ultimately dependent upon a personal love of the divine good *for its own sake*:

> For this is truly perfection; not separating oneself in the manner of a slave from the life lived in vice out of fear of punishment, nor again to activate the good out of hope of payments, as if trading on the virtuous life by some business-like, contractual arrangement; but disregarding all those things, even those put aside as a matter for hope in the scriptures, to think one thing only a matter of fear, falling from friendship with God; and to judge for ourselves the only thing worthy of honor and desire, to become friend to God. (*VM* 44, 429c–d; *GNO*/ VII/i/144, 20–145, 3)[32]

The goal of the reflexive practice which reorganizes life in a dialogical way so that the soul's powers work together rather than sink into a cacophony of fragmentation – that goal is not *apatheia* simply, but a new organic maturity of impassibility/ passionlessness, frankness of speech, freedom, prayer and love. This is, precisely, authentic purity of heart or mind (*puritas cordis*) in the sense that Cassian later understands *apatheia* – either to escape its negative implications or to emphasize (perhaps with Origen and also Evagrius) its Gospel roots: "Blessed are the pure in heart …." Purity of heart in the deeper sense is not abstract self-sufficiency, but the capacity of soul and body to be transformed by divine love. In his *Homilies on the Beatitudes*, Gregory emphasizes, probably against the Messalians, that gentleness rather than perfect *apatheia* is what should characterize the Christian life (*GNO*/VII/2/95, 17–23). Although this might seem to distinguish him from both Evagrius and Clement, gentleness for Evagrius also helps to stabilize the monk on the path to a more perfect *apatheia*: "Conversion and humility have set the soul up; compassion and gentleness have made it firm" (*AM* 53). Gentleness seems personally important for Evagrius: "In the gentle heart, wisdom will rest; a throne of impassibility – a soul of accomplished practice" (*AM* 31).

A classic formulation is to be found in *TH* 11 where Evagrius observes that *lack of feeling* (*anaesthesia*) is a demonic obstacle to both *apatheia* and compassion. Inaccessibility, he writes, produces callousness and total indifference and "is to be found among those who rarely visit their brothers. For in the face of the misfortunes of others overwhelmed by illnesses or languishing in prison …, this demon flees, for the soul is gradually pierced with contrition (*katanussomeis*) and comes to compassion (*sympatheia*)" (*TH* 11). Such compassion is the fruit of impassibility. Moreover, the

---

[31] A feature not only of Moses' shining face in the Bible but also of Plotinus' thought – see *Ennead* V 8, 2, 38–46.

[32] Cf. Philo, *Quaest Ex*. 2, 21 for this Hellenic view.

connection with purity of heart (Matthew 5.8: "Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God") runs throughout Evagrius, but is particularly found in his *Scholia on Proverbs* and *Psalms*, the *AM* and *Eulogios*. Impassibility and rest from dividedness (*anapausis*) raise the heart through soul into the mind (*AM* 66) where in the wisdom of God, the heart becomes enlarged with "contemplations of the worlds" (*AM* 130–33; 135–6).[33] A similar scriptural emphasis on the heart in the context of impassibility informs Gregory's *De Instituto Christiano*, both the text printed in Migne and the collated text together with a portion of the Macarius letter in Jaeger's edition.[34]

Everything above, therefore, strongly suggests that three typical assessments of Evagrius are profoundly misguided: First, the view that Evagrian anchoreticism is "extreme." Evagrius' emphasis upon impassibility and purity of heart is, in fact, similar to that of Gregory. He advocates solitary life only for those who have experienced community successfully (*Eul* 29) and his view of retreat, separation and the monastic life is well balanced and in tune with Basil's Rules, especially the insistence upon manual work and compassion. Furthermore, unlike Basil who seems to reject laughter as an appropriate expression of joy (Shorter Rules 31 R35, Silvas, 292), Evagrius commends cheerfulness and accessibility in the tradition of Macarius of Alexandria.[35]

Second, the view that Evagrian spirituality involves "extirpation, not integration, the reduction of the human subject" (Williams, 1990, 76–7) is not supported by the evidence. The *Eulogios*, *Praktikos* and *Gnostikos* suggest strongly the transformation of one's inner world, and the body's orientation to it, in order to transform one's relation to the created world in and through God. Extirpation is not an issue. Awaking the self to the higher axis of its being in and through created being is what is at stake.

Third, the view that for Evagrius (and Maximus later) love is not the end of the spiritual life, but merely a stage on the way to *gnosis* (cf. Holmes, 2000, 63–6). For Evagrius, in fact, there is no real *gnosis* or prayer that is not pervaded by love.[36] "Faith is the beginning of love; the end of love, knowledge of God" (*AM* 3; cf. *Maxims* 16; *Eul* 21; 11 and 13). Love is the entire pathway.

4.4 The Expansion of the Tripartite Soul

Finally, what does soul-enlargement really mean? As we saw above, Evagrius asserts that "contemplations of worlds enlarge (*platunousi*) the heart" (*AM* 135).[37] Gregory has a similar view. "All matter is determined by quantity and quality," he observes, "but the immaterial escapes limit," and created immaterial being is "in

---

[33] See Driscoll, 1999, 141–60.

[34] See Chapter 1.6.

[35] See *GN* 22 and Socrates' account of Macarius, *HE* 4. 23; *PG* 67, 516a.

[36] As Holmes, 2000, 66, acknowledges.

[37] Cf. *KG* 2.32.

a sense always being created … being changed through its expansion (*epauxēsis*) in goods to the better" (*Cant.* 885c–d). Here we glimpse Gregory's theory of *epektasy*, namely, his view that the soul is continually without limit, being drawn out into the infinite God. A brief look at the positive functioning of the tripartite soul will give us some idea of what such expansion/extension means concretely.

For Evagrius, the aim of the ascetic life is "to purify the part of the soul which is the seat of the passions." The proper ordering of life involves the natural integration of the soul faculties through the virtues. Evagrius puts it this way:

> The rational soul operates according to nature when its desiring part desires virtue, its spirited part struggles on its behalf and its rational part sets upon the contemplation of created things. (*PR* 86: cf. 89)[38]

In Gregory too, when mind operates properly, each emotion "gets transformed into a form of excellence" (*DHO* 44, 193b–c). How does this work in the tripartite soul? Some brief context first. Evagrius makes the Platonic model central to his monastic teaching and emphasizes the role of *nous* in the spiritual life. He refers to the rational part as *nous* or, as in Origen, the heart (*kardia*), though he occasionally uses the Stoic term, *hêgemonikon*.[39] Although *nous* is created for knowledge of God, it is free to choose and "easily moved," particularly under the influence of the irrational part of the soul (*PR* 48), that is, the *epithymia* and *thymos* which Evagrius calls soul "powers" (*dynameis*).[40] That soul or even *nous* is "easily moved" is also a Platonic notion.[41]

Evagrius' most extended treatment of the nature of the tripartite soul is *PR* 89 which also reveals one of his chief "sources." Evagrius defines each of the virtues in relation to the tripartite soul as follows:

> If the rational (*logikê*) soul is tripartite, according to our wise teacher, when virtue comes to be in the rational part (*logistikon*), it is called practical intelligence (*phronesis*), understanding (*synesis*), and wisdom (*sophia*), and when it comes to be in the desiring part, it is called temperance (*sôphrosyne*), love (*agapê*), and control (*egkrateia*), and when in the spirited part, courage (*andreia*) and endurance (*hypomonē*); and in the whole soul, justice.

The wise teacher is, in fact, Macarius or Gregory Nazianzus.[42] But there is no reason why a theory with its origin in Plato, but developed in a broader Christian fashion,

---

[38] Cf. *KG* 4.73.

[39] For example, *hêgemonikon* occurs only once in the *PR* (Prologue 1, 9), but several times in *TH* (2, 21: 4, 2, 5, 8; 41, 1; 42, 3).

[40] *PR* 49, 9; 73, 5; 79, 2; 82, 3; 98, 8; *TH* 2, 16.

[41] To be found in connection with the body and the passions in *Timaeus* 64a–b, the *Republic* (*passim*), in relation to conflict in the soul (in the *Phaedrus*) or of soul being "easily affected and easily stirred" for example, later in Plotinus, I, 8, 14.

[42] For a similar phrase "our wise teacher", see *KG* VI, 51 and *GN* 146.

should not be attributed to someone closer in time and spirit or left anonymous, since "teacher" is an icon from all traditions. The theory of the unity of virtue and of the four cardinal virtues, prudence, justice, courage, and temperance, is Stoic,[43] but also Platonic, since the theme of integrative unity is prominent in the *Phaedo* and the four cardinal virtues first appear in Agathon's speech in the *Symposium* and in the *Republic*. In addition, the tripartite soul appears in Gregory Nazianzus (*Poems* II, 1, 47, *PG* 37, 1381a–4a) also in Clement, Origen and Philo,[44] but the principal source of the above passage nonetheless is the little treatise *On Virtues and Vices*, attributed to Aristotle, where we find the following:

> If the soul is taken to be tripartite according to Plato, the virtue of the rational part is practical intelligence (*phronêsis*), that of the spirited part gentleness and courage, and that of the desiring part temperance (*sôphrosynê*) and self-control (*egkrateia*), and of the whole soul justice and freedom and greatsouledness. (*VV* 1249a–b)

The root of both theories about the nature of justice (and injustice) in the whole soul is obviously *Republic* 4, 443c–5 a, especially 443c–d.

Evagrius has Christianized the virtues of the (pseudo-) Aristotelian *VV* and the *Republic* and retained the four cardinal virtues. Although the *VV* includes a discussion of eight vices associated with the eight virtues listed, Evagrius mentions no vices (probably because he is here concerned with *apatheia*), but he significantly changes the focus of the *VV* passage by opening up or expanding the excellences of each faculty. The rational part expands into the significant progression of practical intelligence, understanding, and wisdom. This looks like a highly compressed interpretation of Aristotle's *EN* 6, namely, practical wisdom or *phronêsis* is concerned with *human* goods; *synesis*, understanding, is given perhaps an Aristotelian sense (cf. *EN* 6, 10) that includes judgment, aptness for learning, and perhaps a touch of its later usage as a form of intelligible understanding in Plotinus, V, 8, 13, 23: "to lead up to a clear understanding of the "intelligible place" (cf. *Republic* 517b); and proper theoretical wisdom or *sophia*, which in Aristotle and Plotinus, if in different ways, is concerned no longer simply with human goods, but with all goods or, in the case of Plotinus, the intelligible world that includes all beings (in *PR* 89: "… contemplation of the *logoi* of both corporeal and incorporeal things"). The expansion of the rational soul into mind therefore means the proper flourishing of practical wisdom, understanding and creative insight. Understanding lifts up soul's proper attention to its own affairs into insightful concern for everything. The soul expands into the dimensions of the corporeal and incorporeal universes.

In the second case, Evagrius opens up the desiring part of soul to the progression of temperance, love, and control, that is, to the discipline of taming the passions tempered by gentleness and love that leads to the confirmed habit of self-control.

---

[43] *SVF* III, 60–62; cf. also Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* I, 20, 97, 3, *SC* 30, 122.

[44] For an account of the history see Thumberg, 1995, 169–207.

In the third case, he expands the *thymos* or spirited part in terms of the courage needed to start this process and steadfast endurance to maintain it. *Makrothymia*, patience or forbearance associated with the positive growth of *thymos*, is important in both Evagrius and Gregory.[45]

Evagrius offers the following interpretation of this tripartite expansion:

> The work (*ergon*) of prudence (*phronesis*) is to lead in the war against the opposing powers and to defend the virtues and to draw the battle lines against the vices and to manage things in between ("the middles": *ta mesa*) according to the circumstances. The work of understanding (*synesis*) involves the harmonious arrangement (*harmodiōs oikonomein*) of all things that contribute to the attainment of the goal (*ta panta syntelounta hemin pros ton skopon*). The work of wisdom (*sophia*) is the contemplation (*theorein*) of the reasons (*logous*) of bodies and incorporeals (*PR* 89). (Sinkewicz, adapted)

Phronesis or prudence is adaptive to particular circumstances. *Synesis* or understanding is in the soul as an organizing function; however, it is also a participation in the divine *oikonomia*, perfecting "all things" (*ta panta*) in relation to our integral, unified goal.[46] And finally, *sophia* or wisdom, the most extensive function, is a deeper participation in the divine. The progression of excellences therefore intimates an expansion of the self through the cosmic, angelic, and divine lives.

In the gnostic life,[47] Evagrius distinguishes two stages of what he calls natural contemplation (*gnosis physike* or *theoria*): (1) second natural contemplation, that is, the gift of seeing God's presence in the whole of visible creation (as later in Pseudo-Dionysius and Bonaventure – the *vestigia Dei*, traces or footprints of God); and (2) first natural contemplation, that is, where the monk's insight pierces through visible signs to see invisible or incorporeal beings and the whole invisible order of creation. First natural contemplation is what angels do, but is partially available to enlightened human beings. In *GN* 44, Evagrius, citing Gregory of Nazianzus explicitly, describes the function of *phronesis* as "contemplation of the intellectual and holy powers apart from their reasons (*to theorein tas noeras kai hagias dynameis dicha tōn logōn*), for these are shown by wisdom alone (*hypo tēs sophias monēs dēlousthai*)." This distinction between powers and reasons seems to imply that at the prudential level of the virtues we see things as the effects or powers of a world made holy, whereas at the level of wisdom, which possesses

---

[45] Cf. Evagrius: *AM* 35; *Scholia on Proverbs* 3, 63; Gregory: *Cant.* 44 849a–52a; *GNO*/VI/125–7.

[46] *Skopos* is also the term used by Gregory and Basil of the goal of the integrated ascetic life of philosophy.

[47] For the Gnostic life see A. and C. Guillaumont, Paris, 1989, introduction, Chapters 1–2; Guillaumont, 1962; Louth, 1981, 107 ff.; Darling Young, 2001, 53–71; Bunge, 1988, 40–44.

an agency of its own, we see more deeply into the reasons behind those effects. *Sophia* reveals the *logoi*, the inner principles of things as God created them.

Despite the emphasis on knowledge, intelligibility, and seeing or contemplation, Evagrius is clear that full knowledge of created things belongs only to angels, and full knowledge of all the *logoi* of beings only to Christ.[48] The gnostic must "make room for all things"[49] "even if a part escapes" him; "this is what is characteristic of an angel, that nothing of what is on earth escapes him" (*GN* 16). Soul-expansion is therefore the rejection of closed ego-consciousness and the practice of growing interrelatedness.

Gregory's treatment of the virtues and of soul is more diverse than that of Evagrius. But in the *CL* (*PG* 45, 224a ff.; *GNO*/III/v/2 ff.), he provides a startlingly similar outline that he explains as relating to the "first *diairesis*" of the soul in its proper alignment, on the one hand, or its downfall, on the other. The schema of the virtues and vices is as follows:

Virtues	Vices
To logistikon (reason)	
1) reverential understanding for the divine	1) lack of reverence for the divine
2) discerning knowledge of what is fine and what is evil	2) lack of judgment between the fine and evil
3) clear, unconfused opinion about the nature of underlying subjects, what is to be chosen and what rejected	3) an inferior grasp of the nature of things
To epithymetikon (desire)	
1) a movement through excellence to what is really desirable	1) changing the direction of desire to unreal *kenodoxia* or bodily appearance
2) leading desire up to the truly beautiful	2) love of money
3) fixing one's erotic power and whole disposition upon excellence	3) love of good opinion
	4) love of pleasure
To thymoeides (spirit)	
1) hatred for evil	1) envy
2) war against the passions	2) hatred
3) training the soul for courage	3) anger
4) contempt for deadly threat and serious pain	4) abuse
5) unyoking oneself from life's sweetest things to fight on behalf of faith and excellence	5) strife
	6) strife-loving and aggressive disposition

The basic governing structure, despite some extra motifs in the more polymorphous *thymoeides*, is, in my view: a) form; b) compound; c) matter/subject. This is to

[48] Darling Young, 2001, 59.

[49] Probably, *panta chōrein*, though the Greek is missing, and the Guillaumonts' French translation is from the Syriac. For this use of *chōrein* in Evagrius and Origen, see A. and C. Guillaumont, 1989, 114.

say that, under the heading of the *logistikon*, reverential understanding for the divine expresses the higher *form* of the rational, while discerning knowledge is directed to the ambiguities of *concrete things*, and clear, unconfused opinion (a variant perhaps upon *orthē doxa* in Plato's dialogues) is needed in the ever difficult choices specifically in relation to *underlying subjects*. The vices show a similar privative orientation.

Under the *epithymetikon*, the virtues 1) and 2) are perhaps not really so distinct (joined by *kai* in the text) except that, again, 1) sums up as a *kinesis the whole form and orientation of desire*, while 2) is *anagogic*, moving between levels, and 3) pertains to the stabilization of the bedrock or *underlying nature*. While the vices of the *logistikon* seem to emphasize the subtle perversion/disruption of intellect resulting from *asebeia*, lack of reverence, pride, the vices of the *epithymetikon* emphasize the fall into unreality, *kenodoxia*, and various forms of object-dependent desire.

Finally, under the *thymoeides*, 1) describes the form of spirit as an excellence (that is, form), 2) relates to the compound struggle, and 3), 4), and 5) emphasize the grass-root or underlying work needed to link the spirit to faith and excellence; and, in the case of the vices, 1)–6) signal in a general way a kind of material hierarchy, ranging from envy and hatred, which can be quite spiritual or psychological and may seem to leave little trace, to anger, abuse and aggression which are much more materially weighted. Gregory's system is different from that of Evagrius, but the general structure and underlying principles are really quite similar. Again, the hidden structure of the divisions shows concretely that each positive quality is part of a dynamic nexus whose essential nature is cooperative expansion.

4.5 Conclusion

The urge in some modern scholarship to trace impassibility principally to Stoicism or to characterize Evagrius' notion as an extreme form of almost self-mutilation is not supported by the evidence. The challenge – to live not the life of the flesh or of material composition but a higher compound existence uplifted by the soul/mind in God which is the context in which impassibility becomes at least comprehensible – is not so much Stoic as it is based squarely in the tradition of Plato, Aristotle, the Gospels, Paul and Clement; and Gregory is demonstrably aware of Plotinus' distinctive theory of the impassibility of "incorporeal." Evagrius and Gregory share common concerns: impassibility admits of degrees and can even be flawed; Gregory in one passage emphasizes gentleness rather than superhuman ideals; but, for both, impassibility is not possible without gentleness, compassion and love. Indeed, Evagrius explicitly links it with the gentleness of the purified heart. John Cassian's translation (*puritas cordis*), therefore, catches Evagrius' meaning more or less exactly. Most important, impassibility is not negative or privative, but an expansive activity of the purified heart. In this connection, three things have escaped the attention they deserve. Evagrius and Gregory provide concrete models of what

soul-expansion actually means. Both models are intrinsically world-embracing and include purified feeling, pleasure and compassion for others. And both accounts are rooted in some tradition of interpretation of Plato's *Republic* that antedates the 4th century but about which we know nothing. This last problem we will explore from the perspective of the "deadly sins" tradition in the next chapter.

Chapter 5
Uncovering the Origins and Structure of the Seven Deadly Sins Tradition: Evagrius and the Eight "Reasonings"

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we shall examine Evagrius' striking theory of the eight *logismoi* – not deadly sins as later with Gregory the Great, Aquinas and Dante, but eight forms of dangerous reasoning. How does Evagrius present *logismoi*? The battle with *logismoi* is not so much against the actual sins, as against the tendencies of thinking, imagination, or concepts as means of temptation. The demons stir up *logismoi* indirectly, for they do not know the heart; only God knows this (*PG* 79, 63 ff.). They watch our behavior for signs. By contrast, God "has no need of a sign to discover the secrets in our hearts" (*PR* 47). When the demons achieve nothing, they withdraw, see what is neglected and attack from that standpoint (*PR* 44). So demons work from outside structures, like hard behaviorists, unable to sense the heart or whole and constrained to judge the movements and weaknesses of soul from their own (ungenerous) guesses about our behavior. Only the hermit experiences their attacks directly. In community, demons attack through the weaknesses of our brothers or sisters, just as they "struggle against people of the world more through things" (*PR* 48), but if one lives alone they "wrestle" with you "naked" (*PR* 5), without intermediary, body to body!

Since Freud's treatment of Christoph Haizmann,[1] demons have been regarded as neurotic projections or complex father-substitutes. But while modern science has little or nothing to say on the subject, it is curious that contemporary cinema should be filled with such entities and that significant literary works should have found demonic inhabitation to be one of the most appropriate vehicles for expressing horror: in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, Ivan's chilling meeting with the devil symbolizes the increasing nihilism of 19th-century intellectual life and foreshadows the unleashing of horrific destructive forces in Russia; and in Thomas Mann, the self-destruction of Nazi Germany through the lens of the great musician, Leverkuhn, and his pact with the devil in *Doctor Faustus*. In both cases, the peculiar horror derives in part because the demon is not simply a figment of imagination, no matter how much Ivan or Leverkuhn argues that "it" or "he" is dependent upon their own banal thought processes. In each novel, the question

[1] Freud, *A Seventeenth Century Demonological Neurosis*.

– whether the devil is or is not a figment of the imagination or a mere doubling of a single consciousness – cannot be resolved since truth and falsity at this level of experience do not come with the normal marking signs or landmarks to permit us to decide once and for all.[2] Yet the destructive consequences are evident; however much Ivan or Leverkuhn might prove to the devil he does not exist, "he" plainly sits there at the same time. Do such representations simply reflect neuroses? Both Leverkuhn and Ivan are sick, but their medical symptoms seem only partial explanations of what they *experience*.

For Evagrius, demons are neither neurotic projections nor perverse father-substitutes, but a kind of real psychic after-image, related to the mind's cramped condition, yet not simply identical with the mind's experience, as we shall see. Projection of neurotic images, by contrast, is certainly sickness and ultimately madness: "The *nous* engaged in the war against the passions does not see clearly the basic meaning of the war for it is like a man fighting in the darkness of the night" (*PR* 83). Remaining in this condition results in apparitions and privation of mind (*sterêsin phrenôn, Thoughts*, 21, 23–6). In *PR* 14, anger and sadness follow upon pride and bring about the final evil, namely, "madness and a crowd of demons seen in the air." Evagrius' demonology then is *not* built upon the apparition or physical manifestation of demons, but rather upon correct diagnosis of the apparently real psychological experience of demonic struggle. We will first examine the nature and curious structure of the *logismoi* (and the tripartite soul) and then determine how demons interfere with thought-processes.

5.2 The Eight "Reasonings"

What are the *logismoi*? Evagrius divides them into eight diagnostic types in the *Praktikos*: gluttony (*gastrimargia*), fornication (*porneia*), avarice (*philargoria*), sadness or grief (*lupê*), anger (*orgê* or *thumos*), accidie or "sloth" (*akêdia*), vainglory (*kenodoxia*), and pride (*hyperephania*). Although these eight are mentioned frequently in Evagrius' writings, they appear as a structure in only a few works (the *Praktikos*, *Antirrhetikos*, and *Eight Spirits*), and in one text, *Vices*, there are nine, with envy (*phthonos*) between vainglory and pride.[3] Elsewhere, Evagrius introduces a demon called *planos*, wanderer, who "drives the mind little by little to death" (*TH* 9, 20–21).[4] We can schematize the eight in descending order as follows:

---

[2] See Corrigan, 1986, 1–9.

[3] See Stewart ("Evagrius Ponticus and the 'eight generic logismoi'" copy kindly given me by Columba prior to publication); and for overview Louth, 1981, 109–13; Tugwell, 1985, 25–36.

[4] Cf. the *Timaeus*' "wandering cause"; the closest parallel seems to be Iamblichus, *DM* 10, 7: nor are those who have mastered the deceitful, daimonic nature "exploited by some wanderer daemon". The *nous* "cannot see clearly what is happening" (9, 28).

Hyperephania – pride
Kenodoxia – vainglory
Akedia – accidie or sloth
Thumos – anger
Lupe – sadness or grief
Philarguria – avarice
Porneia – fornication
Gastrimargia – gluttony

We have no idea where this classification comes from: Evagrius or a forgotten tradition. It is also difficult to see how individual items relate to one another or why there should be eight and in this order. How are pride and vainglory really distinct vices? What is the difference between *akedia* and sadness? Sadness is the only *logismos* abandoned by the later 7 deadly sins tradition. Could sadness be a *vice*?

What Evagrius means by these reasonings is not so much the great sins themselves, as the associated temptations toward them along the particular trajectories of the soul. Gluttony is not the impulse to eat too much, but the temptation to give up ascetic practice in fear for one's health (*PR* 7). The "demon of fornication compels one to desire different bodies but attacks those who practice abstinence more violently, to give up convinced they are accomplishing nothing" (*PR* 8).[5] The *logismoi* therefore are not single items of human conduct abstracted into photographic frames, but tendencies or negative-thought trajectories in constant movement. Desire and motivation are riddled with ambiguities, and the soul is either open to God and the world or thick and heavy with the charges of negative desire.

Of all the *logismoi* the two which do not register as either sinful or particularly deadly are sadness (*lupê*) and the almost untranslatable *akêdia*, later translated "sloth", "the middle-of-the-day demon" (*PR* 12), but probably closer to the French "*ennui*," a state of mind-numbing existential boredom, just waiting for trouble, according to Evagrius. How can these be sinful or mistaken trajectories for thought? In *PR*, sadness has two sources: sometimes it comes from privation or frustration of desires and sometimes from anger. Daytime fantasies of lost times and places (like memory of parents and fear of death amongst others) cause the soul to "pour herself out in thought-pleasures" only to "baptize her in sadness" when she is forced to realize they do not and cannot exist in reality (*PR* 10); then anger ensues. Alternatively, sadness follows anger, for if anger is a desire for

[5] There is a similar psychological acuteness in the roughly contemporary *Life of St. Syncletica* (probably influenced by Evagrius since Syncletica uses the Evagrian schema of *logismoi*) ascribed to Athanasius, Bongie, 1996. The devil wants people to despair and so places all their faults before them "You have fornicated. What pardon can there be for you?" (section 52). The trick for Syncletica (and Evagrius) is not to give the demon a double victory by giving in to temptation and then giving up the struggle altogether, but to "pick oneself up" and get on with a good life.

satisfaction, and satisfaction remains unsatisfied, then sadness ensues (*8TH PG* 79, 1156b–7c). Sadness, therefore, is a negative reaction to the illusory passions generated from what is not and cannot be. Most *logismoi* imply a certain pleasure or oscillation between pleasure and pain. *Lupê* means both "sadness" and "pain" and, therefore, suggests the subtle, almost masochistic tendencies of the human soul to uncover a kind of pleasure in pain or, rather, since sadness is the only thought that dries up pleasure-even the pleasures of all the other thoughts (*TH* 12; *Refl.* 51; 61), a tendency to find in certain kinds of pain an attachment to the illusory, ambiguous state of *not* being satisfied.

Akêdia, the most innovative of Evagrius' *logismoi*,[6] covers various elements such as mind-numbing boredom, torpor, sloth, discouragement and disgust, and is linked especially to the anchoritic life and the monk's state of mind. In Classical language, *akêdia* signifies a lack of interest in or care for anything. In the Septuagint, the verb-form denotes losing heart to the point of despair (cf. *SC* 170, 84–90, 85, Guillaumont). In Origen, it can mean tired, lazy or disheartened as in "tedium of work" (*taedium laboris*) or "surfeit of the good" (*satietas boni*) leading to the fall of created intellects from contemplation of God (*De princ*. 2, 9, 2; 1. 3. 8). In the monastic setting, it takes on the meaning of restless discouragement, and in Evagrius its complex psychological nature is charted together with its overwhelming physicality: suffocation, stifling.

Akêdia is like a virulent form of psychological entropy that shuts off the psyche's emotional capacity in both the upward and horizontal dimensions, swallowing up all other thoughts, totally preoccupying the monk and "accustomed to envelop the soul and suffocate the *nous*" (*PR* 36, 4–6). The other demons attack parts of the soul. *Akêdia* stifles the whole soul (at least the whole soul divided into its parts), especially the rational soul. So in the *Disciples of Evagrius*, it is linked with the rational part (177, 2), whereas in *Refl.* 40,[7] Evagrius roots it in desire and spirit as well. Elsewhere, Evagrius describes how *akêdia* is a prolonged "movement" of *thymos* and *epithymia* (Psalms 118.28; *PG* 12, 1593b), containing nearly all the other thoughts (Psalms 139.3; *PG* 12, 1664b).[8] In other words, *akêdia* is so pervasive it cannot be confined to any one part. It is "heaviest" (*barutatos*); and it drowns or suffocates (*enapopnigein*) even the *nous*. Its demon makes the day seem fifty hours long, suggests that one be anywhere except where one is, then goes in the opposite direction to suggest that place doesn't matter because God can be worshipped anywhere, but then brings "before the eyes" the length of the ascetic toil in order to swamp the mind entirely (*PR* 12).

---

[6] Though it is to be found in a list of three special temptations of Christ – sleep, *akêdia*, and cowardice – in Origen's *Homilies on Luke* 29), and it is highly nuanced in the principal texts where it occurs (*PR* 10; *Antirrhetikos* VI, Frankenberg, 520–31; *8TH* 13–14, *PG* 79, 1157c–60c).

[7] Cf. *TH* 18.

[8] See generally Stewart, 22 and notes.

In *PR*, after the introduction and eight *logismoi* (1–15), Evagrius proposes remedies (15–33) against each *logismos*. Since in *akêdia* what effectively happens is that the soul becomes a kind of frozen unit in a "brown study" without light from above, Evagrius acutely suggests that then is the time "with tears to divide the soul in two, one part to encourage; the other to be encouraged" (*PR* 27) in order to create hope and stand firm where one is. In other words, use emotion to puncture the inertia; but simultaneously divide the self to avoid being a sitting target and to remind oneself that the directive principle actually exists so that you can begin to hope (*PR* 27). Evidently, this strategy is developed from Evagrius' teacher, Macarius the Great,[9] who, according to *PR* 29, advised a double attitude: for the soul one should live as though tomorrow will be one's last day, but one should treat the body[10] as though one will live with it for many years. The first cuts off every thought that comes from *akêdia*, while the second keeps the body healthy and maintains its proper control or abstinence (*egkrateia*). We should note the appropriateness of dividing the soul in this case: *akedia* so swamps the soul that the soul believes it is a single body-like object and in no sense an agent. Division or separation is therefore the first moment of agency so that difference can be harnessed into the future integration of all the soul's powers.

What about the order of *logismoi* and the structure of materiality? Does Evagrius' theory originate with him and the monastic milieu of his day? What is the structure of the soul's fall and breakdown? As far as *logismos* (or *logismoi* plural) is concerned, the roots of Evagrius' theory are to be found in Scripture and Christian monastic thought. As Guillaumont shows (*SC* 170, 37 ff.), the closest source is the *Life of Anthony* where one finds the view that bad thoughts are used by the demons against monks (*PG* 26, 27): "if [the demons] see any Christians, especially monks … making progress, they first … lay down stumbling-blocks [that] are impure thoughts (*tuparoi logismoi*)" (*Life* 23, 1). A similar view is found in Origen,[11] who makes the same association between thoughts and demons[12] and thoughts and spirit (*pneuma*).[13] A more distant model is Biblical, Genesis 8.21:"the thought (*yésér*) of man is evil from his youth", Ecclesiasticus 15.14: "It is Yahweh who from the beginning has created man and given him the power of his *yésér*", where the term *yésér* in Hebrew is rendered by the Greek *diaboulion*, and in the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, in which the Rabbinic theory of two inclinations, the good (*yésér hattob*) and bad inclination (*yésér hara*), is set out.[14] *Yésér* itself is never translated by *logismos* (Guillaumont, 62), but by *diaboulion*, *dianoia* (Genesis 8.21;cf. 6.5) *enthymêma* (Ecclesiaticus 27.6; 37.3), *ennoêma*

---

[9] As well as Anthony, *VA* 19; cf. also I Cor. 15.31.

[10] C*hrêsthai*; cf. Plato, *Alcibiades* I, 130a ff.

[11] Cf. *Commentary on St. Matthew* 21 on Matthew 15.19: "from the heart come wicked thoughts (*dialogismoi*) …."

[12] Cf. *In Cant*. 3, ed. Baehrens, *GCS* 33, 211; 4, 235.

[13] cf. *Homilies on Numbers* VI, 3, ed. Baehrens, *GCS* co, 32–3.

[14] *The Testament of Asher* I, 5, 6 and 8 (c. I, 3), ed. Charles, 1960.

(Ecclesiasticus 21.11, Syriac *yasra*), and *ennoia*, *Testament of Nephtali* 2, 5 (ed. Charles, p. 146) where *ennoia* and *plasma* both render *yeser*. Generally, *logismos* is positive in Biblical usage, but there are pejorative examples with adjectives added, sometimes in the singular (Jeremiah 11.19, *logismon ponêron*, wicked thought; Proverbs 15.26 *logismos adikos*, unjust thought) and sometimes in the plural (*Wisdom* 1, 3, *skolioi logismoi*, crooked reasonings; 1. 5. and 11, 15, *logismoi asynetoi*, thoughts empty of understanding), and there are many examples of the word *dialogismos*, singular or plural, with or without an adjective, understood pejoratively in the New Testament.[15]

So Evagrius is, in part, dependent upon the Judaeo-Christian tradition for his choice of the term *logismos*, as he is for his demonology. In this context, a further background is both the *Life of Antony* and Origen's teaching on the "natural movements" of human appetites susceptible to demonic influence (*De Princ*. 3, 2, 2) and on the three origins of thoughts, namely, that they arise sometimes from ourselves, sometimes from the opposing forces, and occasionally are implanted in us by God or the angels (*De Princ*. 3, 2, 4). But the temptation of Christ in the desert by the devil (Matt. 15.19), the casting out of 7 demons from Mary Magdalene (Luke 8.2) and the parable of the unclean spirit that, having been once expelled, wanders around desert places until it eventually returns to its former home with "seven spirits worse than itself" (Matt. 12.43–5; Luke 11.24–6) – all these episodes are definitive, as is the visionary text *The Shepherd* written by a former slave, Hermas, in the mid–2nd century. Hermas distinguished a good and a bad angel contending for the human heart, compiled lists of virtues and vices, identifying the vices with demons or spirits, distinguishing the presence of good or evil powers by means of an analysis of their emotional effects and insisting that demonic suggestions can be resisted.[16] This becomes central for Anthony, Evagrius, Cassian, and Gregory the Great.

5.3 Noêmata (Representations or Concepts)

The picture, however, is much more complex. *Noêma*, concept or representation, is the word Evagrius uses (related to *logismos*) to designate the imprint of sensations upon the soul or intellect:

> all demonic thoughts (*logismoi*) bring into the soul representations (*noêmata*) of sensible things and being imprinted by them the mind (*nous*) carries around in itself the shapes of those things and from the object itself he recognizes henceforth the approaching demon. (*TH* 2, 1–5)

---

[15] As in Luke 2.35; 5.22; 6.8; 9.46–7; 24.38; and Matthew 15.19; Mark 7.21.

[16] See Stewart "Evagrius Ponticus and the 'eight generic logismoi'" (copy kindly given me by Columba prior to publication), page 5 and notes 12–16.

Evagrius does not think that all such thoughts and memories are produced by demons, only those which draw the *thymos* and *epithymia* along to act against their nature (that is, to move against the control of *nous*; cf. *PR* 86). So *noêmata*, in this sense, are not so much the concepts of mind itself, as conceptual imprints of perceptible objects, more like Stoic *phantasiai*, which are imprints in the soul, like rings upon wax.[17] The Stoic influence is confirmed in *TH* 24, 2–4, which argues that "the mind does not have the natural ability to receive at the same time the representations of two objects," a thesis of Cleanthes (*SVF* I, 484) rejected by Chrysippus (*SVF* II, 56), but held by Aristotle (under the form that it isn't possible for a single sense to receive two sensations simultaneously, *De Sensu* 447a–8a). Evagrius' reason for holding this view is to show that demons cannot tempt us all together at once, because of their incompatibility (*PR* 31, 45, 58; *Eul*. 22) and because of the nature of intellect. But Evagrius definitely prefers the Aristotelian term, *noêma*, probably because,[18] the Aristotelian theory makes a distinction between *noêma* and *phantasma* according to which *phantasma* is the image produced by the perception of the sensible object and *noêma* is already the conceptualized form of the *phantasma* in the mind (cf. *De Anima* 431b–6a). The direct relation of *noêma* to the mind is preferable for Evagrius rather than the *psyche – phantasma – aesthêton* relation, though Géhin–Guillaumont note a similar tendency in the Stoics (*SVF* II, 83).

The deeper problem, however, is whether *noêmata* come only from sensibles or from the mind or both. This difficulty is already felt by Aristotle since if all knowledge arises out of sense perception, then what happens in the case of knowledge of intelligible objects? Aristotle's answer is ambiguous: Are primary *noêmata* anything distinct from phantasms (or images of sense objects)? "Neither these nor the rest (*talla*) of our *noêmata* are *phantasmata*; but they are not without *phantasmata*" (*De Anima* 432a 12–14). Images are indispensable to all thinking, but primary thoughts or concepts (such as a concept or representation of God, or intelligible objects, presumably) are not sensible or imaginary images in that sense, and the same is apparently true of other concepts we have.[19] Evagrius develops Aristotle here, rather than Stoic theory, for in *TH* 41 he argues that the *noêma* of God is not a mind-imprinting *noêma*, and this is true for incorporeals and their *logoi* or images, the reflections of intelligible reality in our minds and world (41, 17 ff.). There are, therefore, two kinds of *noêma*, for Evagrius, one belonging to the spiritual world and the other, as derived from the perceptible world and susceptible to demonic manipulation, in need of control or extirpation.[20] So for

---

[17] Cf. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* VII, 46 (*SVF* II, 53); and for the image see also Plato, *Theaetetus* 191d; Aristotle, *De Anima* 424a 16–21; *De Mem*. 450a 30–450b5.

[18] *Thoughts/ Pensées,* 1998 (ed. P. Géhin/C. Guillaumont/A. Guillaumont), 11–28.

[19] If *talla* in the text bears the translation I have given (after Hicks, *De Anima* "… nor the rest of our *noēmata* …").

[20] Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 1,11 ff., 2,11,96, 9 ff.; 8, 4, 267, 6–10. The same seems to be true for *ennoiai*-concepts or representations (a term Evagrius uses much less than Gregory

Evagrius, by contrast with Aristotle, truly *practical* thinking has to be concerned with action but should strive to be without images.

5.4 Thought not based on Intellect?

Géhin-Guillaumont observe that Evagrius' thinking about *noêmata* and *logismoi* is no longer dependent on the Hellenic philosophical tradition, but only upon the Jewish tradition expressed by *yésér*, which frequently designates, as we have seen, the bad tendency in a human being.[21] This is a startling mistake. The notion of a thought somehow related to mind but not really its product is fundamental to the Platonic tradition. It is true, in particular, of the "bastard form of reasoning" (*nōthos logismos*) in Plato's *Timaeus* 52 a–c where focusing upon the space in which things come to be (*chôra*), a dreamlike state comes over us:

> space … graspable by a sort of bastard reasoning with non-sensation *(anaisthêsia*), barely an object of belief to which we look and dimly dream and say it is necessary that all that exists should exist ….

Here is a form of thinking not strictly that of intellect, but a bastard, space-based reasoning focused upon things.

5.4.1 Noêmata and Demons

This view is exactly what we find developed both in regard to *noêmata* and to demons in Plotinus during the century before Evagrius. In *Ennead* III, 5 (on love and the *Symposium)*, Plotinus develops the idea that soul's Love has a radical incompleteness, a permanent incapacity to be satisfied, because of the material element in it,[22] an incompleteness true of the whole spirit-world (*pan to daimonion*). In the case of good spirits and human beings, love and desire of the good make up for the deficiency, but – and here follow the important passages worth citing in series below:

> those who are ordered under other spirits (*daimonas*) are ordered (*tetachthai*) under different ones at different times leaving their love of the simply good inert (*argon*), but acting under the control of another demon whom *they chose* according *to the corresponding part* (*meros*) of that which is active in them, the soul. (III 5, 7, Armstrong)

---

or Basil), which can be either negative or positive (see *PR* 37 – and Guillaumont's comments ad. loc. that tend to equate *ennoia* with *doxa*-at least from Plotinus' similar question: do the passions move our representations/opinions or our opinions move the passions?). See also *PR* prologue 28.

[21] Cf. *TH* 28 (introduction); cf. 31.

[22] Cf. Armstrong, Plotinus, *LCL* III, 190 note 1.

Three things should be noted: First, Plotinus implicitly attaches his demonology to the tripartite soul. Second, "inert of the simply good," like argon gas or boring, inertia, deprived of the light of the good (cf. VI, 7, 21), is almost exactly *akêdia*. Third, action (*energoun*) proceeding from a particular focus in which one is both active and passive, as above "acting under the control of", is entirely characteristic of Evagrius. Take, for instance, *TH* 7, where Evagrius discusses the active and passive "cutting" characteristics of thought: how good thoughts get "cut" into bad and bad into good. Evagrius sees a double relationship at work in this activity: "But if one of the thoughts which cuts lingers, then it establishes itself in the place (*chôra*) of what is cut and henceforth, according to that thought, the man will be moved in acting (*energêsei*)." The use of the term *chôra* shows that Evagrius is thinking of Plato, just as *energêsai* shows the Aristotelian side of his thinking, but the very notion of cutting in this context probably owes something to Iamblichus for whom while gods "cut through" matter and separate with divine power, demons are strictly limited to a single function and, devoid of reason and judgment, they either divide or bring together in this strictly limited fashion, "just as the function of a knife is to cut" (*DM* 4, 1; 5, 12). So a (demonic) thought that cuts matter in this way lingers (*chronizein*) and festers and, despite its limited power, becomes a habitual motive force. The image of the pruning knife, it has been suggested, may come from *Republic* 1, 353a,[23] but Iamblichus and Evagrius probably derive it from the divided line and its "cuts:" *eikasia* or guesswork, characteristic of demons. And the lowest "cut" on the divided line lacks the clarity of its related "cuts" in the soul, yet simultaneously possesses a remarkably limiting and limited motive power.

Plotinus continues in III, 5, 7:

> But those who are impelled by desires (*epithymiais*) for evil things have fettered all the loves (*erôtas*) in them with the evil passions that have grown up in their souls, just as they have fettered their right reason (*logon ton orthon*), which is inborn in them, with the evil opinions which have grown upon them. So, then, the loves which are natural and according to nature are fair and good; and the loves of a lesser soul … both are *in substance* (*en ousiai*). But the loves which are against nature, these are passive affections (*pathê*) of the perverted and are not in any way *substance* or *substantial realities*, and *are not any longer products of the soul*, but have come into existence together with the vice of a soul which now produces things like herself in her dispositions and states … the other evils are not acting from herself (*ex autês energein*), but are nothing other than passive affections (*pathê*); they are like *false thoughts* (*pseudê noêmata*) which do not have substances under them (III 5, 7, 36–50, Armstrong).

Here in one passage we have the outlines of both a demonology and a theory of *noêmata* which do not come from *nous* and therefore are not grounded in

[23] *DM*, 2003, 205 note 52.

substance. Elsewhere, Plotinus contrasts *peplanêmenos logismos* with *orthos logismos*, language close to that of Evagrius.[24] Or again, he speaks of a *noêsis* (the thought of intellect) "which wants to be *noêsis*," but is *anoia*, "without thought," and, like Plato's "bastard reasoning" in the *Timaeus*, "… the mental representation *phantasma* of it (matter) will be bastard and not genuine, compounded of an unreal part and with the different *logos*" (*Ennead* II 4, 10, 7–11), that is, "by virtue of a reasoning not from intellect (*logismô ouk ek nou*) but emptily (*kenôs*)" (II 4, 12, 33). Our minds can face in two directions, inward within mind itself, or outward where images may bend or warp our real thought-capacity. In Evagrius, one means of fighting against demons is to remind oneself that the cause of sin (*hamartia*) is nothing created by God and, in fact, "not a thing subsisting in substance (*hyphestos kat' ousian*) nor a thought (*noêma*) of a thing nor again an immaterial intellect, but a pleasure hateful to a human being born out of free will, which compels intellect to make evil use of God's creations" (*TH* 19, 1–19).[25]

So while Evagrius' thought is his own, Plotinus nonetheless provides a vital philosophical background for understanding the fall of intellect and soul through the passions by virtue of reasoning or thoughts which have nothing substantial in them, but are instead empty and based upon matter. Equally crucial is Iamblichus' theory of demons and images. The art that is productive of images springs from matter and can be manipulated by demons, he argues. Images in matter are not demonic elements themselves, but we human beings can be shaped and fashioned by demons and so anything remarkable that comes from our own power or faculties has to be suspect. Only inspiration from the gods alone – "demiurgic creativity" – can be trusted by virtue of the vehicle – or intelligible body – that provides a medium through which divine images take possession of the imaginative power in us either by direct divine presence or by illumination. So any theory of divine inspiration based on matter or solely upon psychic and intellectual faculties runs the risk of being empty delusion (*DM* 3, 14; 2, 11; 3, 28–31). Evagrius' thought has to be situated in these contexts. His theory of concepts and images is related to Aristotle but colored decisively by Plato's *Timaeus* and Plotinus' theory of matter-based reasoning, empty of real thought. In sum, we have a distinction, not even suspected in modern thought, between the substantial, intelligible thought of intellect proper, based on divine substance, created beings and *logoi*, and a thicker, rigid thinking, based upon neither substance nor intellect but upon ambiguous sense-derived images that can dupe the ego into thinking it thinks when in fact it does not.

---

[24] Cf. VI, 8, 2; *PT* 15, 1, 30, 3; *TH* 7, 17.

[25] Cf. *Disciples* 118; 165 cited in Géhin–Guillaumont, 219 note 3. For evil as *parhypostasis* in Gregory and Neoplatonic thought, Chapter 6.3 below.

5.5 At the origins of the Deadly Sins Tradition: the strange structure of Matter and Thought

Evagrius has a stranger version of this complex of theories in *TH* and *Refl*, where thoughts are classified according to their more or less abundance of matter:

> Of thoughts some are without matter (*aulai*), others have a little matter (*oligoüloi*) and others have a lot of matter (*poluüloi*): without matter are those which come from the first pride, a little matter, those which come from fornication, a lot of matter, those which come from vainglory. (*Refl.*44)

Details of this classification remain thoroughly obscure. The terms *poluülos* (much-mattered) and *oligoulos* (little-mattered) are almost unparalleled (see *LSJ*), although the notion of "more or less" of body occurs in Plotinus (III, 6) as does the idea of a fall into impurity involving "much of body," association "with much materiality" (*tô hylikô pollô*), and reception of, or transformation into, another form by mixture as with mud, dirt or earthiness.[26] A similar understanding of grades or different consumptions of matter leading to its transformation into the purity of fire is part of Iamblichus' thought in the *DM*,[27] where the theory is also linked to the contrast between demiurgic creativity that is whole and unified and the multiplicity of material powers that have to do with shadow-making and the delusions of wholly passive matter (*ta plasmata tēs pampathous hulēs*) that can be used by demons to shape us.[28] Evagrius' thought again bears affinity with this background, but develops it in new directions.

In *TH* 14, vainglory is said to be the only thought which has much matter in the sense that "it embraces the *entire* inhabited earth and opens the door to *all* the demons … filling the *nous* of the poor monk with many *logoi* and things … because of which he has to take care of *all the traumas* of his soul." So vainglory seems to be the material source for all the other *logismoi* which have different relations to matter, and it is even said to give birth to "the first pride" (presumably in the ascending order of *logismoi*; see *TH* 14, 11–14), namely, that of Lucifer (see *PR*, Prologue, 16–17), which is literally without (*sensible*) matter (cf. *Disciples* 33, 69; compare the emphasis on imagination/fantasy in *8TH* 8, 10). Pride and vainglory, then, the only ones to survive after the defeat of the other thoughts (*Refl.* 57), are respectively without matter and much-mattered, and seem to be the root-vices for the participation of the other *logismoi* in relative immateriality and materiality. Anger, for instance, is said to be much mattered (*Disciples* 161). In *TH* 36, 1, unpurified thoughts in general provide "many matters for increase (*pollas eis auxêsin hulas*) and extend to many things, crossing great seas in thought (*dianoia*) and … making long journeys because of the great heat of passion." So vainglory,

---

[26] Cf. *Enneads* I 6, 5, 41; I 8, 13, 14 ff.

[27] Clark, Dillon, Hershbell, 2003, 246; 76–8; 188–90.

[28] Ibid., 188–92; 196.

anger, and presumably avarice and gluttony are the much-mattered engines of this psychology. Why, on the other hand, should fornication and its effects be little-mattered? What are its effects? They cannot be gluttony because gluttony is much-mattered. Either the reference is general or Evagrius refers to the other little-mattered thoughts. Perhaps then fornication is connected upwards to pride (through sadness and *akedia* that may appear little-mattered) and draws matter from the body or from outside itself. *Refl.* 47 seems to adopt the latter position: "Among thoughts some draw their matter from outside, those of fornication from the body." While the picture is not entirely clear, one set of four appears to be much-mattered, namely, vainglory, anger, avarice and gluttony; and the other set, little or no mattered, namely, fornication, sadness, *akedia* and pride.

So, if we take everything Evagrius has to say into account (*TH* 14; *Refl*. 44; 47; *8TH* 1, 4–6), we may legitimately draw the following conclusion: the classification pairs the *logismoi* in immaterial, or little-mattered, and much-mattered segments in the following descending order in sets of 2:

a) pride: no matter
   vainglory: much-mattered
b) *akêdia*:little-mattered
   anger:much-mattered
c) sadness:little-mattered
   avarice:much-mattered
d) fornication:little-mattered
   gluttony:much-mattered

In other words, pride and vainglory give rise to the other *logismoi*, on the one hand, as a continuum of immateriality stretching into little-mattered *logismoi*, from pride, *akêdia*, sadness, to lust as the top half of each set in all four cases and, on the other, as an extension of much-matter, from vainglory, anger, avarice to gluttony. This can also be seen from the bottom up: from gluttony to vainglory and fornication to pride. Where does this view come from and what new light does it throw on the psychology of the deadly sins' tradition?

5.5.1 Evagrius and Republic 8–9

If this twinned relation between relative immateriality and materiality is correct, so that the eight *logismoi* are in sets of two at each level of descent or ascent; and if this schema is mapped onto the tripartite soul, as it is; and if the structure of matter and of thought here is closest to the Platonic tradition, then we are almost certainly dealing with a hidden tradition of cognitive psychology based upon Plato's *Republic*, among other sources, and particularly upon the four kinds of devolved constitutions or individuals in *Republic* 8–9, for this exactly fits the degenerative possibilities represented by the fall from the timocratic to the tyrannical conditions mapped out in those books. All four individuals are derived

from a single aristocratic parent in whom the whole soul functions integrally, but holistic functioning starts to unravel in the middle constitution, namely, the timocratic, and to become progressively fragmented in the oligarchic, democratic, and tyrannical lives. Since each individual, on Socrates' account, is pulled in two different directions (*Republic* 572 d 1: *agomenos amphoterôse*), in one way towards the life above him and in another in the downward direction by what is effectively an increasing horde of demonic forms marshaled under a demon *Eros*, then each level yields a double tendency in its descent, that is, in the direction of immateriality, on the one hand, and of deepening materiality, on the other.[29]

This deconstruction of the psyche is complex precisely because it resists unification; all its trajectories are related negatively and experienced as forms of disintegration, division, and madness. At the same time, the four conditions/individuals/constitutions of the *Republic* can be glimpsed at different levels: a) Pride and vainglory are particularly the failings of the timocrat, namely, one who is ruled by a sense of honor or shame, but now out of control; b) *Akedia* and anger, while belonging in different measures to different states, are characteristic of the oligarch in transition, namely, one who has little but contempt for a life based upon the good or even honor (such a life is *nothing* for him), but carries a definite anger that even honors are taken from him; c) sadness and avarice are characteristic of the democratic life, namely, a life of nostalgia for the past but consumed by market values and the need for self-aggrandizement; finally d) fornication and gluttony are especially characteristic of tyranny as the most virulent forms of complete slavery to desire and object-dependence that can look very attractive from outside. In Evagrius, the *Republic* side of this has become almost entirely transformed into a new and acute psychological, diagnostic tool for charting the break-down of the proper healthy life of the soul. This is how the soul becomes sick in the midst of a life that can appear otherwise normal to any casual observer. But in each trajectory of such sickness, all the trajectories seem to lie in waiting.

Two further points are worth making. First, these *logismoi* indicate tendencies or states of soul. Both Evagrius and Plato use the word *katastasis* for state or condition of soul. Both scripture and the ancient pagan tradition are aware of a cognitive psychology in which *logismoi* are not based upon intellect or being. Gregory's similar use of *logismos/noema* (and his curiously similar view of materiality in the *DAR* 100c)[30] tends to confirm that we are dealing with a shared tradition of interpretation.

Second, Evagrius' dream-psychology, undoubtedly expressing his own experience, is colored by Plato's picture of the integrated dream and waking life of

---

[29] Matter as such is, of course, the discovery of Aristotle, but this interpretation obviously comes through the perspectives of late antiquity. What is not so obvious to us might have been much clearer to others and have provided good reason to change a covert Platonic eight-fold structure into a more "Christian" seven deadly sins tradition.

[30] *VM* 2, 16; cf. "stiffer", "more frozen" reasonings (*sterroteroi logismoi*) and *alogon* versus *katharon noema* in *Cant*., *PG* 44, 772a–773b (*GNO*/VI/22–6).

the aristocrat as opposed to the living demonic nightmare of the tyrant. Compare *PR* 54–6, for instance, and especially 64:

> The proof of *apatheia* is when the spirit begins to see its own light, when it remains in a state of tranquility in the presence of the images it has during sleep and when it maintains its calm as it beholds the affairs of life.

This is a passage colored by Socrates' picture of the balanced psychic ideal at the beginning of *Republic* 9, against which the devolved realities of the timocratic, oligarchic, democratic and, particularly, the tyrannical conditions will be measured. Socrates begins by doubting they have sufficiently determined the number and nature of the appetites (*epithymiai*) and this leads to the picture of how the beastlike part of the soul (*to thêriôdes te kai agrion*; cf. Evagrius, *Pr.* 5, "pray for tears … to soften your *agriotês*") can be liberated from the tempering effect of the ruling part to commit any form of crime it chooses. Socrates observes that by contrast:

> when a healthy, moderate man goes to sleep after waking his reasonable part, having come to understand himself and giving the desiring part neither too little nor too much, [it will] slumber and not disturb with pleasure or pain his best part … (571d–2a).

To become aware that "there is a terrible, wild, and lawless kind of desire in everyone," which becomes "obvious in our sleep" (*Rep*. 572 b) and so to harmonize the soul in both wakefulness and sleep is essential for Socrates, as for Evagrius. This is not to claim that the *single* source of the eight *logismoi* is the four descending lives or "reasonings" of *Republic* 8–9 (an "incommensurable … reasoning (*logismos*) of the difference between … the just and the unjust man" (*Rep*. 9.587e), the bastard reasoning of the *Timaeus,* or again Plotinus' *logismos not from nous,* but to suggest that a major unsuspected context for understanding Evagrius is a compelling *interpretation* of Platonic thought against the background of the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

5.5.2 A New Reading of the Logismoi

How does this understanding of the eight reasonings provide new insight into their psychological structure? This negative destructuring of the soul leads to the decomposition of authentic psychic-somatic life; desire gradually deconstructs the rational and spirited drives by dividing the soul – as well as itself – from an integrated unity of powers into a structure of eight doubled or twinned distinct trajectories without the new divided self being aware of the division. How are pride and vainglory distinct in this de-structure? Pride has no matter in that it is focused upon *nothing*, an empty ego that takes itself falsely to be *everything*. Vainglory, into which pride is reflected, is, by contrast, object-dependent in that it feeds upon "empty opinion" and swells in its attempt to devour *everything*, viz., a world of

material adulation. *Akedia* (or "noonday" demon) is a further negative consequence of that empty swollen movement in that it shuts down the operations of desire and spirit by a sort of material-less, object-less smog of inert boredom that gives rise, on the other side, to a negative reaction of the spirited part, namely, anger:

> The other demons are like the rising or setting sun in that they latch onto only a part of the soul. The noonday demon, however, is accustomed to envelop the entire soul and suffocate the mind. (*PR* 36)

And again:

> The demon of *acedia* … forces the monk to look constantly out the windows … Then too he puts in him a hatred for the place and for the life itself … if there is someone in those days who happens to have offended the monk, this too the demon adds to increase his hatred. (*PR* 12)

Consequently, within the now cramped condition of the divided soul, sadness or grief – in itself so natural – arises in a seemingly innocent though virulent form as nostalgia for a lost wholeness of life, experienced as a cloying sadness for some or all of the past conditions of life: loved ones, places, lost opportunities. In its general form, sadness is an existential state of nostalgia that can be particularized by individual memories or things, but is in fact profoundly *empty* of them:

> Sadness comes up sometimes because of privation of one's desires; sometimes it follows closely on anger. In the case of privation of desires … certain thoughts … lead the soul to memory of home, parents, or former life. And when they observe that the soul offers no resistance but rather follows right along and pours itself out *in pleasures of thought*, they then hold her and drench her in sadness, with the realization that former things *no longer exist nor can exist in the future* … So the miserable soul, the more she poured herself out upon these earlier thoughts, the more she is restricted and humbled by the second thoughts. (*PR* 10)

In short, sadness possesses a poignant immateriality. Its images are no longer real. Humiliation ensues and there is a subsequent need to fill a vacuum with material things. The effect of sadness, in other words, is avarice. Sadness differs from *akedia* in that it represents the reemergence of desire and spirit in a seemingly innocent form: the longing for lost innocence, pleasure and purity amongst others. *Akedia*, by contrast, stifles the mind in a blanket of the impossibility of desire or spirit. On the other side of sadness or grief, however, is the natural alternation of desire/spirit to fill present loss with things as substitutes. Thus, there ensues a desire for things almost irrational in its obsessive, object-dependent force: avarice.

Finally, fornication and gluttony deepen this object-driven tendency of avarice in the vacuum of sadness or grief. Gluttony attempts to fill the self literally with material things by the excessive ingestion of food or material things, an evident

quasi-logical extension of avarice, namely, from the unrestrained desire for everything to *be* in one's power to the desire for everything to fill or *become* oneself. Fornication, by contrast, is little-mattered, not in the same way as *akedia* or sadness, but rather in its own way: it wants to possess and to be possessed, to ingest and be ingested, but it cannot actually be satisfied on this level as simple hunger might be, since the impulse of desire, despite its perversion in this context, still leaves the other as *other* and, therefore, shows even on this level that desire is not at root object-driven or simply a material ingesting process. As Aristophanes puts it in Plato's *Symposium*, even in sexual intercourse, the soul really desires something else that it cannot put into words. This is partly what Sartre calls *nausea* in his novel, *La Nausée*: namely, the convulsion of desire itself in its inability to become the other and yet its devouring, physical dependence upon the sheer physicality of the other.

In short, what we see in a new key from this perspective is a profound meditation on the "more and less" of the Platonic indefinite dyad mapped onto the psychological experience of an oscillation between illusory nothingness and apparent multiplicity. "Matter" – in this sense, and not the good stuff created by God – has a fleeting oscillating structure in psychological experience, but remains a vanishing point of less and more without foundation in the reality of created things. Perhaps too, the elimination of sadness in the later 7 sins' tradition is a bigger loss than we have ever recognized.

5.6 Platonic Tripartition-Aristotelian Bipartition: the Republic in Evagrius and Gregory

There is a further hidden *Republic* interpretation behind the two hitherto unnoticed versions of the tripartite soul. The early Fathers are typically charged with uncritical adoption of incompatible earlier psychological and philosophical structures:[31] a Platonic tripartite division of the soul with an Aristotelian bipartite division, for example. In the 4th century, following a long tradition including Philo and Clement,[32] Evagrius and Gregory (to a lesser extent) put Plato's tripartite soul at the center of their psychology, while simultaneously admitting a bipartite division between, broadly speaking, impassible and passible forms of soul that is aligned with Aristotle's bipartite division of soul into rational and irrational powers,[33] a division apparently incompatible with Platonic tripartite psychology. In addition, both adopt two different tripartite structures: reason-spirit-desire (from *Republic* 4) and reason-desire-spirit (source unknown). Generally, Evagrius employs the second structure (reason-desire-spirit) in the sphere of *praktikē* (*PR* 86; 89) and

[31] Cf. Cherniss, 1930; Apostolopoulos, 1986, 261 and following.

[32] For details on Evagrius see A. and C. Guillaumont (note 12 below); and on Gregory see Malherbe and Ferguson, 1978, 169 note 116 and 117–2 note 140.

[33] For Gregory's eclectic psychology, see Warren Smith, 2004.

the first structure in works addressed to already initiated gnostics, such as the *KG* (4.73; 3.59). Gregory mixes both structures (*VM* 353a ff. and *DAR* 1st and 2nd; *DHO* xxix–2nd; *Adv.Apoll.* 45, 1140a–b–1st; *CL* 2nd), but there is a striking similarity in the *VM*. "Profane learning," Gregory observes, divides the soul into reason-desire-spirit, 2nd structure (II 96; *PG* 44, 353c; *GNO*/VII/i/62, 10 ff.). But in the positive functioning of the non-corrupted soul, the *Republic* 4 structure implicitly reasserts itself: spirit and desire (in that order) support the intellectual part of the soul and "all the parts cooperate with one another for good" (97; 353d). But then the fall of the rational part from its proper place is reflected in the second structure: "But if this arrangement should be upset and the upper become lower – so that if the rational falls from above, *the appetitive and spirited disposition* makes it the part trampled on – then the destroyer slips inside" (98; 353d; *GNO/* VII/i/63, 3–9). In other words, desire slips in between reason and spirit and lets the demon in. Where does this second structure come from?

The Platonic dialogues present us with many different perspectives on the soul ranging from a simple, incomposite soul in the *Phaedo* and *Republic* 10 to a tripartite structure in *Republic* 4 and the *Phaedrus* (the charioteer and horse-human and divine) and then a bipartite structure (immortal/mortal) in the *Timaeus* and also in the *Laws*, where *thymos* seems to be a species of desire rather than a part or power of soul as such;[34] but again the only tripartite structure is that of *Republic* 4 – except implicitly in the *Phaedrus* (when the "bad horse" gets its own way against reason and spirit).[35] Here desire subverts the more positive structure of *Republic* 4 as in *Republic* 8–9 (in the emergence of the timocratic/democratic/tyrannical individuals), when the individual/constitution (*katastasis*) becomes progressively divided by the negative power of spirit as an *angry* capacity to disrupt and then to be ruled by desire. Here in *Republic* 8, 553c–d explicitly, desire takes up a position *in between* reason and spirit, preventing the natural alliance between reason and spirit and giving rise to the new structure we find in Evagrius and Gregory: reason-desire-spirit.

But surely this should be a desire-reason-spirit rather than a reason-desire-spirit structure? In one sense, desire becomes the dominant force in the oligarchic, democratic, and tyrannical individuals or cities, emphasized by its wish to make itself the "great king" of Persia. In another sense, desire still needs reason's direction (cf. 554c–d), though channeled by compulsion. This new structure is what we find in Gregory and Evagrius: reason-desire-spirit.

Naturally then Evagrius uses Plato's (and Galen's) word, *katastasis*, to describe the "constitution" of the soul or human being, and Gregory situates these two tripartite structures at the level of tyranny and slavery.[36] Evagrius implicitly relates

---

[34] *Laws* 9, 863b.

[35] *Phaedrus* 253c–4e; 255e–6e.

[36] For the connection between the (Biblical) Egyptian army and (Platonic) tyranny in Gregory of Nyssa see *VM* II, 121–9; and for a direct echo of the language of *Republic* 8–9, *VM* II, 125.

his *logismoi* to the *Phaedrus* myth: Get a "little impassibility," he remarks, and "the horse of vainglory … immediately rushes to the cities" to get its fill of praise (*TH* 15). In short, here is a further interpretation of the *Republic* (and *Phaedrus*) that has escaped attention.

Several consequences of this in *Republic* 8–9 resonate with Gregory and Evagrius. The new reason-desire-spirit structure involves the shutting-down of the "whole soul", not because soul is shut down entirely but rather because in its cramped position it cannot act as the *whole* entity it once was: "… its true excellence (*aretē*) of the whole thinking and harmonized soul far escapes" the oligarchic individual" (554e). In other words, this *katastasis* is a passible condition of soul in which the individual is divided, but unaware of it: "Such a man would not then be without discord within himself, not one, but two (*oude heis alla diplous tis*), though generally his better appetites are in control of his worse" (554 c). The integral functioning of the soul in *Republic* 4 has become subject to unchecked desire so that a bipartite structure has effectively emerged between the former tripartite structure (in *Republic* 4), based on the primacy of reason, and the new structure, based on desire, or between the impassible and the passible aspects of soul.[37] From the standpoint of the unconscious, the individual – or community – has no idea that she – or it – is divided. Consequently, the recognition of division between the "parts" divided is the beginning of a remedy: the soul has to recognize dividedness before it can find its own natural, unifying agency: "When we encounter the demon of *akedia*, then is the time to divide the soul (*tēn psychēn merisantes*) into one part to encourage and the other to be encouraged" (*PR* 27). Apart from scripture and his own experience, Evagrius' thought stems from a creative interpretation of Plato's *Republic*, an interpretation that must have been assimilated into Christian thought before Evagrius, if the same structures are present in Gregory *after* his last direct contact with Evagrius in 381 or thereabouts. Where then did it come from?

The tripartite/bipartite assimilation happened early since it occurs already in the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Magna Moralia*.[38] We know the assimilation was made possible by aligning the rational/irrational distinction to the mortal/divine dichotomy of the *Timaeus* and by identifying a bipartite structure in *Laws* 9 where it is unclear whether *thymos* is a part or a *pathos* of soul.[39] Was this bipartite assimilation facilitated by the new structure of *Republic* 8, that is, by the drive of *epithymia* over *thymos* to separate the latter from the rational part and turn the lower part of soul, as in the bad horse image of the *Phaedrus*,[40] into an irrational element?

In the 3rd century, Plotinus is already aware of the reason-desire-spirit structure; he observes in IV 4, 28: "the division is one of desires insofar as they are desires (*orektika*), not of the substance (*ousia*) from which they have come." This

37 Cf. *PR* 78; 80.

38 Cf. 1182a 10–30; Vander Waedt (see note 3), 283 ff.

39 *Laws* 9, 863b; cf. Vander Waedt, 283 ff.

40 *Phaedrus* 253c–254e.

substance-desire distinction is used by Macrina in *DAR*, as we shall see, and its terminology reflects Aristotelian usage (for example *orektikon*),[41] and perhaps the general Stoic subordination of *thymos* to *epithymia*, and its designation as anger (*SVF* III, 396–7).

However, the new tripartite structure occurs earlier in Philo,[42] Plutarch,[43] and Posidonius.[44] According to Galen,[45] Posidonius likened the rational part to the charioteer which, around the age of fourteen, becomes strong enough to rule the team of horses (*thymos* and *epithymia*), that are unruly unless habituated to obey *logos*. Posidonius is interpreting the *Phaedrus* in the light of the *Republic*, that is, Socrates' analogy with child development at *Republic* 4, 441a. But when he divides the soul into rational and passible parts, he subdivides the passible into *epithymetikon* and *thymikon*.[46] Here we have the second passible structure as an interpretation of both *Phaedrus* and *Republic*.

Remarkably, however, the earliest evidence for the second structure is Aristotle's *Topics* in a discussion of differences. A universal difference, Aristotle argues, is the human character of having two feet in relation to a horse. A difference that holds for the most part is the relation of the soul's rational part to the *epithymetikon* and *thymikon*, namely, that it commands and they serve: "for neither does the reasoning faculty always command, but is also sometimes commanded, nor are the *epithymetikon* and *thymikon* always commanded but they also sometimes command, when the man's soul is wicked" (129a). In other words, Aristotle envisages a different tripartite relation exactly equivalent to *Republic* 8 or the bad horse image of the *Phaedrus*, which is effectively a division/difference into rational and irrational models. So the basis for an assimilation of a tripartite structure to a bipartite dichotomy along Peripatetic lines is therefore Aristotle's implicit interpretation of *Republic* 8 and the *Phaedrus*.

We can conclude therefore that the new structure in Evagrius and Gregory is significant, not because it produces a rigid schema in the sinful soul (for they use both tripartite forms), but because it marks the possibility of such a configuration in the ascetic life and alerts us to the fact that we are dealing with two, and not one,

---

41 *Metaphysics* 12 1072a 29 ff.

42 In Philo the different structure is implicit: when the whole soul functions as one, the *thymikon* and the *epithymetikon* are led by the charioteer and "justice comes to be; for it is just that the greater rule always and everywhere; and the rational is indeed greater, but the worse is the *epithymetikon* and the *thymikon*" (*Leg. alleg*. 1,72 ff.).

43 Plutarch divides the soul into the *logistikon/noeron* and the *pathetikon/alogon*, and subdivides the latter into the *epithymetikon* and *thymoeides*. The former serves the body, while the latter sometimes gives strength to reason and sometimes joins forces with the *epithymetikon*" (*On Moral Virtue*, 442a).

44 See Vander Waedt, 1985, 373–94, 385–94.

45 *De affectibus* I 324, 5–23 in Vander Waedt, 1985, 386 ff.

46 Following the general Stoic subordination of *thymos* to *epithymia* (and its designation almost entirely as anger) (*SVF* III, 396–7).

configuration of the tripartite soul. Since for Evagrius anger/*thymos* still retains its place as third in the hierarchy of eight reasonings (*logismoi*) or sins, there is good reason for him to use both configurations interchangeably. Even in the fall of *thymos* that cuts it off from its natural alliance with reason, there remains a negative trace of its dethronement in its earlier middle position. For Gregory too, the headlong drive of desire that pulls spirit out of its rational alliance can be represented by either configuration. The important thing is the dividedness of soul, not the rigid schema. If anger is treated as high-spiritedness with a distinct nature capable of being harnessed integrally, then *thymos* is superior to *epithymia* and a form of substance (as in Plotinus above; cf. *KG* 3, 59). But if *thymos* or anger (negative in the Stoic sense) is treated as a species of desire (as in *Republic* 8), then *thymos* is a pathos (as in *Laws* 9) and subordinate to desire. Evagrius' and Gregory's use of both structures, therefore, reflects an interpretive tradition that goes back to Aristotle and their assimilation of Platonic and Peripatetic models is not uncritical syncretism, but an interpretation of Plato's different statements about tripartition and bipartition in all the major dialogues from the *Phaedo* to the *Laws*, especially the *Republic*, an interpretation endorsed by Aristotle himself.

5.7 Demonic Suggestion

Like Plato, Origen and Anthony, Evagrius describes the origin of evil thoughts with a certain ambiguity, sometimes emphasizing the voices of the crowd or demonic instigation, and sometimes natural movements of the body or soul in the interplay between perception (*PR* 4; 38; *TH* 2–4; 40), memory (*PR* 34; *TH* 2–4; *Refl.* 59), mental images (*PR* 37), will, demons, dreams and others. (*TH* 2–4; *PR* 39). *Epithymia* and *thymos* are like flammable gases. *Epithymia* becomes enflamed (*PR* 15, 2: *ekphlogoumenê*) and *thymos* boils (*PR* 11, 1), the first seeking pleasure and the second attacking other human beings (rather than demons) or fighting for pleasure (*TH* 2; 5; 18; 36; *KG* 3; 59). So they are always vulnerable to ignition by demons, memory or bodily appetites.

Why demons? As in Scripture, Origen, Anthony, Plotinus and Iamblichus, no matter how diminished *nous* or soul may be, its being is still reflexive and dialogical, that is, capable of bending back on itself even at the level of the beast, and it unconsciously discloses, or clothes its vision with, another *subject*, in this case a demonic persona. Is demonic experience then just a facet of individual imagination? No, because such imaginations are diseased consequences of pride, sadness and anger, and because to yield to temptation is to put oneself at the mercy of outside forces; and those forces are, at least in part, demonic agents, that is, diminished and, to a certain degree, blind intelligences acting in parasitic fashion upon consciousness.

5.7.1 Evagrius' Demonology: Classification, Demonic Action, and Cognitive Psychology

Evagrius speculates freely about the origin and nature of demons, questions which on his own account cannot really be determined by human beings, since we are situated between angels and demons without direct access to either world. Evagrius' demonology is founded upon monastic literature (especially the *Life of Antony*) and its Scriptural roots, but developed, in Evagrius' own experience, from observation of the lingering effects of demonic intervention in psychological experience.

First, there are passions of the body, such as gluttony and lust (and the demons who preside over them), and passions of the soul, such as anger, which have to do with relations between human beings, and their corresponding demons (*PR* 35). Soul-passions are more persistent than body-passions, and generally touch only one part of the soul (*PR* 36), except for the demon of *akêdia* which has the capacity to envelop the whole soul and suffocate mind. Of the eight thoughts and corresponding demons then (and there are other demons, as we have seen, such as the "wanderer" of *TH* 9, 1), gluttony and lust are body-passions, while of the other six, five are attached to parts of the soul, but Evagrius also regards the eight thoughts as passions of the soul, for example in *TH*, where gluttony is attached to *epithymia*, avarice to *thymos*, and *kenodoxia* to the *logistikon*; or again in *KG* 1, 53, Evagrius distinguishes demons opposed to the *nous*, those opposed to *thymos*, and those opposed to *epithymia*. The difference is one of viewpoint. The body unfolds into its own dimension from within the multiperspectival dimension of soul. What belongs to soul from one perspective may readily be viewed as bodily from another. The blurring or obliteration of the distinction is nonetheless informative, for it tells us implicitly (as in Plato) that body is not something extra to be added on after the soul stops, so to speak, but a dimension properly to be viewed from within that of soul.[47]

What is this dimension? The soul-dimension for Evagrius is the medium of *self-recognition*, that is, a medium in which every psychic action is not a separate, isolated event, but part of a reflexive totality. From this perspective, demons represent not the reflexive totality or thought itself, but the clever, suggestive, though not truly diagnostic voice which wants to mobilize one fragmentary tendency. Passion and *logismos*, then, are not demons themselves, but only the medium through which the demon works. The struggle, as with Antony, Paul, and Plato's Socrates, inevitably a wrestling struggle (*palaiein, prospaleiein*) occurs in social life through the seduction of things or objects. In the ascetic life,

---

[47] That is to say, for Plato (*Timaeus* 36d, St. Paul (see Chapter 3.1.5 above), Plotinus (IV 3, 20–22), body is "in" soul. Cf. the view of Alexander of Aphrodisias, derived from Aristotle's *Categories*, that soul is not "in" body as in a subject – substratum since this would make the soul-body relation an aggregate of elements (Aristotle, *Cat*. 2, 1a 20 ff.; Alexander, *De Anima* 13–15; *Quaestiones* 1, 8; 2, 17; 2, 26 (Bruns).

where objects as such don't matter but thoughts assume greater significance, the struggle is more difficult in discursive thought (*kata dianoian*), for, as Evagrius states, intellect (*nous*) is "easily moved" (*eukinêtos*) and "hard to settle down" (*duskathekton*) "in relation to lawless images" (*PR* 48, 6–8; cf. 30; 46) or "when it visits the matters productive of pleasures" (*episkeptomenos ... tas poiêtikâs tôn hêdonôn hulas*, see *TH* 26, 14–15). In demonic suggestion, the operations of the cognitive faculties, far from being quasi-objective entities in their own right (in the modern sense of "objective"), contain a potential inner loop, susceptible of linkage, by suggestive voice and through material configurations to images or pleasures which deconstruct the holistic reflexivity of soul: "so that we cease to stand before our Lord God and so that we do not dare to extend our hands to him against whom we have considered such thoughts" (*PR* 46, 7–9).

How precisely does this occur in ordinary experience? How do demons affect our actions and how do we recognize their intervention? We recognize intervention, according to Evagrius: 1) from the greater persistence of psychic than of body passions and their attendant demons, as above; 2) from the fact that some demons are experienced rarely, but have a "heavy" quality, while others are frequent, but "lighter" (*PR* 1229 c); 3) from their various distinctive effects (*PR*. 31, 1229c); they attack us in succession because they cannot do so all at once or even two of them simultaneously; this means we can recognize their order and determine which accompanies which; in addition, one demon is incompatible with another: the demon of vainglory, for example, is the "adversary" of that of lust and "it is impossible for them to attack the soul at the same time" (*PR* 58); and 4) from their unpleasant smell; according to *KG* 5 78, demon bodies neither grow nor diminish and a strong smell of corruption accompanies them (see also *VA* 63).

How do they move our thoughts? Our passions, according to Evagrius, can be unleashed by perceptions (*PR*. 38) or the memory of them (ibid. 34), by thoughts based on perception, or by demonic smell (*PR* 39) which causes the soul to react with anger against the thoughts suggested by an approaching demon or again by dreams or dream-images (*TH* 4). Demons use our perceptions, memories, dream-images, and thoughts to make mind and the rest of soul act "against their proper nature," that is, to make them object-dependent and driven by *thymos* and *epithymia*, rather than self-dependent and reflexively integrated. This happens only indirectly. Demons turn mind from self-dependent contemplation by blinding it or by darkening and dulling it (*PR* 46) or by rousing up the passions that "thicken" it (*Pr.* 50, 1177 b).[48] Demons cannot bring genuine *theôria* to the mind or teach us about the *logoi* of things, as angels can (*TH* 8 generally), but they can introduce images,[49] memories, and thoughts which have the power to make an impression (*typoun*) upon the mind that yields to them; and these images: representations,

[48] This "thickening" of airy bodies relates to Middle Platonic demonology, early Pythagoreanism, and derives ultimately from what is in Anaximenes a general theory of bodily density according to the rarefaction or compaction of air.

[49] *Phantasiai*, *PR* 1233a; 1245c; *TH* 2, 1201c; *eidôlon*, 26, 1232b.

concepts, reasonings (*phantasiai, noêmata, logismoi*) are the result of perception (these are images of sensible objects), memory (based upon sensible images), imagination implicitly,[50] bodily constitution or *krasis* (temperament, cf. *Refl.*17). Evagrius sometimes sees this in relation to the two lower parts of soul:

> The demoniac thought is a conception of a sensible object (*noêma pragmatos aesthêtou*) that draws the *thymos* or *epithymetikon* in a movement contrary to nature (*Refl.*, supplementary chapter, Muyldermans, 1952, 37).

Sometimes in relation to the whole soul:

> All demoniac thoughts introduce into the soul conceptions of sensible objects, being imprinted among which the mind carries around in it the shapes (*morphas*) of those objects, and from the object itself henceforth it recognizes the approaching demon (*TH* 2).

In *TH* 25, Evagrius frames the relation between the immaterial intellect and material body by means of an intermediate notion of intellect's conception (*noêma*) of its own body through which it moves, feels, perceives and so on (on which see Chapter 7.2). The concluding lines of his discussion are as follows:

> The demoniac thought (*logismos*) is … an image (*eikôn*) of the perceptible human being constructed in discursive reason (*dianoia*), an incomplete image, with which the mind is moved empathically to say or do something lawlessly in secret as a form of address to the image which is being shaped successively by itself. (*TH* 25, 52–6)

The demoniac thought is for Evagrius, as for Aristotle, an "incomplete" image, that is, a movement connected with the potentiality or privation of matter. It works from within our self-image, that is, our own image of our sensible bodies, with which mind is moved to a passionate, but privative (*anomôs*) word or deed. The final phrase *pros to morphoumenon ... eidôlon* is ambiguous: does it mean "in relation to the image" or "addressing the image"? The latter meaning is implicit and, therefore, should be understood as a form of address. The demoniac thought uses a body or body-soul composite image, composed in our conceptual-thinking, to move mind into an internal loop of negative dialogue with the image of its own successive formation.[51] The image is "being shaped" (*morphoumenon*) successively by mind and so there is a series of privative images linked dialogically, but negatively with the empathic movement of mind itself. Our composite self-image, therefore, would appear to be of major, if largely unconscious importance

---

[50] *Phantasiai* are imaginary things and also thoughts or conceptions; there is a shift between *phantasia* and *noêma/logismos* that can be blurred easily in different contexts.

[51] Géhin, 1998, 245.

in every action. Who or what we take ourselves to be can be "plucked," "raped" by demons in temptation to turn the mind into an internal spiral of its own dialogical making from which there appears to be no exit, hence a vicious loop or double helix which we ourselves empower to disempower or destroy us.

In sum, all the elements of our psychological make-up are ours to operate freely or not, given the limiting condition that we are not fully aware of the elements in our own action. Furthermore, our actions and motives, if expressed in terms of the broad picture of psychological action, are multi-perspectival, that is, susceptible of many different spotlights. Is it thought (*ennoia*) that moves the passions or the passions that move thought (*PR* 37)? Evagrius' answer appears to be that it depends what perspective we adopt. The Stoics, for example, seem to have held a version of the first (namely, sense-based experience or passivity drives thought). Evagrius, like Plotinus who discusses precisely this question in *Ennead* III, 6, seems to hold the view that both positions are true from different perspectives.

Finally, demonic thought in this context is an extra dimension of negative sense-based experience. Not all sense-based thinking, not every image or concept is demon-provoked, as Evagrius makes clear; but demonic movement is one largely unconscious perspective to be accounted for, not because it explains our healthy functioning psychology (since it doesn't enter into that account) but because it partially explains multiple forms of aberrant psychology in accordance with a broader cosmology that recognizes the existence of other fallen, but more perverse intellect-derived agencies than ourselves and that thinks of the world not as an external object set apart from our thinking but rather as a living totality always related to our being, some parts of which appear, on different reflexive levels, to be almost entirely negative.

5.8 Classification of Demons and the Spiritual Life

How does Evagrius' classification of demons follow the full extent of soul through the three ways of life even after some impassibility has been achieved?

The extent of soul, as revealed in ascetic life generally, discloses three major classes of demons: those who work against the practical life (*praktikê*), namely, the eight *logismoi*, those who work against the way of natural contemplation (*physikê*) and those who work against theological contemplation (*theologikê*) (*KG* 1, 10), or the last two classes taken together simply as contemplation (*theôria*), as at *PR* I, 56 or in Ps. 117.1: "Among demons, one group makes war on the level of practice (*hôs praktikon*), the other on the level of contemplation (*hôs theôrêtikon*). One combats the first by justice, the second by wisdom" (*PG* 12, 1580d).

What are these other two classes of demon if the eight demons associated with the *logismoi* are already situated in the struggle of *praktikê*? Evagrius' answer appears to be that the focus of the soul shifts in a subtle way as its full extent begins to be revealed. *Praktikē* deals with the passionate part of soul, that is, *thymos* and *epithymia* principally, but with the *logistikon* or *nous* subject to their focus and,

therefore, the eight *logismoi* also assume this focus. From this perspective, perhaps, Evagrius in *TH* sees the three principal vices of the soul, and associated demons, to be gluttony (attached to the *epithymia*), avarice (attached to the *thymos*) and vainglory (attached to the *logistikon*), vices which open the door to all the other demons, even pride, which is explicitly the *prôtogennêma* of the devil himself (*TH* 1, 12). So, even though the *logismoi* and their demons can be approached from different points of view, that is, in this case from gluttony to pride, nonetheless in the descending order pride is primary. If we apply this understanding to the two levels of contemplative life (*gnôsis* and prayer, in particular, though both terms necessarily apply to all levels of life simultaneously), then perhaps we can also understand Evagrius' statements in the *PR*, that the more soul progresses, the stronger are the successive adversaries that fight against her (*PR* 59 ff.), to indicate that pride, vainglory, *akêdia*, anger, and sadness yield potentially more deadly forms of themselves the higher the soul ascends into holistic reflexivity. Evagrius rejects the view of the apostolic *Shepherd Hermas* that each person has a proper demon assigned to tempt him: "I am not persuaded that the same demons always remain about her" (*PR* 59). Instead, he takes it as a measure of personal experience that the more one progresses in the spiritual life the more adapted is each successive demon to the new level of struggle.

One, therefore, never finds simply one's own *doppelgänger* in this ascent, but a more intelligently adapted, but indefinite "other" to deal with. Identifiable behavioral imprints work usefully from different perspectives in two different directions, from the monk observing, analyzing, and learning from the traces of demonic activity and from the demon observing the behavior of the monk and inferring what is necessary to effect behavioral changes; in other words, from cognitive science, on the one hand, and behaviorist shadow-inference, on the other. But neither perspective yields any stable *identity*, for the demon invariably assumes another shadow-exercise, if unsuccessful, and the monk cannot stay where he is, successful or unsuccessful, for to stay makes one a single target unconscious of the dimensional complexity implicit in every action or non-action – unless, that is, one has achieved perfect impassibility and is rooted in God alone (see *PR* 57–61; *TH* 15), or, as Kiekegaard puts it, unless one learns "the motions of infinity."[52] *Pr.* 36 catches the movement from Kierkegaard's "Knight of Infinite Resignation," who gives up everything but secretly hopes to get it back, to the "Knight of Faith," who, by contrast, gives up everything without hope of return and yet paradoxically is given everything back:[53] "If you long to pray, renounce all so that you may inherit the all."

At any rate, in the two higher forms of *theôria* beyond the *praktikê*, we do not meet other *logismoi* and their attendant demons so much as new and unexpected forms of demons as beset the rational part of the soul and the whole soul in this ascent. For example, anger: "Whatever you do to avenge yourself on a brother who

---

[52] Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, Chapter 2.

[53] Ibid.

has wronged you will become a stumbling block for you at the time of prayer" (*Pr*. 13). Or sadness: "When the demons see you are really eager for true prayer they suggest concepts of things apparently necessary and, after a while, they stir up memory about them and move your mind to enquire into them; and when it does not find them, it is much saddened and loses heart" (*Pr.* 10). Vainglory and pride are particular temptations of the *logistikon*, above all, and the problems of the higher levels are subtle, more attenuated forms of vainglory and pride, namely, the proclivity to be impressed by perfectly good things and thus to be drawn away from God. Even, for example, when one rises to the "simple" (or bare) thoughts of things, one doesn't necessarily come to "the place of prayer" since the mind "may get involved in the contemplation of objects and waste time in considering their inner nature" (*Pr.* 56). This fine balance of time spent upon anything, expressed so often by forms of the verb *chronizein*, is crucial in Evagrius.[54] To spend too much time even upon things good, but not of primary importance, can be destructive of the balanced life of mind-soul, because the longer we spend with them the greater their gravitational pull:

> For even though these expressions are simple, contemplations of objects as they are, they impress the mind and lead it far from God (*Pr.* 56).

The Holy Spirit in true prayer "destroys the whole phalanx of reasonings and concepts that encircle the mind" (*Pr.* 62), namely, of "reasonings, concepts and meditations" derived "from qualitative changes in the body" (ibid., 62–3). Yet even this does not guarantee the monk freedom from demonic illusions even in pure prayer:

> Beware the traps of your adversaries, for it happens when you are praying purely, without disturbance, that all at once they will set before you some strange and alien form so as to lead you into thinking that God is actually localized there. (*Pr.* 67)

The only remedy from the effects of demons is removal of all multiplicity and matter (cf. *Pr.* 66–7) to a point beyond the contemplations of both corporeal and intelligible things:

> Even if the mind has become above the contemplation of corporeal nature, not yet has it seen perfectly the place of God (*topos theou*). For it can be engaged in knowing intelligible things and colored by that knowing's multiplicity (*Pr.* 57).

Or again:

> One who prays in spirit and truth no longer honors the Demiurge from his works, but praises him from himself (*Pr.* 59).

---

[54] For usage in *TH* see Géhin, 1998, index, 347.

So it is not the case that the more the soul progresses the worse it gets (enough to discourage anyone), but rather that the bigger soul becomes, the more subtle its shadow-combatant. Or, in other words, something that Plato, Paul, the Gospels, especially Luke, took seriously: all activity casts a shadow, even the good, since it is never a mere object, but the shadow of a *self-activity*: nor is it ever a stable, self-identical subject, but a manipulateable image.

So the struggle with demons is a reflection of the dimension of *self-consciousness* and, to the degree that this struggle infects *gnosis* and true prayer, self-conscious demons with more or less recognizable identities are the shadows or vampire-like image-consciousnesses who inhabit, in sometimes terrifying ways, the anger, sadness, vainglory and pride, as well as even the deepest scientific *logoi*[55] and multiplicities of the *savant*, prayerful self. If it is true that the good itself casts the biggest shadow, or that the corruption of the best person is the worst (as Socrates argues in *Republic* 6),[56] then the levels of *gnostikê* and *theologia* may well involve the defeat of some demons and yet harbor the potential trials of others. The dangers that beset inexperience are not those that trouble longer experience.

Decisive for Evagrius, therefore, as also for the great spiritual masters of the previous century, Origen and Plotinus, is the return to our original nature in God in order to live, however imperfectly in our fluctuating natures, within the threshold of the divine life. This is the threshold, for Evagrius, of substance: the "place of God" is without quantity and quality. The thought that God is actually localized is calculated to persuade that the divine is quantitative. "But the divine is without quantity and without figurative image" (*Pr.* 67). Divine substance, like that of intellect, is not subject to thoughts that imprint or leave a mark upon it; it is rather the place of *gnosis* that leaves no mark; and among contemplations that leave no mark on intellect are, first, the *noêma* of God; and, second, thoughts which *indicate the substance* (*ousia*) of incorporeals, and their *logoi* (*TH* 41). The requirements of divine-substance, very much like nous-substance in Plotinian terms,[57] go further: particularity *as such* is incompatible with substantiality, not because individuality or everything that makes a particular substance worthwhile is obliterated in divine-substantiality (for what makes any individual or particular substance worthwhile *is* substance), but rather because particularity isolated from substance is only an illusion, false appearance, or deceptive image. True understanding involves substantial intimacy, not withdrawal or making substance in one's own likeness, but the other way round:

> When you are praying, do not form images of the divine in yourself or allow your mind to be imprinted with any *particular shape*, but immaterial approach the immaterial and you will understand (*Pr*. 66).

---

55 For *logoi* see above Chapter 3 n.19.

56 *Republic* 6, 495a–b.

57 See Corrigan, 1996, 387–95; and compare Gregory in Chapter 10 (10.3–4).

Without this rootedness in the "place of God," we become prey to individualistic fantasy, of which demonic suggestion is one possible layer, even embellishing physiologically the pleasurable image one may receive in prayer that one's goal has been attained.

Evagrius has a peculiar way of speaking about this: when *nous* is settled in prayer and cannot be led astray, demons no longer come upon it from the left, but from the right. What this appears to mean is that the demons can attack intellect from the positive rather than the negative side, namely, from the viewpoint of one's goal already attained (*Pr.* 72). Indeed, the "left eye" is not privative, since it is the eye for the natural contemplation of created things (cf. *TH* 42) which demoniac thoughts can blind (a kind of "left-brain" activity?). The "right eye," by contrast, is that by which the directing faculty can be troubled by thoughts (*noêmata*) and shapes in prayer. This general phenomenon:

> is because of the passion of vainglory and because of the demon who stimulates a place in the brain and causes vibrations in the blood vessels. (*Pr.* 72)

Evagrius is plainly aware of a material basis (namely, the brain and stimulation of the cerebral cortex) not only for emotions and judgments, but also for higher spiritual states, but he does not reduce them to physiological brain-states; instead, he notes the correlation between prayer, emotion, and brain physiology, and then gives a psychological explanation how the demon seizes upon the emotion to produce a willful, but cognitive spotlight-effect in psychological consciousness, at the same time making allowance for an unconscious element in thought. His description is a remarkable mixture of demonology, cognitive psychology, awareness of the unconscious, and brain physiology; it also reveals indirectly his awareness of the (Galenic) medical tradition, as in Gregory, according to which the brain – together with the heart and liver systems – is a physiological basis for psychic operation as well as for the possibilities of higher-order functions, without being the exclusive causal determinant of that function:

> I think the demon touches the spot mentioned above, turns the light around the mind as he wishes and so the passion of vainglory is moved towards a reasoning that shapes the mind, unconsciously, to give a composite form to the divine substantial knowledge … the mind thinks there is no longer any contrary activity operative in it, and so it supposes the manifestation to be divine, a manifestation that has arisen in it by the demon who … with cunning alters through the brain the light associated with it and gives it a form, as we said above (*Pr.* 73).

5.9 Conclusion

In conclusion, Evagrius' theories of the eight *logismoi*, of mind-empty thought, of the structure of matter, and of demonic suggestion build upon the scriptural and philosophical sources available to him, but also express a hidden interpretive tradition of Platonic and Aristotelian psychologies, related to the *Republic* and *Phaedrus* (as well as to Plotinus and Iamblichus), that betrays considerable sophistication and suggests that these psychologies may not have been incompatible from a historical viewpoint. Evagrius clearly shares this general understanding with Gregory, but the eight specific *logismoi* might just have been his own innovation, modeled in some measure upon the aberrant psychological-sociological typologies of *Republic* 8–9, and revealing some subtle philosophical/psychological possibilities that have hitherto remained a hidden part of the 4th-century landscape.

This page has been left blank intentionally

Chapter 6
Gregory and the Fall of Intellect

6.1 Introduction

Perhaps mind-empty thought, focused on matter-based sense-images, is a plausible way of accounting for the difference between fluid ideas and rigid ideologies, or between lucid, meaningful communication and those moments when we have to admit, with Agathon in the *Symposium* (201b), that we did not have the slightest idea what we were thinking. But how does mind un-mind itself or forget its proper function? In his classic *DHO*, that completes Basil's unfinished *Hexaemeron*, Gregory tells us that there is a view "closer to nature from which we might learn something of the more refined doctrines." It is not clear what he means, but perhaps *physikoteron*, "closer to nature," "more physical," indicates he is drawing upon pagan learning, by contrast with Christian teaching, "the more refined dogmata", since this is what he will do. What follows has a Platonic feel about it, before Gregory makes the subject his own:

> For … the most beautiful and highest good is the Divine itself (*auto to theion*) to which all things incline that have desire for the beautiful … for which reason *we say* also that intellect, since it has come to be in the image of the most beautiful, itself also remains in the beautiful, so long as it partakes in its likeness to the archetype, as far as it can; but if it were to become outside of this, it is stripped of the beauty in which it was. (161 c)

The formulaic *phamen*, "we say," indicates agreement among members of a school and here what is agreed upon is a problem of interpretation in Plato's *Republic* and *Symposium*. The *Republic* posits the good as the supreme *mathêma*, beyond both intellect and being.[1] The *Symposium*, by contrast, in Diotima's ladder of ascent, posits the beautiful as the goal of desire and vision.[2] Are the two equivalent? The question remains open in Plato. But in Plotinus, the "beautiful" is ambiguous, indicating the beauty of intellect secondarily and that of the Good beyond it primarily (cf. *Ennead* I 6, 6–7; V 5, 12; and VI 7, 31–3), though this has been debated.[3] Gregory swiftly settles the question that though there is a distinction, the beautiful of the *Symposium* is ultimately the good of the *Republic*, but he allows for a subtlety of interpretation, namely, that the desire for "the beautiful" (*to*

---

1 *Republic* 6, 504e–509c.

2 *Symposium* 211d ff.

3 Massagli, 1981.

kalon) in intellect is a lower expression of what is "most beautiful" (*to kalliston*), namely, the good, and so the good and most beautiful is what Plato must have intended by real divinity (that is, the *form* of the divine, *auto to theion*).[4] This is an interesting example of Plato-interpretation by a Christian school on matters that compel no sure agreement among modern scholars. It accurately captures, yet transforms Plotinus' view. There are no hypostases, just the Divine, the most beautiful, highest good, and individual intellects, beautiful in its image. How then do we lose such beauty?

There follows the famous analogy of the mind formed as mirror to receive the character of the archetypal beauty it expresses, just as "the material element," or body considered as matter, serves as "a mirror of the mirror" and is ruled and held together by mind. The notion of an "image of an image" (*eikôn eikonos*) (cf. 164a), as Daniélou observes (2002, 132 n.1), may come from Philo where sometimes man is regarded as an image of the *Logos* and the *Logos* image of the Father or, sometimes, matter is an image of mind, in its turn an image of God; but mirror (*katoptron*) and image (*eikôn*) in this relation are also found in Plotinus: *Ennead* I, 4, 10 and II, 9, 2–3 in particular, express the same linked relationship Gregory has in mind here: "… and one part of our soul is always directed to the intelligible realities, one to … this world, and one in the middle between these; for since the soul is one nature in many powers, sometimes the whole of it is carried along with the best of it … and sometimes the worse part is dragged down and drags the middle with it …" II, 9, 2).

This provides context for the following remarkable passage in which mind is capable of almost total alienation from its true nature:

> so as long as one holds to the other, the community of true beauty extends proportionally through all, making beautiful what comes next through what lies above; but when a breaking apart (*diaspasmos*) of this good connaturality occurs or when … the superior follows the lower, then the misshapenness (*aschêmon*) of matter itself, when it is isolated from nature, is carried across (for matter is in itself something without form or structure) and by this shapelessness the beauty of nature is destroyed with which it is made beautiful by mind. And so the transmission of the ugliness of matter extends to the mind itself through nature, so that no longer is the image of God seen in the character of what is fashioned (*plasma*). Mind makes the idea of the goods (*tōn agathōn*) like a mirror behind its back, casts out the reflections of the good's illumination, and receives an impression (*anamassetai*) into itself of the formlessness of matter (*DHO PG* 44 161d–4a). [Cf. *DAR* 100a–c]

Certainly, Gregory thinks that thought has a physical basis, but not that matter as such is cause of thought.[5] The above passage, however, goes somewhat beyond

[4] For a discussion of such language, see Chapter 10 (10.6.3).

[5] On this see Chapter 8.

this, for we are forced to realize how completely different the worldview of late antiquity is from our own Postcartesian assumptions. For Gregory, spirit (or soul and intellect) and matter are two different realities, but they are not two different "things" (as in Descartes) or two different bodies (as in Stoicism). So while mind or intellect is spiritual, this does not mean it is not fully present in the physical universe. Mind as the healthy animating principle of the body is more fully present in a very concrete sense to body than one part of body (one finger) is present to another part (another finger). But the above passage proposes the apparently unchristian view that intellect can turn its back upon its true nature and effectively lose it under the influence of matter, a matter not simply shapeless, but *misshapen* and *ugly*. Gregory goes further:

> And in this way there comes about the genesis of evil, associated coordinately (*paruphistamenê*) with the removal of the beautiful (164a) … Such a condition does not arise except when there is the turning around (*epistrophê*) of nature to the opposite, in which the desire (*epithymia*) does not incline to the beautiful, but to what is in need of the beauty-maker; for it is entirely necessary that what is made like to matter which goes begging for its own form (*tes idias morphes*) should be shaped in accordance with it in misshapenness and lack of beauty (164b).

So, for Gregory, evil is a function of the fall of mind into matter. Mind has a capacity to make itself material, but not to assume corporeal shape, for according to the "*logos* under meditation" (as Gregory puts it at 164 a), matter has *no shape* to the point of being misshapen and ugly. So mind then cramps itself into the kind of absence matter is. But how can matter be absence deprived of quality and yet misshapen and ugly? This would seem to imply that God's creativity does not inform everything in the best possible way or that shapelessness can paradoxically assume misshapenness? Where does this "*logos*" under meditation come from?

The answer is that it is a Christianized version of a view that goes back to Plato (and Aristotle), occurs in Origen (for example *Commentary on John* 2, 13, 92–6), but is especially found in Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus.[6] The version here is Plotinian, since it is matter which is in some sense involved in the *genesis* of evil as the choice of individual words indicates (such as *epistrophê*, *anamassetai* amongst others); at the same time, Gregory is not transcribing from a text, but working out the implications of this line of thought. But there are major problems. Can Gregory really subscribe to a negative view of matter, for in Plotinus' thought privative matter is the ultimate source of evil, whereas for Gregory, good and evil are a question of choice; in the words of one scholar: there is no ontological dualism in Gregory (as in Plotinus) but only an *Entscheidungsdualismus*, a "decision dualism."[7] So, on the face of things, the above passage looks to be irreconcilable

---

[6] On this generally see Corrigan, 1996, esp. 182–6.

[7] Cf. *De Mortuis* 46, 528 a. Bournakas, 1972; Daniélou, 1974, 485–92 (who thinks that Plotinus holds an "objective reality of matter" and that "evil comes only from matter");

with Christian thought and has been considered incompatible with Gregory's later thought. Yet this passage is so important for understanding Gregory's wider theory of the privation of intellect or soul entering the field of matter, and the origin and nature of the passions in this connection, that we need a closer look at Plotinus' theory, for it forms a decisive background for understanding the worldview of the 4th century. On the surface, Plotinus seems to have only a negative view of matter and Gregory only a positive view, but the real situation in both cases is more subtle than this superficial picture appears to grant.

6.2 Plotinus and the Fall of Intellect in Matter

In the *Enneads*, soul can be filled with the darkness and indefiniteness of quality-less matter (cf. II, 4, 10–16; III, 6, 6, ff.; I, 8, 4, 28–32), but it is only in a late work that Plotinus describes this experience (*pathos*) specifically in relation to intellect:

> But how do we know what has absolutely no part in form? By completely taking away all form, we call that in which there is no form matter; in the process of taking away all form we apprehend formlessness in ourselves, if we propose to look at matter. So this intellect which sees matter is another intellect which is not intellect, since it presumes (*tolmêsas*) to see what is not its own (*ta mê autou*). As an eye withdraws itself from the light so that it may see the darkness and not see it … that it may be able to see in the way it is possible to see darkness; so intellect leaving its own light in itself and, as it were, going outside itself and coming to what is not its own, by not bringing its own light with it experiences (*epathe*) something contrary to itself that it may see its contrary (I, 8, 9, 14–26, Armstrong).

Plotinus' theory already occurs within an intertextual dialogue with many other strands within different traditions (including Plato's *Timaeus*, as we saw in Chapter 5), ranging from Alexander of Aphrodisias' *hylikos nous* (material intellect), the evil soul of Plutarch and Atticus, the "anima silvae" of Numenius, perhaps too Origen's not dissimilar theory of the fall of intellect and soul from the pneuma or spirit in *De Principiis* II, 10, 7–8, II, 9, 2, and others, or again the fallen *sophia* of Valentinian Gnosticism.[8] The word *tolmêsas*, rash presumption, suggests a Gnostic undertone and, indeed, there is a strikingly similar passage in one of the roughly contemporary Sethian Gnostic texts of the Nag Hammadi library, *Zostrianos* VIII, 1, 45–7 that describes the scattering and return of man. Here, however, Plotinus' theory is about *intellect* (not just man) and about the

---

Philippou, 1970, 251–6 (who accentuates "the demonic structure of evil"); and Vollert, 1897, 25 (who sees a "causal connection" between matter and evil: disharmony in the false relation of spirit and matter). Cf. Armstrong, 1962, 427–9, and Corrigan, 1993, 14–20.

[8] On this see Corrigan, 1996, 10–22; 223–30.

pathos intellect (and soul) experiences in its descent into matter where it becomes progressively cramped and diminished, yet remains an ego-intellect, as it were, or becomes perhaps a field of indefinite plurality, since any real identity requires the bigger unity of soul as a creative force.

6.3 Evil: Gregory and Plotinus/Iamblichus

How then does Plotinus fit into this picture? How can negative matter be compatible with a Christian view? The problem for Plotinus starts with what we mean when we speak, think about, or experience matter. The Aristotelian analysis is fine as far as a positive conception goes but, in Plotinus' view, philosophical analysis has to go further than Aristotle was prepared to take it. Certainly, matter makes a positive contribution to the formation of bodies, but if we suppose that quality, quantity, and others are forms and we push to the indeterminacy of matter (indeterminacy, Plotinus argues, we experience in ordinary life as absence or non-being), we get a different picture. Matter is positive, as contained by form; but as indeterminate, matter is "other" than everything else, bearing a negative relation to form, and not even really "other; if the word "other" implies a formal, unitary notion, but "others," Plotinus argues (in II, 4, 13), that is, indeterminate *plurality* negatively characterized by *privation* or absence of form.

Aristotle had made privation a formal concept (thus, form and privation are contrasted, in the *Physics*, with matter as their underlying "stuff"), but Plotinus insists this leaves indefiniteness unexamined without indicating the negative, indeterminate plurality which is part, for him, of the analysis of a non-formal matter (see II, 4, 6–15). In this sense, matter appears as a field of indeterminate plurality (which, Plotinus suggests, is really Plato's "place of unlikeness", I, 8, 13, 16; cf. *Politicus* 273 d8–e1; also Augustine, *Confessions* VII, 10, 16). At the same time, matter's indeterminacy is such that it is *potentially everything* in the context of form, while *actually* being no one thing (a formula employed in different ways by Plato, Aristotle, and the Peripatetics). The two poles, positive and negative, are two sides of our experience; but in terms of matter's negativity, this means we cannot speak about truth or falsity in the same way as we can for a world of determinate things, for matter is neither an independent essence nor a thing, and there are no things or distinct formal points of reference in an indeterminate landscape. Formed matter or what Gregory calls the "material condition" is an entirely different question. But in the deep privative sense, matter does not exist except with form. Of all the qualities "in themselves thoughts (*ennoiai*) and bare concepts (*psila noêmata*)", "no one of them in itself is matter, but when they come together in relation to one another, matter comes to be" (*In Hexaemeron*, *PG* 44, 69c–d). Or again, in *DHO*, *PG* 44, 212d ff., this notion of matter is consistent with the view that everything comes from the divine will, as Gregory argues: "for we shall find all matter to be composed of certain qualities of which if it is stripped, it

can in no way be grasped in itself by *logos*."[9] The same understanding is already in Origen (*De Principiis* IV, 4, 7) who argues that if one adopts the view that matter comes into existence as the result of qualities or that body is composed of qualities in a matter capable of receiving them but discernible only by intellect, then it is absurd to believe, as so many did, in an uncreated matter, for if qualities are everything, and qualities are created by God, then matter is not uncreated (cf. *De Principiis* II, 1, 4). Plotinus holds a similar view although he is by no means as clear as Origen on this subject.[10]

Nonetheless, what about matter as evil, a Plotinian view later Neoplatonists could not accept? If we mean by matter "stuff" or something formed, then matter is positive, as we have seen. If we mean privation, indefiniteness, and negative indeterminacy, then matter in this sense, although "really non-existent" is not bland nothingness or simple absence, but negatively charged in relation to the forms which enter into its negative field of privation. From this perspective, according to Plotinus, matter is an absence, negativity or non-being which has frighteningly real effects in the world and can even come to condition much of our thinking, since absence can be experienced in as many ways as matter appears.

So matter in this negative sense is false, misformed and evil (cf. II, 4, 16). Plotinus' view can be misleading and, it is true, he also uses the word "principle" of matter, but clearly he does not mean that matter is an unconnected principle separate from form or that it is really a "principle" or causal beginning (*archē*) at all. Its negativity, its power to corrupt what enters into the field, is privation-absence and a negative relation to form. And when Plotinus says there is no "middle" between form and matter (for example in VI, 7, 23, 13–14) as between substance and anti-substance (I, 8, 6), he does not mean either that matter is an independent or separate principle (it is, after all, generated by soul; cf. III, 4, 1) or that it somehow has its own independent power (matter is a "cause" or "principle" only in the sense of *deficiency*, not efficiency; matter is the *deficient* cause of the fall of soul, in Augustine's terminology later, but soul provides the efficient power and freedom; cf. I, 8, 14), or even that form is not united with matter, but rather that matter as pure privation is different from form in a more extreme fashion than any kind of formal contrariety. Negativity in precisely this sense cannot be fitted into a generic scheme of things.

---

[9] Cf. *DAR PG* 46 124c–d; and Basil, *Hom. In Hex*., *PG* 29, 21a–d. For *ennoia*/*epinoia* ("conception" – "concept"/ "reflection" – perhaps reflecting a subtle change in emphasis between more immediate and common-human conception versus reflection) used sometimes interchangeably by both Basil and Gregory in the debate with Eunomius as a positive mode of knowledge about God – and elsewhere, we can compare, from the long history of these terms, Origen's usage in his biblical commentaries (*Comm. John* 10, 37, 246) and Plotinus' varied usage (II 9, 1, 6; VI 6, 6; V 8, 7) and for *ennoia* – VI 5, 1, 1 ff.; see also for Basil of Ancyra's focus upon the formation of concepts about the incomprehensible divine existence, Ayres, 2004, 191–207.

[10] Cf. Porphyry, *In Tim*. Fr 51 Sodano; fr. 236F. Smith.

Later Neoplatonists, like Iamblichus, Proclus, and Simplicius, reject the view that matter is the cause of evil in the soul and that it is evil or a principle of evil[11] in favor of the view that evil is *parhypostasis*, parasitic existence, and failure, ultimately uncaused.[12] It is true, as we have indicated above, that Plotinus uses the word "principle" of matter and that he is unclear (even for modern scholars)[13] about the generation of matter. It is also true that modern scholars have questioned Gregory's consistency on the non-existence of matter and its apparently evil, misshapen character in *DHO*. Daniélou's view that matter is "an objective reality of evil" beyond the individual subject for Plotinus, and that "evil comes only from matter,"[14] however, simply misrepresents Plotinus. The issue is more a question of terms than of substance: a) matter is not the cause of evil in the soul (for either Plotinus or Gregory) but the soul; matter is the negative occasion, not the cause (though Plotinus' language is misleading, cf. I, 8, 14); b) matter is not evil, but privation; and privation is a sort of *parhypostasis* or failure; this is at least what Plotinus' means, and, therefore, evil on the part of privation is uncaused (Pseudo-Dionysius and Aquinas adopt this view) and not a formal principle. It can therefore hardly have an "objective reality."

This is the way Gregory interprets Plotinus: the genesis of evil that introduces the formlessness of matter even into the mind "arises out of the taking away of the beautiful" (164a). Free will and privation are linked dialectically within a single analysis of evil in the *DHO*. Gregory's use of the verb *paruphistemi* in this context probably reflects Iamblichus' (and Proclus') view of evil as a *parhypostasis*, but in context it captures Iamblichus' critique and simultaneous interpretation of the deeper intent of Plotinus' own theory. We get to see – almost unmediated – an instinctive, though thoughtful, reaction to a theory that, through Proclus, will have an undeniable effect upon Pseudo-Dionysius, Aquinas and Dante but will only make a mark in the modern world by its many after-images.

Gregory seems to understand Plotinus profoundly – so well that in later works he eliminates such expressions as the "misshapenness" of matter to avoid giving misleading impressions. This does not result, however, in what Bournakas calls "a dualism of choice," because evil consequences of individual intelligent action remain *material*, namely, intrusions of alienation, absence and non-existence into the psycho-physical world. Evil, therefore, in Gregory's view throughout his writings, springs from free will, thrives upon falsity and deception (cf. *DHO* 44, 200a–c), and has alarmingly real consequences. In fact, an implicitly negative view of matter as privation below the level of true individuality, or of nature,

---

[11] *De Malorum Subsistentia*, 30–37; Simplicius, In *Phys*. 249, 26–250, 3; *Commentary on the Categories* 108–9.

[12] And yet negative terminology about matter in the privative sense continues to be used by Iamblichus, for instance – see *DM* III 28.

[13] See for example the disagreement between Schwyzer, 1973, 266–80; O'Brien, 1991 and Corrigan, 1986, 167–81; 1996, 258 ff.

[14] Daniélou 1974, 485–92; 487; also 1954, 259–62.

remains even in later works, for example: a) in the *OC* 69a (*GNO*/III/iv/66, 10), as the "more dishonorable matter," foreign (*allotrion*), counterfeit (*nothon*), which must be made to disappear (cf. 36a–b (*GNO*/III/iv/31–2); 73a (*GNO*/III/iv/71, 2–9): "there is no *nature* (*physis*) of vice"); b) in the *VM*, as "the destruction of the matter of impiety" (393 a); and c) in the *Homilies on Ecclesiastes* in the notion of evil as a privative field reflected partially in each vice (*PG* 44 681c).

From Gregory's treatment of materiality, and of mind, soul, and body in this perspective, we sense what is decisive. First, there are two fundamental life-perspectives at stake: one polarity according to which body and matter support, and are anchored in, soul and intellect which are, in turn, themselves focused in the good and the beautiful; that is, body and matter are *in* soul, rather than soul in body (a feature of Plato's *Timaeus* as well as of Pauline thought); and a second polarity focused upon non-being ("falsehood is a kind of impression which arises in the understanding about non-being: as though what does not exist does, in fact, exist," *VM* II, 23; 44,333a; *GNO*/VII/i/40, 4 ff.), according to which mind and soul are in body and matter, where matter and body become vanishing points for what is real and the natural order of the tripartite soul is reversed (the rational part or faculty becoming subordinate to the passible, to desire and passion). The two life-perspectives (also in Paul and Origen) are, at this negative point, furthest removed from each other, opposed as opposites, even contradictories.

Second, this does not mean that body is evil, however mortal it may be; body in this more negative sense is "flesh" or, from Genesis, "the dead and earthly covering of skins … placed around our nature" after the fall and which "have to be removed from the feet of the soul" (*VM* II, 22, 333a; *GNO*/VII/i/39, 24–6) or as clay representing the cycle of desire locked into itself, as in "the material life" (*tou hylôdous biou*, *VM* 344b–c; *GNO*/VII/i/50, 20). The material life or earthly covering of skins is *not* bodily existence, for human beings had a body in Paradise. But like circumcision (cf. *De beat*. 8, *PG* 44, 1292b; *GNO*/VII/ii/161) and baptism which involve shedding those skins, material life is *all* the outer accretions of human life (as in Plato's *Republic* 9, in Socrates' famous image of the soul and sea-god Glaucus): material, bodily, psychic, *and* intellectual, that is, *any* form of existence based upon non-being, including animality or purely biological existence without spiritual significance (including the passions, sexuality, mortality, and thought in those perspectives). In this, Gregory is close to Evagrius: "the coverings of skin … are the thought of the flesh (*to phronêma tês sarkos*),"[15] according to Paul in Romans 8.6: "for the thought of the flesh is death, while the thought of the spirit (*pneuma*) is life and peace." And "the thought of the flesh" includes "the reasonings" associated with the parts of the soul (just as in Evagrius):

[15] *DV SC*, XIII, 1, 12–13; and for other references and discussion of these questions in Origen, Philo, the Gnostics, Clement of Alexandria, and others see Malherbe /Ferguson, 1978, 160–61, note 29.

> For who does not know that the Egyptian army [in pursuit of the Israelites] are the varied passions (*poikila pathê*) of the soul by which man is enslaved … For the fierce impulses of reasonings (*tous thymôdeis tôn logismôn*) and the impulses to pleasure, sadness, covetousness are impulses of the above mentioned army. (*VM* II, 122, 361c; *GNO*/VII/i/71, 3–10; cf. also 364a–b; for Evagrius, *KG* 6, 49)

The phrase *tous thymôeideis tôn logismôn* is a direct equivalence of Evagrius' thought about the *logismoi* focused in the "spirited part." Further on, Gregory argues in language reminiscent of Exodus as well as of Plato's depiction of the tyrant in *Republic* 8–9, that if we do not destroy this opposing army (*tês enantias stratias*), then we bring the tyrant, still alive, along with us:

> Those who pass through the mystical water in baptism must put to death the phalanx of vice – such as covetousness, uncontrolled desire (*epithymia*), greedy thought (*harpatikê dianoia*), the passion of vanity and pride (*hyperephania*), fierce impulse, anger, wrath, malice, envy, and all such things. Since the passions naturally pursue our nature, we must make them corpses in the water, both the wicked movements of thought (*dianoia*) and the products of these (364a–b) … For uncontrolled passion is a fierce, raging master to the enslaved reasoning (*logismos*) … and all the other things performed through vice are so many tyrants and masters to which if one is enslaved, even if he should happen to have passed through water, in my opinion at any rate, he has not yet touched the mystical water whose function is the destruction of evil tyrants (*VM* 44 364a–d; *GNO*/VII/i/72–4)

So for Gregory the tyranny of the passions is a complex affair that involves the enslavement of the *dianoia* by the lower powers of soul, as we have seen. Here there is a complex dialectic at work, with an increasingly monological focus, that is, a focus upon only one limited trajectory of thought or impulse, and yet at the same time indefinitely multiple; for here free will, the misshapenness of matter as privation, the passions, and the demons (as represented in the army of the Egyptians) are different aspects of the corruption of soul-thought, so much so that we cannot drive the demons out simply on our own without divine help and the sacraments (baptism as death in water transformed into life), for when the proper balance of the whole being is lost, "then the destroyer slips inside and no opposition from the blood resists his entrance" (*PG* 44, 353c–d; *GNO*/VII/i/63,6–8).

6.4 Conclusion

In short, Gregory's use of matter imagery and his employment of the terms *noema* and *logismos* for what later ages called "sins," as in the *De Instituto Christiano* (*PG* 46 293d *GNO*/VIII/i/57, 5–12), a context probably reflecting the desert usage of Pseudo-Macarius, are a strong indication, if Pseudo-Macarius is to be dated to the 380s, that the *logismoi*/deadly sins tradition was already part of the fabric of desert

thinking *before* Evagrius took it over and reshaped it.[16] A similar potent mixture of biblical motifs and pagan philosophical psychology, as we have seen, underlies the structure of the deadly sins. Whereas Evagrius charts out a definite structure to both virtues and vices, Gregory seems to be wary of any single structure in favor of the view (cf. *De Instituto Christiano* 301c; *CL PG* 45 224a–225b; *GNO*/III/v/2–3) that virtues and vices form branching groups with opposing force. But in both, the structure or de-structure of materiality is strikingly similar; here crucial Biblical motifs and features from the ancient philosophical tradition are evidently part of an often hidden tradition of interpreting Scripture and Plato's dialogues through the lens of a complex network, starting with Aristotle and reaching through Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus into a Christian scholarly community, where the formula "we say" can bridge the gap between traditions and perhaps translate one to another.

For both Gregory and Evagrius, again, what I have called the de-structure of materiality resonates with Plotinus, Porphyry, and Iamblichus' theories of evil – absolute non-being (in Plotinus) or *parhypostasis*, *by-product* (in Iamblichus). It is important to see precisely what this means. The mind's own activity is tiny without the reflective capacity to be illuminated by the Divine. When this capacity is shut off, the mind is forced to adjust to a world without genuine semantic height or insight, in object-dependency and with its own cramped ego, and those of others, to haunt it, but without being aware it is divided from what makes it really think. In other words, such a "mind" – with others – can fall into the loops of its own matter-based gravitational "pull"[17] – not matter as *formed* by God,[18] but "matter" either dimly illumined in the after-image of form or absence of form, quality, quantity, namely, non-being or parasitic by-product. Indirectly, it is this conception of evil as a parasitic by-product or non-being with non-causal but frighteningly real effects that has informed some modern attempts, such as those of Dostoevsky or Mann, mentioned in Chapter 5, either to foresee the cataclysmic events confronting Russia at the end of the 19th century or to depict the horror of Nazi Germany in the 20th century. However this may be, Evagrius' and Gregory's theory outlined in these Chapters overcomes the late Neoplatonic debate whether the human soul is entirely descended (Iamblichus) or remains undescended (Plotinus). The whole human being is made to be with God both here and hereafter. We only have to recognize and repair the rupture to think as we should in the presence of God, for there are no intervening hypostases to complicate or occlude the ascent.

---

[16] See further in Gregory, "stiffer", "more frozen" reasonings (*sterroteroi logismoi*) and *alogon* versus *katharon noema* in *Cant. PG* 44, 772a–773b. Gregory's emphasis upon two opposed forms of reasoning (for example, "the reasoning power of right reverence" (*De Instituto Christiano* 56, 1) versus "a strange reasoning" (*tis xenos logismos*) (57, 9–10) is close to Evagrian usage.

[17] One of Gregory's favorite words: see *DHO* 193d; *DAR* 89b.

[18] This is why the theory of the intelligible body, hitherto unnoticed as far as I can see, in Evagrius and Gregory is so important. See Chapters 7 and 8.

Chapter 7
Body into Mind: the Scientific Eye in Evagrius

7.1 Reading the Body: the Problem of the Intelligible Body

We have seen how the practical and gnostic dimensions for Evagrius are intertwined. In this chapter, I will examine how surprisingly deep the gnostic dimension goes, what the nature of science that informs it is and of the mind/soul/body relation expressed in it, relatively unrecognized but classic for the desert tradition. I have no space for some of the complicated questions of Evagrius' metaphysics,[1] but I will assess important features of his worldview, often taken to be monistic or pantheistic.

For Evagrius, science is possible because everything physical is meaningful. In a weak sense, this is because nature is a created system of symbolic letters permeated by intelligible reality:

> … just as the contents of letters remain hidden to those who cannot read even so he who fails to understand the visible creation equally fails to perceive the intelligible creation which is hidden in it, however much he observes it. (*GL* 100–107, Parmentier)

Positive perception "is the spiritual knowledge of things that have been and that will be … which makes the mind ascend to its former rank" (*KG* 3, 2), through the intelligible element hidden in composite natures, that is, in matter (cf. *KG* 2, 20). Reading the symbolic letters of intelligible reality in nature permits one to predict the future ("knowledge … of the things that will be") and lifts one up to know the wisdom of the Creator "in which He has made all things" (*KG* 5, 51).

---

[1] Essential background reading for Evagrius' anthroplogy and often bewildering metaphysics are two dissertations: O'Laughlin (Harvard dissertation, 1987) and Ousley (Chicago dissertation, 1979). Sinkewicz, 2003, provides useful commentary on many of the texts involved from the ascetic corpus on into the Gnostic and theological life. For text and translation of the *KG* see Guillaumont, 1958 and for detailed analysis of the Origenist background, Guillaumont, 1962; for text and translation of the *GN* see A. and C. Guillaumont, 1989; for the *GL* see Frankenberg, 1912; Vitestam, 1963–64 (second half); English translation used here is by Parmentier, 1985, 2–38; Casiday, 2006. For *Pr.* Greek in *PG* 79, 1165–200; English translation, Bamberger, 1970; French translation and commentary, Hausherr, 1960, and 1934 (*RAM*, 34–93, 113–70). Generally, see Guillaumont, 1980–81, 407–11; Bunge, 1986, 1988, 1989, 1991; von Balthasar, 1939, 1965; Bamberger, 1970 (90 page introduction); O'Laughlin, 1992, 528–34.

The idea that things are full of signs and the stars "like letters always being written on the heavens" is found in Plotinus (*Enneads* II, 3, 7, the Stoics (cf. Seneca, *Naturales Quaestiones* II, 32) and Origen (*Philokalia* 23, 1–6). In Plotinus, analogy or correspondence between intelligible and sensible things is the source of scientific divination, and the internal organic coherence of the way things are proportionally arranged permits us to look at them scientifically. Our ability to read these letters written in nature is the basis, therefore, for intelligent psychological and scientific observation. In Origen, the stars are celestial letters for the angels to read and thereby help human beings, just as human beings can read the Bible and help themselves and others. But human beings cannot read the stars (Origen is against astrology); only the angels can. So Evagrius finds a middle way between Origen and Plotinus, but goes beyond both: nature does not simply reflect intelligible reality; in some sense, it is *already* intelligible.

In a stronger sense, body at one level *is* intelligible – a curious feature of Evagrius' thought that has received little or no attention, though what we should make of it is unclear. Evagrius distinguishes sensible and intelligible bodies in the *GL* in defining the human being in terms of what belongs to human nature (*kata physin*), what is contrary to it (*para physin*), and what above it (*huper physin*), the last phrase apparently coined by Evagrius himself.[2] He then distinguishes between habit and nature. Habits can be changed, but natures are more difficult, except in that some evil impulses may be eradicated and then we need to determine how to replace them with virtues. Evagrius asks how many natures (*physeis*), orders (*taxeis*), qualities, modes (*schemata*), impulses (*kinêseis*) there are and what are their opposing states and the impulses from created things, both self-activated and produced by causes outside of themselves (for details see *GL* V, 9, 10–10, 3). His answer is that created beings have two natures, sensible and intelligible (cf. Origen; *De Princ*. III, 6, 7). The sensible body exists in relation to the four sensible, environmental conditions that determine its health: heat, cold, dryness, and moisture (cf. Origen, *De Principiis* II, 1, 4). The intelligible body is more complex, subject to conditions (life and death, health and sickness), qualities, modes, contrary impulses and perceptions.

What does this mean? Evagrius gives an analogy: just as we learn of God through perceiving the sensible or visible body, so we learn of the soul through perceiving the body. This implies the sensible body is the visible body we see at a fairly rudimentary material level (earth, air, fire, and water). The intelligible body, by contrast, involves organized development between higher possibilities or their opposites; this appears already as an *interplay of activities* in the drama

[2] The three terms were applied to *nous* by Mark the Hermit subsequently (*PG* 65, 941c) and thus entered the tradition. O'Laughlin suggests that Evagrius' development of these terms might have been part of his response to Pelagius (cf. esp. 86–7), but perhaps inclusion of "beyond nature" is a natural extension of 3rd-century thought, particularly that of Origen and Plotinus, for whom going beyond nature is the entry into the larger world of soul and *nous*, an entry that cannot be achieved solely by one's own resources.

of possibilities, potentialities and privations, which provides the organic sub-text for the five senses. The *taxeis* or conditions are the bases for animation itself and physical well-being, or their lack. The *schemata* describe *bodily* dispositions precisely as such, but the need for soul, the animating or well-being principle is implicit in the horizon of both. This is truer of the *kinêseis* which represent positive or negative possibilities as a *dialectical activity of opposition*, that is, an opposition located already in the *logos* or *inner meaning* of things and expressive of their intelligibility. Opposition is part of created nature (*KG* 1, 4). This includes psychological and intellectual existence, together with the subtle balancing activities of body: "Opposition is within the qualities, and qualities relate to the body; therefore, opposition is within creatures" (*KG* 1, 2).

We might expect intelligible body to be spiritual, mystical or even astral derived from Paul, Origen[3] or Iamblichus.[4] But Evagrius means "this organic body," an interrelating activity of possibilities in balance, not simply of movements or impulses (*kineseis*) but of *activities* (*energeiae*), that is, perceptions. I do not know where Evagrius' theory comes from, but it certainly solves a puzzle in Plotinus, seems to mesh with Origen and takes a major step within and beyond Neoplatonism. *Ennead* V 9, 10 enumerates a similar list of things *kata physin* in the intelligible world (qualities, quantities, numbers, relations amongst others, cf. Philo, *De Cherubim* 62), and excludes things *para physin*; VI 2, 21 (cf. II 6) puts everything that can be fitted to *logos* – including *bodies and matter* – in the intelligible; and VI 3, 9 has a similar distinction between "more material" and "more organic" bodies (that also fits Plotinus' two definitions of corporeality – material and formal/productive definitions (II 7, 3): "… what species [of sensible substance] should one point to …? The whole we must class as body, and of bodies some are more material (*hylikôtera*) and others organic (*organika*), the more material are fire, earth, water, air; the organic are the bodies of plants and living creatures, which have their differences according to their shapes" (VI, 3, 9, 1–7) – just like Evagrius. Plainly, the *eidos* or form of body (that includes the *logos* or definition of matter) for Plotinus, as for Origen, is implicitly intelligible. Evagrius takes a further decisive step: actively perceptive body, together with its supporting structures, *is intelligible in its own right*. While for Plotinus the intelligible world is *non-spatially separate* from the sensible world, for Evagrius this physical body is intelligible *both in and beyond its nature*.

This is a decisive shift, but in fact Evagrius' theory is also the logical implication of Neoplatonic thought: in the most striking passage where Plotinus defines "the human being here" he insists that the productive, *intelligible logos* "must be *indwelling, not separate*" from the sensible human being (VI 7, 4,

[3] As it probably, in fact, is – see Paul's notion of the eternal, heavenly house prepared for us by God instead of the earthly body, 2 Corinthians 5.1.

[4] For whom the *ochēma* even for human souls is immortal, an *augoeides pneuma,* illuminated by the *epipnoia* of the gods (cf. Dillon, 1973, 371–5; *DM* 2, 11 and 14; cf. 1, 17; 5, 26).

28–30). So Evagrius' theory both sums up and decisively develops Neoplatonic thought in line with Paul's view of the body as the "temple of the Spirit" and Origen's commentary on 1 Corinthians 15.28 that the body is so made as to pass into different qualities and conditions, from animal to spiritual (*De Princ*. III 6).

7.2 Body-Conception and Self-Knowledge

How does the intelligible body fit into Evagrius' broader thought? *TH* 25, as seen above, examines the role played by self-image in demonic suggestion and also shows indirectly how Evagrius sees the intelligible body in ordinary psychology. Contemplation of realities present in nature, a contemplation drawn from objects, Evagrius states, yields proofs or demonstrations (*apodeixeis*) drawn from what has been contemplated. Here, as in *GN* 4, the "realities" Evagrius speaks of are the *logoi* furnished mediately by observation of the external world or "matters" (*GN* 4); we verify this by experience (that is by duplicating the experience), just as data can be tested by anyone. In most cases, Evagrius observes, the heart of the reader (*kardia tou anaginoskontos*) is the determining factor, especially if intelligent and experienced in the monastic life.

We might expect "my proof," that is Evagrius' proof, to rest upon his own observation, but Evagrius' reverses this. Proof is no ego-object relation, but inclusive dialogue whose focus is less the "I" than the "you." The one who reads nature or Evagrius' work, the one who appears to be the recipient of something, is also the one who gives scientific demonstration. Knowledge is communal but not a community of objective facts, for the community is formed from the intelligent, experienced reading of the other which confirms, or fails to confirm, the interpretation and demonstration of what is under contemplation. "I have said this," Evagrius explains, "because of the physical (natural) object of contemplation (*theôrêma physikon*) now before us which is to be confirmed from what *happens according to the discursive reason* (*ek tôn kata dianoian ginomenôn*) of the reader." A *physikon theôrêma* is like a thought experiment, whose consequences and perspectives can be tested in dialogue.

What is this "physical theorem"? We must start, Evagrius says, from the *logos*, that is from "saying" or "understanding" (again, an indication of how difficult it is to translate the term logos in Evagrius' varied usage)[5] how mind has a nature to receive the representations or conceptions (*noêmata*) of sensible things and to be imprinted by them through this organic body (or "of the instrument that is our body"). The thought is "Aristotelian:" first, because the expression "organic body" goes back to the famous definition of soul as "the first entelechy of a natural organic body" of *De Anima* 412 b, an expression suggesting a close connection between mind and body and, second, because the phrase "this organic body" (even more emphatic in Greek: *tou organikou somatos toutou*, "the organic body,

[5] For *logos*, see Chapter 3, note 19.

I mean this one") indicates, according to Aristotelian usage, what Aristotle calls "primary substance," namely, determinate, concrete "thises," not logical or abstract universals. We start, therefore, at the level of determinate experience with the data of cognitive life permeated by *logos* in both concrete and individualized form.

Whatever quality the shape (*morphê*) of the object, so too is the image (*eikôn*) mind receives; and on this basis, Evagrius affirms, conceptions or representations (*noêmata*) of objects are "said to be" likenesses (*homoiômata*), because they keep the same form or shape. As in Aristotle's theory of perception and conceptualization (cf. *De Interpretatione* 16 a), the concept retains the shape of the object, but appears to be nominally different from the image (*eikôn*)[6] received by intellect by perception. But what is at stake here is a little different: both the accuracy and *proper use* of the image itself. Just as intellect receives the *noêmata* of all sensible objects, so also does it receive the *noêmata* of its own organ (*tou idiou organou*) "for this too is perceptible – except in every case for one's own face" (25, 14–17), because it cannot form this, since it has never seen it.

At first glance, this final remark does not look too promising. Who, after all, in the contemporary world has never seen his own face/person? Mirrors, reflective surfaces abound. One cannot escape photographs or video. Does Evagrius mean simply that the monk in the desert has no lakes, ponds or even medium-sized puddles to see his face reflected? No, the absence of our own face or self-image (*opsis*) indicates the inter-relational complexity of body, namely, that its schema is both other-dependent and yet self-constructed, namely, significantly in our power to correct or pursue distortion. How is this played out in the following passage?

In accordance with this inner figure (*toutou endon tou schematos*), Evagrius argues, "our mind does everything, namely,… sits and walks, gives and takes in thought (*kata dianoian*)." The word "schema" recalls the modes of being from the G*L*. Through its management of this body-*schema*, mind is able to act, since in its own nature it is "incorporeal and deprived of all movement of that kind" (*asômatos kai pasês kinêseôs toiautês esterêmenos*). For a modern reader, this looks like a ghost-in-the-machine view of the mind-body relation, that is, body is a mechanical organism with an immaterial intellect superadded to account for agency. For Gilbert Ryle this is a category mistake.[7] A hard behaviorist, like Skinner or Watson, simply wants to do away with ghostly agency in favor of behavior as self-sufficient mechanism. Why should we need anything more than an intelligible body?

For Evagrius, intellect is not added to body; it *is* body's meaning; but this doesn't make it a form of body in the sense that intellect is purely body-dependent form, for intellect is not a bodily *kinesis* or movement (so above it is said to be "deprived of all motion of such a kind"), but an incorporeal activity or power, that is not completely determined by any particular organ or function of the body and, therefore, capable of directing, governing, ordering the movements of body.

---

[6] Evagrius' term is drawn from Origen and Plotinus (rather than Aristotle); cf. Clement, *Stromata* 8, 23, 1.

[7] Ryle, 1973, 13–25.

Certainly, this mind-body relation is instrumentalist. But Evagrius' insistence upon paying attention to what we actually do – even in temptation – also indicates, however negatively, that a more positive relationship between intellect and intelligible body is possible, especially in his insistence upon the facelessness of our own body-image (that is, upon the partiality and incompleteness of self-image) and the well-rounded or more complete image we already have of our neighbor, as if our face were always in the process of being filled in for us by what we actually do, and by the other's intervention, since we cannot perceive our own "face" directly. "And this is our shortcoming. Except pay attention to yourself how without the face (*prosōpon*) mind clothes the shape of its own body and yet again expresses in thought your neighbor as a whole since it grasped and has seen such a person as a whole" (25, 38–41).

It is an important insight that our self-image is necessarily partial, limited by our blind spots and, therefore, has to be corrected by a more holistic *perception* of the other, as represented in our *dianoia* (an insight that anticipates significant elements in Bakhtin and Levinas[8]). For one thing, it picks up, and explains, the need for the viewpoint of the reader in our own assessment of reality. Reality and thought are not simply a matter of our own assessment. Assessment stands in need of the other. Self-knowledge, like beauty, is never entirely in the eye of the beholder, but equally in the eye of the one who beholds us. Self-knowledge is compelled by our partiality to go the long way round, which is to say, it must not only go through "your" eye but, in principle, through all eyes and times and places, for this is the route of the *gnostikos*, to find the infinity of God in the infinity of this created world. This radical other-dependence is also why Evagrius is careful to insist upon the limitations of human knowing even at the two levels of gnostic life, namely, knowledge of the *logoi* of physical things and knowledge of incorporeal, intelligible things; intellect is radically dependent upon divine knowing for everything, including its ability to know itself, since intellect remains, according to Evagrius, a mystery to itself, just as the divine life of the Trinity, which intellect is fitted by its nature to receive, also remains a mystery to it (cf. *KG* 2, 11). The *idia prosōpa*, persons or faces of the Trinity are mutually disclosing because each and all are immediately substance. Our own face, by contrast, is not so immediately disclosed but, as image of the Trinity, stands in need of both God and neighbor. If this is so, on this all-important question of self-knowledge, then Evagrius' thought can hardly be situated, as von Balthasar wants to, at the level of pre-Christian thinking, for it forms, in fact, one of the major continuous pillars of all subsequent philosophical and theological thinking on this issue from Ps. Dionysius to Bernard of Clairvaux, Bonaventure, Aquinas, and beyond,[9] and is a genuine forerunner of Bakhtin's dialogical thought and of Levinas' insistence upon the primordial face of the other.

---

[8] Bakhtin, 1989, 507:"Even one's own appearance one cannot see fully or conceive in its totality … [but] only by others." Levinas, 1993, 73–119.

[9] See Corrigan-Still, 2004, 1–16.

Plotinus, Porphyry, and others in the previous century may have done much to provide a new understanding of the body-soul relation, but Evagrius shows concretely what this entity means in practical life and how it might function for cognitive experience, not as a medium of self-knowledge itself, for body in its own nature, in Evagrius' view, is not capable of self-knowledge, but for the possibility of a comprehensive understanding of the world and our own bodies within the larger perspectives of soul and *nous*. The intelligible use of the organic body is therefore what Evagrius really points to in the *GL* and *TH* 25. What additional evidence might confirm this conclusion? Just as the knife circumcises the sensible Jew, *praktikê* circumcises the intelligible Jew; this is what Christ has symbolically named "the sword which he has brought into the world" (cf. Matthew 10.34, *KG* 6.6, O'Laughlin).

In the above passage, the "sensible Jew" is either equivalent to the "sensible body" or the sensible body-soul compound, and the "intelligible Jew" likewise is equivalent to the "intelligible body" or the mind/soul-body compound. In either case, we have a distinction between sensible and intelligible body in a different key. But the meaning is relatively clear: just as a material implement purifies or cleanses the sensible body, so the psychic instrument of *praktikê* purifies the intelligible body or whole person considered intelligibly. Ethnicity is a function of time and place; the kingdom of God has no partiality, but Christ, the divine Logos, who wields the force of contrariety already included in the *logos*. The gnostic dimension, then, goes to the root of the ascetic life, however unconsciously we may at first discover the importance of seeking and knowing.

7.3 Body, Soul, and Scientific Cognition

What insight does the intelligible body provide into Evagrius' notion of science? Angels, human beings, and demons are all composed of *nous*, soul, and body but in different proportions of *nous*, *epithymia*, and *thymos*, on the one hand, and of the elements, on the other:

> In the angels there is a predominance of *nous* and fire, in humans a predominance of *epithymia* and earth, and in demons, a predominance of thymos and air (*KG* 1, 68a, O'Laughlin).

Evagrius says elsewhere that the bodies of various *logikoi* are lighter or heavier according to their spiritual stature. The body then indicates the spiritual stature of each rank of being; and this stature, according to the *logos* comprising contraries, provides intelligible classification along the lines of the various categories ascribed to the intelligible body in the *GL* (like conditions, modes of being and others):

> The sign of the human condition is the human body, and the sign of each of the conditions is the greatness, the forms, the colors, the qualities, the natural forces,

> the weakness, the time, the place, the parents, the extensions, the modes, the life, the death, and all which accompany these. (*KG* 3, 29, O'Laughlin)

As O'Laughlin rightly observes, therefore, if body distinguishes different kinds of lives (1987, 128), even contingencies of existence are no longer alien but theologically and empirically significant.

Evagrius' theory of the significance of body, then, in the light of observation, reflection, contemplation and mystical insight, anticipates the development of empirical science later in the Franciscan tradition. Where each detail of created nature is important for itself because it is saturated with broader significance; where the fallibility and partiality of the observer is acknowledged so that it can be tested by a multiplicity of readers; where the sense is developed of what experiment is and of how experience has to be repeatable, verifiable, and corrigible; and where a taxonomy of experience is registered, and a meta-level of theoretical investigation established simultaneously to provide a broader framework of explanation – here, one might argue, are conditions that anticipate a later scientific framework. In this light, Evagrius was certainly ahead of his own time.

Furthermore, together with new emphasis upon body, there is also a critical taxonomy of the instrument of cognition, in *TH* 25. In order to develop any framework for empirical observation, we also have to subject the means of cognition to individual and communal scrutiny and develop a practical epistemology that can be continually adjusted as we too adapt to the diverse phenomena of experience (as those phenomena also adapt reciprocally to us). Evagrius' epistemological classifications, therefore, are not necessarily the outcome of closed mindedness, but rather a sign of openness and accountability. *KG* 6, 72 is one example:

> The mental recognition of the material is one thing, the quality by which this is known is another, another is the internal aspect close to the elements, and another is that of the objects perceived by the senses, and yet another is the contemplation of the body, and yet another is the (contemplation) of the (human) *organon* (*KG*, 6, 72, O'Laughlin).

However ambiguous the nature of the *organon* may be, Evagrius precisely dissects the contemplative act into six different aspects from the infrastructure or underlying basis to the superstructure and complete, integrated activity. To see anything at all is no simple, passive process, but a complex, cognitive operation on many levels. This scientific precision of observation, in principle, renders the instrument of cognition relatively transparent to the experience and validation, rejection, or development of the reader. The act of contemplation starts: from the recognition of its matter (aspect 1) and form or "quality by which this is known" (aspect 2), then proceeds – from the side of the elements (aspect 3) and form as the whole object of perception (aspect 4), and to be completed in the body as object of contemplation (aspect 5); and, finally, contemplation of the *organon* as formal principle, in some sense, either as body or as soul (aspect 6), perhaps in this

case intelligible body as form or content in relation to intelligible body as matter or object. The progression itself is interesting because it shows a high degree of sensitivity to an analogous relation reflected on different levels of objectivity and cognition, and yet also because its purpose is clearly *practical* and *scientific*.

However, neither body nor instrument of cognition is sufficient, in Evagrius' view, for the understanding even of empirical, scientific observation. Here we come upon one of the major themes of Christian spirituality: the question of how the soul can come to understand something of the capacity of her own nature, both for the whole universe and for what is beyond her nature; how do we get opened up to the immensity of the universe and its detailed beauties in ordinary life as also to the immensity of the interior life? For Aquinas, the natural capacities of intellect and will ("being" as the object of intellect throughout the universe, and "love" as the function of will) cannot be satisfied by a single, earthly existence and, therefore, naturally look forward to their expanded *telos* or goal in eternity. For Augustine, as soon as one looks into the hidden content of memory, one finds an unimaginable infinity at the heart of which God's infinity is more intimate to me than myself.[10] Evagrius is at the root of this later tradition, and the language of increase he uses, though it goes back as far as Heraclitus (for example, the "soul has a logos which increases itself"[11]) simultaneously establishes a basis for subsequent theological thinking on the expansion of the mind/soul:

> Just as it is not the materials which disturb the body, but their qualities, it is not the objects which make the soul increase, but the contemplations concerning them (*all' hai peri autôn theôriai auxousi tên psychên*) (*KG* 2, 32; Greek text, J. Muyldermans, *Evagriana* 58).

Soul's increase is caused not by the objects contemplated, but by contemplation itself.[12] If *praktikê* purifies the soul, *gnostikê* properly increases her stature. Why so? The divine life/light directly empowers vision and contemplation; and so the immensity of God's life is growth in the eye that sees.

7.4 Mind/Soul-Body: the Classic Desert Formulation

In ordinary experience most of us live at the level of appearances where a distinction between soul and body is not even suspected. Self-consciousness, in the sense that one is not merely an object sunk in the stupor of objects, but a subject capable of organizing oneself, is a major achievement of human life. Hence, "separation" of soul from body in Plato's *Phaedo* and in monastic practice following upon initial voluntary exile – *xeniteia* – in Basil's *Rules*, is not dualism as often supposed, but

---

10 Augustine, *Confessions* 10.

11 Heraclitus Fr. 115.

12 Compare Plotinus, *Ennead* III 8, 5, 30.

a *prerequisite* for integral mind/soul-body union, that can be lived out in many different ways. In this context, the 4th century seems to have understood the possibilities in "Plato" more profoundly than our own age. The *locus classicus* in Evagrius for the separation theme is *PR* 52:

> To separate body from soul belongs only to the one who bound them together. But to separate soul from body also belongs to the one who desires virtue. For our Fathers call withdrawal (*anachorêsis*) the practice of death (*meletên thanatou*) and flight from the body (*phygê tou sômatos*).

The chapter is a highly condensed meditation upon the early part of Plato's *Phaedo*[13] and *Matthew* 19, 6 and Mark 10.9. Philosophy in Plato has become *anachorêsis* in Evagrius. The testimony of "our Fathers" can be found in Clement of Alexandria[14] and Gregory Nazianzus,[15] and it will pass on to Abba Isaiah, transmitted by his pupil, Abba Peter, and Maximus the Confessor.[16] But what has perhaps not been properly recognized is that desert spirituality highlights the Christian aspect and heritage of this tradition, thus augmenting its Platonic resonance. Salvation is not the liberation of soul from some prison – body – unless we make it so, but the separation that implies the transfiguration of self and flesh and the resurrection of the body.

So mind/soul-body union in this sense is compatible with their separation by *praktikê*. *Syndein*, to bind together, is one verb Evagrius typically uses to express this union.[17] "To bind together" and "to separate" (*chôrizein*) are two sides of a single tension running through human composition, according to which the divinely established union is revealed only by a kind of cutting or opening up of both dimensions – body and mind/soul – hidden in their mutual submersion. What is the significance of this?

---

[13] A similar understanding we find in Plotinus, *Ennead* I, 9; III, 6, 5 and elsewhere, as also in Porphyry, *Sententiae* Chapters 8–9, which has been cited as a possible source of Evagrius here (by F. Refoulé, *RSPT* 47, 1963, 402 note 13). The phrase "practice of death" comes from *Phaedo* 67b–c, 64a, and this is connected with the idea of "fleeing body" at *Phaedo* 80e–81a, though the actual phrase Evagrius uses is closer perhaps to the thought of the final words of the *Enneads*, "flight of the alone to the alone" (VI, 9) (though certainly not Porphyry as cited in Augustine's *De civ. Dei: omne corpus fugiendum*), which does not involve either in Plotinus or in Evagrius any of the overtones which seem so distasteful to modern ears (cf. Bamberger, 30 note 47), overtones of evasion or world denial, but instead the possibility of getting *closer*, as we shall see in classic form below, to the real meaning or broader context of body.

[14] *Stromata* V, 11, 67, 1.

[15] *Letter* 31, to Philagrius, *PG* 37, 68c and *Theological Discourses* I, 7, ed. Mason, p. 12.

[16] References to be found in Guillaumont, II, 1971, 621, see generally 618–21.

[17] Cf. *KG* I, 58, ed. Guillaumont, p. 45 and corresponding Greek text in Muyldermans, *Evagriana*, p. 58, number 15; also *KG* 1, 4, 11 and 63, ed. Guillaumont, p. 19, 21and 47 and Les *Kephalaia Gnostica*, pp. 110–11, note 135; *Eulogios* 6 (and cf. Paul, Eph. 4.3); see generally Guillaumont, 1971, p. 618 note 52. For *sundein/katadein* see Porphyry, *Sent*. 7, 1; 28, 8; 32, 103 and Plotinus, *Ennead* I 6, 3, 10.

First, as in Plato, the body is for the sake of the soul rather than vice-versa, that is, body becomes an instrumental *logos*, something which preserves its nature in the union rather than having it destroyed. Second, from this integral perspective, the life of mind/soul emerges in a new dynamic way, in terms both of potential defects (only when one becomes responsible for something does one see its defects) and of the subtle balance and interrelatedness of all the perspectives integration constitutes. Third, since this is effectively a point of greatest discouragement and of even greater blindness than before if the soul remains locked into itself, mind/soul is compelled to acknowledge a world of meanings beyond its own capacity to invent or control. It is at this point that the fullest realization of the body-soul relation occurs, and Evagrius, in fact, makes this realization classical for subsequent thought. Let us look at some of these points in turn.

First, the perspective of body for the sake of the soul. *Pr.* 132 states this succinctly:

> Let the virtues of body serve as a pledge for the virtues of soul, and those of soul a pledge for those of the spirit (*pneumatikas*), and these latter for immaterial and substantial knowledge.

The body, in this relation, is an *organon* and *logos*, a stepping-stone to understanding, though it possesses no understanding itself. So one has to look after the body, avoid excessive fasting (*PR* 29), live on the level of soul as though one were to die tomorrow, but on the level of body "as if one were to live together with it for many years" and " keep it safe and healthy" (ibid.).

Second, integral action as a function of mind/soul. The contrasting state is set forth clearly in the *GL*. When the soul lives the life of beasts (cf. *Romans* 1, 23), she becomes subjected to all the movements of the body which she has in common with all animals and cannot lift the body above its nature:

> Just as fire cannot extinguish fire nor water dry out water, thus it is in the case of soul which is in the body because of its works: not only can it not set the body free from what belongs to it, but it even confers on the body things which do not belong it, for pride, vainglory, and avarice do not belong to the body. (*GL* 9, 354–68, Parmentier)[18]

Evagrius indicates health and perfection by contrast:

> When the movements of the body occur naturally and in an orderly way, this is … a sign the soul is in health. But when the body has no part in these movements which belong to it, this is a sign of perfection. In such a case there is no reason to praise the body, since it does not perform anything marvelous by itself (for that would be above its nature) but rather the soul. Yet the soul does not really

[18] Cf. M. Parmentier, 1985, 2–8.

> deserve much praise either, since it has not done anything marvelous, seeing that, even if it has elevated the body above its nature, it itself nevertheless remained in its own nature; … just as the body rises above its nature through the health and force of the soul, so too does the soul ascend to its proper nature through the power and the wisdom of God. (*GL* 10, 369–86, Parmentier)

Ordered disposition from above is one state of relative perfection. Integral action of the soul is perfection itself. But what does it mean that "the body has no part in movements which belong to it"? Can this be integral action if it occurs on the part of soul alone? Yes, for Evagrius' argument turns partly upon the force of what it means to be "in something," a question which had received much detailed treatment starting from Timaeus' observations (in Plato's *Timaeus*) that body is "in" soul rather than soul in body, and from Aristotle's detailed analyses of what it means for predicates to be "in" a subject or substance, to Alexander of Aphrodisias' denial that the soul is "in" the body as "in" an underlying subject, and Plotinus' treatments of this theme.[19] When body is "in" soul so that it is lifted above its nature by soul's health and power, this is integral action at its deepest and also where the divine perspective beyond soul necessarily emerges, for soul is not her own organizing principle (except immanently). Her real medium and instrumentality is the power of God's wisdom. From this integral perspective Evagrius can make the astounding statement that the human mind is the *body* of God:

> … just as the body by its actions reveals what the soul which dwells in it is like, and the soul in its turn by its movements proclaims what the mind, which is its head, is like, thus it is also with the mind which functions as a body to the Spirit and the Word: as a body, it reveals what the soul is like which dwells in it; and this soul in its turn reveals its mind, namely, the Father. And as the mind through the mediation of the soul works in the body, so also the Father through the mediation of his soul works in his body, which is the human mind. (Parmentier, 4, 113–20)

Integration and union intensify the closer we come to pure Unity. If the human mind is made in the image of God, and if its comprehensiveness means that it functions as the purest intelligibility of body or all bodies and souls, then it is not *prima facie* pantheistic[20] to make such a statement, but a revealing and startling analogy rooted in the integralist way Evagrius thinks:

> Just as one body is said to be in a certain place, in the same way is mind said to be in a certain *gnosis*; for this reason *gnosis* is properly said to be its place (*KG* 5.70).

Gnosis, as the "place" of *nous*, integrates all the other functions of soul: "The *nous* cannot join itself to *gnosis* until it has united the passible part of its soul to the

---

19 On this see Chapter 6, note 57.

20 On this see 7.9 below.

proper virtues" (*KG* 5.66; cp. 2.29; 6.87). The perfect soul "is the one in which the passive power functions naturally" (*KG* 3.16).

To sum up: The place and proper medium of body is mind/soul, and that of soul/mind *gnosis*, that is, the broadening world of contemplation. Separation gives way to integration, but integration does not result in the loss of what it means to be human; the passible soul is not only retained but enhanced, unlike Plato's *Timaeus*, for example, where ostensibly the two passible parts of the soul and the body are mortal. Here in Evagrius, separation and purgation lead to a deeper integration and expansion of the whole human being, mind/soul and body.

It is not inappropriate that the question of union should be given a classic focus less in the practical and gnostic works than in Evagrius' works on prayer, for only here is the breadth of the whole mind/soul most concretely viewed. If justice is an excellence rooted in the whole soul (justice, in scripture, is the "crown" of soul; cf. *TH* 6, 20; 22, 12; 34, 16; and 2 Tim. 4.8; Eph. 6.14), then what links the individual soul to all human beings is prayer from the standpoint of justice and of the kingdom of God, for the former (justice) recapitulates the whole of moral excellence while the latter (the kingdom of God) comprehends the whole of gnosis:

> In your prayer seek only justice and the kingdom, that is, virtue and knowledge, and all the rest will be given to you. (*Pr.* 38)

This is the positive side of the renunciation of everything in *Pr.* 36: "If you long to pray, renounce all so that you may inherit the all." The Kingdom of God or the aspiration for the whole of moral excellence, summed up in justice, is the first of such renunciations. To put this abstractly, universality is reached by the renunciation of the particular. Yet the universality in question is also that in which the particular is preserved:

> It is just to pray not only for your own purification but also for all humanity so as to imitate the manner of the angels. (*Pr.* 39)

Prayer is the hand-outstretching medium which penetrates the whole soul and opens it up to a deeper union of creative power in which universal and particular are already comprehended. If prayer is the ascent of mind into God (cf. *Pr.* 35), then the unity of all things (including mind/soul/body, universal and particulars) is actually *operative* in this medium. One's way to the body, so to speak, or to one's neighbor is not merely instrumental, from body to body or, in an exterior fashion, from neighbor to neighbor as action or *praxis*. The medium of divine being, in which we *immediately* are, is more breathtakingly intimate, even across materially unbridgeable intervals, than our attempts to reach our neighbors by external action alone. Such attempts – though seemingly immediate – are inevitably mediated.

This central insight is of crucial importance for understanding Kierkegaard, who is deeply aware of the Eastern spiritual tradition. Evagrius' influence shapes the central paradoxical character of Kierkegaard's religious thought in its two stages, namely,

the Knight of Infinite Resignation (who gives everything up however secretly, even on scriptural grounds, but hopes for a material return) and the Knight of True Faith (who renounces everything without hope of return but is given everything back). The Knight of True Faith, that is, the finite individual who, in *The Concept of Dread*, has been given the ability to do the motions of the Infinite, is not the person furthest removed from concrete reality, but the one *closest* to it and freest with it, because he lives in the world but not *of* it (in the language of the Gospels).

This is precisely the conception of the deeper unity of intellect/soul and body in the particular and broader, cosmic sense developed by Evagrius.[21] Evagrius expresses this paradoxical concreteness in a form reaching back to the Gospel's Beatitudes, to Origen (cf. *On Prayer* XI, 1–2; and the vision of the Church as a whole community praying in the prayer of Christ through which it is unified with all; also *Homily on Leviticus* 10, 2), and to the desert tradition; yet he also crystallizes in a stunning way the essence of several insights into the unity of the contemplative/ascetic life:

> Happy is the monk who sees the salvation and progress of all with as much joy *as he would his own*. (*Pr.* 122)
> Happy is the monk who considers *all men as god – after God* (ibid. 123)
> A monk is one who *separated from all is united with all*. (124)
> A monk is a one who thinks himself *one with all* because he believes he sees himself constantly in each (125).

And finally:

> He perfects prayer who offers to God the fruits of his every first-thought? (126)

The separation of mind/soul from body leads, in other words, not simply to a new integral mind/body relation, but to a new interrelated way of living in the world: on the one hand, a closeness, harmony and radical equality with all; on the other, a quasi-divine way of living. The "one who offers to God every first-thought" signifies co-creative activity in service to God as would be appropriate to the *GL*'s view of the human mind as the *body* of God, but an intelligible, *thinking* body. The truly blessed human being is the one closest to all because she or he lives most deeply in God.

---

[21] In the absence of the pagan notion of a World Soul or a Plotinian All Soul as a hypostasis or level of real being, with which it bears very faint affinities. But instead of a purely psychic/noeric or noetic arena, we encounter in Gregory the heavenly city in which the bride searches for her beloved (*Cant.*) and in Evagrius the "metropolis of the virtues" whose love gives joy to "the entire soul" as the sun illuminates "the entire earth": "If we have acquired love, we have extinguished the passions and have let our light shine into the heavens" (*Eul.* 30, trans. Sinkewicz).

7.5 Transmigration and Evagrius' Extended World

Let me briefly sketch the broader context of Evagrius' thought: transmigration, the many levels of existence and the spiritual senses. According to Evagrius, we don't really have knowledge of the beginnings of things, for example, how the *logikoi* or bodies first come to be. All we can recognize are the differences between angels, demons, and human beings, and the various stages of existence, including the "changes," "transitions," "transmigrations" between them (apparently revealed by the Holy Spirit):

> The Holy Spirit has not explained the first differentiation (*diairesis*) of the *logikoi* nor the primary substance (*tên prôtên ousian*) of bodies [Greek text in Barsanuphius, *Doctrina circa Origenis, Evagrii, et Didymi*, *PG* 86, 1, 893 b]; rather it is the present differentiation of *logikoi* and the transformation of bodies which it has revealed to us [Syriac text] (*KG* 2.69, O'Laughlin, 130; cf. *KG* 2.73; 2.74).

Transmigration has been considered one of the central doctrines of Origenism, though it is by no means certain that Origen held this himself.[22] Evagrius seems to take it for granted (together with the transformations and distinction of the *logikoi*), but transmigration means for him the passage of souls into other bodies either up or down the chain of being as a result of Christ's judgment of the *logikoi* at death. How to envisage this is no easy matter.

KG 2.4 proposes 4 transformations (in ascending order): from evil to virtue; from impassibility to second natural contemplation; from second natural contemplation to the gnosis concerning the *logikoi*; and from all these to gnosis of the Trinity. Second natural contemplation correlates with contemplation of bodies, as in *KG* 1.27 with its five-fold classification of acts of contemplation and *KG* 1.70 with a similar classification based upon knowing, contemplating, seeing, acquiring. According to *KG* 1.27, there are (in descending order): contemplation of the Trinity; of incorporeal reality; of bodies; and of judgment and providence. And according to *KG* I.70, there is a perhaps similar scale: one who knows the Holy Trinity; one who sees the *logoi* of the intelligibles (*tous logous peri tôn noêtôn*); one who sees "incorporeals themselves" (*auta asomata*); one who knows the contemplation "of the worlds" (*aiônôn*); and one who possesses impassibility of soul. *KG* 1.70 above seems to envisage a distinction between *logoi peri tôn noêtôn* (as a higher state) and incorporeals; and *KG* 1.27 introduces a further wrinkle: contemplations of judgment and providence. If we put all of these classifications, or steps in movement from *KG* 2.4, together, we get a much bigger picture of nine stages (as O'Laughlin has done (1987, 136), which we can represent in the following way from the bottom up:

---

[22] See, for example, Harl cited in O'Laughlin, 1987, 131 note 28, and especially Edwards, 2003, 160–61, and Crouzel, 1989.

1. Evil (demons or the life of passibility)
2. Virtue (*praktikê*, cf. *KG* 6. 49
3. Impassibililty
4. Contemplation of Providence
5. Contemplation of Judgment (precisely at which level is unclear, since there are three judgments)
6. Second Natural Contemplation, that of bodies or that of the worlds
7. First Natural Contemplation, that of incorporeals themselves or gnosis concerning the *logikoi*
8. Contemplation of Intelligibles
9. Gnosis of the Trinity/Unity

We might well ask how we should map onto the above schema the various types of beings, the various levels of human beings (angelic, psychic, somatic), and the kinds of body. These are problems without easy answers; where, for example, do we put the "spiritual body" and how do we represent its scope since it appears not to work from below, that is, from the somatic, but from above down to the somatic, thereby transforming it in a spiritual way? Or again, what is the significance of the apparent distinction between 7) and 8)? Could this be construed as related to Iamblichus/Proclus' distinction between the noeric and the noetic levels of *nous*, therefore between "subjects" contemplating and "objects" contemplated, a distinction anticipated in Origen's distinction between a *kosmos noetos* contained in Christ's wisdom and a *kosmos noeros*, the world of created intelligence and soul (*De Princ*. I 2, 10; cf. Crouzel, 1991, 462)? I simply signal the topic's complexity since we have no space for extended analysis.

7.6 The Spiritual Senses: Transformation from Above

Evagrius' Origen-inspired theory of the spiritual senses should also be mapped onto any schema of his thinking at this point. One way of looking at the spiritual senses might be to suppose, with Karl Rahner,[23] that through the spiritual senses we perceive physical phenomena on a deeper contemplative level, leading to meditation on the non-physical (cf. also O'Laughlin, 161). But there is good reason not to view it exclusively in this way. Since at the level of the integrated mind, the body emerges with greater intelligible and *sensual* clarity,[24] the spiritual senses may well represent a more immediate and concrete way of seeing, a prelude to the greater immediacy of mystical sensing. However, Rahner is not right to see this simply as perceiving physical phenomena at a deeper, contemplative level,

[23] Rahner, *RAM* 13, 1932, 36.

[24] As is emphasized, for example, but usually overlooked, in the final myth of Plato's *Phaedo*, in Origen, in Plotinus (for example among many other passages, VI, 7, 1–7; see IV 3.18 and others) and also in Gregory of Nyssa. cf. Danielou, 1953, 238–66; and Chapter 10 below.

for the spiritual or "divine" senses are, in fact, an *infused* way of mind's seeing its *own content*. The "divine" way of seeing *precedes* ordinary perception on the levels of being. In other words, it is a form of seeing from itself and its own world, infused by divine clarity, *before* it could become a deeper way of seeing physical phenomena:

> The *nous* also possesses five divine perceptions (*theias aisthêseis*), through which it grasps its own material things (*di' hôn antilambanetai tôn oikeiôn hylôn*): seeing shows it the bare intelligible objects themselves (*psila ... noêta*) as objects for it; hearing takes in the *logoi* which concern them (*tous logous peri autôn*); the sense of smell delights in their fragrance unmixed with any falsity, and the mouth partakes in the pleasure (*hêdonê*) which comes from them; and through touch the accurate proof of the objects grasped is confirmed. (*KG* 2.35; cf. 2.45)

If ever one needed confirmation of the sensual, pleasurable reality of the integrated intelligible/sensible world, here it is. The link with the arts is certainly in Evagrius' mind, for he explicitly makes a connection between training the organs or senses of creative reception in relation to the material in both fields:

> Just as each of the arts has a need for a developed sense concerning its material, in the same way the *nous* needs a spiritual sense in order to discern spiritual things. (*KG* 1.33, O'Laughlin, 176, cf. 1.34)

As we saw above, all contemplative activity (including presumably that of the artist) changes or increases the mind not so much in *what* it sees (though this is undoubtedly included), but in the unrestricted *activity* of seeing or contemplating itself.

7.7 Is Evagrius' Metaphysics Monistic?

Finally, two questions: Is Evagrian metaphysics monistic, abstract or pantheistic? If monism is the view that there is only one thing or reality, then Evagrius' metaphysics is not monistic, since even though he believes in the final unity of all creation in God, he nonetheless distinguishes Creator and created throughout. If pantheism is the view that God is the unity and being of all things, then equally he is not a pantheist. He stresses monadic unity, and he calls God the henad and the monad, but he takes these terms from Origen – current anyway before the third century.[25] What does Evagrius mean by them? Gabriel Bunge has argued (on the basis of the *LF*, the *GL*, and the *KG*):[26] 1) that the phrase "henad and monad" (from Origen's *De Princ*. 1.1.6) invariably designates in Evagrius the incomprehensible

[25] See, for example *Ennead* V 5, 5 for a tradition going back through "Neopythagoreanism" to the early academy (Xenocrates).

[26] Bunge, 1989, 69–91.

unity of the Trinity, "henad" emphasizing the absolute unity of the Divine essence and "monad" implying the Trinity of persons; 2) that "monad" on its own, also in Origen (for example *John Comm*. fragment, Preuschen 4, 120), is a technical usage signifying the beatific state of non-numerical unity between Creator and created, that is, *not* monistic identity, but participation/mystical union. He concludes, among other things, that the anathematization of Origenism (if it includes Evagrius) wrongly identified monad simply with the Trinity and that Evagrius' spirituality is not monism or pagan philosophy, but radically Trinitarian (and Christological) mysticism. Bunge is at least partially right.[27] According to Evagrius, number

[27] Evagrius is not mentioned in the surviving documents of the Fifth Ecumenical Council of 553, but contemporary accounts include his name among the anathematized and in the reaffirmation by the Sixth Ecumenical Council in 680–81 of the earlier Council's decrees; cf. Guillaumont, *Kephalaia Gnostica*, 136–40. Against Guillaumont's anathemata reading, see Bunge, *Briefe* 1986, 59 note 166, 67 note 188, 144 note 153; cf. 1989, 89–91; For Evagrius' Christology, see Refoulé, 1961, 221–66; Guillaumont, *Keph. Gnost*. 117–19. and generally on the Origenist controversy, see Guillaumont, *Kephalaia Gnostica* and O'Laughlin, 1992, 528–34 (also see above Chapter 2 (2.5). A non-Origenist interpretation is more difficult to maintain in the light of a) Evagrius' Christology, b) the Origenist controversy itself (and Jerome's accusations against Origen, Didymus, and Evagrius; cf. *Letter* 133.3c) Guillaumont's discovery of an earlier (undoctored), Syriac version of the *KG*, d) and the anathemata of the Council of 553 (and earlier the Synod of Constantinople in 543). Refoulé, in his analysis of the *Letter of Faith*, the *Commentary on the Psalms* and the *KG*, concludes that in the first two works Evagrius' Christology is neither modalist nor adoptionist nor Appollinarian. Evagrius distinguishes two natures in Christ, affirming both divinity and full humanity (1961, 225–44), but there remains nonetheless a hint of subordinationism and the nature of the relation/union of the two natures is left unclear (ibid. 244–5). In particular, the notion that Christ "participates" in the Father (Ps. 104, R 15 De la Rue, *Selecta in Psalmos*, *PG* 12, 1054 ff.) might have been pardonable for Origen in the 3rd century (cf. *Contra Celsum* 5, 39, *GCS* II, 43, 26 ff.) but not for Evagrius in the 4th (ibid. 246 ff.). Similarly in the KG Christ seems to function as demiurge, creator of the material world, intermediate between the Father and creation (*KG* 2, 2; 1, 14; 3, 10 Ps. 89. P 4 (Pitra, *Origenes in Psalmos*, *Analecta Sacra*, 2, 444–83 and 3, 1–364) precisely as anathema 6 of 553 envisages. Finally, in the *KG*, addressed already to the Gnostic initiated and therefore unveiled, all – or some – of the ambiguity is removed, although we never get a complete systematic exposition and even seem to find a series of contradictory statements, tending to Nestorianism, on the one hand, and to Monophysitism, on the other (Refoulé, 251–3). Here Christ is both prototype and precursor of "naked intellectuality" (cf. *KG* 3, 6; 12; 13; 15; 40) that by itself is receptive of the vision of God. Christ's state will be the final state for all pure/naked intellects and so the difference between Christ and all intellects "does not seem to be essential" (ibid. 254). Furthermore, Evagrius' treatment of Christ as the demiurge between the Trinity and creation makes him, like Origen, "vrai platonicien" in the sense that he cannot conceive an intermediary as not "ontologically inferior". Refoulé therefore concludes (with Guillaumont, *Les Kephalaia Gnostica*, 147 ff.) that the anathemata of 553 refer to Evagrius among others and that Evagrius is more Origenist than Origen himself (with Von Balthasar). We might reply generally: 1) Whatever the anathemata tell us, subordinationism, *absolute identity* of all naked intellects in the monad, and pantheism are not unequivocally demonstrated in any of the passages cited. 2) Just as Bunge seems to exclude something important to arrive at his

signifies quantity, that is, material, circumscribed or composite natures, sensible or intelligible/human or angelic (*LF* 2–3). The "simple and incomprehensible substance" (2, 41–2) of Divine unity, however, signifies uniqueness, *monos* (3, 24–36). What is "one in number" is not simple; if the Holy Spirit were not simple, it would be a compound of *ousia*, substance and *hagiasmos*, sanctification (10, 30–32). This is a point made directly by Plotinus at the conclusion of his great work on the free creative will of the One (*Ennead* VI 8). The One alone is simply itself; everything else is a compound, itself and something else (VI 8, 18 *ad fin*.); and the compound is a "such" having together with itself the cause of its being (VI 8, 14, 21). So too Evagrius here: "the such is composite." The nice feature of Plotinus' language for Evagrius is that it neatly distinguishes Divine Unity from any other unity more simply than other philosophical language Evagrius uses – and apologizes for – in this letter. Divine substance is not composite; it is unique consubstantiality that cannot be grasped (10, 33–5). And while the phrase

---

assessment of Evagrius, so Refoulé has to exclude a great deal to get a focused picture of an Origenist Evagrius, though in fairness he tries to point out that this is not cut-and-dried even in the *KG*. But if it is not unambiguous, and if we cannot even be sure what constitutes "Origen" much less "Origenism", then it is fairer to argue that while there are "origenist" elements in Evagrius' Christology, we cannot go so far as to characterize Evagrius in this way or to see this aspect of his work as either more Origenist than Origen or pantheistic (cf. Refoulé's conclusion, 265–6). The tensions in Evagrius' thought (Nestorianism/Monophysitism – are anachronisms anyway) are different emphases in part due to the fact that he lives over half a century before the Council of Chalcedon (451). Furthermore, the term "Origenism" is a tautology, since historically it has been a thin disguise for "Evagrius" – in other words, it tells us very little or nothing beyond invective. We might also reply more specifically: 1) If Christ is *nous* and one of the *logikoi* (cf. *KG* 5, 67; 69), then at least Evagrius may be taken to have held, against Apollinarius, that Christ really is mind/rational soul/body. 2) If Christ is called the demiurge of secondary beings (bodies and the worlds) and God the demiurge of first beings, intellects and souls (*KG* 3, 26), then we should at least situate this alongside *KG* 4, 58 (cf. 7 in *Ps*. 29, 8), where God is said explicitly to create the secondary beings *in* his Christ. 3) The distinction between Christ (a created being) who has consubstantial knowledge and the Logos-God who is substantial knowledge (*KG* 6, 14; 4, 18; 4, 21; 4, 9) and the view that the Logos-God does not descend into Sheol and ascend into heaven, but the Christ who "has" the Logos in him are undoubtedly problematic; but Evagrius is clearly if unsuccessfully trying to grapple with different aspects of a mystery-just as is Gregory in his Christology: God as unity of three persons, Christ as unity of divinity and humanity, Christ as intermediary before and in the Incarnation and after the Resurrection, Christ as truly flesh. 4) The expression "equal to Christ" (*isochristoi*) referring to the heretical 6th-century monks is not found in Evagrius, but the idea behind it is, according to Guillaumont: namely, the idea that all will be equal to Christ in the *apokatastasis* – "all will be gods" (*KG* 4, 51; 3, 72; 5, 81). Yet the divinization of all is not unique to Evagrius. We can argue that Evagrius should have known better – as does Refoulé, but we cannot fairly read back the condemnations and monastic practices of a much later time onto a somewhat ambiguous account some 60 years before the Council of Chalcedon (451). Guillaumont had to point out the similarities (though the prejudices of later ages are wrong in the case of Didymus and others), but we cannot accept those similarities uncritically for Evagrius' own time and place.

"henad and monad" signifies the Trinity alone, human beings do not become the "monad" in God; instead "the one God coming to be in each unifies them all and number is destroyed by the indwelling of the monad" (7, 64–6; cf. Origen, 785a (Von Balthasar: "nowhere is the monad …. the one has abandoned them and they have become numbers, perhaps endless numbers"). Such a view, employing terms and thought shared by Origen and Gregory of Nyssa as well as by the Platonic tradition, indicates the causal intimacy of Divine Unity in the indwelling monad in which the whole of creation is unified; but it is not monistic or pantheistic. Neither is this indwelling abstract.[28]

How are we to put the complexity of this metaphysics into perspective? Is Von Balthasar's assessment that Evagrius takes Origen's views to an absurd extreme correct? In the context of the third and fourth centuries, Von Balthasar's view is historically improbable. What is more likely is that Evagrius' speculative metaphysics was designed: 1) to provide a gnostic guide, as in the *LF*, for those prey to a host of alternative speculations/crazy ideas in the desert, or alternatively, for those ready to dispense with any structure, including metaphysics, such as some Messalians; 2) to follow out the fundamental principles of his own gnostic commitment, namely, that one has to encounter the *logoi* indwelling in the created world in order to approach God, not to dismiss them or to proclaim only one's own revelations (as in other forms of Gnosticism); 3) to provide a Christian alternative to the thoroughly plausible Biblical and strongly Platonic models/visions of the Sethian and other Gnostic texts – plausible because they obviously claimed to interpret the Bible, Platonic dialogues, and perhaps even Origen's own writings. They must therefore have influenced Evagrius' fellow ascetics in the desert.[29] Such a challenge had to be met with an alternative gnostic vision. Evagrius' cosmology/metaphysics is, therefore, spare beside many Gnostic texts, and it is appropriate that knowing-through-prayer, not ignorance and passion, should guide its meaning.

[28] Note the epistemological humility: 7, 5 ff. Also the auto-compounds, as in Gregory: 7, 11; 9, 13.

[29] Cf. G. Bunge, 1986, 24–54; *LH* 38; and for assessment Sinkewicz, 2003, 120–22.

Chapter 8
Gregory's Anthropology: Trinity, Humanity and Body-Soul Formation

8.1 Introduction: the Problems

After the death of Basil and Gregory Nazianzus' departure from Constantinople, Gregory and Evagrius remained at the Council and must have worked together. About this time (379–81), Evagrius wrote his *LF* and Gregory the *DHO*, *DAR*, *VSM* and at least two Trinity-related works (*AA*, *DSS*), if not the early books against Eunomius. Such a formative period might well provide insight into the hidden background to Evagrius' thinking about the Trinity and humanity, since both seem to have been in accord on the major issues. On the surface, however, the picture does not look promising because Gregory's views of creation and humanity are problematic; nonetheless, his view of the soul-body relation is revolutionary and very much in tune with his Trinitarian thought. Let us look at the problems and then sketch a plausible way of thinking through them.

Gregory's apparently abstract view of created humanity is problematic. God creates man as a whole before individuals and before gender difference. Is humanity then purely conceptual or some universal nature? Scholars are divided on the issue.[1] Furthermore, there are two creations (cf. Origen *De Princ*. II 9, 6), one corresponding to the fullness of God's image in humanity ("God created man in the image of God." *Gen*. 1, 27a) and the other providing for temporal reproduction and connected with fallen nature ("male and female he created them," *Gen*. 1, 27b). On the one hand, a holistic first creation must include humanity – *body and soul*; on the other, if sexuality is added to provide for the Fall, this undermines body-soul integrity and the goodness of creation, makes God responsible for sin

[1] See Hübner, 1974, 67–94; Oesterle, 1985, 101–14; Balás, 1966; Drobner, 2000, 69–101; Zachhuber, 2000; Ladner, 1958, 58–94; Warren Smith, 2004. See also Danielou, 1971, 12–13; Meredith, 1988, 342–3. Von Balthasar (1995, 53–4; 81) takes this to be an exclusively Stoic notion; cf. Corsini, 1971, 123. More recently Cross, 2002, 327–410 and Zachhuber, 2005, 75–98. Gregory, unlike Irenaeus and others (see Behr, 2000, 89–90; 114–15), does not distinguish between the image and likeness of God, that is between our original created similarity to the divine and our ultimate becoming like God in and through Christ (cf. Hart, 2003, 120–21). On the image of God see Muckle, 1945, 55–84; Leys, 1951; Cline Horowitz, 1979, 175–206; Young, 1983, 110–40; Greer, 1986, 169–80; Harrison, 1990, 441–71.

and reduces gender to a subsidiary accident. Finally, there seems an irreconcilable gulf between rationality and passion/feeling.

In Christopher Stead's view, Gregory gives us a "picture of the human subject as a core of rationality with impulse added on …".[2] His overall argument has been criticized by Williams, Hart, Behr, Harrison, Laird, Warren Smith and others – sometimes in relation to Gregory's ascetic theory, celibacy, and marriage (Hart),[3] sometimes in relation to gender and sexuality (Behr; Harrison; Hart),[4] and sometimes on its own terms in the *DAR* (Williams; Warren Smith).[5] But the central dilemma, in Williams' view, remains that desire and spirit in *DAR* are external additions (*PG* 46, 57c), a model that stands in crude opposition to Macrina's later, more sophisticated view that includes them as the basis on which rationality grows (60a ff) and on the understanding that the motions of soul are in themselves neither virtuous nor vicious, but morally neutral.[6] Macrina is "muddled," but Williams sees her as moving from an ethic characterized by impassibility that does not countenance grief, to a more moderate ethic that encourages us to find our way through the emotions, including grief, to deeper understanding.

Warren Smith (2004) agrees in principle with Williams' reading but insists that Williams' "pastoral sensitivity" to grief is not that of Gregory: "grief is not a healthy emotion … [but] a disturbance of the soul" (17). On the one hand, Gregory's views relating to asceticism are essentially consistent throughout the corpus (that desire is inherently moral neutral; and when desire is controlled by reason, it is necessary for our participation in God); on the other hand, there is both a continuity and yet a gap between transformed carnal desire and real love of God:[7] "eschatological *eros* is more than 'impassible desire'" (227). Warren Smith sees Gregory as overcoming, by his theory of the transformed desire of God, both Origen's notion that rational creatures fell away from God because they were satiated by God's goodness (for Gregory the soul can never have too much of God) and something Smith strangely characterizes as *the* pagan *eros*, namely, Aristophanes' eros in the *Symposium* as an essential poverty or lack "which futilely seeks to fill the void of the self's isolation and separation from the one who would make her whole" (223).

---

2 Stead, 1982, 48; cf. Laird, 2003, 79.

3 Williams, 1993, 227–46; Hart, 1990, 450–78; Behr, 1999, 227–46; Laird, 2003, 77–96; Warren Smith, 2004; Harrison, 1989, 23–7.

4 Harrison, 1989, 23–7; 190, 441–71; 1993, 34–8; Hart, 1990, 450–78; Cline Horowitz, 1979, 175–206.

5 Williams, 1993, 227–46; Warren Smith, 2004, 75–103.

6 Williams, 1993, 232–8.

7 Warren Smith, 2004, 17–18, 206–27.

8.2 Trinitarian Thought

Perhaps these problems cannot be entirely dispelled, but let me sketch a positive case for thinking about them, starting with the Trinity which is decisive. Gregory's Trinitarian thought builds upon Scripture and the Patristic tradition, particularly Athanasius and Basil, but important structural features arise from critical dialogue with Neoplatonism that have not been seen before. In the *DM*, Iamblichus had argued against Plotinus' view of the One as "cause of itself" or "concurrent (*syndromon*)" with itself (*Ennead* VI 8) that the proper name for the One is Unbegotten and that no "commixed form of hypostasis" is possible in this case (*DM* III, 21). So the question emerged (against Iamblichus as represented in Eunomius) how there could be three persons in one substance without subordinationism or Neoplatonic "originary hypostases" (concerns expressed by Athanasius, Basil and Gregory Nazianzus) and how God could be both Unbegotten and yet Self-caused in a substantial and not generic or hierarchical way, a problem exacerbated by the necessary inclusion of the Spirit (cf. Apollinarius in Basil, *Letter* 362 and Basil's reply, *Letter* 361). Eunomius rejected the possibility of co-existence (*synhuparchein*) (*Apol*. 10, 44, 10–46, 19). Against this, Gregory argues (*AA*, *CE* and *AG*) that in the Trinity there is co-existence of "cause" (Father) and "caused" (Son, Spirit) without subordinationism for this is beyond time or any Arian "when he was not"; and one model he adopts is the triple causality of unified intellect in Plotinus' early work V 1, 4 (a work cited by Basil). There Plotinus writes: "… intellect makes being exist in thinking it, and being (to on) gives intellect thinking and being (to einai) by being thought. But the *cause* of thinking is another, which is also the *cause* of being; *they both* therefore have a *cause* other than themselves. For simultaneously they *co-exist* (s*ynhuparchei*)." In this case, the "cause other than themselves" is not the One, but intellect itself. We can compare Gregory's direct reflection on this in *AG*: "That is indeed why the one as *cause* of its [two] causeds we say is one God; since indeed it co-exists with them (*synhuparchei*)" (45, 180c; *GNO*/III/i/25, 6–8[8]). In the later work, VI 8 (criticized by Iamblichus), Plotinus implicitly transfers this causal triplicity to the One, but the point is clear: Gregory rejects Neoplatonism by using part of its own compelling logic against itself. Hypostatic substantial co-existence makes better sense in the Trinity than Iamblichus' solitary Unbegotten or the implicit models one demonstrably uncovers in Plotinus. It becomes possible then to talk of cause and caused in a single substance: in the Trinity pre-eminently, but also in human beings derivatively. Despite the inadequacy of images, something like the "united distinction" and "distinguished union" of the persons of the Trinity can be found, Gregory or Basil argues, even "in sensible objects" analogically in our experience of light, flame and human beings (*Letter* 38, 4, 87–93). There is more in experience than can be unpacked by perception, just as there is more in faith than can be secreted in thought.

[8] Reading *onta* (*PG*) for *meta* (*GNO*).

8.3 Humanity

What are the consequences for Gregory's view of humanity? In light of his Trinitarian thought, Gregory's striking notion of humanity as a whole in the fullness of first creation cannot be interpreted in any of the typical ways it has been, for it is not purely conceptual (Meredith) or an Aristotelian universal concept (Hübner) or a general nature considered abstractly or deductively extrapolated from some a priori instance, since it is not a concept, item or universal, but a substance that includes all individuals. Nor again is it the "sum" of all human beings (von Balthasar, Zachhuber) or a Platonic form or an Aristotelian second substance (Pottier), but a first created substance or real concrete nature in a Christian sense that includes all individuals and reaches right through them, as *DHO* 16 makes clear:

> When the word says that God made man, by the indefiniteness of the expression the whole of humanity is indicated. For Adam is not now named together with the creation, as the history/account says in what follows, but the name for the created man (*tô ktisthenti anthrôpô*) is not the particular (*ho tis*), but the universal (*ho katholou*). Now we are led by the universal naming of the nature to think by implication (*hyponoein*)[9] some such thing as that by the divine foreknowledge and power all humanity was embraced in the first creation. For it is necessary in the case of God to consider nothing to be indefinite (*aoriston*) in the things which have come to be from Him, but there is a limit and measure of each of the real beings (*ton onton*), something circumscribed by the wisdom of the maker. Just as therefore the particular man (*ho tis anthrôpos*) is limited by the quantity of his body, and the measure of his existence (*hypostasis*) is the size contained by the surface of his body, so I think is the whole fullness of humanity (*holon to tês anthrôpotêtos plêrôma*) encompassed as in one body (*kathaper en heni somati*) by virtue of the foreknowing power of the God of the wholes (*tôn holôn*); and this teaches the word which says that "God created man" and "in the image of God he made him". For the image (*eikôn*) is not in part of the nature nor is the grace (*charis*) in one of the contemplated features of humanity; but such power (*dynamis*) extends equally to the whole race (*genos*). And the sign of this is that *nous* is rooted in the same way in all human beings. All have the capacity (*dynamis*) to think (*dianoeisthai*), plan, and all the other things through which divine nature is reflected in him who has come to be in its image. Alike are the man made manifest at the first creation of the world and the man who will be at the completion of the all, since they bear equally the image of God in themselves. For this reason the whole race has been called one man (*heis anthrôpos*) because for the power of god there is neither anything past nor future, but even what we look forward to is comprehended equally with what is present (*episês tô parenti*)

[9] *Hyponoein* has a considerable background in Plato, as also in later medical usage – see for example Galen's usage for the first step in coming to a precise knowledge of a pathogenic mechanism, *De loc. aff.* VIII 340 (Kühn).

> by the activity that encompasses the all (*tê periektikê tou pantos energeiai*) (*DHO* 16, *PG*. 44, 185b–d; cf. *AA*, 45, 120a; *GNO*/III/i/40).

When we use the word "man," there is a kind of fuzziness or indefiniteness of expression, but what is meant in the creation narrative is not individual man (even Adam) or man as idea or generic notion, but the total concrete reality of all humanity, *prior to all individual beings*, *but indwelling in them all-mind/soul/body included*, in God's foreknowing thought. God's thought must be pre-eminently real and whole; so the fuzziness of expression in our own thinking cannot be applied to God's immediate creation.

Gregory is rethinking an entire tradition. Demiurgic creation cannot involve incompleteness or deliberation, as Plato seems to represent it in the *Timaeus*, Plotinus argues in VI 7, 1, because in God's providential activity everything must be included so that while we separate time into "this after that," co-generation or *synhypostasis* is the simultaneous function of intellectual substance *and* human substantiality (VI 7, 1–2; VI 8, 14). We cannot define "this man here" without the intelligible *logos* that makes him who he is, "indwelling, not separate" (VI 7, 1–4). The *Timaeus*-tradition, transformed spectacularly by Plotinus, is divested by Gregory of hypostatic levels of being and the indefinite dyad, for indefiniteness cannot characterize God's work: we need to turn back to God, but not for some original self-definition. We were made whole from the beginning. Unlike Origen too, for whom the human being is not *eikôn tou theou*, "image of God," but *eikôn tou eikonos*, or *kat' eikona*, an "image of the image," Gregory asserts the holistic immediacy of the human being made directly in the image of God.[10]

Though Gregory talks of "double creation (*kataskeuē/ktisis*)," he sees this not as numerically double, but as a single activity, instantaneous, yet eternally transforming time so that historical contingencies are meaningful. In *CE* 4 (45, 636d–7a; *GNO*/II/68–70), we are "formed and reformed" in it. In *ICR* (46,604c), this reformation "in Christ" involves "another genesis … form of life … not from the will of the flesh, but from God (cf. John 1.13)." In the *DHO*, Gregory's view is misleading, but perspectival. Foreseeing the Fall from within holistic creation (189c), God "prepared the beast-like, irrational form of transmission" (189d), but as a salvific addition "*because* of the gravitational fall to the material (*dia tēn pros to hulōdes ropēn*)" (192a). This implies, as Gregory subsequently argues, *both* an unstable balancing *in human beings* whose sinful weight tips the scale in favor of passion (193c: *bareia … hē tēs hamartias ropē*) or whose "pull" drags rational energy to serve "the reasoning-*logismos*-of the passions" 192d) *and* the proper use of God's gift so that the divine image is clear (body/ soul/mind) in individuals like Moses (193d ff). This does not make divine foreknowledge responsible for sin or eliminate meaning. Rather, the intelligible *pleroma* is a *dynamis*, or power/potency, that comes to new light in the lives of individual people. "Double creation," therefore, is neither pre-determined nor an afterthought, for what it

[10] Cf. Origen, *Comm. On John* II, 3, 20: 55, 15 ff.

means to be human is the created perfection of the whole *in* the achievements of individual existences, lived as they are amidst the challenges of grief, pain and loss in a fallen world.

In *AA*, we find a significant variation. Gregory argues that words like "God," and even "man," are not class or genus words that refer to a particular nature or even a common nature. The word "God," for instance, is above nature and therefore cannot be used in the plural. It denotes unity yet distinctness of operation and internal relatedness. Concerning humanity, Gregory argues that calling people "many human beings" is a misuse of language as if we were to say "many human natures." This is why we use proper names, like Luke and Stephen, to address individuals. But "while there are many who have participated in the nature," that is, the common human nature, "one is the man in them all" (*PG* 45 120a; *GNO*/III/i/40). Gregory conceives this in a realist, existential way (not class-participatory). The formula or account (*logos*) of persons (*hypostasis*), he says, admits of division by the peculiar attributes in each human being and is viewed in accordance with composition in number (120b), by which he means: while qualitative or attributive division is in terms of quantity (or the fact that George is clever, Jane subtle, Andrew snub-nosed, and so on), the so-called common nature is one in a different, substantial sense – not qualitative or quantitative:

> But the nature is one, united to itself (*autē pros heautēn hēnomenē*), indivisible, completely a monad (*monas*), not increased by addition, nor diminished by subtraction, but just what it is, it is one and remains one, even if it is seen in a multitude, uncut, continuous, whole, and not divided in the particulars that participate in it. (*AA* 120b; *GNO*/III/i/41, 2–7)

Gregory's view is realist, and it resonates with Plotinus and Origen: the integral omnipresence of an undivided real nature simultaneously abiding in itself and yet also undivided in all the particular individuals participating in it (cf. *Enneads* VI 4–5). The word *monas* (cf. *Cant*. 15, *GNO*/VII/466, 5 ff: all will become the saved monad unified by their common attachment to the one and only good) reflects Origen's usage (in the monad there is no dissension or numerical division, but only harmony and unity – *Comm John. Frag*., Preuschen 4, 102–3) and is the common heritage of Plotinus (*Ennead* VI 6; V 5), Iamblichus, Basil (cf. *Spir*. XVIII/45) and Evagrius. If individuality is lost neither in the Trinity nor in humanity, and yet, according to Evagrius, greater unity with God is a condition in which difference disappears into *consubstantiality*, then it is more plausible to interpret Evagrius in the light of Gregory than in the condemnations of later Councils. Pantheism or monism is not part of this picture.

8.4 Gender and the Unity of Humanity

If gender and sexual procreation turn out in the argument of *DAR* to be not what is most important about humanity, we are nonetheless given a vivid dramatic representation of how female and male, even in their differences, can be a unified cooperative force in intellectual procreation, since this shared procreative image is *the* frame and setting of the whole work. Macrina and Gregory foreshadow the cooperative unity of the sexes in the afterlife.[11]

This belies any simplistic understanding of Gregory's view both here and in the *DHO* that gender is *simply* accidental. Just because physical sexuality and genitalia are accidental, this does not mean that everything resulting from them is accidental. Human life and suffering have their achievements. Moreover, in the *DAR*, female is not subordinated to male or male to female; the masculine is not associated with rationality or the feminine with the irrational; Gregory subverts the prejudices of his and many another age. Instead, men and women share an equal capacity for insight, intelligence, strength of will and character, Macrina perhaps more so than Gregory. And although Macrina lives her life so purely that Gregory speaks of her as transcending gender, this does not mean she has become male, as Jerome might say.[12] In fact, she seems decidedly feminine.

One may argue that Gregory simply misses the point. Gender and sexuality in their present forms define who we are. To prescind from them is to ignore the obvious: to substitute a mystical ideal for the real business of loving and cherishing otherness. One might reply, however, that far from prescinding from reality or ignoring gender, Gregory's view is more radical since it actually permits us to recognize distorted perception, social custom and prejudice for what they are: without foundation in reality, and thus – perhaps paradoxically – to see gender in a new way that celebrates radical equality and otherness simultaneously. In the *DV*, Gregory's presentation of marriage as a social institution is devastatingly, even brutally realistic;[13] if this is a rhetorical device, the picture he paints is nonetheless one we recognize readily. Yet it is the same Gregory who, later in the work, in tune with Clement of Alexandria, recognizes that purity of heart if found in marriage may be a genuinely higher state than celibacy which after all might only be necessary for those not quite up to the real challenges of married life.[14] With a certain balance and consistency, we might suggest, Gregory is prepared to include both genders in speaking about the Triune God. In *DP*, God the Father is called "life-giving mother" of humanity (*GNO*/VIII/i/205); and in *Cant*, homily 7, double-gendered

---

[11] Cf. Turcescu, 2005, 102–3; Brown, 1988, 293–7; Gregory uses more explicit feminine language of God in the later works; cf. Harrison, 1996, 39–41; 1990, 441–71.

[12] Cf. Jerome, *Letter* 71.

[13] *DV* 3–4; cf. 8.

[14] *DV* 8.

language is appropriate for God: both "mother" and "father" mean the same thing because there is neither male nor female in God (cf. Galatians 3.28).[15]

8.5 Substance and Passion

In real dialogue, like that between Gregory and Macrina in *DAR*, gaps appear between positions, open up more complex questions so that ideas grow. As the problem is first posed by Gregory in *DAR* 48c–9b, the central question is the unity of soul's agency, for if different activities or movements exhibited by desire, anger and thought are each capable at different times of taking the lead, then perhaps there are many souls in us and no single unity. In this context, Macrina's reply makes sense. If opinions are unstable and syncretistic, we have to use Scripture and reason as our guide (49b–52a) and abandon the Platonic chariot image as well as Aristotle's view that the soul is mortal. This reply is not disingenuous, as has been suggested, for Macrina will demythologize the Platonic image and reject the mortality of the soul, but this does not prevent her from employing images and structures that remain useful. Rather, this is to reinterpret Plato and Aristotle on her own terms. She is not necessarily unaware that Aristotle also holds the intellect to be immortal (*De an*. 3.6. 430a23). She simply signals that there is a problem for ordinary people in adopting any particular system uncritically.

She therefore adopts the following strong position: 1) According to scripture, we should consider nothing proper to the soul which is not also characteristic of the divine nature. 2) Since neither desire nor anger appears in the divine nature, then logically one should not suppose them "to belong together in the substance" (*synousiousthai*) of the soul (52a). 3) Even non-Christians (like Plato and Aristotle) think it a mark of our essential nature that "this rational animal, the human being, is receptive of intellect and science" (52d). 4) If every definition of a substance looks to the characteristic mark of the subject, then since we share anger and desire with other animals, these impulses should not define our nature, even if we observe them in the soul. We should not give a common, trans-species characteristic (*to koinon*) when we are looking for the individual defining mark (*to idion*) (52d). How, then, Gregory asks, if these motions are in us can they be alien (53b)?

Macrina's reply shows how she views anger and desire: they are *passions*, not *substance* (53c–6a: … *tauta ta pathe ... kai ouk ousia*).[16] The soul longs to be free of dividedness and capable of unified agency.[17] We desire to become like Moses who was "greater than desire and anger." But if a human being can lose these passions, continue to exist, and be *better* for it, then the passions must be external

---

[15] For refs. Harrison, 1990, 441–71; 1996, 39–41; Turcescu, 2005, 102–3.

[16] See also for Evagrius, Chapter 4 (4.3). For the general distinction in Platonic, Peripatetic, and Stoic thought see Vander Waerdt, 1985, 283–302, 373–94. See also Chapter 5.6.

[17] A Stoic characteristic but also Platonic (*Republic* 4–9) and Aristotelian (*De Anima* 2–3, 4 and 5).

to our substance. Macrina completes her argument by presenting: a) a definition of passion, b) a precision of its context, and c) an implicit interpretation of how this relates to Plato's tripartite soul. Some people give a physiological definition of anger, she says: "boiling of the blood around the heart" (56a). Others hold that anger is a desire (*orexis*) to return injury for injury: Macrina agrees it is an impulse (*hormē*)[18] to do evil to one who provokes you; she then defines desire in the context of pairs of opposites – or the experience of being divided by different desires, pleasures or pains – and relates this explicitly to the tripartite soul: "each of these," that illustrate the nature of desire but not of the soul, she says, "seems to be related to the *epithymetikon* and the *thymoeides*, but indicates its own nature with its own peculiar definition" (56b); she concludes by citing implicitly Plato's own description of the soul's evil accretions like seaweed and barnacles obscuring the sea-god Glaucus (*Republic* 10, 611d): "they are like warts growing out of the thinking part of the soul (*to dianoetikon meros*) which are *considered to be parts* of it because they grow on it, but they are not that which the soul is in its substance (*haper estin hē psyche kat' ousian*)" (56c).

The force of Macrina's argument has somehow escaped attention. She gets the "Platonic" position exactly right; she is also clearly re-interpreting Plato. Macrina focuses upon the passions *precisely as passions*, upon *orexis* as *orexis*, *hormē* qua *hormē*. There is no reason to see here a Stoic emphasis, as Williams supposes, though the inclusive range of terms is attractive. Macrina is dealing with the "mortal form" of the "soul."[19] These seem to be parts, even distinct agents in the soul (as she will specify later), but they are really epiphenomenal psychic drives. Her view – interestingly enough – is that of Plotinus; and, like Plotinus, Gregory is less interested in a *partite* soul than he is in a faculty or *dynameis* analysis of a single incomposite soul, vested nonetheless with a multiplicity of powers. This is perhaps why he employs an Aristotelian or Pauline framework: to avoid hard and fast partition, a partition that is in any case characteristic of epiphenomenalism and object dependency of split psychic drives.[20]

Plotinus provides a similar analysis in the one place in his writings where he mentions desire and spirit as forms of desire. In IV, 4, 28, he asks where we should locate their origin, that is, "the passions, not the perceptions *(ta pathē, ou tas aestheseis)*": should we situate them in the body qualified in a particular way, in a particular bodily organ, in the power of growth or the trace of soul in the body? What kind of soul is the passionate soul? If some kinds of anger seem to require perception and understanding (just as we get angry over the unjust suffering of

---

[18] For *hormē* see *LSJ*; in the *Magna Moralia*, Vander Waedt, 1985, 291–2 and note 24; for the Stoics, *SVF* IV, 105–6 (index); and for Plotinus, *Lexicon Plotinianum*, Sleeman–Pollet, s.v.

[19] *DAR* 56b.

[20] For Gregory's implicit meditation on Simmias' epiphenomenalist objection (soul to body is as harmony to lyre) at *Phaedo* 85e ff. (cf. Porphyry, *Sentences* 18, 8–18, Brisson) in *DHO* 9–10.

others), then anger must be located in some other psychic impulse (*hormesthai*) (28, 1–28). He finally decides that the process of anger can start either from below or from above, either as an irrational awakening in which reason gets dragged aside by the mental image (*ephelkesthai ton phantasiaton logon*), or as something that begins from reason and terminates in what is naturally adapted to be angry (28, 47–9). Plotinus is dealing with a broader view of *passion*, and not – as he puts it – the active perceptions, which would require a different treatment (as in Gregory and Evagrius). What happens from the perspective of the passions is that because of a particular bodily state, one "trace" of the soul is moved to get angry and, having been wronged, it then tries instinctively "to wrong the others too and … make them like itself." Evidence of this "consubstantiality" (*homoousion*), Plotinus adds, is that people less desirous of bodily pleasures are less moved to anger. Trees do not have *thymos* because they do not have the material infrastructure for it: blood or bile. If they had this structure, then they would be boiling/seething and irritable; and if one added sense-perception, they would have the impulse (*hormē*) to defend themselves – like Tolkien's Ents. Notice in Plotinus the language Macrina uses: anger as "boiling of the blood;" impulse as *hormē*; if we add Plotinus' insistence that these are *pathē*, not substance, and his view that desire as *orexis* is a function of the divided soul that gives the illusion there are different actual *parts* or subjects at work, the comparison with Macrina's argument is striking. Notice how in his conclusion at IV, 4, 28, 63–72, Plotinus also indicates a positive view of desire and spirit, *if the substance links the energy of impulse to itself*.

Gregory replies that these impulses contribute significantly for the better in Scripture: *epithymia* with Daniel, *thymos* in Phineas, wisdom from fear (*Proverbs* 1, 7, 9, 10), salvation from godly grief (*2 Cor*. 7, 10). So we shouldn't think of them as passions if they contribute to the formation of human excellences (56c–9a). In response, Macrina recasts her position. The capacity for contemplation, judgment, and insight, she observes, properly characterizes the image of God, while what lies on the "boundary of soul" and *flows in opposite directions* (*prone to each of the opposites*: 57c) – for good or ill – is from outside (57b–c). The emphasis here is surely, as in Augustine and up to Peter Lombard, that these passions are *unstable*, fatally ambivalent – they *can* sin: *posse peccare*.[21] Creation and organic development proceed through the animal kingdom up to human development which encompasses every life-form, Macrina urges, and so our development involves a mixture of different levels of life: matter, desire, perception, and so-called passions. But in the development process, it becomes apparent that these motions are not inevitably ambivalent; they can be *utilized habitually* for good or evil in the sense that they can be *shaped strongly* in either direction, like a sword (for strife) or farm implement (for growth).[22] This is not a muddle, but a clarified vantage-point where it becomes possible to see that it is not a question – in Augustine's terminology

[21] For Augustine see *De corruptione et gratia*, *PL* 44, 936–8; *De civitate Dei*, 22, cap. 30, *PL* 41, 801–4; and for the whole tradition, Lonergan, London, 1971, 1–20.

[22] See Aristotle, *De Anima* 412b 15; *DAR PG* 46, 61a.

– of "being able *not* to sin" (*posse non peccare*) in the fatally ambiguous context of *always* "being able to sin" (*posse peccare*), but rather of "*not* being able to sin" (*non posse peccare*) *because* one recognizes and lives the truest good of human nature. In one context, the distinctive substance is operative so that impulses can be brought into steady, integrative functioning, just as scripture elevates meaning to new levels for Gregory or, in Plotinus' terms, the substance links the energy of the impulse to itself. In another context, the impulses are turned into passions (61b–c):

> And so if *logos* … the special feature of nature, should have leadership of those things added from outside, as the *logos* of scripture has also shown in a riddle, commanding us rule over all irrational things, then none of these motions would *operate*/*actualize* (*energeseis*) in us in service to vice, but fear would produce obedience, anger courage, cowardice steadfastness, and desiring impulse would offer us the hospitality of divine, unmixed *pleasure*. (61b)

So a stable, more *pleasurable* dimension of life emerges here, an *intermediate* perspective between mind and passion where motions are no longer competing impulses, or divergent subjects, but lifted into the unified life of mind. As Macrina puts it (after her reinterpretation of the parable of mixed healthy seeds and weeds):[23] "if someone uses these seeds according to the right principle (*logos*) and takes them *in him* and not *himself in them* (*en auto ... ekeina, kai mē autos en ekeinois*), he will be like a king using the many-handed synergy of his servants and easily accomplishing the serious purpose of his excellence" (66c). As body is *in* soul (rather than vice versa) in Paul, and Plato, so soul's motions lifted up into unified agency produce new dynamic synergy. The echo of the *Republic* is strong as Macrina lays out the two major perspectives that cut across humanity, one based upon self-mastery, the other dominated by slavery and dependence (65c–8a) – as in the devolution from aristocracy to tyranny in *Republic* 8–9. These motions, Macrina concludes, instead of being *prone both ways*, as earlier, are *neither virtuous nor vicious* but depend upon the active subject-agent; they thus become *matter* (*hulē*) for praise in Daniel, Phineas or the one who *mourns finely* (*kalōs*).[24] Here we are given an answer to Gregory's grief-stricken outburst at the beginning of the dialogue. Rowan William's pastoral concerns are apparently Macrina's concern after all.[25]

Exactly the same understanding informs Gregory's parallel conclusion in the *DHO*. The precarious "balance" between good and evil we saw above is symbolized by Scripture, Gregory observes, in the forbidden tree of the "knowledge" of good and evil in the Garden (197c ff.). What does knowledge mean and why is it forbidden? Here Scripture uses *gnosis* (knowledge), not *epistēmē* (science) or *diakrisis* (discernment), Gregory argues, because *gnosis* indicates a mixed disposition prone to what *seems* agreeable; so the tree's fruit is "commixed" of

---

[23] *PG* 46, 64a–65a.

[24] *DAR* 68a.

[25] See Williams, 1993, 227–46; Warren Smith, 2004, 17.

good/evil and its taste means death (200b–c). By contrast, scientific discernment of real beauty/good from evil belongs to a "more perfect capacity…of exercised *sense-organs*" (cf. *Hebrews* 5, 14) that can separate the real good from the seeming good in daily life. This latter capacity is what Gregory – and Evagrius (though this detail might look anti-Evagrian[26]) – means by "substance." We shall take a more philological look at the term substance and its history in Chapter 10.

Macrina argues, therefore, not for a position where passions are simply an afterthought, added to rationality, but for a more complex view: 1) that the distinctive *substance* of the human soul is to be determined not by passion/desire precisely as passion, nor is it to be a mixed life if this involves unstable proneness; 2) that in the full development of the whole person, where the psychic motions, as neutral and not prone to passion, are integrated/organized by the rational self, the energy of the passions is transformed into positive emotions or purified feelings capable of expressing who we really are; 3) that substance cannot be thought of as a homunculus soul *plus* the passions, but rather as a multi-perspectival activity encompassing the whole human being and bringing desire and spirit into the focus of intellectual/spiritual life; and 4) that in God's creative providence, desire and spirit are no longer "parts" of a tripartite soul, but integrated faculties that take their energy from above. Hence, it is natural for Gregory to utilize Aristotelian faculty language from a common tradition that he shares with Alexander of Aphrodisias, Origen, Plotinus, Porphyry and many Christian thinkers.

Macrina wants to go beyond desire and spirit to a still more unified view of the incomposite soul later in the dialogue (cf. 93a ff.). "We are led up to God by desire" (89a); but what this means, Macrina explains, is that what we call desire is really the pulling force of the beautiful itself (*to epheltikon*, 89b). Desire takes us only so far (92c: "This yearning (*ephesis*) for what is lacking is the desiring condition (*hē epithumetikē diathesis*) of our nature"). To this degree, clearly, Macrina leaves behind the condition that characterizes Aristophanic love in the *Symposium*, that is a love characterized *primarily* by lack, or a love characterized by the need for possession as in the "lesser mysteries" of Socrates-Diotima's speech where the various forms of immortality in question are honor and fame,[27] in favor of a love or desire that is rooted in God and that embodies the divine-beautiful focus of the ladder of love in Socrates-Diotima's "greater mysteries."[28] Since the divine is beyond every good, she continues, the soul becomes "godlike" when it has put off memory and even hope – in short, "all the varied (*poikila*) motions of nature" (93b):

> So when the soul having become simple (*haplē*), of a single form (*monoeides*), and an accurate image of God, finds that truly simple immaterial good, it attaches itself to it and combines with it through the movement and energy of love, shaping itself to that which is always being grasped and found. (93c)

---

[26] For Evagrius *gnosis* without prayer/theology is unstable; see Chapters 4 and 9 *passim*.

[27] *Symp*. 208e ff.

[28] *Symp*. 210a ff.

Here Platonic language, signaling that higher level of the greater mysteries, is appropriately wedded to Christian language about the movement of love – *kinesis*\ *agapete* – on the surely accurate understanding that Platonic vision at this level is genuinely cognate.

8.6 Whole-Formation

Gregory's revolutionary view of soul-body equality flows directly from this. In the *DHO* and *DAR*, he argues against the pre-existence and the transmigration of souls and for the radical unity of the human being, based upon the whole-formation of both body and soul in the development of the seed, in accordance with God's providential power (Chapter 30, *PG* 44 233d ff.; cf. *PG* 46 125c ff.). The *DAR* formulates this as follows:

> So the alternative remains to suppose one and the same beginning of the constitution of soul and body …. just as with growing seeds increase proceeds to its goal proportionately *(kata logon*), in the same way in the human constitution the power of the soul appears in proportion to bodily quantity, first entering into things formed internally through the nutritive and growth faculty; after this adding the grace of perception to infants emerging into light, like some fruit, when the plant has already grown, manifesting in a measured way the power of rationality, not all at once but increasing together with the plant's growth in the normal sequence of development … from this evidence we understand that there is a common entry into being for the compound of both, neither one going before, nor the other coming later. (*DAR* 125c–128b)

Here the biblical seed image (cf. 125c–d) colors the whole analysis.[29] In the *DHO* by contrast, there is a detailed medical analysis of the construction of the human body (on which see below), but the conclusion is substantially the same. Instead of a pagan World Soul or different levels of soul receiving the new growth, from the nutritive faculty to Nature in various senses; instead of an uncreated nurse (*tithēnē*) or receptacle responsible for nurture,[30] it is definitively our "human nature" that supervises and cares for the whole process of development:

> … the seminal cause of our constitution is neither soul without body nor body without soul, but … from ensouled and living beings it is generated at first as a living, ensouled animal, and human nature receives it and nurses it (*tithenesasthai*) like an offshoot with its own powers, and it grows on both sides and makes its growth clear correspondingly in each part …. For this reason our

[29] For the seed-image as the oldest Christian metaphor for resurrection, and for the image in the Koran and rabbinic Judaism, see Walker Bynum, 1995, 3 and note 4.

[30] See *Timaeus* 52b–d.

> sharing in the empathic, animal generation has brought it about that the divine image does not shine out immediately in what is formed, but by a certain path and sequence leads through the material and more animal properties of the soul to the complete man. (*DHO* 253b–6a)

What we actually see in nature then is the organic emergence of an articulated and unified human being, in whom the "energies of the soul increase together with the subject-substrate, analogously to the development and perfection of the body" (*DHO* 237b). Why do we have hands? For the expression of reason through speech, because without hands our faces would have been configured for feeding on the ground, and the form necessary for such ground-feeding would not have had the proper "configuration" for speech (*DHO* 148b–9a).

This distinctive whole-formation theory (though it might look like a Stoic *spermatikos logos*)[31] was developed – in different form – by Plotinus in VI 7, 1–13 and summed up in VI 8, 14.[32] But Gregory has transformed it completely into a strikingly successful Christian formulation, in which body and soul are *radically* equal and the accompanying wheat-image properly *biblical*: "just as we say that in the wheat … the whole is potentially included" (236a). Plotinus, by contrast, retains a vertical focus that is from soul to body, throughout VI 7, 1–7, but Gregory brings the whole theory – with Aristotelian precision – into concrete unity before our eyes, and yet includes the vertical, Platonic aspects, for within this concrete biological unity the soul 'prepares for herself … a proper (*prosphues*), not an alien (*allotrion*) dwelling' (237b).[33] For Gregory, each of us, as soul-body complex, is irreducibly unique, though the proper and fullest realization of identity depends upon the restoration of the image of God (cf. Chapter 10.6.1). At the same time, Gregory insists upon *human* identity; we don't transmigrate or possess bestial souls.

8.7 Intelligible Body-Soul

The body is "the concurrence (*syndromē*) of the elements," language used of the Trinity by Gregory, the concurrence of the One by Plotinus and the consubstantiality of virtue with intellect by Porphyry.[34] In a positive sense, this is what makes bodily *ousia* or substance (cf. *DAR* 84d).[35] But bodily *ousia* is not as stable as the nature of soul, and so substance in this sense is ambiguous – material, as we saw in Chapter 6, but also intelligible/formal, as in Evagrius:

---

[31] For *spermatikos logos* see Graeser, 1972, and for Plotinus' view of the difference from his own notion of *logos*, *Ennead* IV 4, 39, 5–17.

[32] For treatment see Corrigan, 1996, 360 ff.

[33] Compare *Ennead* VI 7, 7 *ad fin.*

[34] *Ennead* VI 8, 13, 29; 20, 26; Sentences 32, 90.

[35] Unlike Gregory, Plotinus takes a negative view of sensible substance as sensible alone *Enneads*: VI 3, 8, 19–37.

> And concerning all the individual features grasped in relation to bodily nature, we say so much: that none of them … is body, not shape, color, weight, dimension, or quantity; but each of these is a *logos* (that is a forming-principle knowable by definition (*logos*). The concurrence and union of these with one another becomes a body. Since therefore the qualities that together complete (*symplēromatikai*) are grasped by mind and not perception, and the divine is intellectual, what is the toil for the Divine to have fashioned of the intelligible objects (*ta noēta*) the intelligible concepts (*ta noēmata*) which by their concurrence with one another have generated our bodily nature? (*PG* 46 *DAR* 124c–d)

The *logoi* in our grasp of the compound through definition are intelligible concepts (*noēmata*) fashioned of intelligible objects (*noēta*) by God's creative plan. So too in Plotinus, in every intelligible concept (*noēma*), the whole demiurgic creativity shines through.[36] But for Gregory body is a vessel or receptacle that grows bit by bit into a person or subject-agent. Macrina observes:

> For the sake of this the rational nature came to birth, that the wealth of divine goods might not be idle; but like certain vessels, freely choosing receptacles for souls (*proairetika tōn psychōn docheia*), fashioned by the wisdom that constructed the universe, so that there should be some space (*ti chôrêma*) to receive good things, a space that always becomes greater by the addition of what is poured into it; for such is the participation in the divine good that it makes the *person in whom* it comes to be greater and more receptive; as it is taken up it increases the power and magnitude of the recipient (*tō dechomenō*) so that one who is nourished grows and never ceases from growth. (*DAR* 105a–b)

Macrina's unconscious switch from the neuter for vessel (*to aggeion*) to the personal agent ("the one who receives," *ton dechomenon*) indicates matter's potentiality for individual agency; but she emphasizes not material causality but the goal, *skopos*, or developmental end-in-view of creation (cf. *DAR* 105a). What is crucial for Gregory is matter's natural capacity for expansion into more complex forms of organic receptivity by participation in the creative teleology of divine creation. Consequently, it is the end-in-view (*skopos*) in the above passage, or again, the *logos*, forming-principle, or *physis*, nature, in *DAR* 124c–d (cited above) that determines the intelligible structure of body.

8.8 Medicine and Bodily Structure

Gregory's interest in medicine and the interrelatedness of bodily structures is striking.[37] Medicine becomes a means of describing psycho-physical processes

---

[36] *Ennead* VI 7, 2, 48–54.

[37] On this Cavarnos, 2000, 77 ff.; and for background, Nutton, 2004.

within the human body, just as philosophy is the medical art of the soul "through which we learn the therapy of every passion affecting the soul" (*DV* GNO/VIII/i/335–6; *PG* 46, 408 b). Alongside the tripartite soul and the Aristotelian faculty/power division (growth – sensitive – rational) mapped into body structures through the systems of nerves/brain/reason, arteries/heart/spirit, and veins/liver/desire,[38] Gregory distinguishes three directive powers of life in the body. The first gives heat to the entire body. The second moistens the heated body, and the third holds together the various joints harmoniously and gives to all parts its self-moved and deliberative (*proairetikēn dynamin*) power. This third power, extending through the joints and organs, exhibits a self-commanding impulse transmitted through the nerves to the various part of the body (*PG* 44, 241c–d; 244c). The root of all these powers and the principle (*archē*) of the motions of the nerves (after Galen) is situated in the nervous tissue surrounding the brain, whereas the heart provides the warmth transmitted to bodily parts by the arteries and veins; and, finally, the liver is where the blood is prepared from ingested food (244c ff.). In each case, Gregory gives reasons from observation for supposing the interrelated importance of brain, heart, and liver systems for the functioning of life and also for supposing these to form a dynamic material nexus for the support of higher order activities such as "living well" and provision for the future. His analysis provides physiological infrastructure for psychological functions, localization of different psycho-somatic operations, yet holistic, non-local activity of mind-soul as a whole.

Medical knowledge of bodily structure then provides material insight into the mutual purposiveness of bodily activities, and this is a basis from which to explore the deeper expressiveness of material functions in nature as a whole, in the light of the divine creative *oikonomia*. Matter and form reflect into each other. Remarkably, the conclusion of both *DAR* and *DHO* is not soul or heavenly bliss but bodily function and structure – in *DAR*, the beauty of the whole "plant" or myriad ears of wheat, purified soul together with resurrected body, and in *DHO*, construction of body from a medical viewpoint. Perhaps Gregory inverts the customary Platonic ascent from body to the spiritual world, but he does so – as both dialogues show – to bring out a deeper strand of Platonism than normally meets the eye: the return – through separation – to a new understanding of body (characteristic of the myth at the end of the *Phaedo*, and of the whole structure of the *Republic*, *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and *Timaeus*) that belies customary surface interpretations of Platonic dialogues.[39] He does so, as if to indicate that a whole-formed view of soul-body, culminating in resurrected union and evidenced in their present structure, is more the logical conclusion of Platonism than Platonism admits. In other words, a medical/scientific view of body in soul, initiated in the *Republic* and *Timaeus*, developed via the discoveries of Erasistratus and Hierophilus in Hellenistic Alexandria, and virtually codified later by Galen, comes into new focus because of Christian thinking. Body is organic, not just as instrument of soul, external form

[38] On tripartion/bipartition, Chapter 5.6.

[39] On this see Corrigan/Glazov-Corrigan, 2004, 224–342.

or rationality, though this is also undoubtedly true. Organic material structure has its own directive intelligibility arising from its mutually implicative *nature*. Hands are a proper distinguishing mark of rationality – of our *ousia* or what makes us who we are (*DAR* 148c–9a; *DHO* 8, 144b–c). Undoubtedly, the reality of Christ's body of which for Paul we are parts – from Gregory's multi-perspectival accounts – makes this radical innovation necessary, especially if our "exercised sense-organs" directly express our substance.

8.9 The Resurrection-Body: Continuity, Identity and Transformation

Gregory's notion of the resurrection-body and of the intermediate state of soul between death and resurrection flows again from this general understanding, despite the difficulties associated with his various accounts,[40] some of which

[40] Gregory's view has been much debated. See Danielou, 1953, 154–70; Ladner, 1958, 61–94; Dennis, 1981, 51–80; Walker Bynum, 1995, 81–6 (and 63); and for surprisingly unproblematic treatment, see Pochoshajew, 2004, 146–50. One problem lies in the focus of, or inconsistencies between, different accounts, *DAR*, *DHO* and *De Mortuis* (*PG* 46/*GNO*/IX). On Dennis' analysis, the Origenist *eidos*/form of body account in the *DHO* is the most satisfactory since it avoids the fatal difficulties of Methodius' presentation in his *De resurrectione* (for more on this see below in this chapter). In the *DAR* there is no mention of the corporeal *eidos*, according to Dennis [though in fact there is an *eidos* at 73a–b and 73c and *morphe* at 76a that turns out to be the condition (*kateskeue*) and physical characteristic of the body (*physike idiotes*)]; instead the soul naturally develops an intimate knowledge during its lifetime of the atoms with which it is united and is able to remain with them after bodily dissolution because of its non-spatial character (cf. 44c–8c; 73a–80a; 84d–5b), While all the passions of the irrational nature will disappear together with biological functions and conditions, Dennis notes that both here and in the *De Mortuis* the passions are also preserved and make a contribution [as we have seen above]. In the *De Mortuis* (an early work, according to Dennis), there is an entirely different and inconsistent view, namely, that the body has no single form that could be restored to it, that disfigurations (absurdly) would be included in such a form, that we can have no idea anyway what form the body will have on any model drawn from earthly experience, and that all earthly physical characteristics will disappear when all human beings will be of one *genos*, belonging to the body of Christ (as in Paul). Instead, Gregory suggests that the distinctive form of each will be the result not of the elements, but of the moral character – an interesting suggestion; but if we add to this the treatise's identification of the self with the soul, then we appear to have a Platonic/Origenist muddle: – the first part espousing a Platonic separation of soul from body and a hostile view of body (in the context of rejecting undue grief for lost loved ones) and the second part a "sop" to Christian resurrection that in fact makes a mockery of the notion. At any rate, *De Mortuis* argues for the abandonment of earthly form (if not substance, in contradiction with *DHO* and *DAR*); and this leads, in Dennis' view, to a hopeless tension between resurrection and anthropology in Gregory's thought, first, because Gregory was not aware of the anthropological implications of the doctrine of the resurrection and, second, because of the essential conflict between the Semitic and Biblical view of man and

Gregory himself formulates to Macrina. Either we lose our identity if our bodies are no longer ordinary bodies, he suggests, or resurrection will be monstrous if our bodies are the same, since all the various ages and stages of an ever-changing material entity will come into existence simultaneously.[41]

---

the Platonic/Neoplatonic scheme of things (Dennis, 72–3). *De Mortuis* may well be an early work – at best misleading and certainly fatal if the work's two parts are severed. However, we might suggest a different way of reading *De Mortuis*. Its two parts match exactly a) the need to separate the soul from body and materiality precisely *as the locus of passions/mortality/irrationality* and b) the subsequent possibility of integrating a new understanding of soul-body: i.e., precisely the great perspectival divide cutting right across Gregory's thought (as above: 4.7.3). This is supported by the clearly stated purpose of the first part, namely, to avoid an unchristian grief by overcoming the cycle of opposites ("repletion and evacuation", 501a ff.) which cannot belong to the notion of what is truly noble or good. What is at stake here, I suggest, is not so much that opposition cannot be part of a genuine soul-body relation as that subjugation to opposites cannot be part of the truly good life. Therefore, it is necessary to work one's way out of an element/material-dependent view of soul-body to a subject-agency (that is, a moral) view. This is not a patch-work of quotes from the *Phaedo* (as Cherniss supposed) but rather an understanding that any morphology of the resurrected body depends not upon the doing of the elements (533d) (which is limited material causality on its own) but upon the *idioms* of virtue or vice, "what makes the shape of each is not these elements, but the idioms and their qualified mutual mixture prepare the form to be characterized in one way or another" (533d). What is this form? It is all the substantial qualities of virtue's wisdom together as light in unity (533d–6b). And in this form the opposition between appearance and reality, soul and body, self and other is overcome. This final remark is an interesting, if perhaps misleading suggestion, for it implies the disappearance of difference and even of substantial form. It might also, of course, have exposed Gregory to charges of Origenism/Neoplatonism, charges becoming more urgent in the latter half of the 4th century (cf. W. Jaeger, *Two Rediscovered Works*, 120a 1). This implication, however, is not Gregory's intention, for his final image is one of mutual delight in mutual recognition: "this is why each of us takes a mutual delight in seeing the beauty of the other", that is, the beauty of virtue, "no vice shaping the form (*eidos*) into an unseemly character" (536c). In other words, the unity of the resurrected body in the soul has to be located not in the elements but in the *knowing* virtuous soul and in the dialogical mutuality of self/other immediate recognition. There is therefore much more in common between *De Mortuis* and *DHO/DAR* than has been supposed, even if the treatment is significantly different. Plainly too, Gregory is not unaware of the anthropological implications of the doctrine of resurrection, for it is precisely these implications he is attempting to explore. Furthermore, Dennis may think the conflict between the Bible and Platonism is "essential", but Gregory is not of that opinion. Gregory's final image in the *De Mortuis* is a striking adaptation of a detail from Plotinus' work on intelligible beauty (*Ennead* V 8, 2): "it is truly a greater beauty than that (magnitude) when you see moral sense in someone and delight in it, not looking at his face – which might be ugly – but putting aside all shape and pursuing his inner beauty". The proper form of this reflexive recognition, Plotinus insists, is not mass or matter, but the direct link of the beauty of the other and of self in the medium of intelligible beauty.

[41] *DAR* 137b.

For Macrina, soul's presence guarantees the individual identity of the particular body and person for all time in the *DAR* and this means not only that the matter or substance of body is part of the context of soul, but also that the parts of bodies themselves can denote who we really are. This view of soul's relation to the body-to-be-resurrected makes it clear that Gregory envisages an intimate *material* relation between soul and body. Is this relation to be lived in an immaterial or a fleshly way (84d–5c)? The immaterial/incorporeal form of soul's life after death, according to the story of Lazarus, is only a stage on the path toward the greater union of soul-body in the resurrection. Yet even here, a spiritual, but existential, understanding of the importance of body-structure is necessary, according to Macrina's argument:

> So if the soul is still present to the elements from the body when they have been mixed into the universe, it will not merely *recognize* (*gnōrisei*) the fullness (*plerōma*) of the elements that have come together into the whole structure, and will *be* (*estai*) in them; but it will not be ignorant of the individual structure of each of the parts (*tēn idiazousan hekatou tōn merōn systasin*), through which portions in the elements of our limbs have been completed; …. and so if one looks at the elements in which the particular limbs inhere potentially (*enhyparchei tēi dynamei*), supposing (*hyponoōn*) that the scripture is referring to these in saying that the finger is with the soul, as well as with the eye and the tongue and all the other parts, after the dissolution of the structure, he will likely not miss the probable. (*DAR* 85a–b)

Even after death and before the resurrection, the organic structure of body is an integral part of soul's cognition and being, so that even at the level of potentiality/power (*dynamei* includes both notions) there is nothing illusory about the reality of body even in decomposition. Body and bodily structure mark an essential trajectory into soul's being.

The central principle at stake here is the integral omnipresence of the soul in both the whole body and whole in each of the parts (as in Plotinus and Porphyry)[42] (85b). In the *DHO* (and *VSM*), Gregory outlines this theory in a more material quasi-Stoic fashion or in terms reminiscent of Origen's view that bodily identity is guaranteed by a corporeal *eidos*: "… the real Paul or Peter, so to speak, is always the same-and not merely in [the soul] …. even if the nature of body is in a state of flux, because the form characterizing the body is the same."[43] Origen goes on to suggest that certain features like scars will be preserved in the spiritual body, just as Gregory in the *VSM* suggests that the scar left on Macrina's breast after her

---

[42] *Enneads* VI 4–5; IV 1; IV 2; Porphyry, *Sent*. and 261F Smith (Nemesius, *De natura hominis*, 40.22–42, 9).

[43] Fragment on Psalm 1.5 in Methodius, *De resurrectione*, bk. 1, Chapters 22–3 – see Walker Bynum, 1995, 64 note 16.

cancer had been miraculously healed – like the martyrs' relics – is "a reminder of God's visitation."[44] In *DHO*, Gregory presents his view as follows:

> for while the body is altered … the form remains unaltered in itself through every change, not altered by the signs once cast upon it from nature, but appearing with its own tokens of recognition (*oikeion gnorismaton*) in all the changes that occur in body … necessarily the form remains in the soul as in the impression of a seal (*ekmageion sphragidis*) and the soul does not fail to recognize those things that have received the impression of the seal, but at the time of dissolution, it receives back to itself whatever fits to the stamp of the form; and all those things would surely fit that were stamped from the beginning by the form. (225d–8b)

On the surface, this may look like Stoic materialistic impressions, but there is more involved. First, there is an implicit reciprocal recognition between soul and the material elements imprinted by the form. In the *OC*, where Gregory talks directly about matter, he asserts unequivocally that while *this matter* is radically purified, it is nonetheless retained in its purified state: "the matter that receives the evil" will be dissolved and reconfigured into its original beauty without "the contrary evil" (*OC* 36b; *GNO*/III/iv/31, 12–21). So, first, Gregory accounts for *material* continuity. Second, in *DHO* above, as the principle of material continuity and bodily identity, the form of body itself registers experience in its own mode (as an organizing principle and not simply as something organized). This takes place at the level of organic bodily activity. Gregory then goes on to specify that the form remains (that is "abides") in the soul like the impression of a seal. Again, this sounds materialistic, as though the soul was physically imprinted, and the choice of *ekmageion* (probably from Plato's *Theaetetus*) seems to support this: maybe knowledge is like wax being imprinted.[45] However, in the sequel – just as in the *Theaetetus* – this turns out not to be the case. Instead of being imprinted, the soul recognizes in its own mode, by means of the form, all the bodily parts that bear its trace. In other words, Gregory allows for both change and material continuity, accounts for material (that is physical) and formal (that is psycho-physical) identity, and simultaneously preserves the immaterial autonomy of the soul. From this perspective, the form remains whole in the soul and integral in the body while being encoded like a genetic pattern in each bodily part, element or atom. At the same time, like the biblical seed, it is open to transformation from above into the spiritual body, but it is not dematterred or changed into a different body.

---

[44] *VSM PG* 46, 992c; *GNO*/VIII/i/406, 7–8; Corrigan, 1987, 31; Woods Callahan, 1967, 186.

[45] See also for *typôsis* Cleanthes' theory of perception, Sambursky, 1959, 25 and Dennis, 1981, 76n 15, who compares this with *DHO* 30, 241d–244a. Cf. also Plato, *Gorgias* 526b where Rhadamanthus "stamps" the souls of the dead, and *Republic* 10, 614c–d, for *semeia* (signs).

If Gregory adapts Origen's corporeal *eidos* here,[46] he is also able to develop Plotinus' similar view in the context of perception and memory. For Plotinus, the structure of perception – from one viewpoint[47] – lies in the form from the beginning and is part of the substance of soul; so there are two levels of perception, one of external objects and another of soul's own content: "And the soul's own power of perception need not be of sensible objects, but it must rather be able to apprehend the imprints (*typoi*) that come to be in the living creature because of perception; for these are already intelligible objects" (I 1, 7, 6–14). In other words, the soul in a compound human being is a register of everything belonging to it. Strictly speaking, for Plotinus, higher principles imprint lower ones and the seal or imprint is an image in the thing impressed, not in the perceiving subject (that is, the human compound agent to the degree she or he is empowered by soul).[48] What is a modification in the organ is a form of knowing (*ginoskein*) in the soul (cf. IV 6, 2, 7–8), of "reading the impressions" (14–15); in the case of memory, "nothing prevents any human being who has superiority of soul from reading off the memories lying there (IV 6, 3, 67–8; and for *ensphragiseis* .amongst others, see IV 3, 26; IV 7, 6, 37 ff.). And if external perception takes place there where the object is in a single unbroken activity of perceiver and percipient, as Plotinus insists, then how much more intimate is the soul's recognition of the data of its corporeality as its own content and responsibility? So there are two parallel contexts (Origen and Plotinus) that shed light on Gregory's theory, but in Gregory the mutual unity of soul-body in the form-imprint is new.

The apparent inconsistencies or unsuccessful images Gregory uses – quicksilver, a herd knowing its own way home, a cracked pot or leaky bottle[49] – are according to Gregory only there to suggest correlatives in experience. His chief image is organic: the Pauline seed bursting into bloom. The inorganic images do not have to reflect Methodius of Olympus' reading or misreading of Origen; they show instead that there is a reading of Origen that doesn't have to be that of Methodius. Gregory's theory also makes good sense of the scriptural evidence – above all, in Paul's different presentations: 1) I Cor. 15.21–3 emphasizes the transformation of body from natural to spiritual; 2) Romans 6–8 suggests that resurrection starts already through baptism; and 3) 2 Cor. 15.1–10 implies that we discard body in exchanging our earthly clothing for a dwelling in heaven. For Gregory, our matter will be shed of the passions and re-forged, from a bundle view of identity (that is body/brain mind drain, according to Gregory's presentation of

---

[46] For further use see *DHO* 26–7 and Daniélou/ Laplace 1943, 209 note 1, for Methodius' objections and Gregory's solution in Chapter 27 that brings together "the Origenist doctrine of the identity of the *eidos* and that of Methodius on material identity".

[47] Plotinus' viewpoint differs just as it does with "sensible" substance or corporeity (compare *Ennead* VI 3, 9 with VI 2, 22 and II 7, 3). For Porphyry, *Sent*. 14, 7–9.

[48] For examples of *typos* and cognates see Pollet–Sleeman s.v. and for the compound to the degree empowered by soul, see I 1, 7 and 13.

[49] See *DAR.* 45d–8b: *OC* 8; 37; *DHO* 27.

Diotima's theory in the lesser mysteries of the *Symposium*)[50] into the resurrected body, materially and formally identical, but spiritually transformed. Is Gregory confused about the shape and substance of this body, as Walker Bynum claims?[51] Perhaps, but then who wouldn't be? Neither Gregory nor Macrina claims definite knowledge; Macrina rules out intercourse, aging and other things but otherwise she only knows what scripture tells her.[52] The mortality of passionate attachment is shed, but not everything expressing vulnerability in human life is accidental. So "the naked grain of our body",[53] by undergoing the life and passion of Christ, starts on its many-staged path to immortality already in the sacraments: "…the immortal body becoming itself in the recipient changes the whole body to its own nature" (*OC* 37, 93c–d; *GNO*/III/iv/).

In this theory of the resurrection-body, Gregory seems to be aware that he is developing a theory which Platonism itself should, perhaps paradoxically, be committed to on its own terms, because he, rather daringly, has Macrina cite Aristophanes' speech in the *Symposium* as her fundamental principle (which she calls on scripture to support), both here in the *DAR* and elsewhere.[54] The physical division of those monstrous globular beings we originally were, on Aristophanes' comic account, leaves present human beings in a divided state, divided from our other halves and yet, even in sexual intercourse, in need of a deeper *psychic* union with God or "return to our ancient nature." This "return to our ancient nature" is Macrina's fundamental principle. Gregory indicates with this prominent stratagem how the doctrine of the resurrection completes what remains undeveloped in Platonism: namely, the proper identity and sacred return of body itself to its original integrity in the Triune God's creation. For what remains illogical in Aristophanes' speech – namely, the division of a single body into two and the pathetic desire for *physical* reunion which can only be realized in the soul – becomes a new reality in Christ when the corruptible body is lifted up finally to embrace and become one with its other half in the compassionate care of soul for its own kin. The force of Macrina's conclusion can be felt even more acutely if one considers that in certain passages in Plotinus body is clearly an intelligible entity (VI 2, 21; IV 3, 18), that in Porphyry the soul has access to lunar, solar, aetherial and pneumatic bodies in descent/ascent provided by the universe (*Sent*. 29; Dillon, 1973, 371–5), and that in Iamblichus the heavenly, pneumatic vehicle is given not by the universe but by the gods, which is why it can be directly illuminated by the inspiration of divine thoughts – as in Evagrius – imprinted upon the human *phantasia* (*DM* 3. 14).

---

[50] Cf. *Symposium* 207d ff.

[51] Walker Bynum, 1995, 85.

[52] *DAR* 148b ff.

[53] *DAR*. 157a.

[54] The return to the ancient state: *ten archaian katastasin/ten palaian diaplasin, DHO* 17, 188c; 21, 204a; *OC* 8, ed. Strawley, 42, 10–14; *DV* (ed. Aubineau) 12, 2, 63–70; *DAR* 156c; 148a; *Symposium* 193c.

Gregory and Macrina are acute readers and critics of Platonism even when they turn Platonism on its head.

8.10 Conclusion

In short, Gregory's view of humanity, whole before and in individuals, and of the split between substance and passion, developed with Plotinus and Origen in mind and dependent upon his Trinitarian thought, is more plausible than has been supposed, does not divorce rationality and feeling or make material structures after the Fall some kind of divine afterthought. The opposite rather is true. For the first time in the history of thought, soul and body are radically equal from the beginning and develop holistically together. Gregory presents an in-depth view of body's intelligibility from the standpoint of active perception (as in Evagrius) and in terms of body's interrelated physiological systems and psycho-somatic functions (developing Basil's interest in the medical tradition from Hippocrates to Plato and, much later, Galen) without losing sight of body-soul-mind holistic autonomy in the image of God. His theory of the resurrection-body equally – despite questions that naturally remain – allows for change and material identity, accounts for physical and psycho-physical continuity and simultaneously preserves the immaterial autonomy of soul-mind. I have argued that Evagrius should be interpreted more in light of Gregory than from the anathemas of later Councils. This makes better sense of the evidence, for not only did he and Gregory share many details of this vision during their Constantinople years, but only some such vision can account for their conviction that human beings are created whole in the image of God-mind, soul *and* body.

This page has been left blank intentionally

Chapter 9
The Human in the Divine: the Dialogical Expansion of Mind and Heart in Evagrius

9.1 Overview

The mystical life, for Evagrius, is intimately concerned with opening up the inner potential dimensions of being human to scrutiny, self-organization, and spiritual guidance, on the one hand, and to reception of the grace of divine love – Unity and Uniqueness, on the other. Everything in Evagrius' thought is consciously a transmission from an older wisdom, a dialogue of in-betweenness in which older voices can be overheard – above all, scripture. But Evagrius nonetheless transmits a startlingly new map of the structure of the human self, in which three major dimensions, as we have seen, *praktike*, *gnostike*, and *theologia*, come together in the practice and discovery of who we are as human beings made in the image of God. Even here Evagrius' language is complex and full of hidden resonances. The distinction between gnostic and practical sciences, for instance, is first made in Plato,[1] but the program of *paideia*, its terminology and its framework are from Clement, whose works include a progressive *paideia* for Christian *gnostikoi*: "the mystic stages of progress" (*Stromateis* 7, 10, 57). This progressive *paideia* is linked, as in Origen, with the exegesis of three biblical texts (as also in Gregory of Nyssa). Evagrius' scholia on *Proverbs*, *Eccesiastes*, and *Psalms* resonate with Origen's proposed progression of the soul through the books of *Wisdom*, *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, and the *Song or Songs* as these reflect Origen's progressive stages of *ethike, physike, enoptike*.[2]

The practical life, for Evagrius, presupposes stillness (*hesychia*), attention (*proseche*), and withdrawal (*xeniteia*) – as in Basil's Rules, but it is open to anyone, "even those who do not yet believe in God" (*Pr.* 81). It involves struggle with "thoughts" and it values manual labor; and so it has a purgative side, cleansing "the affective part of the soul," disclosing the pathologies of the soul, i.e., the *logismoi* or thought-tendencies that break down or fragment the healthy psychic structure; but it also has a positive side revealing healing strategies and the soul's healthy constitution: namely, the virtues or excellent functions of the psychic faculties. Evagrius sees this as a process of psychic biological development imbued with the scriptural transmitting word or seed. *Praktike* starts with faith. Faith begets (proverbial) fear of God. Fear of God supports the observance of

---

1 Cf. *Politicus* 258e–9a.

2 *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Prologue.

the commandments that in turn constitutes the ascetic life. The active life flowers into passionlessness (*apatheia*). Passionlessness gives birth to love (*agape*) (*Pr.* 81). Here is a structure that reaches back into the pagan self and opens that self up through *Proverbs* and *Exodus* (fear of God and observance of the commandments) into an organism capable of living non-egoistically in a community of God's children. Evagrius likens this process to mining: "As those who go down to the roots of the earth dig up gold, so those who go down to golden humility bring back virtues" (*Eul.* 29). Pseudo-Macarius likens it to deep-sea pearl-diving (*Homily* 15, 51).[3] But the ascetic life is more about learning to love.

Evagrius is realistic: "It is not possible to love all the brothers equally, but it is possible to relate to all without passion, free from rancor and hatred" (*PR* 100). Evagrius counsels different measures of love according to a rudimentary ecclesiastical/celestial hierarchy: "One should love the priests after the Lord, for they purify us through the sacred mysteries and pray on our behalf. We should honor our elders like the angels, for … they anoint us … and heal the bites of wild beasts" (ibid.). But love also teaches us to glimpse Christ in fallen humanity everywhere: "The work of love is to conduct itself to every image of God much as it would to the archetype, even when the demons try to defile it" (*PR* 89). Here "every image of God" means every human being and the archetype/prototype is Christ. In love, what is human recovers its likeness and dwells in the divine.

In this context, the soul becomes, instead of a divided entity, an organic whole, held in balance as a harmony of powers that exercise integrally its best athletic functions. With progress, one discovers a new landscape emerging in one's own being as different soul faculties give birth to different virtues. From the rational part are born: prudence, understanding, and wisdom; from the spirited part: courage and patience; from the desiring part: continence, charity, and temperance; and finally justice is "in the whole soul" (*PR* 89). Progress in the practical life opens up the self to become human as God originally intended: just and harmonious in relation both to oneself and others in a spirit of charity to "every image of God" and directed overall by wisdom, understanding, and prudence.

9.2 Reintegration

But this schema should not make us forget several important features of Evagrius' view. First, the reintegration of the whole soul is what Evagrius means by *nous* or *kardia*, that is, intellect and heart. This is not, as frequently supposed, predominantly intellectualist, but an integration of feeling and thought at a deeper level of overall sensibility. This reintegration already requires the gnostic life to open up the *nous* so that it can bloom through tears into joy:

[3] See Pseudo-Macarius (ed. Maloney) 1992, 128.

> The fruit of seeds, the sheaves; of virtues, knowledge. As tears follow the seeds, so joy the sheaves (cf. Psalm 125.6) (*PR* 90).

Furthermore, what is characteristic of the gnostic life (a life of the search for truth that builds on virtue/ practice) is that it is a dialogical science, an in-between life of reception and transmission, from God and one's spiritual directors through the monk as medium to others, beginners and non-beginners alike, since everyone needs help. Evagrius, in a section on spiritual direction in *Eul.*, emphasizes the need for both lives to be joined so that "the land of the soul" might be watered for growth in excellence:

> Praiseworthy is the person who has yoked (*syzeuxas*) the gnostic life to the practical life so that from both springs he might water (*ardueoito*) to virtue the land of the soul (*to tēs psychēs chorion*). For the gnostic life gives wings to the intellectual substance (*pteroi tēn noeran ousian*) by the contemplation of greater things (*tōn kreittonōn*), and the practical life puts to death the members that are upon earth: fornication, impurity, passion, vice, evil desire (cf. Eph. 6.11, 13) (*Eul.* 15, 1–4). (Sinkewicz, adapted)

In-betweenness is part of the internal structure of this passage as its language shows: Plato's *Phaedrus* and the yoking of the chariot of soul with the growth of the soul's wings as they are watered from above (as in Jesus' baptism in Matt.3.6; cf. *TH* 29) – this is one side of a much bigger issue that plainly retains and reshapes its Platonic heritage; and Paul's death of the old man in us, this is the other shore that plainly has its wisdom in the integral structure of the soul/nous, and is already future-based. The teacher, like the disciple, is an icon of in-betweenness: between past and future, representative of many traditions in one (which is perhaps why Evagrius so often leaves his "wise teacher" anonymous). Like the blessed in the Sermon of the Mount: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they *shall see* God," so the gnostic receives a promise that comes to him out of his future, so that he can be an illuminator – a future – for the *praktikos*: "*Praktikoi* will think (*noesousi*) practical principles (*logoi*), but gnostics will see (*opsontai*) gnostic things (*gnostika*)" (*GN* 1).

A second important feature of the reintegration of soul and the emergence of mind/heart (the heart appropriately, since it is watered by the tears of a continuous history) is that while the dead members are stripped off, the body so purified is retained and given a new orientation, just as the lower parts of soul can become positive (for *thymos* see *Refl.* 8–10 and for desire *Refl.* 37). Impassibility gives birth to love: a joyful love for other concrete human beings and for God primarily (cf. *PR* 81). If the goal of the ascetic life is learning to love, the goal of the contemplative life is theology: divine love itself (cf. *PR* 84; prologue). In the gnostic, joy and peace bring a new emergent unity not only with others but also within the self: a unity of body, soul, and mind or spirit, namely, the image of the Trinity within the human being:

> But it is not only among people that the bond of peace (*ho tēs eirēnēs syndesmos*) (Eph. 4.13) is to be sought, but also in your body and in your spirit and in your soul (*soma – pneuma – psyche*). When you unify the bond of this trinity of yours *(tēs sēs triados ton syndesmon henōsēs*) by means of peace, then unified (*henōtheis*) by the commandment of the divine Trinity, you will hear: "Blessed are the peacemaker for they shall be called sons of God" (Matt. 5.9) …. Great is the bond of peace in which has also been united the joy that illuminates the eye of the thought directed to the contemplation of greater things (*hē chara phōtizousa to omma tēs dianoias eis tēn tōn kreittonōn theōrian*). (*Eul.* 5–6, Sinkewicz, adapted)

The unity of body, soul, mind as an image of the Trinity is only realized, Evagrius intimates, in the bond of peace and joy that illuminates the eye of our thinking (*dianoia*) – usually discursive thought but, as in Gregory of Nyssa, a function that is transformed into *nous*, *theoria*, *sophia* by its eye (*omma, ophthalmos* – as elsewhere in Evagrius)[4] for greater/larger things. Scientific or mystical vision in this sense is not abstract, or stripped of body. It brings bodies into focus – not just to know them, but to *see* them as unified wholes in a unified creation.[5]

In a similar way, in the *Praktikos* passage noted above, where the excellences of soul are enumerated, the actions or functioning of the *logistikon* and of the whole soul imply three things: 1) that the self becomes pervaded by the hidden meanings of the world; 2) that the world becomes genuinely open to the self; and 3) that a sort of hyper-individual reality, at once in the soul and yet not entirely so, bridges the horizontal and vertical dimensions between self and nature, on the one hand, and the self-in-nature and the divine, on the other:

> The work (*ergon*) of prudence (*phronesis*) is to lead in the war against the opposing powers and to defend the virtues and to draw the battle lines against the vices and to manage things in between ("the middles": *ta mesa*) according to the circumstances. The work of understanding (*synesis*) involves the harmonious arrangement (*harmodiōs oikonomein*) of all things that contribute to the attainment of our goal (*ta panta syntelounta hēmin pros ton skopon*). The work of wisdom (*sophia*) is the contemplation (*theorein*) of the reasons (*logous*) of bodies and incorporeals. (*Pr*. 89) (Sinkewicz, adapted)

---

[4] *Eul.* 6, 6; 9, 9; 10, 9; *Pr.* 27, 64; *Refl.* 24.

[5] A similar vision is articulated more fully in Cassian's Origen/Evagrius-influenced view of prayer. In *Conference* 9, for instance, Cassian distinguishes in order: 1) "supplications" (*obsecrationes*), to seek pardon from sin; 2) "prayers" (*orationes*), to renounce worldly honors and riches and turn to excellences of life; 3) "intercessions" (*postulations*), to intercede for loved ones and for the peace of the world; and 4) "thanksgivings" (*gratiarum actiones*), contemplative prayers celebrating God's providence in the world. What is a taxonomy of prayer-forms in Origen is in Cassian (and Evagrius) a progress from prayer to free the self to self-less prayer to bless others in God's providential mercy.

Phronesis or prudence is adaptive to particular circumstances. *Synesis* or understanding is actually in the soul as an organizing function, but also, as an *oikonomia*, it participates in the divine *oikonomia*, perfecting "all things" (*ta panta*) in relation to our integral, unified goal.[6] Finally, *sophia* or wisdom functions as a deeper participation in the divine, and the progression of excellences as a whole intimates an awakening and expansion of the self to the potential meanings of the cosmic, angelic, and divine lives. In this context, the wisdom of God lifts up and expands the heart: "Contemplations of worlds enlarge the heart, *logoi* of providence and judgment lift it up."[7]

This is also why concealment is necessary: "announcing some things obscurely (*skoteinōs*), signifying others through riddles (*di' ainigmatōn*), and exposing still others clearly for the benefit of the more simple ones" (*GN* 44). And even if one has to pretend not to know something because one's questioners are not worthy of understanding, nonetheless "you will be truthful, because you are linked to a body and do not now have integral knowledge of things" (*GN* 23, preserved only in Syriac and Armenian). So Evagrius' confidence about the gnostic life springs from his conviction that we need to open ourselves up to the world as a whole, even if we live alone in the desert; in fact, we separate ourselves from the world, and from dependence upon bodily existence, precisely in order not to live fragmented lives where God's meaning in all the parts of the world cannot be glimpsed; we must, then, "make room for all things." At the same time, Evagrius' conviction is tempered by the realization that integral knowledge, even integral self-knowledge, is not possible in our present existence. This is a conviction he shares with a long line of thinkers. For Aristotle, Plotinus, Porphyry, Proclus, and Aquinas, the human mind cannot know itself fully in its own *ousia* or essence. Only limited self-knowledge is possible and then only of our acts, but not of our essence as such which can be known only by or through the life of God.[8]

9.3 Gnostikos: the Gnostic Life

Evagrius' *Gnostikos* is not a philosophy or theology manual. There is nothing academic in the modern sense about it, except that it is pervaded by learning at whose center is scripture. Like Pseudo-Dionysius later, Evagrius works through riddles within which there is enfolded a symbolic ecclesiastical hierarchy pervaded by scriptural resonances.[9] The effect is not a set of items to be learned, but rather

---

[6] *Skopos* is also the term used by Gregory and Basil of the goal of the integrated ascetic life of philosophy.

[7] *AM* 135; 131; and for other refs see Driscoll, 152, note 36.

[8] *Aquinas ST*. I, 87; cf. Corrigan, Still, 2004, 1 ff.

[9] *Gnostikos* 23; 44, 9–13; *Praktikos*, prologue; Pseudo-Dionysius, *Celestial Hierarchy* 2, 140–41b.

a meditation, a memory or recollection to be provoked. The *Gnostikos* is a form of divine reading and writing, whose goal is, in part, to reveal the reflexive mind to itself as a sacred image mediated through the gnostic in his care for the other and his gaze upon Christ. The last chapter of the book sums this up: "To the archetype looking always try to write the icons (*pros to archetypon blepōn aei peirō graphein tas eikonas*) leaving out nothing of the things which contribute to the gaining of the one fallen" (*GN* 50). Despite its Platonic language, this is simple and direct. Evagrius worked as a copyist, copying sacred texts. As he worked, he also saw those who had come for spiritual guidance. As he worked or walked, he recited biblical texts. As he copied, he meditated on the text he was reading and writing. At night he would stay awake and walk in the courtyard meditating and praying and, as the *Coptic Life* puts it, "making his intellect search out contemplations of the Scriptures"; or alternatively, he would sit in his cell "with the lamp burning beside me reading one of the prophets."[10] Chapter 50 sums up and is a vivid thought-picture of the reality of Evagrius' life on all those different levels: a divine reading that is a) simultaneously a form of human writing; b) a meditation that is simultaneously a form of being-with-others; c) a recollection that is an aid to memory in times of trouble; d) a stillness and silence that is also writing, inscribing, and spiritual direction; e) an archetype that includes surely those five wise teachers of the Church whose examples in the *Gnostikos* Evagrius has just stressed, and who reflect Christ and scripture to others; and f) a prayer that is simultaneously inclusive of everyone.[11]

We should also notice that this is precisely an icon of reflexivity: instead of single texts with distinct chapters, every text bends back upon itself and relates to every other text through the word of God; instead of a world of divided subjects and discrete objects, we have an icon of activity in motion that in turning back upon itself turns simultaneously to God, to those in its care, and to the practical tasks of everyday life. Instead of a first-person monologue or a third-person account, *GN* 50 also embodies and symbolizes the second person dialectic so characteristic of the old and new covenant, from Moses and the tablets on Mount Sinai to Christ who in looking to the Father addresses and commissions the disciples, "As I have done … so do you".[12]

9.4 Theology and Prayer

This brings us finally to theology, the goal and empowerment of the gnostic life, and to Evagrius' powerful insights into prayer.[13] The classic text identifying

[10] Vivian, section 24, p. 86.

[11] Compare Darling Young, 2001, 63. For *logos* see Chapter 4 note 35.

[12] Cf. John 15.9–12, 14, 15.

[13] Three major texts are the basis for a study of prayer: *Thoughts*, *Reflections*, and *Prayer*. For translation see Sinkewicz, 2003 and for context and commentary, Stewart,

theology and prayer or the unity of the activity of *doing* theology and praying (as is perhaps also implicit in Iamblichus' and, later, Proclus', notions of theurgy as god-doing as opposed to god-talk: theology)[14] is *Pr.* 60: "If you are a theologian, you will pray truly and if you pray truly, you will be a theologian." Prayer is the most active form of God-speaking. To *speak* God or about God in the deepest way is already to enact prayer authentically.[15]

But here we encounter two difficulties. First, Evagrius' cosmic metaphysics in the *Kephalaia gnostica* and his "intellectualist" view that at the summit of mystical ascent bodies disappear and the mind achieves or returns to its true nature (rather than going out of its mind as in affective mysticism) is problematic.[16] This view was later condemned by the second Council of Constantinople in 553 and the Council's anathema 14 appears directed explicitly against it: "If anyone shall say that all rational beings will one day be united in one, when the hypostases as well as the numbers and the bodies shall have disappeared … moreover that in this pretended *apokatastasis*, spirits only will continue to exist, as it was in the feigned pre-existence, let him be anathema."[17] The problem is that Evagrius' view looks esoteric – at best, quaint. If prayer is to live the life of such theology, why bother? Even Bamberger notes the switch from Paul's use of the word (*kardia*) (in 2 *Cor*. 3.3) to Evagrius' use of *nous* "to express his intellectualist emphasis, and his bias toward contemplation …. For Evagrius man is not, essentially, a creature composed of body and soul, but a nous, that is, an intelligence whose proper activity is religious contemplation."[18] We have seen good reason in this and earlier chapters of this book to take a different view of body: it depends what Evagrius means in context; the intelligible body of the *GL* is a case in point.[19] And, just above, we pointed out that the "trinity" in us is body, spirit, soul *together*, which suggests that there are different perspectives in Evagrius to be taken into account. Finally, there is an essential role for the "heart" in prayer: "Pray first to receive tears, so that through sorrow you may soften the wildness that is in your soul" (*Pr.* 5).[20] So the intellectualist charge is not justified.

2001, 182 ff.; for detailed commentary see translation of *Prayer*, Hausherr, 1960; 1934, 34–93, 113–70; Bamberger, 1971; for overview, Harmless, 2004, 350–54.

[14] For theurgy, see Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* 1, 11 ff. and *passim*; and Proclus, *Platonic Theology* 13.

[15] Cf. *KG* 5, 26; and see Hausherr's comments, 1934, 90.

[16] Cf. *KG* 1, 26; 1, 29; 1, 58; 2, 17; 2, 62; 3, 66; 3, 68; also *GL*/*Letter to Melania*, Frankenberg, 616–20 esp. 618, 27; Parmentier, lines 158–231.

[17] Translation in Edwards, 2002, 4.

[18] In Bamberger, 1971, 53, note 7.

[19] See Chapter 7 (7.1).

[20] Cf. *Prayer*, 78; *To Monks* 53 and 56 (see Sinkewicz, 125); *Antirrhetikos*, Acedia 10; and see Hausherr, 1934, 49–50 and Driscoll, 1999, 141–60.

A second difficulty, however, is the opposite. Evagrius is often regarded as an extreme ascetic.[21] But his view of prayer may seem equally extreme, since "pure" or "true" prayer, he insists, must be imageless. "Strive to keep your mind deaf and dumb at the time of prayer, and you will be able to pray" (*Pr.* 11). "When you are praying, do not form images of the divine in yourself or allow your mind to be imprinted with any particular shape, but, immaterial, approach the immaterial and you will understand" (*Pr.* 66). But what would imageless thought be, if not the opposite of intellectualism, that is not thinking at all?

Both these difficulties pick out a general problem, but they also get the picture out of focus. As we have seen in previous chapters, Evagrius holds no simple-minded instrumentalist view of mental operations. The mind, being incorporeal, must think and act via concepts, mental representations or images, creating and receiving an internal world of conceptual representations that correspond to *divine-created* things in the external world. Evagrius' terminology for concepts, thoughts, mental representations or images is not rigidly demarcated.[22] *Logismos*, thought or reasoning, sometimes connected with demonic suggestion, can also refer to angels and human beings (cf. *TH* 8, 31). *Noēma*, concept or representation, is the way the mind works in processing information. *Noēmata* bear the form or shape (*morphē*) of objects and ideas so that the mind can function in a perceptible world and think through ideas. How we deal with these representations is in our own power, for they can be negative, neutral, or positive: "The *noēmata* of this age, the Lord has entrusted them to man like lambs to the good shepherd …"[23] *Noēmata* arise from the senses, memory (and dreams), temperament (that follows upon them in *Refl.* 17) or demonic suggestion. They leave a shape or impression on the mind (*typoô*, *typos*, *morphē*) and these images – *eidōla*, *eikones*, *phantasiai*, *phantasmata* – can preoccupy or oppress us, but also shape us for the better like the icons of the *gnostikos* above. As we have seen with demonic thoughts, the mind naturally receives only one representation of a sensible object at a time, though the illusion of many representations simultaneously can easily be created by the swiftness of mind like two pebbles fixed at opposite sides of a potter's wheel that give the illusion of singleness when the wheel is spun (*TH* 24).

The point is this: prayer, for Evagrius, as also for Gregory, is the realization of a different axis of our being. We live in a world of discrete particularity, a

---

[21] By contrast, for instance, with Gregory of Nyssa – see, for example, Warren Smith, 2004, p. 16. However, this is not supported by all the evidence. If Basil is hostile to the anchoretic life (see Longer Rule 7, Holmes, 2000, 139 ff.), Evagrius' viewpoint is at least cautious, emphasizing humility, obedience and the virtues of community and recommending anachoresis *only* to those who can handle it after living in community (*Eul.*29).

[22] See Géhin–Guillaumont, 1998, 11–28 (see Evagrius, Bibliology under *Thoughts*); for a useful overview of terms see Stewart, 2001, 186–90 with note 73.

[23] *Thoughts* 17; an image also in Philo (*Sacr*. 10, 45), Clement (*Strom* 1, 23), Origen (*Hom. Jer*. 5, 6) and Gregory of Nyssa, *VM* II, 18; see Stewart 187; Malherbe/Ferguson, p. 159.

fragmented, behavioral nightmare at the level of demonic imprinting, but organized into a multiple, meaningful world by our minds. This is still dangerous, traumatic, however beautiful and good, because our minds are not the organizing/interfering principles of this world, but only their shepherds or stewards. Prayer/theology lifts the mind to God in order to receive the created whole from God. In prayer and the mystical life – just as announced in the beatitudes – we give up sight and sound, images and thoughts, all things, so that the form-creating images or thoughts of God might allow us to inherit the whole: ""If you long to pray, renounce all so that you may inherit the all." (*Pr.* 36)[24]

What then is the whole? All the good things that come from God, and from God's angels, prophets, and gnostics. So, there *are noemata* and *eikones* that come from God, and we apparently possess a sort of contemplation, that is, physical contemplation or second natural contemplation, that neither imprints nor shapes the mind, but simply provides *gnosis* (*TH* 41, 2–3). What could this be? It is the direct recognition of the *logoi* and *ousia* of corporeal and incorporeal things (*TH* 41, 25–35; 42, 2–3). The example Evagrius gives is interesting. John 1.1 "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God" puts down in the heart (*kardia*) a certain *noema*, but it does not shape or imprint it. His point seems to be that there is no material correlative for this verse. It is as pure a thought as one can have, not like other scriptural phrases such as "taking bread." In pure verses, the mind is no longer mediated or limited by an image, but provides the possibility of thought. Or rather, thought becomes a pure activity empowered by the *spiritual* significance of scripture, rather than mediated by material images. At any rate, the great divide for Evagrius is between what comes from below and what is given from above:[25]

> Watch out lest the evil demons deceive you through some apparition; rather, be mindful, turn to prayer and call upon God in order that, *if the mental representation comes from him*, he may enlighten you, but if not, that he may quickly drive the deceiver from you (*Pr.* 94; Sinkewicz adapted).

There are still major dangers for the gnostic even in first natural contemplation (of incorporeal realities), since he/she is not self-sufficient, and even the multiplicity of intelligible objects might easily mislead her, as we have seen in *Pr.* 57: "Even if the mind has become above the contemplation of corporeal nature, not yet has it seen perfectly the place of God (*topos theou*). For it can be engaged in knowing intelligible things and colored by that knowing's multiplicity."

What kinds of prayer might Evagrius have used, then, what are the major features of prayer and, finally, what is prayer, what does it *do*, if anything, and what effect does it have on our being human? The Lord's Prayer is obviously important,

---

[24] Cf. *Pr.* 17; 18; and see Chapter 7, 97.5–7.6.

[25] As also for Gregory, see Chapter 9 (9.7.3); compare Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* 3, 7–8.

as above in *Pr.* 58; there is also a brief commentary on it.[26] In *Refl.* 26–30, Evagrius mentions prayer, petitions, vows, intercessions, and thanksgiving (as in Paul, I Timothy 2.1) – just as in Cassian above. The beatitudes – making blessed – are also central (cf. *Pr.* 118–23), for prayer sanctifies the world. Apart from the weekend *synaxeis*, eucharist and assemblies, Evagrius would have prayed a liturgical office of twelve psalms in the early evening and then in the latter part of the night. According to Palladius, Evagrius prayed 100 text-prayer sections each day either standing or in prostration.[27] And, as we have seen, his work as a copyist was part of the prayerful fabric of daily life. In this overall sense, prayer for Evagrius was a kind of continual translation, a crossing over of the normal boundaries of life so as to knit together two different experiences into a single fabric. Evagrius therefore emphasizes that prayer should be unceasing: "We have not been commanded to work, to keep vigil, and to fast at all times, but the law of unceasing (1 Thess. 5.17) prayer has been handed down to us" (*PR* 49). Vigils and fastings, Evagrius continues, require the body's service to heal our desires, but prayer strengthens and purifies the mind for the struggle, "since it is *naturally made* for prayer even without this body" (*PR* 49). What is this natural constitution of the mind for prayer and what form might it have had? In the next century, in Palestine, the Jesus prayer emerged, that is, the unceasing repetition of a short phrase, such as "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me," that becomes a continual part of the fabric of consciousness – even in sleep. Ceaseless prayer of this kind has been part of Byzantine and Russian Orthodox spirituality for almost 1,500 years. We have no evidence that such a prayer existed in 4th-century Egypt, although excavations at Kellia – exactly where Evagrius lived – have uncovered inscriptions of this prayer on the wall of a cell from the 6th century.[28] So it is reasonable to suppose that he might have advocated some formula for constant prayer, especially since his disciple, John Cassian, recommends the constant repetition of a verse from Psalm 70.1: "God, come to my aid; Lord, make haste to help me" (Cassian, *Conferences* 10, 10, 2–14). However, while Cassian recommends one prayer in all temptations, Evagrius' *Antirrhetikos* advocates 487 for 487 temptations. Yet for both, Biblical intertextuality is the means of understanding and protection: the Bible is to be interpreted by the Bible and the world to be delivered by the Word – intertextually – that comes from above.

So prayer is not just an activity of mind, but an unceasing condition of *being* itself (very like Gregory's notion of *epektasis,* cf. *PR* 87) beyond one's own words and images. Here Evagrius follows Origen, in rejecting babbling prayers and thoughts (*Pr.* 20, 2–21), and Clement (*Stromateis* 7, 39, 6):

---

[26] Coptic text, P. Lagarde, *Catenae in evangelia aegyptiacae quae supersunt*, Gottingen: Dieterich, 1886, 3.

[27] Cf. *LH* 38.10; cf. Stewart, 2001, 184–5 and notes 51–3.

[28] See Antoine Guillaumont, 1974, 66–71; cf. Kallistos Ware, 1986, 175–84; Gabriel Bunge, "'Priez sans cesse': aux origins de la priere hesychaste", *Studia Monastica*, 30, 1988, 7–6; W. Harmless, 2004, 351 and notes 25–6.

> Prayer is a communion of mind with God (*homilia nou pros theon*). What sort of condition does the mind need so that it can reach out to its Lord without turning back and commune with him without intermediary? (*Pr.* 3)
>
> When the soul has been purified by the fullness of the virtues, it stabilizes the mind's constitution and prepares it *to receive* the desired condition. (*Pr.* 2)[29]

The desired state of being the mind receives from above is not in the mind's own power because *homilia/synomilein* always depends on another. God bestows prayer on the one who prays (*Pr.* 59). We cannot control this meeting by our own expectations. God draws near and journeys with the one who prays (ibid. 65). "Prayer is the ascent of the mind to God" (ibid. 35), the giving of God's own enlightening *noema* (ibid. 94), an intimate being–with that is the Trinity's own gift.[30] The Holy Spirit visits the mind directly, stirring up an *eros* for spiritual prayer (ibid. 62–3) that "carries off to the intelligible height the spiritual mind beloved of wisdom" (ibid. 62). "Blessed is the mind that prays without distraction and *increases* in desire" (ibid. 118). We can see a deep resonance here with many passages in Gregory's *Cant*. and *VM*, especially II 239, 404d (*GNO*/VII/i/116, 19–20): "… one must always, in looking through those things by which one is able to see, rekindle one's desire to see more …" (cf. *VM* II 163, 376d–7a; 233–5, 404a–b).

Why this emphasis upon communion, company, address, conversation and the cluster of images attached, such as ascent, increase, growth, and intimacy? And how are these images connected with the notion of science? From our standpoint in a data-information, hard-nosed science and business world, the very notion of prayer and associated images may seem quaint or silly. But this part of Evagrian thought is a misunderstood feature of the monastic heritage. For Evagrius, the mind is naturally reflexive from a second-person standpoint, that is, as self-conscious, it is naturally constituted to communicate with God, others, and itself. Yet this reflexivity can also be deepened and can shed self-awareness (as in sleep and in love and intense communication, experiences that can be so intimate the barriers between people seem to disappear). Why Evagrius thinks like this can be seen

---

[29] In this state the mind is "naked" (*gymnos*), that is simply itself without any covering; cf. *KG* 3, 6; 8; 19.

[30] Cf. Clement, Stromateis III, 39.6: *homilia nou pros theon euche*. As Bunge has shown (1999, 211–27; 2000, 7–26), Evagrius emphasizes togetherness, conversation in the sense of spending time together, self-forgetfulness and even distraction (instead of ecstasy): *synomilein*, *synousia*, *perispasmos*, even *anaisthesia* in a positive sense (see *Prayer* 3; 4; 34) that is an expression of love (*erôti aktotatô Pr.* 53; 63), an immediate, face-to-face and personal experience (steeped in scriptural and not just philosophical language as in, *Ex* 33, 11; *I Cor* 13, 12) that gives birth to: a) faith; b) adoration; c) the engagement of the whole person – not just *ratio* – in *proskunēsis*, falling to one's knees; d) deep humility, and e) simple experience *(aisthesis euchēs*) mixed with religious reverence/fear (*eulabeia*), sadness for one's past faults, and tears. (Bunge, 2000, 14 ff.) Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 1, 15; 4, 3; 5, 26.

more clearly if we contrast our modern notions of science with the way Evagrius sees *physikē* and *theologia*.

Although Western empirical science has its roots in a tradition informed both by monasticism and Neoplatonism (among other things), namely, the Franciscan tradition of Grosseteste and Bacon, modern science has had to lose touch with its roots completely as the price it paid for deconstructing parts of Aristotle's physics and for getting pragmatic results. In some ways, this has been a successful break with the past, as hot showers, fax machines, and air conditioners testify. But in other ways, it has had potentially disastrous consequences: not only the constant threat of nuclear and biological warfare, but also the potential destruction of the environment. Our science has had to adopt a third-person standpoint, namely, the dispassionate scrutiny of things as objects, and to settle for a natural but uncritical attitude to the world in which we take ourselves to be in control of other species. This may be disastrous for the environment, however, since dispassionate scrutiny works in a morally neutral universe in which things, resources, and other species possess no intrinsic values beyond the instrumental values we assign them. Their "value" is their scientific or mercantile usefulness. And once intrinsic value has become extinct, it is almost impossible to re-invent it, despite contemporary ecology. We end up either "managing" or "romanticizing" the environment – or searching for some other model to bridge the gap between hard science and moral philosophy.[31] In other areas too, dispassionate scrutiny doesn't seem to work – not only in medicine and psychology, but also in physics where subatomic particles don't seem to behave themselves as we think they should in front of electron microscopes, for instance. The presence of the observer changes the electron's behavior.

Generally speaking, ancient science, from Plato and Aristotle to Evagrius and Gregory, inhabits a very different world, technologically impoverished but rich in its framework of understanding. Nothing in gnostic science or theology is only an object. Everything expresses reflexive, second-person (I-you) understanding. Every chapter, every apophthegm is addressed to a "you." Moreover, we are warned constantly by Evagrius and Gregory not to yield to our "bestial" natures, and this might give the impression that other animals get short shrift in a Christian ascetic universe. But this is not true, for the gnostic looks to the archetype and reads the *logoi*, the divine speech, in all of creation, so that even wild animals, trees, and stones address the gnostic, as he or she them, in a second-person conversation. This is the tradition that will be passed on to the great Irish hermits and, still later, rediscovered by Francis and Clare. In other words, the address of the gnostic embedded in his prayer, conversation, and company with God includes the intrinsic values of things and reflects a genuine ecological view of the universe by participating in the divine economy. It is a model of stewardship, not management, of practical *agape*, not romanticism.

---

[31] For an account see Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*, Cambridge, 1994.

This inclusive view of prayer is also interesting in another way, for it turns upside down our characteristic "objective" modern way of looking of things. Jacques Derrida has perhaps understood this feature of so-called negative theology. In his little essay (*Comment ne pas parler: Dénégations*),[32] he discusses Pseudo-Dionysius, Meister Eckhart, and Martin Heidegger, and his observations about prayer in Pseudo-Dionysius can be readily applied to Evagrius (and Gregory) who is certainly a fore-runner of Dionysius. Derrida observes: "between the theological movement that speaks and is inspired by the Good beyond Being and the apophatic path that exceeds the Good, there is necessarily a passage, a transfer, a translation." This translation is prayer. He then cites Dionysius' famous prayer from the beginning of the *Mystical Theology*: "O Triad beyond substance, beyond God, beyond Good …"[33] (*MT* 998a). What happens in this prayer, according to Derrida, is something remarkable. Dionysius' prayer addresses an unknownness, namely, the utterly unknown God, an unknownness that is immediately determined by an encomium of contradictory predications beyond truth or falseness, "hidden in the darkness beyond light that illuminates …". This instantaneous translation between prayer to (pure address) and prayer about (predication, encomium) also includes its immediate addressee, Timothy; the prayer is also the result of a prayer that has already been prayed and is now, as written by Dionysius, being quoted, or as read by us, being quoted again. One can see the same complex forms of address in the chapters of the *Gnostikos*. As Derrida observes, the prayer is not addressed to Timothy or to us "as we are, at present, but as we would have to be in our souls if we read this text as it ought to be read, aright, in the proper direction, correctly: according to its prayer and promise" (Derrida, 1992, 117). Just so the *gnostikos* in the multilayered fabric of his meditation also addresses beginners and *praktikoi*. In other words, the remarkable quality of this prayer is, in part, its radical and unusual inclusiveness: "It is exactly *because he does not turn away from God that he Dionysius can turn toward Timothy and pass from one addressee to the other without changing direction* (Derrida, 117). The quality of such prayer is that by being rooted firmly and exclusively in God, it already includes in its potential embrace the future of individual addressees – something remarkable for its future orientation, its promise of a place of waiting (Jerusalem) "only after what will have taken place – according to the time and history of this future perfect" (Derrida, 118). In Dionysius' words: "Do not distance yourself from Jerusalem, but await the promise of the Father … according to which you *will be* baptized by the Holy Spirit."[34] This inclusiveness of everything through prayer in God is precisely the paradox of what we argued in Chapter 7 was the classic desert soul/body formulation: the one separated from all is the one closest to all (cf. *Pr.* 124). Simultaneously, Evagrius' thought is intrinsically future-oriented: "*Praktikoi will think* practical *logoi*; gnostics *will see* gnostic things" (*GN* 1).

---

[32] In Coward and Foshay, 1992, 73–142.

[33] *Mystical Theology* 998a. For Pseudo-Dionysius see Corrigan and Harrington, 2004.

[34] Ecclesiastical Hierarchy 512c–d.

The emphasis on *knowing* or seeing, however, can be misleading. Of *theologia*, for instance, Evagrius can write: "Blessed is he who has reached the ignorance that is inexhaustible" (*KG* 3, 88); but another manuscript has "the knowledge that is inexhaustible."[35] Thus, for Evagrius, one cannot apprehend God, where there is only such consubstantiality or unity that difference, as we know it, disappears (cf. *Refl.* 18).[36] Moreover, while prayer is not an *ekstasis*, a going out of oneself – as in Pseudo-Dionysius and Gregory, but a *katastasis*, a coming into one's true nature, nonetheless, self-awareness in some sense disappears: "Just as when we are asleep we do not know that we sleep, so neither when we are contemplating do we know that we have passed into contemplation" (*Scholia in PS.* 126.2 *PG* 12. 1644A).[37] In sum, the structure of Dionysius' prayer – its instantaneous, reflexive translation and its future expectation – is characteristic of Evagrius' apophthegms, and of some of the closing addresses of his other works (for example, *Eul.* 32).

9.5 Experience of Prayer

"Evidence of impassibility is when the mind (*nous*) begins to see its own light, and stays still (*hēsuchos*) in front of the images in sleep and serene as it looks at things" (*PR* 64). The experience of one's own formless light is a sign that one is entering the life of mystical knowledge. Where does this light come from? From the mind or God?[38] These questions were so pressing that Evagrius and Ammonius,

---

[35] See Hausherr, 1936, 351–62, who argues that both readings could be Evagrian; for a negative assessment, see Thunberg, 195, 359–61 and n.182, who is really arguing for the superiority of Maximus; cf. Louth, 1981, 108; Tugwell, 1985, 30–31, who gives a balanced assessment along the lines that since the Trinity is not a thing or an idea, but a mystery without limits, then "it does not really make much difference whether you call the highest state knowledge of God or ignorance of God". *Refl.* 20, what "pertains to God belongs clearly to the realm of the impossible, for substantial knowledge is obscure and there is no differentiation …", that is, it is impossible to apprehend the substance of God, as one can with either corporeal or incorporeal entities, since in the Trinity there is only consubstantiality (Sinkewicz, 2003 and 286 note 15).

[36] Stewart, 2001, 191: "Only knowledge of the Trinity is 'essential Knowledge', that is to say, knowledge without an object exterior to the self".

[37] Trans. Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, 1998, 114.

[38] On this experience of light in Evagrius see A. Guillaumont, 1984, 255–62; C. Stewart, 2001, 193 ff.; W. Harmless, 2004, 353–4, 370–71. In the *Praktikos* (64) and *Gnostikos* (45), the mind begins to see its own light (*pheggos* here and in *Eul.* 30; otherwise *phōs*). Elsewhere, the light is of the Trinity or Christ the Savior, (*TH* 42, 6–7; *Refl.* 4, 27; *KG* 5, 3; Christ: *TH* 15, 14–15), and Divine knowledge is light or ambiguous (*TH* 30, 16–17, 37, 35; 40, 8–9). Part of the ambiguity, Columba Stewart explains (2001, 193), is that Evagrius writes both about the mind in its original created nature, in which it is filled with the light of the knowledge of God, and in its present state for which such radiance is no longer natural.

one of the Tall Brothers from Nitria, actually made the long journey to seek the advice of the great "Seer of the Thebaid," John of Lycopolis, who pronounced the question beyond human knowledge, but added that the mind cannot be illuminated in prayer without the grace of God.[39]

In his own writings, Evagrius is ambivalent, probably because the cause of vision is not guaranteed; the mind may be manipulated by demons and can need angelic visitation to restore its own light (cf. *Pr.* 73, 74). Sometimes this light is the mind's own (*PR* 64), sometimes "the light of the holy Trinity" (*Antirrhetikos*, prologue, Frankenberg, 474). But probably Evagrius thought it was both, that is, the light by which the mind sees is also the immaterial divine light itself: "Prayer is a state of the mind that arises under the influence of the unique light of the holy Trinity" (*Refl.* 26). This may sound Platonic/Plotinian (for example *Ennead* V, 5, 7 amongst others), as Antoine Guillaumont has noted.[40] For Plato in the *Republic* and *Symposium*, the soul sees the Good and the Beautiful by virtue of the self-disclosing light of each. For Plotinus, the seer is not even sure afterwards whether the light is itself or another.[41] Evagrius' emphasis on light's formlessness bears some affinity with Plotinus' descriptions of the formless light-beauty in intellect, which comes from the superabundant beauty in the formless One[42] (for example, VI, 7, 32).

His overall approach, however, is different. Like Gregory of Nyssa, he frames his experience of the unknowable God not in the theology of Neoplatonism, but within his experience of the Bible: he transposes the external landscape of Moses at Mt. Sinai into the internal "land of the soul."[43] "When the mind – after having put off the old man – shall put on the one who is [born out] of grace, then it will see its own state at the time of prayer like sapphire and the color of the sky, which scripture calls the 'place of God' seen by our elders on Mt. Sinai" (*TH* 39). Here Evagrius' starting point is Paul (*Col*. 3, 9–10), together with *Exodus*: Moses, Aaron, and seventy elders climbed Mt. Sinai and, in the Septuagint version, "saw the place where there stood the God of Israel" (Hebrew text: "they saw the God of Israel"); "and what was under His feet was like a work/pavement of sapphire like the firmament of heaven in its transparency" (Exodus 24.9–11). The sapphire reappears in Ezekiel (1.26; 10.1) where God's throne sits upon it. The experience of pure prayer, then, is a return to Mt. Sinai, to the "place of God," that Evagrius also defines in *Refl.* as "his dwelling in Zion" (25), a quotation from Psalm 75.3. Is this just flowery allegorization? Evagrius' intention is surely not this. Within the context of Paul cited above, for Evagrius, each part of the Bible becomes transparent, just as Psalm 75 is able to address Exodus 24, and the whole living word is therefore not restricted to place or time, Sinai or Jerusalem, but opens

[39] See *Antirrhetikos* VI. 16, Frankenberg; and for Palladius' similar journey which took 18 days see *Lausiac History* 35, Butler, 101; compare Harmless, 353, and Stewart, 2001, 194.

[40] A. Guillaumont, 1984, 255–62.

[41] Cf. Plotinus, *Enneads* V 5, 7, 31–5; V 3, 11, 1–8.

[42] VI, 7, 32, 30–39.

[43] Stewart, 2001, 196–201.

upon the invisible creation permeating the human mind in whom God dwells: "The mind is the temple of the holy Trinity" (*Refl.* 34). The light we see in the mystical mind, therefore, is a partial experience of the light of God refracted in the world and across history through the prism of scripture (and coincidentally, for modern science, a sapphire light registering a specific intensity of heat on the light spectrum). The "place of God" remains formless (cf. *Refl.* 20) in that it is "free of self-created imagery."[44] Evagrius' complex prismatic view of scripture, prayer, time and place resonates profoundly with Gregory's treatment of the *Song of Songs* and Moses' life in which every reference bears an intertextual, holographic timbre: for both, there is no exclusively Platonic wing to bear the soul aloft without the Biblical eyes of the dove to inspire and accompany it. Finally, then, in Evagrius' thought, the monadic or non-numerical unity of humanity in union with God[45] is an expression not of abstract philosophical monism but of intimate union that enlarges the unity of body/soul/mind and directly links all beings to each other through their unity in God's love.[46]

9.6 Evagrius: Conclusion

In sum, Evagrius is neither exclusively intellectualistic nor cataphatic; there is a hidden balance or tension in his thought throughout. While the mind is the center of our psycho-physical structure, it is nonetheless capable of being disrupted by its internal, tripartite structure (reason-desire-spirit) and of being immersed in material passions. But the mind is also where the heart is situated because when passionlessness is attained by tears and purity, there love is born and sympathy for others (cf. *TH* 11). Consequently, when the mind/heart is opened into a larger self from an enclosed ego, it operates as a landscape of synergistic excellence expressing the whole range of body and soul in a larger world of spiritual significance and developing its natural constitution to the full in prayer. The mind remains the heart especially in prayer, since prayer is an expression of love/desire/eros and includes compassion for others in the gnostic hierarchy of in-betweeness. Compassion is the natural child of passionlessness, but it is directly the gift of God's own love.

The mind, therefore, is an icon of reflexivity expressed in divine-human covenant and in compassion for others (Love the Lord your God and your neighbor as yourself). To be with God is to know and to love with one's whole being, a simple experience of being-with. Therefore, prayer is not just an activity of mind; it expresses and enacts our natural best state of being, which in receiving everything from God does not predetermine or create its own meanings. It is therefore the most inclusive and original of all human states. In receptive communion with God, one is most in communion with others.

---

44 Ibid., 197.

45 For Gregory see Chapter 8.

46 See Chapter 7.7 and Bunge, 2000, 16 ff.

Finally, in prayer the mind experiences formless light, a sapphire light, refracted through the prism of Scripture. The mind becomes the temple, the body, the place of God, but the Triune God escapes all representation and all conceptual strategies.

This page has been left blank intentionally

Chapter 10
Pathways into Infinity: Gregory of Nyssa and the Mystical Life

10.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, I shall link Gregory's anthropology to his mystical theology by examining the questions of individuality, personhood and identity as a means of drawing broader conclusions. Why do these questions pose problems? Treatments of identity and related terms in Patristic thought risk being anachronistic. Terms like "personal" and "human identity" are creations of modern consciousness, situated in the post-Cartesian and post-Kantian context of individualistic subjectivity and of second-order capacities such as the ability to modify one's beliefs and desires by rational reflection.[1] Yet Gregory has something valuable to say about this, despite lacking the vocabulary/context in which the modern debate is cast. Part of the problem associated with modern use of these terms is that if something is not "personal" in the way we expect it to be, that is belonging irreducibly and privately to an individual or to "me," then it must be "impersonal." This has been a common reading of Plato and of "Platonic love" in the past 50 years.[2] Much in Gregory does not seem personal in this modern sense, and the problem is that unless we read him carefully, he and other ancient thinkers seem abstract, impersonal, and arid for readers informed by this modern dichotomy: personal or impersonal.

The same problem is more pressing with the term "identity." Identity means sameness (from the Latin word *idem* – same), and sameness without difference or uniqueness is not very interesting. The Platonic Form, for instance, or the *auto*-compounds in Gregory,[3] "the beautiful itself", just don't seem to tell us anything exciting, if we bracket off "the divine" into its own department. The "sameness" of self-relatedness looks empty or too universal; it may, by contrast, be an appropriate archetype for qualitative or quantitative "sameness" or the somewhat boring "sameness" of a subject persisting over time.[4] Although the term "person"

---

[1] By contrast with first-order capacities like sense-perception. For useful treatment of these issues see Gill (ed.), Oxford, 1990 and compare Gill, Oxford, 1995.

[2] See, for example, Vlastos, 1973, 3–42 and Nussbaum, 1986, 178 ff., and for the personal/impersonal contrast in Gregory, Balás, 1966, 67.

[3] As in *DHO*, 184a–c; *DAR*, 89b–97a.

[4] Greek: *hypokeimenon*, Latin: *substratum*, that is something underlying change or subject to change. This persistence we tend to associate with any basic notion of identity from Aristotle and, in modern times, John Locke (*Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Chapter 27).

(etymologically from the Latin *persona*) and its Greek cognate *prosôpon* have some interesting connotations in Hellenistic and Roman philosophy, and although later conceptions of *persona*, as in Boethius' formulation "an individual substance of a rational nature", clearly draw upon previous history,[5] "personal identity" as something belonging exclusively to a modern person may appear alien to ancient texts. So, from the standpoint of modern individualistic and objectivist use of these terms, Gregory or Evagrius may seem to have little to say to us, apart perhaps from the richness of scripture and Christian life which informs all their writings, especially if the things we take to be really "ours" (our loves, emotions, thoughts, shared lives, and so on) are relatively unimportant in the ascent of the soul into the mystery of divine infinity. This is often seen as a typical Platonist rejection of individuality in favor of the "abstract universalism of the Platonic Idea," and readers as different as Popper, Vlastos, and Nussbaum would undoubtedly hold such a view of both Evagrius and Gregory.[6]

There are other puzzles, however. First, all the criteria we might offer for personhood (for example agency, self-consciousness, sociability, the capacity to shape one's own life) – though these are important for Evagrius and Gregory – are not generally accepted as immediate criteria of any intelligible identity in the 4th century. John Rist poses the predominant view of the latter half of the 20th century when he says (in connection with Augustine) that "for Plato, individuality, being a mark of variation from the perfect, and thus a defect, must be qualitatively overcome."[7] Second, it is difficult to explain to a modern pragmatist what it means to be human or to be an individual person, if the human mind, made in the image of divine infinity, is actually incomprehensible to itself.[8] And third, partly because of these puzzles, scholars like Zizioulas have drawn a sharp distinction between modern notions of individuality, personality and other qualities (which they regard as belonging to an objectivist Western tradition initiated by Augustine and Boethius and developed by Descartes, Kant and others) and a richer Eastern view of personhood in Gregory and the Cappadocians that has to be understood relationally, socially and as being in communion prior to individual substances in the image of the Trinity where personal encounter is supreme.[9] Personhood is about uniqueness that cannot be catalogued as a series of qualities or arithmetical concepts. This is a powerful but divisive reading. It is also false. Let me look at these issues as they relate to Gregory' theology.

---

[5] See Gill, 1990, 7.

[6] Popper, Princeton, 1950; Vlastos, 1973, 3–42; Nussbaum, 1986, 178 ff.; 2003 (on Plato's ladder of eros).

[7] Rist, 1994, 129.

[8] There is a similar view in both Evagrius (*LF* 2, 41–2) and Gregory (*DHO* 15).

[9] Zizioulas, 1985, 47; 1991, 45; and for critical assessment Turcescu, 2003, 97–110.

10.2 Individuals

Boethius' definition of the human person, "an individual substance of a rational nature," comes from a tradition of which Gregory is an important part. The many terms Gregory uses to indicate the individual simply reinforce this. *To kath' hekaston*, "the particular", *ho tis anthropos* versus *to anthropoi einai*, "the individual man" versus "human beingness"; *hē idia psychē*, *hē idia ousia*, "the particular soul" or "substance"; *atomon*, "individual" or "indivisible"; *merikē* or *idikē ousia*, "partial" or "particular substance." And the terms he employs in Trinitarian contexts[10] although their meanings can shift significantly, also support this. *Prosōpon*, "face" or "person" (Latin: *per-sona*, the theatre-mask through which the voice comes) and *hypostasis*, "person," "individual entity," "substance" (like *hyparxis*) versus physis, "nature," *to koinon*, "what is common," and *ousia*, "substance," the most difficult of all terms.

An individual thing, person or primary substance "this human being," "Peter" is a "collection of peculiar characteristics" (*syndromē tōn idiōmatōn*), a *synolon*, "a together-whole," or a more complex organic, developmental unity, as we have seen above.[11] Such individuals are unique; quantity and number figure prominently in this, since we count them individually as a way of marking their differences and yet of presenting their combination.[12] In fact, the term *hypostasis* probably means something more like "particular entity" than "person" – despite its usage for the "persons" of the Trinity.[13] For example, "what is said individually (*idiôs*) is what is signified by *hypostasis*" (*Letter* 38, 3. 1 ff.). *Hypostasis* can also refer to a horse.[14] Uniqueness in this sense then is clearly a quality of distinct individuals for Gregory; and as we have seen above with the resurrection-body, individual continuity and identity are basic.

10.3 Individual and Substance: Human Beings and the Trinity

However, the picture is broader, since the individual is the place where "separation" from the material passions opens up into unified self-dependent agency, inner mutuality and self-knowledge. Separation from the "skins" of fallen life does not annihilate individuality, but focuses and lifts it up into an integrated form of life, and then turns it inside out; instead of an isolated item, it becomes a reflective surface, a mirror.[15] In short, separation makes it "substantial" (*ousiōdes*). What

---

[10] See Basil, *Letter* 38, *AG*, *AA*, *CE*; Ayres, 2003, 15–44; Barnes, 2003, 45–66; Turcescu, 2005.

[11] Chapter 8.6.

[12] Cf. *AA GNO*/III/i/40, 24 ff.; Turcescu, 2003, 102.

[13] See Barnes, 2003, 52.

[14] Turcescu, 2003, 103.

[15] *Cant.* XV (*GNO*/VI/440); IV, 104, 833b (*GNO*/VI/104); 868d (*GNO*/VI/150); See Hart, 2003, 120–21, and compare Horn, 1927, 113 ff. with Leys, 1957, 510; Daniélou,

does this mean? To be substantial, for Gregory, is to be like God and God is incorruptible loving *ousia* in the primary, archetypal sense, while angels and human beings are incorruptible substances in a secondary sense (without being in any way consubstantial with God), since they reflect and participate in God's life.[16] What then does it mean to be a substance?

10.4 Substance: Persons and Community

"Substance" is the Latin term for the Greek *ousia*.[17] Unfortunately, this tends to signify something that "stands under" appearance, which in Greek would be the *hypokeimenon* or in Latin *substratum*, which is something underlying appearances, namely, matter or formed matter. *Ousia* in early Greek signifies material "stuff," namely, things you can get your hands on. But for Plato, this came to mean intelligible reality, that is, "really real" things of which material particulars are only reflections. For Aristotle, by contrast, primary substances are individual things – "this dog, this human being," whereas secondary substances (for example rational or irrational animality) are the means by which we define individual things. But we can also look at individuals not just in terms of matter or the formed material compounds we see and touch, but also in terms of their form, namely, the organizing principle in them that makes them what they are, that is, the soul. For Aristotle in different works, then, substance is both individual things and the forms that make them what they are.[18] Gregory – after Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus – holds this complete historical picture together like two sides of the same coin. On the one side, substances are individual realities (Peter, Paul and others), but they are individual because, on the other side of the coin, their community of nature and their complete reality comes from above, namely, from God. This is why "substance" is really the wrong translation because it implies something separate, underlying appearances, whereas for Gregory *ousia* is the community of all beingness "overlying" individual things, that comes *immediately* from the "overlying" or transcendent (*hyperkeimenon*) cause, namely, the Trinity.[19] In human perception/apprehension, there is a kind of gap between the individual thing we see – you or me – and the "overlying" reality that makes individuals who and what they are. In fact, we mistakenly take that overlying reality to be an abstraction. So there is a kind of gap or interval between the two sides of our coins.

1953, 210–22; Muckler, 1945, 77–84.

[16] Cf. *Cant. 6*, 885c–8a; 873c ff.

[17] *LSJ*/Lampe, s.v.; Stead, 1997; for *ousia* before and in Plotinus, see Corrigan, 2004, 158–63; and Chapter 8.3–5.

[18] Compare Aristotle's *Categories* with *Metaphysics* 7–8.

[19] For the phrase in different contexts see *DAR* 124 b; *CE* 321d (*GNO*/I/96, 4); *De Mortuis* 532a (*GNO*/IX/61, 23); *De beat*. 1197a–b (*GNO*/VII/ii/80, 14).

But in God there is no interval[20] whatsoever between individual persons and the community of reality or substance.

For Gregory, as we have seen, in the case of individual compound things the forming principles (*logoi*) we perceive and grasp in definitions (*logoi*) – two sides of a single activity – are interconnected *noeta* or intelligible realities in God's creation.[21] Patterned interconnectedness[22] is a reflected feature of every level of existence from matter and body to soul and mind. This interconnectedness is one of the primary features of *ousia*: individual human beings are interconnected in the nature and substance of humanity; individual Divine Persons are related (*schetikōs* or by *schesis*)[23] in the one substance of the Godhead. And despite the inadequacy of our images, something like the "united distinction" and "distinguished union" of the persons of the Trinity can be found, according to Gregory, even "in sensible objects" analogically by our experience of light, flame, and human beings (*Letter* 38, 4, 87–93).[24] It is not so much that we grasp the unity of Peter and humanity or flame and radiance conceptually, but "our experience of what appears to our eyes is greater than the account we give of the cause, just as our faith in dogmas that go beyond us is greater than apprehension through reasoning, when it teaches us that what is separated in *hypostasis* is what is unified in the substance" (ibid. 5, 56–60). To sum up, *ousia* is: a) primarily, the inherent community of divine substance and persons and b) analogically, the extended (that is with an interval-*diastema*) community of human and other substance. In each case, *ousia* does not eliminate individuality, that is, either separate entities in human beings or full personhood or *hypostasis* in divine substance, but *ousia* signifies in us not the individuals as such, separate or isolated, but individuals *only* to the degree they share a common nature (with all this means in human development) and *only* to the further degree that human nature reflects the *ousia* of the Trinity where individual personhood and substance as communion are mutually coinherent and from whose being the

---

[20] That is, *diastēma*, a fundamental concept in Gregory's anthropological and ethical thought. All created reality is characterized by interval/distance. Only God is "nature without interval" (*adiastatos physis*). See, for example, *Letter* 38 (in Basil), 7, 21–2. For good context von Balthasar, 1995, 27 ff. However, Peroli (1985, 44 ff.) is not correct to see this as an overcoming of the Platonic account, since – although Gregory does away with Neoplatonic emanationism and all its grades of being – for Plotinus intelligible and sensible being are characterized by *diastéma*, while only the One is absolutely without interval.

[21] See above, Chapter 9 (9.8.1 on *DAR* 124c–d).

[22] One of Gregory's favorite terms is *akolouthia*, for which see Daniélou, 1953, 236 ff.; cp. Porphyry *Sent*. 32, 59; and for *akolouthia* as a logical or physical/causal sequence see Plotinus, I 8, 2, 18; III 1, 8, 2; III 2, 10, 17; III 3, 2, 2; cp. V 8, 7, 41–2; and Drobner, 2000, 69–101.

[23] Cf. *Letter* 38, 7, 10; 7, 48; and compare Porphyry, *Sent*. 3, 4; 29, 11; 29, 20.

[24] Among the many memorable examples in Plotinus is the light/radiance image of VI 4, 7, 22–47.

immaterial reality of full humanity is expressed.[25] This is precisely how Gregory envisages the relation between *hypostasis*, *physis* and *ousia*, however much their individual meanings might fluctuate.[26] Any meaningful notion of individuality must express not only free subject-agency and human community on every genuine level, including the Church as Christ's body, but also divine-human community radiating in and from the fully personal community of the Trinity. We should note here the inversion in Gregory of our contemporary way of thinking. To give a purely rational account of things may miss the richness of experience and faith, both of which surpass our capacity to grasp or analyze conceptually.[27] At the same time, all the elements of a theory of personhood are functionally operative in this view for the first time in history. If substance and person are co-inherent; if what it means to be a self is mediated through the other and the other as community – on both divine and human levels; and if the phrases Gregory uses such as "individual substance," *hypostasis* or *prosōpon*, designate not soul-self or mind-self or body-self, but the whole person in the immediate image of God, then a rich relational view of person is already operative in the 4th Century.

---

[25] This doubleness of substance analogically is Gregory's adaptation of the Neoplatonic notion of substance that in Plotinus, for example, applies both to intelligible substance in the strict sense (which is the level of *Nous* proper) and to everything that is, in principle, intelligible, namely, *logoi* and even humanity as a formal compound. Unlike Plotinus, however, for whom sensible compounds precisely as sensible are only collections of qualities in matter and not "real substance" (cf. VI, 3, 9), Gregory by this analogical view can see individual sensible things in a much more positive light. In addition, since for Gregory God is substance, whereas for Plotinus the One is not substance (except by a faulty way of speaking at the end of Plotinus' great work on the Will of the One, *Ennead* VI, 8), Gregory can combine the radical transcendence "beyond determinate being" of the Trinity with the realization that God is complete, perfect substance or reality, thereby paving the way for a tradition of theology that will stretch from Pseudo-Dionysius to Aquinas and beyond. For *ousia* in Plotinus as a creative development of Plato, Aristotle, and others, see Corrigan, 1996, 383 ff., and for further perspective Chiaradonna, 2002, 15–146; 227 ff. On this understanding, Stead's generally negative interpretation of Gregory and of the Patristic notion of substance is mistaken.

[26] Cf. Zachhuber, 2000, 36–8, 73–97; Turcescu, 2005, passim.

[27] This is Gregory's own observation, but it also reflects: a) Plotinus' insistence that we should not mistake our own explanations/formulations of causality in events for the actual reality (therefore the "why" is there in such a way that we can unpack it later, but the event itself exceeds our ability to "explain" it directly; cf. VI, 7, 1–4) and b) what appears to be the view of the *Theaetetus* and other dialogues that knowledge (*noesis*, understanding, or, *epistēme*, science) is not correct opinion *plus* a *logos* (an account; so a justifiable belief), but *understanding* – at least according to the negative conclusion reached about the definition of knowledge at the end of the *Theaetetus*.

10.5 Pathways: Divine/Human Being-With

If person in this sense is a reflective surface, a mirror-receptacle, then what does this mean for Gregory's view of the "self"? Everything you have, you have been given, Macrina tells Gregory;[28] and even at the level of reproduction, the whole of human life is a gift. But at the divine-human level, in what sense is it a gift, making rather than eliminating personhood?

A mirror has its own complex structure and so the reflection is not one-sided. Nor is the relation between light-source and mirror two-dimensional but holographic: whole in each of the structure's parts. Furthermore, the non-reflective outside of the mirror – where we look out to the apparently real – is incapable on its own of providing a real or substantial focus to reflect God, so that we can be converted into ourselves and drawn up further into likeness.[29] "The kingdom of God is within you," Gregory often quotes. The outside surface has to be illumined through the inner-reflective dimension, self-scrutiny, unbiased self-knowledge, and the journey to the interior of self. At the same time, the created world and the Church, as re-creation, are all around us. So the inward and the outward, like individual and substance, are mutually reflective, co-inherent. Our identity lies in how intensively we live this mutuality and follow into the dynamic reflection. In other words, identity is a function of the structure and quality of the mirror as well as its relational capacity to reflect in its entire structure what is given to it so that the whole structural capacity can be extended toward the source.

What then is reflected: something personal, a face-to-face encounter? According to the image developed in *Letter* 38, this seems to be the case: "just as in the pure mirror, one who sees the reflection of the shape has a clear knowledge of the face represented in it, so one receives in one's heart the character of the Father's *hypostasis* through the knowledge of the Son … so that the *hypostasis* of the Son becomes like a shape and face for the recognition of the Father …" (8, 18–30).[30] The face and form of Christ, that is, the whole person, appear to open up the beam of reflected light into a face-to-face encounter. But this is only an image and Gregory's view is more complex, for in the *VM* he states unequivocally that face-to-face encounters are how we meet evil. Why? Partly, his inspiration is biblical: "You shall not see my face" (Exod. 33.20). Partly, philosophical: "for good does not look in the opposite direction to good: it follows it." The face of one's guide is hidden (like Orpheus and Eurydice in Rilke's poetry) – always receding before one's gaze, just as "Moses does not look on the face of God, but sees only his backsides" (*VM* 409a–b; *GNO*/VII/i/121, 15 ff).[31] One must

---

[28] Cf. *VSM* 980b–1c; *GNO*/VIII/i/394.

[29] Cf. Hart, 2003, 111–32.

[30] Cp. Evagrius (*LF*): "Knowledge of these things (divine things) is thick by comparison with face to face."

[31] God is invisible but his *opisthia* "hindparts" are his after-traces in the world. Cf. Philo, *De spec. leg.* 1, 41–50; *De post. Cain*; and Gregory Nazianzus, *Or.* 2, 3 (*PG* 36, 29b).

then be *antiprosōpos*, "contrary-faced" or "reflected," in relation to one's guide, never to look upon the face, never upon God as object-spectacle, but to follow the back, content – and yet not content – to "be with." The ancient image of journey – Biblical, Babylonian, Homeric, Pauline – the *keleuthos*, *hodos*, *dromos*, the pathway, trail or running track, is the image Gregory adopts for understanding the reflection of God in the human person and the reality of self. We follow or trek up the pathways of God's incommensurable self-givingness, always behind – simply with. Is this just endless deferral, a suppressed recognition of the supplement, or recognition of limitation and future-oriented promise? It could be either or a bit of both. But the self as a form of unconditional "being-with" on the trail or pathway, in the multiperspectival sense of both individuality and community, is the image Gregory adopts for understanding the self's condition both as excess of love and as limitation and vulnerability.

Here there is a significant shift from what we might call in modern terms a metaphysics of presence, light and identity to a metaphysics of need, touch and erotic desire. This is why one has to be a lover to read the *Song of Songs* with understanding. Without love's eyes, such discourse is just a biblical anomaly or the babbling of fools. But for lovers every individual detail is important and all conversations are forms of intimacy whereby one being comes spontaneously to dwell in the being of the other. So the question whether or not Gregory is the founder of mystical theology and a mystic himself that has been debated in recent years[32] and that invariably[33] tends to come down to the issue of some form of special experience or immediate consciousness – this question cannot perhaps be answered in modern terms, for none of these ancient mystical thinkers actually claimed such things for themselves; and it cannot be answered at all in Gregory's case since no one form of anything is adequate to the pathways he represents. But if we ask instead: was Gregory a lover? – The answer is clear. The mystical life is about loving.

See Malherbe/Ferguson, 1978, 179 n208 and 184 n301. "… the contemplation of his face is ceaseless journey toward him" (*Cant*. 1025d–8a; *GNO*/VI/356). Abraham "set out not knowing where he was going … the safe journey … was for him not to be led by any of the representations of God at hand" (*CE* 45, 940c–41a; *GNO*/I/252–3). Cf. *De Beat*. 44, 1269c; 1272b–c; *GNO*/VII/ii/142–3; Von Balthasar, 1995, 127–8.

[32] On the nature and originality of Gregory's mysticism Puech, 1978, vol. 1, 119–41 (136–9); LeMaitre, *Dictiônnaire de Spiritualité*, s.v. contemplation, columns 1868–72; *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, vol. 4, s.v. Dunkelheit, columns 350–58; Daniélou, 1953; and for contestation of Daniélou's positive estimate see Völker, 1955; Crouzel, 1957, 189–202 (against Daniélou's claim that Origen had no mystical experience); cf. Daniélou's revised assessment, 1956, 617–20. And against or agnostic on the question whether Gregory actually had mystical experience, see Macleod, 1971, 362–79.

[33] For the difficulties see Butler's distinction between mystical experience and speculation in relation to Augustine (1922, 58); for criticism McGinn, 1, 1992, iv–xix; and for criticism of both, Turner, 1995, 260–8. See also Meredith, 1995, 136–8.

10.6 Mystical Theology: Kataphatic and Apophatic on the Pathway into Being

Gregory's philosophical theology is a theology of the pathway, sometimes generally referred to as Christian negative theology, namely, a strategy that first negates all its affirmations about God to ensure we do not treat God as a thing to be grasped and then goes on to negate those negations to ensure we do not covertly turn our negated affirmations into idol-substitutes for God. Of God's own nature we know nothing; "about" God we may trust and know a good deal through scripture, effects in history and so on. Gregory's mystical theology – or theology "with its eyes tight shut" according to one etymology of "mystical"[34] in order to develop the spiritual senses and to awaken a deeper form of being – is more complex, since Gregory's apophaticism (denial/negation) is only one moment of negativity within a much larger series of perspectives that is at every point both kataphatic (affirmative) and apophatic (negative). In other words, Gregory represents this pathway as progressive in that the self is constantly being drawn out in new growth toward God. This is Gregory's view of *epectasy*, developed from Paul and Plotinus (very similar in Evagrius, see *PR* 87).[35] To be drawn out of oneself, *epektasis*, also involves standing out of oneself, *ekstasis*, a term that also means growth.[36] Each stage, however, is not in linear succession, but mutually implicative; and the distinction between practical and contemplative cuts through every stage in a non-hierarchical way (*VM* II 200, 392c–d; *GNO*/VII/i/102, 22–104) so that in the particular pathways of fear/reverence or faith in God, hope, and love, it is the practical aspect, loving in the third way "that is essential."[37] For Gregory, the simple practice of ordinary things, like being good, loving, believing and hoping, is not subordinated to forms of knowledge.[38]

Moreover, while Gregory is certainly *the* theologian of mystical darkness and the forerunner of Pseudo-Dionysius' luminous darkness,[39] he is also a theologian of light. This affirmative side seems important for three reasons: First, it reflects Gregory's – and Basil's – concern that our concepts and reflections can lead to a positive knowledge of the ultimately unknowable God.[40] Our language, rooted in

---

[34] From the Greek *muein*: to close the eyes (or again, *mus*: mouse; c.f. Apollo Sminthius). For Christian mysticism, see McGinn, 1991, xiii (and passim).

[35] On *epectasy* see Daniélou, 1953, 309–26; Mühlenberg, 1966, 159 ff. Traces of a similar view can be found in Evagrius, for example, in his Commentary on the Psalms (70, 14), ceaseless hope in God is grounded in the infinity of the knowledge of the Trinity. Cf. *KG* 2, 11; 3, 88; and Refoulé, 1961, 261; for *epekteinomenos* see *Eul.* 8. The emphasis is of course different in each, but this may reflect more the different focus and character of their work. Had Evagrius written a commentary on the *Song of Songs* we might have a different picture.

[36] Cf. *LSJ* s.v.; also Corrigan, 1995, 27–37. Evagrius rejects ecstasy for obvious reasons.

[37] Cf. Daniélou, 1953, 24; *Cant.*44, 765b; *GNO*/VI/15–16.

[38] On this see Meredith, 1995, 59; Laird, 2004, 202–3.

[39] See Laird, 2004, 174–204.

[40] See Chapter 2.1 above.

God's creation, provides a genuine departure-point for our capacity to praise or hymn God by entering into a discipline and way of life that helps us understand the gifts of language and reason correctly and grasp the necessity of transforming our view of the world in that light. Second, if positive concepts are more indicative of God's *ousia* than negative concepts such as the "unbegotten-ness" that the Anomoian Eunomius of Cyzicus held to be the only defining idiom of God (the Father), then there is an appropriate dialectical moment for affirmation even in what might appear to be the predominantly apophatic movements of mystical theology.

Third, Gregory's triune God, after all, is beyond good, beauty, even beyond God, but not beyond the "I am who am" of Exodus or the existential, infinitival "to be" that cannot be unpacked into determinate essences. Gregory can therefore transform the complex Neoplatonic tradition without adopting a One beyond Being with Plotinus and perhaps Eunomius, or without adopting a One beyond the One with Iamblichus, in order to safeguard the Holy of Holies. God so loved the world, after all, as to be born into a real manger. Kataphatic and apophatic elements therefore reflect each other and are both parts of the conjunction of opposites that overturns the principle of non-contradiction at this level. Some of the above overlapping perspectives, then, can be represented in the following schematic pathways:

a) In terms of three ways of life-as in Origen and Evagrius:
ethics – physical contemplation – *enoptikē*

b) As lived biblical exegesis – intertextuality – of the books of Solomon:
Proverbs – Ecclesiastes – Song of Songs

c) As different modes of signification, where the literal, moral and mystical senses of texts are mutually pervasive, so that the literal is not superseded but transformed, as in Origen:
literal/psychic – moral/allegorical – mystical

d) As ages of development (maturity is not necessarily a chronological item, any more than it is for Aristotle in the *Ethics*):
infancy – youth – maturity

e) As a movement from ascetic purification through illumination to faith (very much like Evagrius): purgation – purification/illumination – union/faith:
or: separation – contemplation through phenomena – contemplation outside phenomena

f) As light into progressive darkness and from darkness into blinding light:
phōs (light) – nephele (cloud) – gnophos (darkness)
darkness – shadow – light

Laird has aptly observed: "Union does not stand at the end-point of a linear ascent but is the context of such ascent. The interior ground of ascent is the union of

finite creature and Infinite Creator, and the exterior ground of union is continual ascent."[41] In f) above, salvation history, the life of the Church, divinization,[42] the light of the Spirit and the illumined light of the virtues, by contrast with epistemological darkness, permit us to conclude that "Gregory's doctrine on union through the 'progressive deification through virtue' in light should not be subordinated to his theory of union in the darkness of unknowing."[43] And so a mysticism of light should not be subordinated to a mysticism of darkness. They are both parts of a larger picture of the darkness of God which is a "luminous dark" (*lampros gnophos*) (*VM* II 163, 377a; *GNO*/VI/i/87, 1–13), within which (*Cant*., Homily 12, 1025c; *GNO*/VI/355) Moses becomes like the sun and cannot be approached because of the light streaming from his face (cf. Exodus 34.29–30). These two pathways, therefore, represent two trajectories of a larger picture that includes the schema below:

> g) baptism – eucharist/liturgy – holy of holies/bed of the bride – (Spirit) – (Christ) – (Trinity/Father)

Like Pseudo-Dionysius later, and Evagrius and Pseudo-Macarius, the ecclesiastical hierarchy or order of superior/inferior and obedience is important to Gregory (in the *De Instituto Christiano*, for instance) and, at the same time, the sacramental life of the Church is an essential part of any progression or sustained journey in the mystical or hidden life.[44] *Dianoia* is "taken by the hand," freed from enslavement of the passions by baptism,[45] so that "purified in the crossing of the water … [it] then proceeds to contemplation of the nature that lies above" (ibid. 153, 373a–b), both the "divine" and "*ta onta*" (cf. 154, 373b). In other words, baptism helps us to see reality, but also to pass beyond our own views of it: as in Evagrius, it washes the *dianoia* "of all aesthetic and irrational motion … and all opinion born from conception *(pasan doxan tēn ek prokatalepseōs tinos gegenēmenēn)*" (ibid. 157, 373d; *GNO*/VII/i/84, 13–20). So the ascent of the mind to God is grounded in the

---

[41] Laird, 2004, 94.

[42] For divinization in Gregory, by contrast with Basil and Gregory Nazianzus, see Gross, 1938, 219 (who sees Gregory as perfectly expressing the Greek idea of divinization); Dalmais, *Dictiônnaire de Spiritualité*, 3, columns 1380–89 (who finds Gregory extremely reserved on this issue), and Meredith, 1995, 160–61 note 3, who endorses that reserve and finds that the language of sharing/participation is preferred to the vocabulary of divinization although such language is occasionally used: *VM* II, 35, 336c; *GNO*/VII/i/43, 7; *OC* 25 65c ff. (*GNO*/III/iv/63, 17 ff.) because of the fundamental divide between Uncreated and Created, Infinite and Finite (Meredith, 137). On the divinization of the virtues in the divine light rather than the divinization of mind (as in Origen) that participates in the light by means of faith, see Laird, 2004, 201–2.

[43] Laird, 2004, 203–4.

[44] See von Balthasar, 1942.

[45] *VM* II 125, 364a; 129, 364d; *GNO*/VII/i/72–4.

sacramental/liturgical life of the Church. And in the case of the Eucharist, this is very concrete since the Eucharist explicitly reaches into both body and soul. In the *OC*, Gregory distinguishes two types of union with God, of the soul through faith and of the body through reception of the Eucharist as a kind of divinization: "so the body that has been rendered immortal by God enters into our body whole, whole it transforms it to itself" (*OC* PG 45, 93b; *GNO*/III/iv/93, 21–94, 1).

But who is the self that ascends? Abraham, Moses, Solomon, Macrina, Gregory and his addressees? Are these merely the archetypes and not the flesh and blood creatures that we are? A brief look at Gregory's terminology will answer our question.

10.6.1 Identity and Continuity:Heart, Thought, and Mind

Is there a genuine continuity between the human reason, as well as ordered feeling integrated in the tripartite soul, and the ascent of thought and mind to God in mystical prayer? For Gregory, *nous*, *dianoia* and *kardia* are not sharply divided. All three can become embroiled in the passions and dispersed in sense-pleasures, as we have seen.[46] Conversely, through *dianoia* (rational thinking) and *nous* (intellect) we can approach the mountain of divine knowledge and enter the darkness of God (*VM* II, 152, 372d; 163, 377a; *GNO*/VII/i/82 and 87), and yet Gregory can distinguish *dianoia* and *nous*, insofar as the discursive understanding present in the *dianoia* is left behind in the movement of *nous*, even if it is also an essential stepping stone into the divine darkness:

> For leaving behind everything that appears, not only what perception grasps but also what the discursive reason (*dianoia*) seems to see, it (*nous*) keeps on going deeper inside until by the *dianoia's* great concern (*tē polupragmosunē tês diānoiās*) it gains access to the unseeable and ungraspable and there sees God (*VM* II; *PG* 44, 376d–7a; *GNO*/VII/i/86–7).

Nous and *dianoia* are, therefore, roughly coextensive, except in the highest regions of "true knowledge" where *nous* alone, it would seem from the above passage, but still aided even by the *dianoia's polupragmosunē*, can move beyond "every intelligible nature."[47] In at least one text, however, Gregory distinguishes divine *nous* from human *dianoia*, while elsewhere allowing for the transformation of *dianoia* into *nous* in the mystical life. For this reason, Laird in a recent book has drawn a major distinction between Gregory's more continuous use of discursive thought, on the one hand, and Plato's divided line in the *Republic*, on the other,

---

[46] Chapter 6.

[47] For positive and negative uses ("concern" and "busybodiness") of *polupragmosunē*, see *VM* II, 163, *PG* 44 377a; *GNO*/VII/i/87, 4–5 and *CE* 2 *PG* 45, 941b; *GNO*/I/253, 29; *Cant*. 11, *PG* 44, 1013c; *GNO*/VI/339, 17; and for positive and negative usage in Plotinus, see Sleeman-Pollet, and above all *Ennead* III 7, 11.

where discursive thought gives way to *noēsis* at the top of the divided line (*noēsis-dianoia-doxa/pistis-eikasia*).[48] Laird is correct to note Gregory's insistence upon the primary function of faith (*pistis*) by contrast with its somewhat lowly position on Plato's divided line. But even here Gregory is an acute interpreter of Plato, for, contrary to Laird's claim, Socrates himself in *Republic* book 7, after the treatment of dialectic and of *noēsis* included in dialectic*,* refers to *both* higher sections of the divided line – *noēsis* and *dianoia – as forms or kinds (eidē)* of understanding or *noēsis*.[49] In other words, Gregory exhibits considerable flexibility in his use of these terms but, as in Plato and also Iamblichus, for whom the triad, good hope, faith and love, is primary (*DM* 5, 26), the crucial distinction comes down to the *direction* of thought: from below, discursive thought remains just that, always potentially transformable by divine power. From above, discursive thought is already transformed into understanding (*noēsis*). But what is striking in the above passage from the *VM* is that from the top-down perspective even a potentially negative quality such as *polupragmosunē* or busybodyness, a quality surely to be associated with the lower human impulses or emotions (as in Augustine's notion of *curiositas*),[50] can make a positive contribution to what is effectively a new form of human desire and awareness, if transformed by the divine. This strongly suggests that emotion, or even something associated negatively with the *dianoia*, from a new perspective actually makes a real contribution to the emergence of a higher form of life.

Another term Gregory uses as roughly equivalent to *nous* and *dianoia,* is the *hēgemonikon*, the directing rational faculty or intellect, a Stoic term he adapts from either Origen or Galen.[51] The *hēgemonikon* in Galen is located in the heart.[52] And in Gregory's *Cant*., Homily 3 (see also 7), it is clear that in relation to the *hēgemonikon* the heart has a double function: physiological, as a source of heat distributed throughout the body through the arteries and veins; and epistemological, in which it receives and distributes the "fragrant presence of Christ":

> The bride therefore having received the sweet fragrance of the Lord in the intellect (*hēgemonikon*) and having made her own heart (*kardia*) a sachet of such scent, she makes all the pursuits of her life like the limbs of a body come alive with the breath/spirit (*pneuma*) reaching from her heart. (*Cant. GNO* VI, 94, 19–21)

In a *medical* way, then, just as the rational faculty assimilates and transforms all the lower faculties in itself, so the *nous*, *dianoia*, or *hegemonikon* assimilates the

---

[48] Laird, 2004, 5, 12, 28, 56–7, 206 (following Desalvo, 1996, 215–35). *Republic* 6, 511d–c.

[49] *Republic* 7, 543a.

[50] Confessions 10, 35.

[51] Laird, 2004, 148.

[52] Cf. Desalvo, 1996, 53–7.

body and especially the life-pervading function of the heart (*kardia*) to itself. Thought characterizes, transforms and assimilates the body from top down just as body is transformed, organized or becomes organic from the bottom up. Or, as in the above passage, the anagogic/metaphorical character of the heart makes *kardia* both image and reality of the intellectual organic function in both physiology and epistemology. Desire that springs from the understanding is the essence of the heart. On this basis, then, we conclude that Gregory insists in a remarkable way upon the continuity of identity in the human agent from physiological functions to the various epistemological spotlights of the *hegemonikon, kardia, dianoia,* and *nous* (as well as the flowering of the spiritual senses and the awakening or reconfiguration of memory at this level)[53] and on up to the highest function or power in the human being, faith or *pistis*, namely, the capacity for the most intimate form of friendship, communion, relatedness, that is ultimately a form of genuine surrender to the other, and paradoxically the real basis of human freedom. "You have given us heart," *Canticle* 4.9 proclaims, and this means, Gregory says, "You have made in us a soul and *dianoia* for the cognition of the light that comes through you yourself" (*Cant*. 949c).

10.6.2 The Role of Faith

What role does faith or trust play?[54] As Laird puts it (92): "… faith does not penetrate the heart under its own power, but only through the prowess and fine marksmanship of the archer." Faith and grace go together. Faith is the beginning and end of Christian life, a mode beyond *dianoia* and *nous*, receptive of divine immensity and grace. As in Evagrius,[55] *dianoia* and *nous* must abandon all images, concepts, self-projections to ascend into the sanctuary of darkness where God dwells, but in this non-discursive sanctuary discursive reason is not annihilated; it cannot grasp God as it would grasp things or ideas: it must therefore relinquish its customary functions and become purely receptive; and to be receptive in this mode is nonetheless part of its function from the beginning. For it could not even think accurately were it not capable of relinquishing its own determinate constructions of "reality," built as it is from the beginning (at least partially) upon receptivity.

---

[53] For the spiritual senses see Daniélou, 1953, 235 ff. On memory cf. *De Instituto Christiano*; *DV PG* 46, 352a–d; for the erasure of "lower" memory-as in Plotinus and Evagrius, *Cant*. 6, 885c–8a.

[54] See Laird, 2004 (15 ff.; 205 ff.), who argues for a nuanced view of the relationship of faith and knowledge in Gregory against Völker's claim that faith has no technical meaning and that a relationship between faith and knowledge is absent from Gregory's thought, and against Pottier's emphasis on the discontinuity between knowledge and faith (Pottier, 1994, 207; Völker, 1955, 140 ff., 244). See also Canévet, 1983; Harrison, 1992, 64–7.

[55] See Chapter 9 passim. Cf. in Gregory, *Cant.* 6, *PG* 45, 940c–d; *De Virg*., *PG* 46, 361b; *VSM*, *PG* 46, 977b; *Cant*. 6, *PG* 44, 892d; cf. Völker, 1955, 203 ff.; Daniélou, 1953, 261–73.

So the *dianoia*'s abandonment of any cognitive comprehension is both rupture and yet continuity in its own nature through which it can be informed anew beyond images and concepts: "When I let go of every sort of comprehension, I found the Beloved …. by the grasp of faith" (*Cant.* 6, *GNO*/ V/183, 7–9).[56]

Yet at the same time, the *dianoia* through faith is expanded and *augmented*. Instead of a torrent of knowledge (or the wave of intellect upon which soul rides in VI 7, 35 for Plotinus), we must be "content if truth bedew knowledge with certain subtle and indistinct thoughts (*leptis tisi kai amudrais dianoiais*) (*Cant*. 11, *GNO*/V/325, 21–326, 5). Through faith, *gnosis* is augmented by a different, hypernoetic kind of *dianoia* from above.[57] So faith makes the soul/mind a dwelling-place for God (*Cant.* 1033a – "body" for God, exactly as in Evagrius), expands the soul's desire and capacity for union, touches or grasps non-cognitively the incomprehensible, ungraspable God, and yet also transmits something of what is touched to the receptive *dianoia* that continues to expand. Faith therefore is an unknowing that transcends but completes the discursive/non-discursive functions of the mind. It also opens human beings to their natural receptivity.

Gregory's notion of "exalted faith" is indeed unique, standing in a relation to God that is unparalleled in other writers, especially Plotinus and the *Chaldean Oracles* that espouse a kind of simplicity beyond intellect or being as the ultimate relation to the "First." Nonetheless, it is contiguous to Porphyry's placing faith in the relationship with God,[58] to Iamblichus' establishing faith within the triad of good hope, faith and love in the *DM*,[59] and anticipatory of Proclus' exalting faith to the position of mediating union with God.[60] At the same time, one needs to recognize that there is a role in both Plato and Plotinus for a kind of awareness, divination, simple grasp beyond cognition or intellection that something – the good – is there, whether "inside" or "external," self or other, that roughly parallels the range and role of *pistis* in Gregory, despite the fact that *pistis* itself is placed low down on the "divided line."[61] Plotinus' use of *pisteuein* is also proleptic of Gregory's notion.[62] In general, Plotinus' recognition of a double capacity in mind to know its own content and yet also to go beyond itself as a loving mind – even a mind out of its mind, toward a simple contact with the Good of which it has an inkling (*phantasia*), sensation (*aesthesis*) – this recognition is part of the context for

---

[56] "Grasp (*labē*)" is definitive. See Laird, 2004, 208.

[57] Cf. Laird, 207 ff.; cf. *Cant*. 892b. Compare Evagrius, *Eul.* 20: "… souls free of resentment are covered with spiritual dew (*drosizontai pneumatikōs*)".

[58] See especially Dodds, *Pagan and Christian* 123 n.2; *Porphyry the Philosopher: To Marcella*, trans. Wicker, 289 note 23.

[59] *DM* 5, 26; cf. Psellus, *Hypotyposis* 74, 28; Kroll; Proclus, *Comm. Tim*. 1, 212, 19; *Comm. Alcibiades* 51, 15–16.

[60] On the later Neoplatonic triad "faith-truth-love", Wallis, 1995, 154.

[61] See *Republic* 6, 505e–6a; *Symposium* 192c–d.

[62] Cf. *Enneads* V, 8, 11, 33 ff.; V, 5, 12, 3; V, 3, 17, 28.

understanding Gregory's multi-perspectival view of the path.[63] Also fundamental is the corollary view in Plotinus that while *nous* contains everything in itself, it does so because it is given everything from another. Consequently, at the root of its nature, *nous* has to go in search – eternally – of its own *ousia*.[64] Generally, it makes little sense to draw absolute contrasts between forms of thought that are in any case different. Resonating strings empower music. The single string does not really suffice.[65]

10.6.3 Unity, Aloneness, Self-Identity and Form

There are two pressing questions that tend to trouble readers of the *VM* and *Cant*. 1, what does Gregory mean by aloneness and unity: being alone with the bridegroom, monoform, or the one eye that Gregory insists we should keep? The phrase "alone to the alone Trinity" sounds like the famous closing words of *Ennead* VI 9[66] that have inevitably been taken to mark a world-renouncing solitary mysticism; and why should Gregory employ Plato's abstract language about forms: namely, "itself" phrases such as "the Good itself," "the Beautiful itself," "Justice itself" amongst others? Can such language about the Trinity be appropriate when not even Plato identified such "Forms" as Gods? Again, does this not turn the person-communion Trinity into a Platonic abstraction? For an answer to these questions we have to go back to Plato's dialogues just to see how Gregory appears to have read them on these questions.

In the *Alcibiades I*,[67] the question of identity seems to go beyond the definition of the human being. After having defined man as his soul at 130c, which satisfies Alcibiades, Socrates finds the definition too limited without a clear understanding of *auto kath'auto*, "it itself." The sense of the text seems to be, that having determined roughly what the individual is, we still need to see what that individuality depends

---

[63] Compare *Enneads* VI 7, 35 and for this double function in Plotinus, Porphyry, and Amelius see Corrigan, 1987, 975–93. Cf. Laird, 2004, 117–29.

[64] *Enneads* VI, 7, 37, 19–22; V, 6, 2, 7–13.

[65] Furthermore, "change" in the broader sense, is not simply pejorative for Platonists (as Daniélou has argued). Quite apart from the "greatest kinds" of Plato's *Sophist* (that include movement), desire, movement and intelligible transformation are fundamental to Plotinus' view of *nous*. "Platonic eros" can hardly be identified only with Aristophanes' view in the *Symposium* (as Warren Smith seems to do). Gregory's eros has *everything* to do with the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* and it is very different. Contrary to Daniélou's view (Musurillo, 1979, 61), while Biblical anthropology is concerned with the age to come, with a promise for the future, "Platonist anthropology" by contrast is not focused upon "a past already fulfilled". The Platonic dialogues are conversations, not text books, and so they are inevitably future-oriented. And the whole focus of negative and positive theology in Neoplatonism is upon a presence, touch, promise that will come of its own self-giving, not of our compelling, and yet a promise that is open to all.

[66] VI 9, 11, 51; and Corrigan, 1996, 28–42; also Von Balthasar, 1995, 121–52.

[67] For the authenticity of the *Alcibiades I*, see Corrigan, 2001, 51 note 2.

on, which will be the fundamental question of human identity. The eye analogy which follows is meant to clarify the meaning of this. Just as the eye if it wishes to see itself looks into the pupil of another eye, so the soul must look into a soul and into its best excellence, if it is to know itself and the divine (133b). What then is the *auto kath' auto*? It is both the good and the medium of self-knowing, a "place" of sharedsouledness as in intersubjective conversation, that is, divine wisdom reflected in the soul (133b–c), by which anyone, (*tis*) not simply the soul herself, knows "all the divine" and "himself … above all" (133c) and furthermore, by which one knows each thing as a result (133c–5c), not only oneself, but practical things, like what belongs to us (133d). All of this results in temperance and just action both for the city (134a ff.) and for oneself (134d ff.). In other words, the ground of identity that is part of the very sight of soul is glimpsed in the reflexive activity of seeing; and this involves a transformation of the subject seeing, but with very practical consequences in the actual world. While the *auto kath' auto* remains itself, its realized effects involve both personal and world transformation.

For brevity's sake, we must pass over other discussions of this question in other dialogues (like the *Charmides* and *Republic* 6–7) [68] and come immediately to the *Symposium*, for here we see the vivid practical effects of this life-long quest of "the beautiful itself, single-form, pure, suddenly appearing"[69] confirmed by Alcibiades of Socrates. Socrates is not one of the many; he is conspicuously not like Apollodorus and Aristodemus, who remain "groupie" types; nor is he like any of the other *illuminati* at the get-together. He is specifically "unlike" any other human being but, according to Alcibiades, literally "unique" (without a place, *atopos*).[70] In other words, Socrates' unique identity is the result of his dialectical quest for the "uniquely beautiful" which has transformed him into a kind of half-human, half-divine person, supremely himself and with a "divine" inner world. There are several important consequences of this for our consideration of identity here: First, the Platonic Form is not the abstract universal, or the genus, or shared nature, but the unique self-identical reality, uncoordinated with everything else, capable – if approached in the right way – of making human lives, not homogenized, bland or even simply human, but remarkable, unique, provocative and somewhat divine.[71] True self-related uniqueness, therefore, belongs only to the divine, but a unique self-related divine *likeness* can also be a feature of authentic personal humanity. "Don't say *same*," says Macrina, when Gregory concludes that our minds must be the same as the divine nature if we remove sense-data from consideration; "say that one is *like* the other (cf. Genesis 1.26–7) [as] image … to … archetype"(*DAR*

---

[68] Especially the question of the possibility of a "science of science" in the *Charmides* 169b and the reflexive eye of the soul in dialectic in *Republic* 7, 517c ff.

[69] *Symposium* 211a–b.

[70] *Symposium* 211c.

[71] Here by implication is a hint of how the greater mysteries (*Symposium* 209c ff.) go beyond and overcome the perpetual identity-drain of the "lower mysteries" (*Symposium* 207d ff.).

41b–c). And since the "beautiful itself" (like the Good of the *Republic* or the *auto kath' auto* of the *Alcibiades*) can only be glimpsed by its own self-gift – but is present in every activity of seeing beauty from body to science, then any example of authentic personal identity must involve self-reflexivity, both intersubjective dialogue and the life-long approach to the Beautiful by means of its own gift which transforms not only the soul but the whole human person. In other words, to say that Platonic Love or the *auto kath' auto* is impersonal is simply to miss the point that any *personal* identity worth having depends entirely upon the divine uniqueness of what is always self-related. And this uniqueness is not solitary or to be conceived as a unit, but an immense cause which opens up the human person to something bigger than himself or herself.

Something like this understanding of identity in Plato fits Gregory much better than an impersonal "Platonic Love" or the view that Form is a generic concept or a free-floating universal. Yes, it is universal or comprehensive because it is *unique*. But uniqueness does not mean solitary in the sense of isolated or stripped of community and meaning. Uniqueness in this sense is not being subject to classification; it is an *Ausschlussbegriff*, excluding alignment with classes[72] and not a *Begriff* or concept, since it is not conceptually graspable; and, for Gregory, God is too close to be seen or grasped, since God is both Being and beyond Being, as in Pseudo-Dionysius and Aquinas. Of course, uniqueness in the strict sense for Gregory means Trinity. So while Plato or Plotinus might insist upon the need to become identical with the intelligible form, Gregory emphasizes the deepening *likeness* of the soul to the Triune God, whereby "knowledge becomes love" (*DAR*, *PG* 46, 96c). In the soul's "aloneness" with the Triune God (cf. *Cant*., *PG* 44, 949c–d; 952a), she is transformed into her own *uniqueness* as a creature of God: she becomes "simple … monoform … distinctly godlike" and "grows in relation to and blends with"[73] the simply Good, in a simple reflexivity in which she is continually transforming herself "by the idioms of the divine nature" (*PG* 46, 93b–97b). This is to restore the image of God within her, "that which belongs to God", *to idion* (*PG* 46, 97b), but this *idion* (distinct uniqueness) is also what is the soul's own (*to oikeion*), and not just the soul, but the whole human being: "for what is human in a certain way belongs (that is, *oikeion*) to God" (*PG* 46, 97b). Oneness of eye in this sense then is to see with the whole soul "that which is contemplated in one nature," without division or separation (*Cant*. 44 949c–d; *GNO*/VI/257–8). This is an integral part of the enlarging of the self so necessary in Gregory's thought for the deepest realization of *human* identity: "such is the participation of the divine Good that it makes him (*ton en hō ginetai*) in whom it comes to be larger and more capable of receiving; out of this capacity and magnitude it gets

[72] Ebert, 1974, 143–6.

[73] For blending language (*anakrasis* and cognates) and its uses for: a) soul-body union (*OC* 6); b) spiritual union re soul and God (*Cant*. Homily 1, *GNO*/VI/23, 1); and c) divine-human union in Christ, see Meredith, 1995, 148 note 52.

an addition for the recipient so that he who is nourished increases and never stops increasing" (*DAR*, PG 46, 105b).

In these passages (particularly from the *DAR* and *DHO*), Gregory goes far beyond Plato, but his constant return to the "Beautiful" and the "Good" shows that he includes Plato in his thinking and also, by inclusion of the *whole human being* in personal identity at its highest, he catches something deeper in Platonism by simultaneously transforming it. Instead of the unique Socrates in the *Symposium* (body *in* soul), Gregory give us several unique exemplars of precisely what he means: Macrina, Moses, Solomon and others. But for Gregory, Macrina is much more than a type; she is the living witness that a unique personal identity depends upon the transformative reflexive activity of the Good in us, an activity which also opens us up to become human, by going beyond our own human preferences.[74] Instead of the monstrous search for wholeness by the separated lawless halves in Aristophanes' fable in the *Symposium*, Gregory shows us scripturally what intimate covenant means (in the *VM*) and how divine erotic intimacy turns the body/soul/mind of the beloved inside out into a dwelling place, a bed or "body" for God (in *Cant.*). Even in Plotinus, the "alone to the alone" motif, misunderstood by contemporary writers as different as Kristeva, Nussbaum, and Rubensen, is adopted from a tradition of private conversation and then transformed into intimacy, the ground of all desire and communion.[75] Gregory takes it further still, back into its biblical past and forward through Plato, Origen and Plotinus to become the symbol of the Christian life in which everything and everyone will be eternally restored to the love of God – as in another schema of pathway represented below:

g) Movement from false reality –
to contemplation of *logoi* and *logos* (*oikonomia*) –
to divinization (aloneness/intimacy withTrinity).

10.6.4 Testing the Boundaries of Language

In the pathway of trust, hope and unceasing love, the previous "parts" of the soul come into a different focus: gentleness, lack of anger, and compassion for others blend with self-control and patient courage, *makrothymon* (*Cant.* 44 849a–52a; *GNO*/VI/125–7). And we strengthen our *prothymia* by "our own reasonings" so that *our own epithymia* becomes our guide on the pathway (876d–7e). For a similar usage in relation to love (*agape*) see Evagrius, *Eul.* 11 and 21. Self-guidance of this kind has an effect (as in Evagrius, Chapter 7): immediate closeness with God and others. In her love for God, the bride simultaneously leads other souls like catechumens in her train. As in Pseudo-Dionysius, intimate love involves linked

[74] On going beyond humanity/human nature, see *VSM*, *PG* 46, 977b (*GNO*/VIII/i/390, 7); *Cant*. PG 44, 776c ff. (*GNO*/VI/29, 2 ff.).

[75] Cf. Corrigan, 1996, 28–42.

hierarchies of interdependence (*Cant*. 44 852–7; *GNO*/VI/127–35).[76] At the same time, the bride in Gregory's account is "led by the hand." "Hand of God is the demiurgic power … pathway for those who run" (*PG* 44 *VM* 408c; *GNO*/VII/i/120, 6–19). In the mystical life, closeness of physical contact and of down-to-earth imagery surpasses thought and vision that imply interval or distance (*Cant*. 9; *GNO*/V/324,10–11). "The bride thinks she is ready to see the face of the speaker openly and to hear his word from himself, no longer spoken through others" (*Cant*. 44 889c; *GNO*/VI/178, 16–19). And there *is* union: "God comes to dwell in the soul and again the soul migrates into God" (889d; *GNO*/VI/179, 5–7).[77] But it is only when she has gone right through the city of God and given up everything she has found that Gregory represents the bride as recognizing what she sought and finding her beloved in trust/faith (893b) as "Mother, first cause of our being" (893c; *GNO*/VI/183, 14). Union by touch and trust; a seeing that is not seeing; God is bridegroom, Trinity, Mother.[78] Here too is a coincidence of opposites: The bride is wounded by the arrow of love, becomes the shaft of the arrow in the hands of the archer, and yet is cradled in the embrace of the bridegroom. She is both in motion and at rest: "shot forth like an arrow and at rest in the hands of the other."[79] Such paradoxical language and superimposition of images[80] in Gregory break the dependence upon determinate geography and take us beyond the principle of non-contradiction, since the bride does not dwell in a physical world of determinable facts, and God is not *a* being, but being beyond being; so the bride is always on the way – *potential* – in the *power* of the infinite other. And this is an experience of metamorphosis, of newness (as "for the first time", *Cant*. 876b; *GNO*/VI/158, 21–159, 11), and of otherness with a distinctive individual character (*idios tis charactēr toi bioi epilampei*, 896c; *GNO*/VI/186, 10–11*)* – a divinization even to the point of no longer being properly human, in Gregory as also in Plotinus (776c–d; *GNO*/VI/29, 12 ff.).[81] Consequently, the limits of language are appropriately explored and transgressed, and yet the experience of union by faith also saturates language beyond its normal capacity, so that Gregory represents Thekla after the teaching of Paul as transformed by the word that lives in her (*Cant*. 14; *GNO*/VI/ 405, 7–9), and the bride's heart after the kiss of the bridegroom becomes a treasure-house of words (*Cant.* 4 968d; *GNO*/V/281, 2–7) – from her mouth "a paradise of pomegranates." As Laird has observed, *apophasis*, denial, or apophatic negation, has to be balanced by *logophasis*, positive word-speaking, or superabundance that crosses over the threshold of incommensurables from non-discursive joy to speech.

---

[76] See *Celestial Hierarchy* and *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* passim, and for ecstatic Divine Love *Divine Names* 4.

[77] *Aesthesis tēs parousias*, *Cant. GNO*/VI/324, 10–11; cf. Canévet, 1972, 443–54.

[78] See Harrison, 1990, 441–71; 1996, 39–41; Turcescu, 2005, 102–3.

[79] Cf. *Cant*. *GNO*/VI/129, 15–16; Laird, 2004, 94–5.

[80] Canévet, 1983, 314–16, 339 ff.; and for Plotinus, see Corrigan, 2003, 223–46; Mortley, 2003, 247–54.

[81] Cf. *Ennead* V 8, 7, 31 ff.

What is striking in such discourse is not only the saturated simplicity of language (kiss, dove, garden, moisture, perception, trust, intimacy), but also the radical vulnerability of experience: trauma is finally not negative, but *the very means of union*. The wound of love (*trauma kai plagē*)[82] is emblematic of the wounded body – Christ's body – and the image is also surely sexual. However, just as "separation" from the passions in the ascetic life opened up the possibility of organizing a mind/soul-body continuum and just as the soul began to grow in the love of God, so here in the mystical life Gregory represents the soul/mind as punctured by love, by God, so that a new articulation can be formed within: "it is a noble wound and a sweet blow through which life slips through into her inner parts just as if she opened a door, an entrance into herself which is the division (*diairesis*) caused by the arrow" (*Cant*. 4, 852b; *GNO*/VI/128, 3–5). The soul becomes a dwelling place for God. And since the "soul" here is the whole mind-body continuum unified, it is not out of place to see a similarity with Evagrius' notion of the mind as "body" for the Trinity. What seems shocking in Evagrius is more muted in Gregory, but in both the "mind" becomes a dwelling-house or "body" for the Trinity.

10.6.5 Conclusion: Neither Boundary nor Distance

In conclusion, individual perceptible things have their own positive identity right from the beginning – as bodily compounds, mind/soul body compounds. They are individual substances, but their natures and their substance are also what they share as the community of all creation. Zizioulas is therefore mistaken when he emphasizes uniqueness as a feature of relational personhood and not of irreducible individuality. Something unique or *idios* belongs to each human substance by virtue of its participation in the divine community of personhood and substance. And this uniqueness continues and deepens in the mystical life even to the point where specific human nature itself seems to be left behind. In the mystical life, however, there are other kinds of "uniqueness" to be considered, since such life is a community of many pathways in which "unity" and "aloneness" signify both integration of body/mind/soul and a deeper dialogical intimacy or relatedness that, on the one hand, lifts up others to God and, on the other, expands the soul so that she can welcome into herself the incommensurable Divine immensity. Gregory adopts Plato's *auto kath' auto* or "itself in itself" language because he understands that for Plato the Good, the Beautiful, or the Just is *uniqueness itself* in the lifelong pursuit of which the human being becomes progressively transformed. The Trinity therefore is uniqueness open to everyone – Christian, pagan, Jew or Gentile. Abraham, Moses, Solomon, Paul, Thekla, and Macrina are unique exemplars of such lifelong metamorphoses. Gregory also emphasizes the continuity of the discursive reason or *dianoia* into mind and faith in the mystical life. Otherness, transformation, the shedding of everything one holds dear – these do not eliminate

[82] On this see Laird, 2004, 91–101, 168–9; Williams, 1991 (1979).

individual personhood, but give it a unique character, transforming weakness and vulnerability into a dwelling-place for God. In short, the mystical life is where one begins to see every detail as if for the first time, where love frees us to see and touch the uniqueness of things and where the mystical signification is at home with the down-to-earth literal meaning.

God, for Gregory, cannot be contained by any limit, and so 'not to have a boundary' is what links the soul to God (*DAR*, *PG* 46, 96a ff.), as the necessary source and term of her being, for the soul is linked to God not as unit to unit, but as individual substance (*idia ousia*) to a Triune community of blessedness which embraces everything. So one cannot tell who "we" are without also indicating the source and goal of our identity. In God's love, there is no interval (*diastema*),[83] and for Gregory, following St. Paul, everything passes away except love, which alone is without limit. So the fundamental desire of the human heart is to fulfill the purpose for which it is made: namely, to become radically open to that which is greater than itself and to be linked without interval or distance. If we as human beings are in this sense incommensurate with ourselves, then the potential infinity of the human mind, as touched by the incomprehensibility, but direct immediacy of the divine community, is beyond our capacity to grasp, but at the same time deeply meaningful.[84] Furthermore, Gregory's view, so resonant with that of Evagrius, of the integral unity of mind/soul-body in the creative power of the triune God, leads to a much deeper sense of the importance of the everyday life of the church, of sacramental theology and the mystical life. We cannot divinize ourselves any more than we can ever hope to completely understand ourselves. Yet divinization is at work in human beings from the beginning since they are made in the living image of God that continues to recall them all (as in Origen and Evagrius), through sacramental life and Christ's presence, eternally back into the Triune God – without a boundary.

---

[83] On *diastema* see von Balthasar, 1995, 27 ff.; Desalvo, 1996, 111 ff.; cf. Verghese, 1976; for the whole spiritual world as without boundary, see *Cant*. 6, 885c–8a; *GNO*/ VI/173, 7–174,20; and for *methorios* Daniélou, 1961, 161–87.

[84] In this, Gregory is part of a long tradition that includes Plotinus, Porphyry, Proclus, Pseudo-Dionysius and Aquinas; see Corrigan-Still, 2004, 1 ff.

Chapter 11
General Conclusion

Evagrius and Gregory have never been seriously compared though their lives intersected significantly, especially at the Council of Constantinople. In both lives, the desert tradition is expressed in powerful ways: Evagrius, at home in the city, ended up in the Egyptian desert, transforming the heritage of Origen, Antony (or several different "Antonies"), and the Macarii into what would later become the seven deadly sins tradition; and Gregory, with links to the desert, was compelled to live in the "city" as a bishop, like Augustine, yet participated significantly in the transmission of the Syrian monastic tradition in his cooperation with Pseudo-Macarius (perhaps Symeon of Mesopotamia). In their lives too, the forceful but hidden presence of women in the 4th Century is strikingly revealed; because of the influence of Melania and Macrina respectively, they came to represent major strands of the legacy of the 4th Century: the development of cognitive psychology, Christian anthropology, Trinitarian, mystical and sacramental theology, and biblical exegesis worthy of Origen. They mapped out the range of scientific insight from psychology and ethics (and their pathologies) through medicine and physics to theology, prayer, and the mystical life. Whether or not they themselves were mystics, they also charted the pathways and benchmarks of ascetic and mystical experience for future ages.

This book has shown that, despite differences in thought and writing-genres, Evagrius and Gregory are more radically interconnected than has been supposed on a range of significant issues from Trinitarian theology to "thick" thoughts and deadly sins; that Evagrius is not the extreme, world-rejecting ascetic or Gregory so full of inconsistencies as is often thought; but that both were able to develop classic expressions of the divide between substance and passion and of the mind-soul-body relation because, in holding that the human being is made mind, soul *and* body in the image of God, they were able to pay closer attention to lived bodily and psychic experience. They thus laid pioneering foundations for what is effectively in Evagrius the birth of recorded cognitive psychology in the desert tradition of ascetic practice and for radical soul-body equality in Gregory, together with a new empirical emphasis on medicine and physiological structures for the emergence and operation of higher order functions (including spiritual experience) without diminishing the holistic integrity of those functions themselves. Demonic manipulation of the cerebral cortex in states approaching the purest prayer is a striking example in Evagrius.

I have argued for new readings of Evagrius and Gregory on key issues such as the intelligible body, the faceless self-image constructed by the mind in action, the structure and meaning of the eight *logismoi* and materiality, humanity as monad made

whole in creation, and especially the mind-soul-body relation. There is no single, static soul-body relation but different ways of living a series of possible relations – integral or not; and moral sensitivity is the key criterion for determining the quality of the lived relation. The separation of soul from body, then, is not the dualist strategy that supposedly separates Biblical anthropology from practices infected by pagan philosophy but the capacity of emergent agency to separate itself from passion and object-dependency so as to function self-reflexively, self-consciously as an integral soul-body union. Separation is a prerequisite for a more unified life. Furthermore, the divide between substance and passion is not a divide between rationality and feeling, for ordered feeling, or the "heart," is what most characterizes mind in both Evagrius and Gregory, and body lifted up by soul into this perspective essentially expresses the life of mind. For this reason, to live the mind-body relation integrally is to be closest to, not furthest removed from, the world.

I have also presented new interpretations of Neoplatonic thought, particularly of Plotinus and Iamblichus, together with instances of significant divergence between them that had an impact on Christianity's engagement with pagan thought. Generally, the sophisticated character of Christianity's critical debate with Neoplatonism has in large measure gone unnoticed. Gregory's anthropology, revolutionary in its own right, requires an acute understanding of Plotinus' theory of substance, whole-formation and the soul-body relation as a formal compound (developed in *Ennead* VI 7 and elsewhere), together with Origen's similar view of monad-humanity in the *pleroma*, to become properly contextualized so that one can avoid obvious red herrings such as supposing the monad to be some generic nature or Aristotelian "secondary substance."

This book has also argued for a hidden tradition of Plato-interpretation starting with Aristotle and shown how this tradition is in part responsible for the earliest structure of the deadly sins in Evagrius and how the supposed uncritical syncretism of the Church Fathers is actually a modern misapprehension. The equation, for instance, of the Platonic tripartite soul with Aristotelian bipartite psychology is not a misunderstanding of both systems but a sophisticated attempt to think through all that Plato and Aristotle had to say on this complicated and still debated issue in the light of Biblical and later thought (like the Stoics, St. Paul, Plotinus) and with 4th-century Christian ascetic, psychological and theological experience in mind.

Against this broader background, then, Evagrius and Gregory can be seen in new ways. Evagrius is often called an extreme ascetic who demands the extirpation of feeling and belongs to a more "intellectualist" tradition than Gregory. None of this is true. Chapters 3–5 show that a purely intellectualist, non-emotivist or subjectivist notion of mind does not represent the meaning and range of terms such as *nous*, *kardia*, *dianoia*, *hegemonikon*, *psyche* and so on in either Gregory or Evagrius. Equally, both show a respect for monastic superiors and the cenobitic life; both emphasize manual labor and compassion for others, not lack of feeling. These positive qualities, together with withdrawal from the world or *xeniteia*, attention to oneself, stillness, self-knowledge, mindfulness, endurance, yet also hospitality, show that the spirit of Evagrius is not removed from Basil's Rules.

Furthermore, a deeper comparison between the two reveals striking resonances not fully seen before. In both, *apatheia* means the human/divine capacity not to be driven by object-dependent forces, but to become a free agent in God. The austere side of unaffectedness has to be mitigated by two further considerations: first, the ascetic and contemplative life is about awakening a higher axis of lived experience in the midst of ordinary life. This is the gateway to love, compassion, and care for others, as also to a radical simplicity of life. Gnosis does not supplant love in Evagrius' gnostic form of life; gnosis continues to be transformed by love. Second, *apatheia* is directly equated with purity of heart, the term Cassian will employ. The biblical notion of the heart, together with the beatitudes, provides the conduit for Christian life to flourish. Evagrius' way of understanding this in terms of *apatheia* and the three ways (*praktikē – gnostikē – theologia*) is far less Stoic – as has been thought – than Platonic/Aristotelian. And Gregory's approach, like that of Evagrius, contains diverse elements and terminologies, but is more Platonic/Aristotelian than straightforwardly Stoic (Chapter 4).

One the most striking features of the ascetic thought of both Evagrius and Gregory is the interpretive and transformative structure that underlies their works, so deeply interwoven with, or already assimilated into, other ascetic/intellectual strands that it has almost completely escaped attention (see Chapters 5–6). The tripartite structure of the soul, for instance, comes in two forms in the works of Evagrius and Gregory, namely, *Republic* 4's integrative structure of potentially conflicting psychic drives and another different, disintegrative structure from *Republic* 8–9 (and elsewhere), where the disruption of the drives actually leads to an unconscious division of the soul into two. Evagrius and Gregory employ both structures, and this seems to be based upon their understanding that while the tripartite soul can be an integrated unity, the different structure based on the predominance of desire and the dethronement of the *thymos*' positive qualities is a structure based not on substance, but on desire or passion (as is recognized by Plotinus). This is not 4th-century uncritical syncretism, but a tradition that goes back to a plausible interpretation of significant Platonic dialogues by Aristotle himself in the *Topics*. Gregory is more eclectic than Evagrius, but both receive an already established tradition: for Gregory, this includes the lintel and doorposts of the Israelite Passover as a tripartite structure together with the drowning of the Egyptians' horses and chariots in the Red Sea (from Philo and Origen); for Evagrius it is the heritage of his "teacher" – Gregory Nazianzus, Macarius – that stretches back through Aristotle to Plato.

As for the structure and terminologies of the "passions" and the fall of intellect or soul, Origen and biblical thought are, indeed, fundamental. It is striking, however, that both Gregory and Evagrius inherit a tradition not so much of "deadly sins" as of evil (or good) *logismoi* or *noēmata*. Some of this is scriptural: the good or evil Hebrew *yésér* is one example. But the concepts/imprints theory of images in Evagrius' writings (less explicit in Gregory) is one that goes back to Aristotle, has Stoic applications, and comes into focus in the spiritual life, between divine and demonic visitations, with Iamblichus. The closest parallel to a

"thought" which is "empty of thought," however, is not exclusively Biblical as it is Platonic and Neoplatonic (Chapter 5). In addition, Plotinus' demonology (together with that of Iamblichus) provides a genuine background for understanding the broader ramifications of Evagrius' view, and the Neoplatonic view of matter (with Plotinus' view well understood, but ultimately corrected) is evidently the setting for some of Gregory's major presentations of how an immaterial intellect can become immersed in matter and "thickened" as in Evagrius (Chapter 6). This post-Plotinian Neoplatonic view of evil as a *parhypostasis* or side-effect in both Evagrius and Gregory will become definitive in Pseudo-Dionysius and later in Aquinas' *Commentary on the Divine Names*.

That all of the above is not just coincidence is confirmed by the fact that the eight *logismoi* or deadly sins tradition, apparently initiated by Evagrius, emerges from a subtle transformation of Plato's *Republic* 8–9, in which the four individuals/constitutions (*katastaseis*), from timocracy to tyranny, with the double tendencies of each (each is linked to what lies above it and to what comes after it, yielding a configuration of eight), provide the conceptual framework for the complex Biblical-Hellenic views of the vices that is then fleshed out by means of a material continuum structure that finds its closest parallel in Iamblichus and Plotinus (Chapter 5). The deep structure of the seven deadly sins tradition, therefore, is born in significant measure from a psychological rethinking of the *Republic* that adopts the tripartite structure of book 4 and works out the consequences of this when the integrated structure is overthrown and the dominance of desire unconsciously deconstructs the orderly life of a unified psyche (in *Republic* books 8–9). While the eight *logismoi* structure does not exist in Gregory, a similar group of ideas is operative, for Gregory maps the downfall of soul onto the overthrow of the tyrant, both the Egyptian variety (Pharaoh) and the tyrannic variety (*eros*) of *Republic* 8–9. While Evagrius' catalogues of virtues and vices admits of relatively minor variations, Gregory likes to employ different scenarios. Greater diversity is Gregory's way; iconic simplicity characterizes Evagrius. Nonetheless, the resonances are striking – not only in the structure of materiality, the negative/positive senses of *logismoi*/*noēmata*, the tripartite structures of the soul, and impassibility, but also in the mind-soul-body relation, in the use of auto-compounds (such as "Justice-itself"), and even in the small reflection of Gregory's characteristic *epectasy* doctrine in Evagrius.

Evagrius' view of the mind-soul-body continuum is more complex than has frequently been supposed. Like Origen and Gregory, body is not a pejorative, but an organic entity that has to be purified together with the soul as the "intelligible body" (Chapter 7). Purification or separation – both Scriptural and Platonic – is necessary, first, to distinguish the soul from the body (for otherwise in their unconscious union no self-consciousness is possible) and, then, to open up the possibilities of psychological/moral development for organic agency as a pre-condition of their integral (rather than unconscious/object-dependent) union. *Praktikē*, or ascetic practice, therefore sets free the previously unconscious individual for a more integrated mind/soul-body union in which organizing principle and structure organized can overcome the various tyrannies of purely

matter-based, ego-enclosed activity and instead disclose a unified self-dependent subject. Separation, therefore, divides the frozen individualized ego to disclose a psychological/moral complexity that requires a unifying principle. On the other side of the equation, the proper organization of the self is inherently a community-venture, even for the hermit, because he/she is no longer able to live simply in the self-enclosed world of his own preferences. They come to live in the whole created world where psychological *praxis* has to be guided by knowledge about the nature of things. Scientific thinking in this sense is even more crucial for hermits than it might be for city-dwellers, since they have to be able to recognize and check their impulses with a knowledge that is not simply from their own *psyche* or experience; it must be a genuine, true-to-reality knowledge, mediated through another's "reading." This is ultimately God's knowing – *gnosis ousiôdēs*. Scholars' assessments of Evagrius' emphasis on such knowledge vary considerably, but there is a rigorous logic behind his thinking that does not immediately make sense to the modern mind. If various levels of contemplation by the *gnostikos* are essential to ascetic practice, then it is not enough to separate oneself from the passions in order to live the full range of human life; it is also necessary to separate oneself from attachment to all things so that one can come to know the created world in and through God's knowledge. God's knowledge is precisely not an object or thing set apart from a scrutinizing subjective consciousness, but a loving intimacy or a "being-with" (*synomilein*, *synousia*). Evagrius therefore formulates the classical desert-tradition view of the soul-body union, one that unites Platonic *chôrismos* with Origen/Aristotle's *nous* in an ongoing tradition from the Gospels and Letters of Paul to Antony: the one who is separated from everything is the one closest to everything (Chapter 7). Separation, in this sense, up to the complete immateriality of God, is the closest one can be to everything. Perhaps like Paul, and certainly like Origen, Porphyry, and Iamblichus, Evagrius conceived body stretching up from the gnostic body toward the immaterial Trinity; and he even goes so far as to say that our purified *nous* (within which soul-body union is most completely achieved) serves as a body for the Trinity.

Gregory's notion that the soul or bride can become a dwelling-place/body for the Bridegroom is not far from that of Evagrius (Chapter 10.6.4). For Gregory, separation/purgation/purification is also crucial for the building of a substantial mind/soul-body union rather than an object-dependent, unconscious one, but Gregory articulates this in a thoroughly realist, holistic and developmental fashion. First, humanity as part of the *pleroma* or fullness of God's demiurgic plan is not an abstraction or a conceptual nature either separate from individual human beings or considered apart from them, but the living, indwelling nature in each and every human being (completely pre-formed in Adam) that points through the image of God reflected in every soul-body compound to the substantial unity of humanity rooted in God (Chapter 8). This is as concrete and as down-to-earth as our notion of DNA, a transmitted genetic pattern, but Gregory conceives this substantial unity of all humanity more realistically still, since it is not something merely reflected dimly in our nature; it is our nature inscribed in Christ's body and reflected in

the life of the Trinity as our biological, psychological, spiritual and sacramental heritage informing every particle of experience. In other words, it means something distinctive to be human or to have a human nature. It is not an abstraction or merely a construct, but a genuine participation in God's creation concretely operative in every human being. Here I have suggested that certain distinctive theories outlined in some of Plotinus' greatest works – *Enneads* VI 7, VI 8, and VI 4–5 – form a major context for understanding the precise sense, consistency and yet creativity of Gregory's way of thinking through such a major problem in a new way (Chapter 8). In my view, Gregory must have read the groundbreaking work, *Ennead* VI 8, *On the free will of the One*, since his distinctive doctrine of human freedom rooted in Divine creative freedom adapts and transforms for the 4th Century Plotinus' subtle analysis in the late 3rd Century in the light of Socrates' assertion in the *Republic* that virtue is *adespoton*, "without master," cited frequently by Plotinus and an integral part of the whole Greco-Roman tradition.

Second, God's foresight in providing for the Fall is not an afterthought of passions tacked onto an essentially mental structure, but a *provision* that still permits human beings to overcome the divide between substance and passion. The great divide for Gregory (and Evagrius), as noted above, is not between soul and body but a radical, perspectival divide that runs right across the mind-soul-body continuum, namely, between a perspective that pertains to the created substance, *qua* substance (that is, not to something underlying the human being or "standing under," but to the stuff "overlying" as created by God) and a perspective that relates only to the functions of object-dependent experience, which are the passions. From the former perspective, the mind-soul-body continuum constitutes an integral union; from the latter, their union seems accidental and disintegrative. In this, we have suggested, Gregory changes Origen's apparent view that "the earthly skins" signify body, in favor of reinterpreting Plato (and Plotinus), namely, that the differing perspectives upon simplicity or partition of soul in the Platonic dialogues should ultimately be seen in this light (Chapter 8.5). To the degree that the tripartite soul involves a division of desire as passion that does not reflect the true nature of soul itself, this partite structure is focused upon the irrational and will pass away. On the other hand, desire and spirit remain, together with *dianoia* and *nous*, if they are transformed from above. The same is true in Evagrius. Desire and spirit have both positive and negative possibilities. Under the action of love (*agape* and *eros* almost interchangeably in both Evagrius and Gregory), the deeper created axis of humanity emerges in the simplicity of a unified, integrated self.

In general, I have argued that Gregory is much more consistent than many of his interpreters have taken him to be or, at least, that he is quite prepared to grapple freely with difficult aspects of problems like creation, incarnation, and resurrection and that he is an acute interpreter of Plato and Plotinus, finding a plausible solution to the different views of tripartition/bipartition in different dialogues; adapting and transforming fundamental insights from Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus – that have for the most part escaped notice – to broaden and deepen the force and appeal of his thought; and interpreting the middle dialogues – particularly, the *Phaedo*,

Symposium, *Republic* and *Phaedrus* – with powerful insight. In relation to the *Symposium*, for instance, he is well aware of the difference between the "lesser" and the "higher" mysteries in Diotima's speech, of the vertical axis of *eros* or desire in the higher mysteries, of the devastating irony of Aristophanes' speech that he adapts to his own view of resurrection as the logical conclusion of Platonism itself, and finally, of the holistic focus of the Platonic dialogues that cannot be reduced to any one speech, especially in his thematization of the linked relation of Aristodemus to Socrates, and Socrates to Diotima ("inferior" to "best" in Socrates' language); for he casts Gregory as Aristodemus/Socrates to Macrina's Diotima and employs the cooperative dialogue between them, namely, the *DAR* as a whole, to show vividly that while gender will pass away in the afterlife, rationality is a function of both male and female (perhaps even superior in Macrina) and the loss of sexual procreation will not be a diminishment of life, but an enhancement of human dialogical community and intellectual procreation (Chapter 8.4).

Most striking is Gregory's view of the mind-soul-body relation (Chapter 8.6). If Plotinus' philosophy puts an end to the opposition between so-called Platonic dualism and Aristotelian entelechism (as Jésus Igal has argued), Gregory puts an end to any disproportionate primacy of soul over body. Because of his rejection of any pre-existence of soul, soul-body/form-matter develop together from the beginning in an organic whole-formation that does not subordinate one to the other and allows for two-way causal interaction and for different forms of explanation (mechanistic, physiological, psychological) at different levels. Gregory's interest in medicine (in which he follows Basil and Galen) helps him to explore the interconnectedness of psycho-physical processes in the body and the purposiveness of material functions (8.8). The particular structure of the hands, for instance, makes language possible so that *logos* is not just the container or shaper of matter. Formed matter expresses *logos* intrinsically. And the structure of the intellectual organism is more like an orchestra than a single instrument in Gregory's development of Simmias' epiphenomenal illustration (in the *Phaedo*-and perhaps Porphyry) of the lyre and its attunement for the soul/body relation (*DHO* 8–10, 148b–155c). Here the mind is like a giant data-sorting house, and instead of compressing all the organic powers of the human being into a single frame, Gregory's causally active view of the mind-soul-body continuum permits their full articulation and interrelated freedom. The body is "in" the mind both as the horizon of the body's possibilities and also as the limiting condition of the mind. Furthermore, within this causal relation, body and soul develop together in dynamic co-equivalence that also allows for the biological/intellectual human-species *pleroma* to be operative in individual human growth. In this, Gregory takes a major aspect of Plotinus' critical development of Aristotle's biological thought to the logical conclusion to which Plotinus could never have taken it. If we grant this radically realist conception, it is hardly surprising that despite all the difficulties noted by modern scholars, Gregory's view of the resurrection-body should be in fact remarkably coherent providing a plausible account of not only material continuity, but also material and formal identity. Here I have suggested an alternative reading of the problematic

De Mortuis, in light of the two pivotal moments of the ascetic life: separation and integration. At the same time, Gregory's use of Aristophanes' phrase from the *Symposium* for his own view of the resurrection subtly underscores his evident view that the resurrection is really the logical conclusion of Platonism on its own grounds, if body is in some sense a "form" (as in Origen and Plotinus) and the reflection of a "Form" – even in the strange variety of Aristophanes' "Platonism" in the *Symposium*.

Gregory's realism is also evident in his mystical theology (Chapter 10). Despite Zizioulas' view that uniqueness is a feature of relational personhood and not of irreducible individuality (a notion he links to the Latin West), uniqueness belongs to individual perceptible things right from the beginning, but this is also by virtue of the community of substance that comes from God, and ultimately because of the unity of persons and substance in the Trinity. Individuality and substance are like two sides of a single coin in human beings, whereas they are pure unity in distinction without interval in God. The term *ousia*, that Gregory adopts and develops from the long tradition of ancient thought, therefore applies both to God and to created substances analogically insofar as the image of God is reflected in them. There are no individuals without *ousia,* but individuality expresses uniqueness or peculiarity, whereas *ousia* expresses the inexhaustible community of being. Gregory's view of substance, therefore, takes a notion developed by Origen, Plotinus and others and forges a pathway to link Plato's usage with that of Aristotle, namely, *ousia* as spiritual reality with *ousia* as individual compounds (in the *Categories*), in which the form/soul is also primary *ousia* (in the *Metaphysics*) and God *the* primary/exemplary *ousia*, *tode ti*, individual and *ti ēn einai*, essence (in *Metaphysics* 12). Without materializing the spiritual world (with the Stoics) and without spiritualizing the material world (with the Neoplatonists), Gregory outlines a realist view of *ousia* that states the concreteness of its apparently early meanings: property, stuff, but stuff that links us to the complete reality of the creation and the Creator (10.2–10.4).

Several consequences of this are worth noting. First, Basil, Gregory Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa and Evagrius share a Trinitarian theology toward which Basil worked only gradually, as we can see from his letters. Gregory's adaptation of the Plotinian non-subordinationist triadic model, that combined ungeneratedness and self-causality against Eunomius' Iamblichean ungenerated model, resulted in a logic of substance and person that created a grammar for speaking about a mystery on the basis of all the scriptural evidence and, at the same time, eliminated the Neoplatonic hypostases by restoring them to the only place their logic warranted: that is, in individuals, whose substance simultaneously guarantees the community of their being. Evagrius fully shares this theology, as his use of cause-caused language of the Trinity, like Gregory and Plotinus, in *GL* 25 (together with the earlier *LF*), shows. This is a major achievement of the 4th Century. It also confirms that Evagrius' Trinitarian and anthropological thought should be seen more in the light of Gregory than in the condemnations of later Councils. We have had no space to examine the tradition of Aristotle category-interpretation in antiquity, but

we should note that because Trinity and human individuals are no longer mediated by the Neoplatonic hypostases or Intelligible world, the logic of Porphyry's terms (such as genus, difference, form, proprium, amongst others) in the *Isagoge*, for instance, can be immediately applied to individuals in their relationality to each other and God, and even analogically to God, though, as Evagrius' points out in *GN* 41, these Porphyrian terms cannot strictly be applied to the Trinity.

Second, I have suggested that all the elements of a theory of personhood are functionally operative in this Trinitarian and anthropological view for the first time in history. If substance and person are co-inherent; if what it means to be a self is mediated through the other and the other as community, as it is for Gregory and Evagrius – our body or self-image is incomplete in Evagrius and all our thoughts need the other's reading; and finally if the phrases they use such as individual substance, *hypostasis* or *prosōpon*, designate not soul-self, mind-self or body-self, but whole-self in the immediate image of God, then a rich relational view of personhood is already operative for the first time in this climate.

Third, I have argued that from the perspective of substance (rather than passion), the human being is made in the image of God, mind, soul and body for both Evagrius and Gregory. This goes against some scholarly assessments of Gregory's thought, but is a more radical reevaluation of Evagrius, for scholars unanimously hold the view that the ultimate state of union with the Trinity is bodiless and soul-less (cf. *KG* 3.15). While no one, least of all Evagrius, would want to claim that God has a body, I think that the way this is customarily stated is misleading. To be free of materiality, or of body as the locus of passion, is not to be without body. To be free of "the names and numbers" of body and "lifted to the order of mind" – to be "naked mind" – is to be free of qualitative and quantitative counting, exactly as Basil, Gregory and Evagrius insist is necessary in the case of the Trinity where consubstantiality prevails and we cannot count persons arithmetically. But whether the full *meaning* of "body-soul" lifted up into mind and ultimately changed to the nature of God (*GL* 22–7) is lost or not, this is an open question, even in the intelligible, infinite sea of God's being, where "they will be one and no longer many, since they will be united to him" (*GL* 27).

As we have seen, the mystery of uniqueness and of identity for Gregory deepens in the mystical life since "aloneness," "unity" and "self-identity" are not abstractions or purely form-entities (Chapter 10.6.3), but part of a deeper intimacy or relatedness that constantly transforms the soul or mind, simultaneously lifts up others, and also expands the wounded soul to become a dwelling place for the Trinity. Evagrius is strikingly similar here. In both cases, to interpret this mystical path as either simply solitary or intellectualist is to miss the richness of the *monos*/alone theme itself that signifies intimacy and community responsibility to and for others. In this connection, I have suggested that one of the reasons both Evagrius and Gregory employ so frequently Plato's auto-compounds (such as Justice-itself, and others) is that they do not see such forms of expression to be abstract, universalist ideas but rather indicators of a unique Identity that cannot be inductively or deductively packaged and in the pursuit of which human

personhood is transformed into its own proper identity. This is already the case with Socrates in the *Symposium*, and it seems to be an accurate interpretation of the iconic figures of Solomon, Moses, Macrina as well as of the great icons in some of Evagrius' chapters. They are icons of in-betweenness that pervades the whole fabric of Church and life and that will become manifested in the hierarchies of Pseudo-Dionysius (see Chapters 8 and 10). In addition, such transformability goes to the heart of Evagrius' and Gregory's thought: to be so transformed by the divine (*metapoiesis*, *metabiosis*, *metastoicheiosis*) as to live in a transformed relation to the world (that is, the order, *kosmos*, of creation) – a) by being one with all through living in God (*hyperkeimenon*/overlying *ousia*) who is "all in all"; b) by taking everything one finds in the world even in its diminishment, fallenness, but hidden truthfulness as created by God and by seeing the power/potentiality of that truthfulness as accurately or scientifically as possible; and c) by lifting up this scientific grasp of truth into a larger Christian understanding to follow out its hidden order (*akolouthia*) so as to bring it into the *oikonomia* of God's creative and sacramental, self-giving actuality. Again, Gregory emphasizes (as also Evagrius) in important new ways the continuity and individual identity of *dianoia*, *kardia* and *nous*, from the physiological to the epistemological and the ultimate transformation of the *dianoia* by union with God through the "grasp of faith" (see Chapter 10.6.1–2). Gregory's notion of faith in relation to the *dianoia* is original with him, but there is also a continuity with Platonic thought in this context (not with the divided line, but with Socrates' view of *dianoia* after the ascent of dialectic in *Republic* 7) and also with the Neoplatonic thought of Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus.

I have also emphasized in this book Gregory's multi-perspectival view of the mystical life (10.5; 10.6–10.6.5). His apophaticism is not simply a movement into the "luminous darkness," but also a transformation into light, an *ekstasy* (unlike Evagrius) that is also an eternal drawing out, *epektasy*, into the infinity of God; not a face-to-face encounter, but a following, a being-with and yet at the same time an indwelling union whose effects are translated into the superabundant language of the word dwelling in Paul or Thekla. In other words, Gregory's apophaticism is only one moment of negativity within a much larger series of perspectives that is at every point kataphatic and apophatic. Negative theology is therefore part of a larger picture in which, with Basil, it remains important to make positive affirmations about God from within our own experience as well as to chart pathways into a One-Triune, Infinite Being rather than beyond Being altogether toward a Neoplatonic One.

On the whole, I have argued here for a more orthodox and relatively consistent view of both Evagrius and Gregory. In the first case, this is because, in my view, Evagrius is neither monistic nor pantheistic (nor in any useful sense Platonist or Origenist) and because his apophthegmatic Christology, even in the earlier Syriac version of the *KG*, is less straightforwardly heretical and more an attempt to think out the problems of the Incarnation in relation to both the Trinity and a cosmology that will make sense to his fellow monks against the backdrop of various heresies, especially Messalianism, and the much more spectacular cosmologies of diverse

Gnostic groups. Antoine Guillaumont brilliantly established the correspondences between the earlier *KG* version he had himself discovered and the anathemata of 553 (and 543). But we cannot uncritically transfer this further to Evagrius' own time and place on the basis of later categories. Evagrius *is* complex, but on balance he held to the orthodox Cappadocian theology he helped to put in place and, beyond this, in extreme circumstances, he continued to think freely. In the process, he became one of the great diagnosticians of empirical psychology, the founder of the deadly sins tradition in one of its most interesting forms, the formulator – in the spirit of Plato, Aristotle and Origen – of the classical, desert mind/soul-body tradition, and, finally, instead of the aesthete in Constantinople or the solitary hermit of the desert, the genuine founder of a tradition whose cell was open to all his contemporaries and whose heart and wisdom were thought so worthy to be transmitted beyond his own lifetime that they somehow survived their repeated extirpation.

In Gregory's case, it is not so difficult to reach a balanced assessment. Pressed against his own will into Church service, Gregory nonetheless embraced the intellectual and pastoral legacy of his brother, Basil, and became a bridge-builder who forged crucial new links between pagan and Christian thought, desert and city, positive and negative theology. Together with Basil and Gregory Nazianzus, he developed a positive grammar or language for speaking about the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation (not unlike the language of the signs of the creation in Evagrius' *GL*) as a means of thinking freely from many different perspectives about the major issues of faith and reason. Because Gregory likes to think through the many different angles of these difficult questions interpretively, his thought is full of perspectival tensions. Yet it also has a lucidity and ultimate coherence that outweigh those tensions. In addition, his capacity for interpreting Plato creatively is as great as the best of modern times, and his ability to understand profound sequences of ideas in Aristotle and Plotinus and to develop them with uncanny perspicacity for their future potential is unrivalled even by later great masters such as Augustine and Aquinas. Gregory's ascetic, psychological, and anthropological works create an entirely new way of charting the relationship between realism and idealism or, broadly speaking, between the material structures that make consciousness possible and the complex life of the mind that gives those structures their peculiar form and quality. In short, Gregory's theory of the mind-soul-body continuum is the most important contribution on this question after Plotinus and before Aquinas. Even Augustine who has a varied and interesting theory himself is not as genuinely innovative as Gregory, for Gregory provides a model that proposes a complex physical basis for consciousness, allows for psycho-physical interactionism, sees the mind-brain as a system of enormous complexity, simultaneously comprehensive and local, and yet develops a more holistic, personal/community view of the heart-mind that never loses its individual dianoetic character in relation to the Trinitarian theology he helped to develop and champion. By insisting that soul/body and form/matter have a single birth out of which different organic possibilities emerge into the subsequent complexities of

thought, feeling and spirit, Gregory effectively turns any simple-minded Platonic hierarchy inside out, for spirit and matter become mutually implicative and expressive of each other in ways that may be latent in Aristotle's biology and Plotinus' notion of whole-formation but are never developed into a fully articulated theory before Gregory.

Finally, a puzzle. In the 4th Century there was an impetus to create a critical dialogue between Christianity and paganism and, as we have seen, at the forefront of this dialogue at almost every point in Evagrius and Gregory stand the great creative figures of Origen and Plotinus. Could it be that in the Christian "school" to which Gregory, Evagrius, Basil and Gregory Nazianzus in some sense belonged (a school indirectly revealed in the formulaic phrase employed by Gregory: "we say"), an established mode of operation was to think out a way between Origen and Plotinus, rejecting the pagan side but including it in dialogue by showing that the compelling inner logic of its greatest insights pointed to Christianity, not Neoplatonism? This is a definite strategy in Gregory, but only implicit in Evagrius who "often went down to Alexandria and refuted the pagan philosophers in disputations" (Russell, 1980, 107). This might well be coincidence, but it could also be indirect evidence that the Cappadocians thought that Origen actually was the person mentioned by Porphyry as studying with Plotinus under their mysterious teacher Ammonius Sacchas. It is impossible to tell, but this certainly suggests they might have thought so. Whatever the case, Gregory of Nyssa's detailed knowledge of Plotinus is impressive, even for the 20th and 21st Centuries, and it reflects Basil's, Gregory Nazianzus' and Evagrius' familiarity with Neoplatonism on a range of issues from triads to categories in the thought of Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus.

Bibliography

(1) Evagrius: Texts and Translations

Sinkewicz, R. E., *Evagrius of Pontus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003) – includes: a) *Foundations* (*PG* 40 1252d–64c); b) *Eulogio*s (Greek and English); c) *On the Vices opposed to the Virtues* (*PG* 79 1140b–44d); d*) 8TH* (*PG* 79 1145d–64d); e) *PR* (see 1 below); f) *AM* (see 9) *and Exhortation to a Virgin* (*CPG* 2436); g) *8TH* (see 8); h) *Pr*. (see 4); i) *Refl. (Skemmata*) (see 5 below); j) *Exhortations 1–2 to Monks* (*PG* 79 1235a–40b); k) *Thirty-Three Ordered Chapters* (*PG* 40 1264d–8b); l) *Maxims* 1–3 (*PG* 79 1249c–69d).

Casiday, A. M., *Evagrius Ponticus*, New York: Routledge, 2006.

For individual works:

1) Praktikos (PR)

Bamberger, J. E., *Evagrius Ponticus: The Praktikos; Chapters on Prayer*, *CS*, Kalamazoo, MI, 1981, 13–42.

Guillaumont, A., and C., *Évagre Le Pontique, traité pratique ou le Moine*, *SC* 170–71 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1971).

2) Gnostikos (GN)

Guillaumont, A., *Évagre Le Pontique: "Le gnostique," SC* 356, Paris, 1989.

3) Kephalaia Gnostica (KG)

Bundy, D., *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, ed. Vincent L. Wimbush, Minneapolis, 1990, 175–86 (English translation).

Guillaumont, A., *Les six centuries des «Kephalaia Gnostica*," *PO* 28, facs.I, Paris, 1958 (Syriac text, with a French translation).

4) Prayer (Pr.)

Greek text (under Nilus of Ancyra) *PG* 79: 1165–200.

Bamberger, J. E., *Evagrius Ponticus: The Praktikos; Chapters on Prayer, CS*, Kalamazoo, MI, 1981.

Hausherr, I., *Les Leçons d'un contemplatif: Le Traité de l'Oraison d'Evagre le Pontique*, Paris, 1960 (with commentary).

Chapters on Prayer in G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware, eds, *Philokalia: The Complete Text* (Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain and Macarius of Corinth) London, 1979, vol. I: 55–71.

5) Refl. (Reflections/Skemmata)

Greek text, Muyldermans, J., "Evagriana," *Le Muséon* 44, 1931, 37–68 and 369–83.
Harmless, W., and Fitzgerald, R., "'The Sapphire Light of the Mind': The *Skemmata* of Evagrius Ponticus," *TS* 62 (2001): 498–529 (translation and commentary).

6) Antirrhetikos (Counter-Arguments)

Syriac text, Frankenberg, W., *Euagrios Ponticus, Abhandlungen der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*; Philol. His. Klasse, Neue Folge, 13,2, Berlin, 1912, 472–545.
O'Laughlin, M., in *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook*, ed. V. L. Wimbush, Minneapolis, 1990, 243–62 (partial).
Stewart, C., "Evagrius on Prayer and Anger", in *Religions of Late Antiquity in Practice*, ed. R. Valantasis, Princeton, 2000, 71–80 (translation of the fifth treatise, "Against the Demon of Anger").

7) Eight Thoughts (8TH)

Greek text, *PG* 79, 1145–1164.
Moscatelli, F., *Evagrio Pontico: Gli Otto Spiriti della Malvagità: Sui diversi pensieri della malvagita*, Milan, 1996, (Greek with Italian translation).

8) Thoughts (TH)

Greek text, *PG* 79, 1200–33.
Texts on Discrimination in respect of Passions and Thoughts in the *Philokalia* of Nicodimus of the Holy Mountain and Macarius of Corinth, English translation, *Philokalia: The Complete Text*, G. E. H., Palmer, P. Sherrard, and K. Ware, eds, London, 1979, 1:38–52.
Géhin, P., Guillaumont, C., and Guillaumont, A., eds, *Évagre Le Pontique: sur les pensées*, *SC* 438, Paris, 1998 (Critical edition/French translation).
Muyldermans, J., *À travers la tradition manuscrite d'Évagre Le Pontique: essais sur les manuscrits grecs conservés á la Bibliothèque nationale de Paris*, Bibliothèque du Muséon 3 Louvain, 1932, 47–55 (longer recension).

9) Ad Monachos (AM)

Driscoll, J., *Evagrius Ponticus*, *Ad Monachos*, trans. and commentary, *ACW* 59, New York, 2003.

Gressmann, H., ed., *Nonnenspiegel und Mönchsspiegel des Evagrios Pontikos*, *TU* 39, 4 Leipzig, 1913, 152–65 (Critical edition).

10) Biblical Commentaries (on Proverbs and Ecclesiastes)

Géhin, P., *Évagre Le Pontique: scholies aux Proverbes*, *SC* 340, Paris, 1987 (Greek and French).

Géhin, P., Evagre Le Pontique: scholies à l'Ecclésiaste, *SC* 397, Paris, 1993 (Commentary on Ecclesiastes-Greek and French).

Greek text of Evagrius's *Scholia on the Psalms* has yet to be collected from the works of Origen and there is no translation. For a guide to it, see Rondeau, M. -J., "Le commentaire sur les Psaumes d'Évagre Ie Pontique," *OCP* 26, 1960, 307–48.

11) Letters

a) *Epistula fidei (LF)* – Long attributed to Basil and appears as *Letter* 8 in Basil's *Letters*. Deferrari, R. J., *Saint Basil: The Letters*, *LCL*, Cambridge, Mass, 1950, I, 4693.

b) *Great Letter* (*GL* – also known as *Letter to Melania*). [At 3 points Evagrius addresses a male reader, so caution should prevail about the addressee – Vitestam, 1964; Bunge, 1986].

Parmentier, M., "Evagrius of Pontus and the 'Letter to Melania,' " *Bijdragen, tijdschrift voor filosofie en theologie*" 46, 1985, 2–38, reprinted in *Forms of Devotion: Conversation, Worship, Spirituality, and Asceticism*, ed. E. Ferguson, New York, 1999, 272–309 (English translation).

Syriac text, Frankenberg, W., *Euagrios Ponticus, Abhandlungen der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*; Philol. His. Klasse, Neue Folge, 13, 2, Berlin, 1912, 610–19 (first half).

Vitestam, G., *Seconde partie de traité, qui passé sous le nom de "La grande letter d'Évagre le Pontique à Mélanie l'Ancienne," publiée et traduite d'après le manuscrit du British Museum Add.* 17192, Scripta minora 31, Lund, 1964 (second half).

c) Frankenberg, W., *Euagrios Ponticus, Abhandlungen der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Gottingen*; Philol. His. Klasse, Neue Folge, 13, 2, Berlin, 1912, 564–611 (62 letters by Evagrius preserved in Syriac).

Bunge, G., *Evagrios Pontikos: Briefe aus der Wüste*, Sophia Bd. 24, Trier, 1985 (German translation).

12) Disciples

Géhin, P., *[Évagre Le Pontique] Chapitres des disciples d'Évagre*, *SC* 514, Paris, 2007.

(2) Gregory: Texts and Translations

Ad Ablabium, quod non sint tres dei, *PG* 45 (*GNO*/III/i, ed. F. Müller, Leiden, 1958).
Ad Graecos, ex communibus notionibus, *PG* 45 (*GNO*/III/i, ed. F. Müller, Leiden, 1958).
Commentarius in canticum canticorum, *PG* 44 (*GNO*/VI, ed. H. Langerbeck, Leiden, 1960).
Contra Eunomium Libri, *PG 45* (*GNO*/I–II, ed. W. Jaeger, Leiden, 1960).
De anima et resurrectione, *PG* 46, 12a–160c.
De beatitudinibus, *PG* 44 (*GNO*/VII/ii, ed. J. Callahan, Leiden, 1992).
De hominis opificio, *PG* 44, 124d–256c.
De instituto Christiano, *PG* 46 (*GNO*/VIII/i, ed. W. Jaeger, Leiden, 1952).
De Mortuis, *PG* 46 (*GNO*/IX, ed. G. Heil, Leiden, 1967).
De oratione dominica, *PG* 44 (*GNO*/VII/ii, ed. J. Callahan, Leiden, 1992).
De perfectione, *PG* 46 (*GNO*/VIII/ii, ed. W. Jaeger, Leiden, 1952).
De Spiritu Sancto, *PG* 45 (*GNO*/III/I, ed. F. Müller, Leiden, 1958).
De virginitate, *PG* 46 (*GNO*/VIII/i, ed. V. Woods, Leiden, 1952/*SC* 119, ed. and trans. M. Aubineau, Paris, 1966).
De vita Moysis, *PG* 44 (*GNO*/VII/i, ed. H. Musurillo, Leiden, 1964/*SC* 1 *bis*, ed. and trans. J. Daniélou, Paris, 1955).
De oratione dominica, *PG* 44 (*GNO*/VII/ii, ed. J. Callahan, Leiden, 1992).
Epistula Canonica, *PG* 45 (*GNO*/III/v, ed. E. Mühlenberg, Leiden/Boston, 2008).
In Christi Resurrectionem, *PG* 46, 599–690.
In diem natalem, *PG* 46 (*GNO*/X/ii, ed. F. Mann, Leiden/New York/Köln, 1996).
In Ecclesiasten, *PG* 44 (*SC* 416, ed. P. Alexander, and trans. F. Vinel, Paris, 1996).
In inscriptiones Psalmorum, *PG* 44 (*GNO*/V, eds J. McDonough, and P. Alexander, Leiden, 1962).
Letter 38 in Basil, *Letters* I (see Bibliography (3)).
Oratio catechetica, *PG* 45 (*GNO*/III/iv, ed. E. Mühlenberg, Leiden, 1996).
Vita S. Macrinae, *PG* 46 (*GNO*/VIII/i, ed. V. Woods, Leiden, 1952).

Translations

Callahan, V. Woods (trans.), *Gregory of Nyssa: Ascetical Works*, Fathers of the Church 58, Washington, DC, 1967.
Corrigan, K., *The Life of St. Macrina by St. Gregory of Nyssa*, trans., introduction and notes, Peregrina, Toronto, 1987.
Ferguson, E., and Malherbe, A. (trans.), *The Life of Moses*, Classics of Western Spirituality, New York, 1978.
Graef, H. (trans.), *The Lord's Prayer, The Beatitudes*, *ACW* 18, New York, 1954.
Hall, Stuart G. (trans.), *Contra Eunomium I*, in L. Mateo-Seco, and J. Bastero, eds, *EI "Contra Eunomium I" en Ia producción literaria de Gregorio de Nisa,* VI Coloquio Internacional sobre Gregorio de Nisa, Pamplona, 1988, 247–68.

———, and Moriarity, R. (trans. and eds), *Gregory of Nyssa: "Homilies on Ecclesiastes": An English Version with Supporting Studies*, Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference on Gregory of Nyssa, St Andrews, 5–10 September, Berlin, 1993.
Hardy, E. et al. (eds and trans.), *Christology of the Later Fathers*, Library of Christian Classics 3, London, 1954.
Heine, R., *Gregory of Nyssa's Treatise on the "Inscriptions on the Psalms"*, Oxford Early Christian Studies, Oxford, 1995.
McCambley, C. (trans.), *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, The Archbishop Iakovanos Library of Ecclesiastical and Historical Sources 12, Brookline, Mass., 1987.
More, W., and Wilson, H. (trans.), *Selected Writings and Letters of Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa*, NPNF II.5, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1892.
Moreschini, C. (trans.), *Omelie suI Cantico dei cantici*, *Testi Patristici* 72, Rome, 1996.
Musurillo, H. (trans.), *From Glory to Glory: Texts from Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Writings*, Crestwood, NY, 1979.
Roth, C. P., *St. Gregory of Nyssa. The Soul and the Resurrection, St. Vladimir's Seminary*, Crestwood, NY, 1993.
Schaff, P., and Wace, H., *Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises*, NPNF, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, reprint, 1994.

(3) Other Ancient Authors

Alcinous, *The Handbook of Platonism*, trans. with commentary, John Dillon, Oxford, 1993.
Ammonas, texts grecs et syriaques, ed. F. Nau, Paris, 1915.
Antony (?), Chitty, Derwas (trans.), *The Letters of St. Antony*, Fairacres, 1974.
———, Bartelink, G. J. M., *Vie d'Antonie*, Paris, 1994.
———, Gregg, R.C., *Athanasius: The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, *CWS* 65, New York, 1980.
———, Meyer, R. T., *St. Athanasius, The Life of St. Antony*, *ACW* 10, Westminster, MD, 1950.
———, Rubensen, S., *The Letters of St. Antony*, Minneapolis, 1995.
Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, revised Oxford Translation, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols, Princeton, 1984.
———, (Pseudo), *Virtues and Vices*, LCL XX, H. Rackham, Cambridge, Mass./ London, 1935 (1995).
———, *De Anima*, R. D. Hicks, Cambridge, 1907.
Athanasius, *De incarnatione verbi. Sur L'Incarnation du Verbe*, *SC* 199, ed. and trans. C. Kannengieser, Paris, 1973.
———, *Discourses Against the Arians*, ed. and trans. J. H. Newman, Oxford, 1877.

———, *Contra Gentes*, R. W. Thompson, *Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione*, Oxford, 1971.
———, *Vie d'Antoine*, G. J. M. Bartelink, Paris, 1994.
Augustine, *Confessions* (*PL* 32); *De Civitate Dei* (*PL* 41); *De corruptione et gratia* (*PL* 44); *De immortalitate animae* (*PL* 32).
Basil of Caesarea, *De spiritu sancto. Sur le Saint-Esprit*, *SC* 17 *bis*, ed. and trans. B. Pruche, Paris, 1968.
———, *Letters*, trans. R. J. Ferrari, *LCL*, 4 vols, Cambridge, Mass., 1926–34.
———, *Epistulae. Lettres*, 3 vols, ed. and trans. Y. Courtonne, Paris, 1957–66.
———, *The Ascetikon of St. Basil the Great*, A. M. Silvas, Oxford, 2005.
Boharic Life *CSCO* 89, Louvain, 1953 (trans. A Villeux *CS* 45, Michigan, 1980).
Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus. Protréptique*, *SC* 2 *bis*, trans. C. Mondésert, Paris, 1976.
———, *Stromateis* II, *SC* 38, ed. and trans. C. Mondésert, Paris, 1954.
———, *Stromateis*, *FC* 85, trans. J. Ferguson, Washington, DC, 1991.
———, *The Epistles of St. Clement of Rome and St. Ignatius of Antioch*, trans. J. Kleist, *ACW* 1, 1946.
Denys the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, Corpus Dionysiacum I, Patristische Texte und *Studien 33*, ed. B. Suchla, Berlin, 1990.
———, *De mystica Theologia*, Corpus Dionysiacum II, Patristische Texte und Studien 36, eds G. Hill, and A. Ritter, Berlin, 1991.
———, *Epistulae*, Corpus Dionysiacum II, Patristische Texte und Studien 36, eds G. Hill, and A. Ritter, Berlin, 1991.
Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum*, 2 vols, ed. H. S. Long, Oxford, 1964.
Eunomius, *Eunomius. The Extant Works*, R. P. Vaggione, Oxford, 1987.
Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica. La Préparation Évangélique*, *SC* 206, ed. and trans. J. Sirinelli, and E. des Places, Paris, 1974.
———, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. C. F. Cruse, Peabody, Mass., 1998.
Galen, *De locis affectis*, *Claudii Galeni Opera Omnia*, vol. VIII (20 vols in 22), C. G. Kühn, Leipzig, 1821–33 (repr. Hildesheim, 1964–65).
Gennadius of Marseilles, *De viris illustribus*, *PL* 58, 1059–120.
Gregory Nazianzus, *Orationes. Discours* 27–31, *SC* 250, ed. and trans. P. Gallay, Paris, 1978.
———, *Orationes. Discours* 32–7, *SC* 318, ed. C. Moreschini, trans. P. Gallay, Paris, 1985.
———, *Orationes. Discours* 38–41, *SC* 358, ed. C. Moreschini, trans. P. Gallay, Paris, 1990.
———, Gallay, P., *Grégoire de Nazianze, Lettres*, 2 vols, Paris, 1964, 1967.
Iamblichus, *Iamblichus. On the Mysteries*, eds E. C. Clarke, J. M. Dillon, and J. P. Hershbell, Atlanta, 2003.
———, *Iamblichi Chalcidensis in Platonis dialogos commentariorum Fragmenta*, Dillon, J., ed., Leiden, 1973.
———, *Iamblichus. De Anima, Text, Translation, and Commentary*, eds, J. Dillon, and J. Finamore, Leiden/Boston/Köln, 2002.

Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses. Contre les Hérésies*, *SC* 100, 152, 153, 210, 211, 263, 264, ed. and trans. A. Rousseau et al., Paris, 1965–69.
Jerome, *Epistulae*, ed. Hilberg, *CSEL* 54.
———, *De viris illustribus*, ed. Migne, *PL* 23, 602–720.
Methodius, *Methodius*, N. Bonwetsch, *GCS* 27, 1917.
Nemesius, *De natura hominis*, ed. M. Morani, Leipzig, Teubner, 1987.
Origen, *Commentarius in Canticum canticorum*, *GCS* 8, ed. W. Baehrens, Leipzig, 1925.
———, *Commentarius in Johannis Evangelium*, *GCS*, ed. E. Preuschen, Leipzig, 1903.
———, *Contra Celsum,* rev. edn trans. H. Chadwick, Cambridge, 1965.
———, *De principiis.Traité des principes*, *SC* 252, 253, 268, 269, 312, trans. and ed. H. Crouzel, and M. Simonetti, Paris, 1978–82.
———, *Homilae in Genesim. Homélies sur la Genèse*, *SC* 7 *bis*, ed. and trans. L. Doutreleau, Paris, 1976.
———, *Homiliae in Numeros*, *GCS* 7, ed. W. Baehrens, Leipzig, 1921.
———, *In Lucam* fragmenta, *GCS* 9, ed. M. Rauer, Leipzig, 1930.
———, *The Philokalia*, trans. G. Palmer, P. Sherrard et al., 3 vols, London and Boston, 1984.
———, *Origen, Spirit and Fire: A Thematic Anthology of His Writings*, H. U. von Balthasar, trans. R. Daly, Washington, DC, 1984.
Palladius, *The Lausiac History of Palladius*, E. C. Butler, Cambridge, 1898–1904; reprint, Hildesheim, Olms, 1967.
Philo, *De Abrahamo*, *LCL*, Philo vol. vi, trans. F. Colson, Cambridge, Mass., 1959.
———, *De decalogo*, *LCL*, Philo vol. vii, trans. F. Colson, Cambridge, Mass., 1958.
———, *De migratione Abrahami*, *LCL*, Philo vol. iv, trans. F. Colson, and G. Whitaker, Cambridge, Mass., 1949.
———, *De mutatione nominum*, *LCL*, Philo vol. v, trans. F. Colson, and G. Whitaker, Cambridge, Mass., 1949.
———, *De posteritate Caini*, *LCL*, Philo vol. ii, trans. F. Colson, and G. Whitaker, Cambridge, Mass., 1950.
———, *De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini*, *LCL*, Philo vol. ii, trans. F. Colson, and G. Whitaker, Cambridge, Mass., 1950.
———, *De Specialibus Legibus*, *LCL* vii and viii, trans. F. H. Colson, Cambridge, Mass., 1958.
———, *De vita Moysis*, *LCL*, Philo vol.vi, trans. F. Colson, Cambridge, Mass., 1959.
———, *Legum allegoriae*, *LCL*, Philo vol. i, trans. F. Colson, and G. Whitaker, Cambridge, Mass., 1949.
Plato, *Platonis Opera*, ed. J. Burnet, Oxford, 1900–1907, 1950–1952.
Plotinus, *Plotini Opera*, eds P. Henry, and H. R. Schwyzer, 3 vols, Paris, Brussels, Leiden, 1951–73.
———, *The Enneads*, 7 vols, LCL, trans. A. H. Armstrong, Cambridge, Mass., 1966–88.

Porphyry, *Porphyre. Sentences*, 2 vols, ed. L. Brisson, Paris, 2005.
———, *Isagoge*, ed. Busse, *CAG* IV/1, 1–22 (*Porphyry. Introduction*, J. Barnes, Clarendon, Oxford, 2003).
———, *Porphyry the Philosopher: To Marcella*, Society of Biblical Literature Texts and Translations 28, Graeco-Roman Series 10, trans. K. Wicker, Atlanta, 1987.
———, Smith, A., *Porphyrii Philosophi Fragmenta*, Stuttgart/Leipzig, 1993.
———, *Palladius: The Lausiac History*, R. T. Meyer, *ACW* 34, New York, 1965.
Plutarch, *Moralia XII*, *LCL*, eds H. Cherniss, and W. Helmbold, Cambridge, Mass., 1957.
Proclus, *In Alcibiadem*, ed. L. Westerink, *Proclus Diodochus: Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato*, Amsterdam, 1954.
———, *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, 3 vols, ed. E. Diehl, Leipzig, 1903.
Pseudo-Macarius, G. A. Maloney, *Pseudo-Macarius*. *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter* (ed., trans., and intro., and with preface by Kallistos Ware), Paulist Press, New York.
Rufinus, *Historia monachorum in Aegypto*, A. J. Festugière, Brussels, 1971.
———, *The lives of the desert Fathers: The "Historia monachorum in aegypto"*, trans. Norman Russell, *CS* 34, Kalamazoo, Mich., 1981.
Socrates and Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical Histories*, *PG* 67.
Zostrien Nag Hammadi VIII, 1, C. Barry et al., Québec, 2000.

(4) Secondary Works Cited

Albrecht, R., *Das Leben der heiligen Makrina auf dem Hintergrund der Thekla-Traditionen*, Gottingen, 1986**.**
Apostolopoulos, C., *Phaedo Christianus*, Frankfurt, 1986.
Armstrong, A. H., "Platonic Elements in St Gregory of Nyssa's Doctrine of Man", *Dominican Studies* 1 (1948), 113–26.
———, "The Nature of Man in St Gregory of Nyssa," *Eastern Churches Quarterly* 8 (1949), 2–9.
———, "Platonic *Eros* and Christian *Agapé*," *Downside Review* 79 (1961), 105–21; reprinted in *Plotinian and Christian Studies*, London, 1979.
Arnim, H., von, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, Leipzig, 1903–24.
Arnold, D. W. H., *The Early Episcopal Career of Athanasius of Alexandria*, Notre Dame, 1991.
Ayres, L., "On Not Three People: The Fundamental Themes of Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology as Seen in *To Ablanius: On Not Three Gods*," in *Rethinking Gregory of Nyssa*, ed. Coakley, S., Blackwell, 2003, 15–44.
———, *Nicaea and its Legacy; An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*, Oxford, 2004.
Bakhtin, M., *Literaturno-kriticheskie statii*, Moskva, 1989.

Balàs, D., *Metousia Theou: Man's Participation in God's Perfections according to St Gregory of Nyssa*, *Studia Anselmiana* 55, Rome, 1966.
Balthasar, H. U. Von, "Die Hiera des Evagrius", *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*, 63, 1939, 86–106, 181–206.
———, "Metaphysik und Mystik des Evagrius Pontikus", *Zeitschrift für Askese und Mystik*, 1939, 31–47.
———, "The Metaphysics and Mystical Theology of Evagrius", *MS* 3, 1965, 183, 95.
———, *Origen, Spirit and Fire: A Thematic Anthology of His Writings*, trans. R. Daly, Washington, DC, 1984.
———, *Présence et pensée: Essai sur la philosophie religieuse de Grégoire de Nysse*, Paris, 1942 (*Presence and Thought: An Essay on the Religious Philosophy of Gregory of Nyssa*, trans. M. Sebanc, San Francisco, 1995).
Bamberger, J. E., (trans.), *Evagrius Ponticus: The Praktikos, Chapters on Prayer, CS*, 4, Kalamazoo, MI, 1970.
Barnes, J., *Porphyry. Introduction*, Clarendon, Oxford, 2003.
Barnes, M. R., "Divine Unity and the Divided Self: Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology in its Psychological Context" in *Rethinking Gregory of Nyssa*, ed. S. Coakley, Blackwell, 2003, 45–66.
Barnes, T. D., *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantian Empire*, Cambridge, Mass., 1981.
Behr, J., "The Rational Animal: A Rereading of Gregory of Nyssa's *De hominis opificio*," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7, 1999, 219–47.
———, *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement*, Oxford, 2000.
Bethune-Baker, J. F., *Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine*, London, 1903.
Bongie, E. B. (trans.), *The Life and Regimen of the Blessed and Holy Teacher, Syncletica*, by Pseudo-Athanasius, Toronto, Peregrina, 1996.
Bournakas, A., *Das Problem der Materie in der Schöpfungslehre des Gregor von Nyssa*, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1972.
Bouteneff, P. C., "Essential or Existential: The Problem of the Body in the Anthropology of St. Gregory of Nyssa", in *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Beatitudes*, eds H.R. Drobner and A. Viciano, Leiden, Boston, Köln, 200, 409–20.
Bouyer, L., *The Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers*, New York, 1963.
Brakke, D., *Athanasius and Asceticism*, Baltimore, 1998.
Brown, P., *The Making of Late Antiquity*, Cambridge, Mass., 1978.
———, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1988.
Bundy, D., "The Philosophical Structures of Origenism: the Case of the Expurgated Version (SI) of the Kephalaia Gnostica of Evagrius", in Robert J. Daly, *Origeniana Quinta*, Leuven, 1992, 577–84.

Bunge, G., "Évagre Le Pontique et les deux Macaire," *Irénikon* 56, 1983, 215–27; 323–60.
———, (trans.), *Evagrios Pontikos: Briefe aus der Wuste*, Trier: Paulinus, 1986.
———, "Origenismus-Gnostizismus. Zum geistesgeschichtlichen Standort des Evagrios Pontikos," *VigChr* 40, 1986, 24–54.
———, *Geistliche Vaterschaft. Christliche Gnosis bei Evagrios Pontikos*, Regensburg: Pustet, 1988.
———, "'Priez sans cesse.' Aux origins de la prière hésychaste," *SM* 30, 1988, 7–16.
———, *Evagrios Pontikos: Praktikos oder der Mönch*, Cologne: Luthe, 1989.
———, "Hénade ou monade? Au sujet de deux notions centrales de la terminologie évagrienne," *Le Muséon*, 102, 1989, 69–91.
———, "Aktive und Kontemplative Weise des Betens im Traktat *De oratione* des Evagrios Pontikos", *SM* 41 (1999), 211–27.
———, "La montagne intelligible. De la contemplation indirecte à la connaisance immediate de Dieu dans le traité De oratione d'Évagre le Pontique," *SM* 42, 2000, 7–26.
Butler, E. C., *Western Mysticism: The Teaching of SS Augustine, Gregory and Bernard on Contemplation and the Contemplative Life*, London. 1922.
Callahan, J., "Greek Philosophy and the Cappadocian Cosmology," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 12, 1958, 29–57.
Canévet, M., "Grégoire de Nysse (saint)," s.v., *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite*, vol. vi, Paris, 1967, cols 971–1011.
———, "Le 'De Instituto Christano' est-il de Grégoire de Nysse?" *REG* 82, 1969, 404–23.
———, "Exégèse et théologie dans les traités spirituels de Grégoire de Nysse," in *Ecriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse*, ed. M. Harl, Leiden, 1971, 144–68.
———, "La Perception de la présence de Dieu. A propos d'une expression de la XIième Homélie sur le Cantique des Cantiques," in *Epektasis: Mélanges patristiques offerts au Cardinal Jean Daniélou*, eds J. Fontaine, and C. Kannengiesser, Paris, 1972, 443–54.
———, *Grégoire de Nysse et I' herméneutique biblique: Étude des rapporis entre le langage et la connaissance de Dieu*, Paris, 1983.
———, "Sens Spirituel," s.v., *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. xiv, Paris, 1990, cols 598–617.
———, "L'Humanité de l'embryon selon Grégoire de Nysse," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 114, 1992, 678–95.
Castellucio, G., *L'antropologia di Gregorio Nissano*, Bari, 1992.
Cavallin, A., *Studien zu den Briefen des hl. Basiliús*, Lund, 1944.
Cavarnos, J. P., *St. Gregory of Nyssa on the Human Soul*, Constantine Cavarnos, ed., Belmont: Institute of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 2000.
Cherniss, H., *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa*, Berkeley, 1930.

Chiaradonna, R., *Sostanza, Movimento, Analogia. Plotino Critico di Aristotele, Bibliopolis*, 2002.

Clark, E. A., *Clement's Use of Aristotle: The Aristotelian Contribution to Clement of Alexandria's Refutation of Gnosticism*, New York, 1977.

———, *The Origenist Controversy. The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, Princeton, 1992.

Clark, G., *Women in Late Antiquity: Pagan and Christian Life–Styles*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1993.

———, "Women and Asceticism in Late Antiquity" in *Asceticism*, eds V. L. Wimbush, and R. Valantasis, Oxford University Press, New York, 1995, 33–48.

Clarke, E., "New Perspectives on the Origenist Controversy: Human Embodiment and Ascetic Strategies,' *Church History*, 59, 1990, 145–62.

Cline Horowitz, M., "The Image of God in Man: Is Woman Included?", *Harvard Theological Review* 72, 1979, 175–206.

Cooper, J. W., *Body, Soul and Life Everlasting. Biblical Anthropology and the Monism – Dualism Debate*, Eerdman, Grand Rapids, 1989.

Corrigan, K., "Amelius, Plotinus, and Porphyry on Being, Intellect, and the One,"*ANRW* II, 36, 2, 1987, 975–93.

———, "Plotinus and St. Gregory of Nyssa: Can Matter really have a Positive Function?," *SP* 27, 1993, 14–20.

———, "'Solitary' Mysticism in Plotinus, Proclus, Gregory of Nyssa, and Pseudo-Dionysius," *Journal of Religion* 76, 1996, 28–42.

———, *Plotinus' Theory of Matter – Evil and the Question of Substance: Plato, Aristotle and Alexander of Aphrodisias*, Leuven, 1996.

———, "*Essence and Existence in the Enneads*", *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, Cambridge, 1996, 105–129.

———, "The problem of personal and human identity in Plotinus and Gregory of Nyssa," *Studia Patristica*, vol. xxxvii, 2001, 51–68.

———, "La discursivité et le temps futur du langage chez Plotin," in *Logos et Langage chez Plotin et avant Plotin*, ed. M. Fattal, Paris, 2003.

———, *Plato's Dialectic at Play: Structure, Myth, and Argument in the Symposium* (with Elena Glazov-Corrigan), Penn State Press, 2004.

———, *Reading Plotinus. A practical introduction to the Enneads*, Purdue University Press, 2004.

———, (and Still, C.), "Self-knowledge and *reditio completa*; Aquinas and his sources," *Being and Thought in Aquinas*, Binghampton, N.Y., 2004, 1 ff.

———, (and Harrington, M.), "Pseudo-Dionysius" in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2004 (on-line).

———, "The Soul-Body Relation in and before Augustine", *SP* XLIII, Leuven, 2006, 59–80.

Corsini, E., "Plérôme humain et plérôme cosmique chez Grégoire de Nysse" in *Écriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse*, ed. M. Harl, Leiden, 1971, 111–26.

Cortesi, A., *Le "Omelie sul Cantico dei Cantici" di Gregorio di Nissa: Proposta di un itinerario di vita battesimale*, *Studia Ephemerides Augustinianum* 70, Rome, 2000.
Courcelle, P., "Grégoire de Nysse, lecteur de Porphyre," *REG* 80, 1967, 402–6.
Cox Miller, P., *Biography in Late Antiquity: A Quest for the Holy Man*, Berkeley, 1983.
———, "Desert Asceticism and 'The Body from Nowhere'", *JECS* 2, 1994, 137–53.
Cross, R., "Gregory of Nyssa on Universals", *VigChr* 56, 2002, 372–410.
Crouzel, H., "Grégoire de Nysse est-il le fondateur de la théologie mystique? Une controverse récente," *RAM* 33, 1957, 189–202.
———, *Origène et la* "*connaissance mystique*," Museum Lessianum Section Theologique 56, Paris, 1961.
———, "Recherches sur Origène et son influence" *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique*, 6th ser., 62, 1961, 3–15; 105–13.
———, "Les critiques adressées par Methode et ses contemporains à la doctrine origénienne du corps ressuscité", *Gregorianum* 53, 1972, 679–716.
———, "La doctrine origènienne du corps ressuscité," *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique*, 81, 1980, 175–200, 241–66.
———, *Traité des Principes, Origène*, introd., texte critique de la version de Rufin, traduction, commentaire et fragments par H. Crouzel et M. Simonetti, Paris, 1978–84.
———, "Origène e l'origenismo: Le condanne di Origene,"*Augustinianum* 26, 1986, 295–303.
———, *Origen: The Life and Thought of the First Great Theologian*, trans., A. S. Worrall, San Francisco, 1989.
———, *Origène et Plotin. Comparaison doctrinale*, Téqui, Paris, 1991.
Crowley, T., *Roger Bacon: The problem of the soul in his philosophical commentaries*, Louvain/Dublin, 1950.
Daley, B., "Divine Transcendence and Human Transformation" in *Rethinking Gregory of Nyssa*, ed. S. Coakley, Blackwell, 2003.
Daniélou, J., *Platonisme et théologie mystique: Essai sur la doctrine spirituelle de Saint Grégoire de Nysse*, 2nd edn, Paris, 1953.
———, "Mystique de la ténèbre chez Grégoire de Nysse," s.v. contemplation, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. ii. ii, Paris, 1953, cols 1872–86.
———, "Grégoire de Nysse et Plotin," *Congrès de Tours, Association Guillaume Budé*, 1954, 259–62.
———, "Le mariage de Grégoire de Nysse et la chronologie de sa vie," *Revue des études Augustiniennes* 2, 1956, 71–8.
———, "'Methorios.' La Notion de Confino chez Grégoire de Nysse", *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 16, 1961, 161–87.
———, "La Chronologie des ceuvres de Grégoire de Nysse," *SP* 7 (Texte und Untersuchungen 92), Berlin, 1966, 159–69.
———, 'Grégoire de Nysse et le Néo-Platonisme de l'école d'Athènes," *REG* 80, 1967, 395–401.

———, *L'être et Ie temps chez Grégoire de Nysse*, Leiden, 1970.
———, "Orientations Actuelles" in *Écriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse*, ed. M. Hart, Leiden, 1971, 3–17.
———, "Plotin et Grégoire de Nyssa sur le mal", in *Plotino e il Neoplatonismo*, Roma, 1974, 485–922.
Dennis, T. J., "Gregory on the Resurrection of the Body", in *The Easter Sermons of Gregory of Nyssa: Translation and Commentary*, eds A. Spira and C. Klock, Cambridge, Mass., 1981, 55–80.
Derrida, J., "How not to speak: Denials," trans. K. Frieden, in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, eds H. G. Coward, and T. Foshay, Albany, New York, 1992, 73–142.
Desalvo, C., *L' 'oltre' nel presente: La filosofia dell'uomo in Gregorio di Nissa*, Platonismo e filosofia patristica, Studi e testi 9, Milan, 1996.
Desprez, V., "Macaire (Pseudo), Macaire, Macaire-Syméon", in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascetique et mystique doctrine et histoire*, eds M. Viller et al., 1980, 10, 20–43.
Dihle, A., *The Theory of the Will in Classical Antiquity*, Berkeley, 1982.
Dillon, J., *Middle Platonists*, London, 1977.
Dodds, E. R., "Theurgy and its Relationship to Neoplatonism," *Journal of Roman Studies* 37, 1947, 55–69; reprinted in *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Boston, 1957, 83–311.
———, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*, Cambridge, 1965.
Dörries, Hermann, *Die Theologie des Makarios/Symeon*, Gottingen, 1978.
Drecoll, V., *Die Entwicklung der Trinitätslehre des Basilius von Cäsarea: Sein Weg vom Homöusianer zum Neunizäner*, Gottingen, 1996.
Driscoll, J., "*Apatheia* and Purity of Heart in Evagrius Ponticus", *Purity of Heart in Early Ascetic and Monastic Literature*, eds Harriet A. Luckman, and Linda Kulzer, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1999, 141–60.
———, Evagrius Ponticus, *Ad Monachos*, trans. and commentary, *ACW* 59, Paulist Press, New York, 2003.
Drobner, H. R., "Gregory of Nyssa as Philosopher: *De anima et resurrechone* and *De hominis opificio*", *Dionysius* 18, 2000, 69–101.
Dysinger, L., "The Significance of Psalmody in the Mystical Theology of Evagrius of Pontus," *SP* 30, 1997, 176–82.
Ebert, T., *Meinung und Wissen in der philosophie Platons*, De Gruyter, New York, 1974.
Edwards, M. J., *Origen against Plato*, Ashgate, UK, 2002.
Elm, S. K., '*The Sententiae ad Virginem* by Evagrius Ponticus and the Problem of the Early Monastic Rules,' *Augustinianum* 30, 1990, 393–404.
———, *Virgins of God: The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1994.
Everson, S., ed., *Psychology*, Cambridge, 1991.
Fedwick, P. J., "A Commentary of Gregory of Nyssa or the 38th Letter of Basil of Caesarea" in *OCP* 44, 1978, 31–51.

———, ed., *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic*, Toronto, 1981.
———, "The Knowledge of Truth or the State of Prayer in Gregory of Nyssa," *Polyanethema: Studi di Letteratura Cristiana offerti a Salvatore Costanza. Studi Tardoantichi 7*, 1989, 349–71.
Finamore, J. F., *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul*, Chico, CA, 1985.
Frankenberg, W., *Euagrius Ponticus*, Abhandlungen der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Gottingen, Philolologisch-historische Klasse, new series, 13.2, Berlin, 1912.
Géhin, P., "Un nouvel inédit d'Évagre le Pontique: son commentaire de l'Ecclesiaste," *Byzantion* 49, 1979, 188–98.
———, ed., *Évagre Le Pontique, Scholies auz Proverbs*, *SC* 340, Paris, 1987.
———, ed., *Évagre Le Pontique, Scholies à I'Ecclésiaste*, *SC* 397, Paris, 1993.
———, ed., *Évagre Le Pontique. Sur les Pensées*, *SC* 438, Paris, 1998.
Gill, C., *The Person and the Human Mind*, Oxford, 1990.
———, *Personality in Greek Epic, Tragedy and Philosophy*, Oxford, 1995.
Grillmeier, A., *Christ in Christian Tradition*, London, 1965.
Gross, J., *La Divinisation du Chrétien d'aprés les pères grecs: Contribution historique à la doctrine de grace*, Paris, 1938.
Guillaumont, A., ed., Les Six Centuries des '*Kephalaia Gnostica*' *d'Évagre le Pontique*, *PO* 28, I, Paris, 1958.
———, "Évagre et les anathématismes antiorigénistes de 553," *SP 3*, 1961, 219–26.
———, *Les "Kephalaia Gnostica" d'Évagre Le Pontique et I'histoire de l'origenisme chez les grecs et chez les syriens*, Patristica Sorbonensia, 5 Paris, 1962.
———, "Un philosophe au désert: Évagre Le Pontique," *Revue de I'Histoire des Religions* 181, 1972, 29–56 (Origines 12: 185–212).
———, "The Jesus Prayer among the Monks of Egypt" *Eastern Churches Review* 6, 1974, 66–71.
———, "Le problème des deux Macaire dans les *Apophthegmata patrum*," *lrénikon*, 48, 1975, 41–59.
———, "La vision de l'intellect par lui-même dans la mystique évagrienne," in *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph 50*, Beirut, 1984, 255–62.
Guillaumont, Antoine, and Claire, "Le texte véritable des 'Gnostica' d'Évagre Le Pontique," *Revue de I'Histoire des Religions* 142, 1952, 156–205.
———, "Évagre Le Pontique," *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 4, 1961, 1731–44.
———, "Evagrius Ponticus. Persönlichkeit, Leben, Wirkung," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 6, 1966, 1088–107.
———, eds, *Évagre Le Pontique, Traité Pratique ou Le Moine*, *SC* 170–71, Paris, 1971.
———, eds, *Évagre Le Pontique. Le Gnostique*, *SC* 356, Paris, 1989.
———, and Paul Géhin, *Évagre Le Pontique. Sur les Pensées*, *SC* 438, Paris, 1998.
Hadot, P., *Exercices spirituelles et philosophie antique*, Paris, 1987 (Eng. trans. M. Chase), ed. A. I. Davidson, *Philosophy as a way of life*, Chicago, 1995.
Hanson, R. P. C., *Origen's Doctrine of Tradition*, London, 1954.

———, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy*, 318–81, Edinburgh, 1988.
Harl, M., ed., *Écriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse*, Leiden, 1971.
Harmless, W., *Desert Christians. An introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism*, Oxford, 2004.
Harmless, W., and Fitzgerald, R. R., "The Sapphire Light of the Mind': The Skemmata of Evagrius Ponticus", *TS* 62, 2001, 498–529.
Harrison, V., "Receptacle Imagery in St. Gregory of Nyssa's Anthropology," *SP* 22, 1989, 23–7.
———, "Grace and Human Freedom according to Gregory of Nyssa," *Studies in Bible and Early Christianity* 30, Lewiston, NY, 1992.
———, "Gender, Generation, and Virginity in Cappadocian Theology," *JECS* 47, 1996, 39–41.
———, "Male and Female in the Cappadocian Theology," *JECS* 41, 441–71.
Hart, D. B., "The Mirror of the Infinite: Gregory of Nyssa on the *Vestigia Trinitatis*," in *Rethinking Gregory of Nyssa*, ed. S. Coakley, Blackwell, 2003, 111–32.
Hart, M., "Reconciliation of Body and Soul: Gregory of Nyssa's Deeper Theology of Marriage," *TS* 51, 1990, 450–78.
———, "Gregory of Nyssa's Ironic Praise of the Celibate Life," *Heythrop Journal* 33, 1992, 1–19.
Hausherr, I., "Le Traité de l'Oraison d'Évagre Le Pontique (Pseudo-Nil)," *RAM* 15, 1934, 34–93, 113–70.
———, "Ignorance infinie," *OCP* 2, 1936, 351–62.
———, "Nouveaux fragments grecs d'Évagre Le Pontique," *OCP* 5, 1939, 229–33.
———, "Le 'De oratione' d'Évagre Le Pontique en syriaque et en arabe," *OCP* 5, 1939, 7–71.
———, "Ignorance infinie ou science infinie?," *OCP* 25, 1959, 44–52.
———, *Les leçons d'un contemplatif. Le Traité de l'Oraison d'Évagre Le Pontique*, Paris, 1960.
Heine, R., *Perfection in the Virtuous Life: A Study in the Relationship between Edification and Polemical Theology in Gregory of Nyssa*, Patristic Monograph Series 2, Philadelphia, 1975.
———, "Gregory of Nyssa's Apology for Allegory," *VigChr* 38, 1984, 360–70.
Holmes, A., *A Life Pleasing to God: The Spirituality of the Rules of St. Basil*, CS, Kalamazoo, MI, 2000.
Horn, G., "Le 'Miroir', la 'nuée,' deux manières de voir Dieu d'après S. Grégoire de Nysse," *RAM* 8, 1927, 113–31.
Hübner, R., "Gregor von Nyssa als Verfasser der sog. ep. 38 des Basilius" in *Epektasis: Mélanges patristiques offerts au Cardinal Jean Daniélou*, eds J. Fontaine, and C. Kannengieser, Paris, 1972, 463–90.
———, *Die Einheit des Leibes Christi bei Gregor von Nyssa: Untersuchungen zum Ursprung der "physischen Erlösungslehre*," Leiden, 1974.

Igal, J., "Aristoteles y la evolucion de la antropologia de Plotino", *Pensiamento* 35, 1979, 315–46.
Irwin, T., *Aristotle's First Principles*, Oxford, 1988.
Jaeger, W., *Two Rediscovered Works of Ancient Christian Literature*, Leiden, 1954.
Joachim, H. H., *Aristotle. The Nichomachean Ethics*, Oxford, 1951.
Judge, E. A., "The Earliest Use of Monachos for 'Monk' and the Origins of Monasticism," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 20, 1977, 72–89.
Kelly, J. N. D., *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd edn, Longman, London, 1972 (5th edn, London, 1977).
Kopecek, T. A., *A History of Neo-Arianism*, Patristic Monograph Series 8, Cambridge, Mass., 1979.
Ladner, G., "The Philosophical Anthropology of Saint Gregory of Nyssa," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 12, 1958, 58–94.
Laird, M., *Gregory of Nyssa and the grasp of Faith*, Oxford, 2004.
Lampe, G. W. H., ed., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Oxford, 1961.
Langerbeck, H., "Zur Interpretation Gregors von Nyssa," *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 82, 1957, 81–90.
Laporte, J., *The Role of Woman in Early Christianity*, New York/Toronto, 1982.
Lear, J., *Aristotle. The Desire to Understand*, Cambridge, 1988.
Le Maitre, J., "Préhistoire du concepte de *gnophos*," *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. ii. ii, Paris, 1953, s.v. contemplation, cols 1868–72.
Levinas, E., *La Philosophie et l'idée de l'infini*, in *To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*, A. Peperzak, Purdue, Indiana, 1993, 73–119.
Lewy, H., *Sobria Ebreitas: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der antiken Mystik*, Giessen, 1929.
———, and Leys, R., *L'Image de Dieu chez Saint Grégoire de Nysse*, Museum Lessianum Section Theologique 49, Paris, 1951.
———, "La théologie spirituelle de Grégoire de Nysse," *SP* 2, 1957, 495–511.
———, *Chaldean Oracles and Theurgy: Mysticism, Magic and Platonism in the Later Roman Empire*, Cairo, 1956; new edn, M. Tardieu, Paris, 1978.
Leys, R., *L'image de Dieu chez Saint Gregoire de Nysse*, Bruxelles, 1951.
Liddell, H. G., and Scott, R., eds, A *Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th edn, revised and augmented by H. Jones, Oxford, 1996.
Lilla, S., *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism*, Oxford, 1971.
———, "La teologia negativa del pensiero greco classico a quello patristico e bizantino," *Helikon* 22–7, 1982–87, 211–79; 28, 1988, 203–79; 29–30, 1989–90, 97–186; 31–2, 1991–92, 3–72.
———, "Platonism and the Fathers," *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, ed. A. Di Berardino, trans. A. Walford, Cambridge, 1992.
Lonergan, B. J. F., *Grace and Freedom*, London, 1971.

Lorie, L., *Spiritual Terminology in the Latin Translations of the Vita Antonii, Nijmmegen*, 1955.
Louth, A., *Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys*, Oxford, 1981.
Macleod, C., "A Study of Ancient Mysticism", *JTS* NS 21, 1970, 43–55.
———, "Allegory and Mysticism in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa", *JTS* NS 22, 1971, 362–79.
———, "The Preface to Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Moses*", *JTS* NS 33, 1982, 183–91.
Mann, F., ed., *Lexicon Gregorianum: Wörterbuch zu den Schriften Gregors von Nyssa*, Leiden, 1999.
Massagli, M., "L'Uno al di sopra del bello e della bellezza nelle *Enneadi* di Plotino", *Rivista di filosofia neo-scolastica* 73, 1981, 111–31.
McEvoy, J., *The Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste*, Oxford, 1982.
McGinn, B., *The Foundations of Mysticism*, vol. 1: *Origins to the Fifth Century*, London, 1992.
———, The Foundations of Mysticism (vol. I of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism*, Crossroad, New York, 1994.
McGrath, C., "Gregory of Nyssa's Doctrine on Knowledge of God," Ph.D. thesis, Fordham University, 1964.
McGuckin, J., *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus. An Intellectual Biography*, Crestwood, NY, 2001.
Meredith, A., "Gregory of Nyssa and Plotinus," *SP* 17 1982, 1120–26.
———, *The Cappadocians, Outstanding Christian Thinkers*, London, 1995.
———, *Gregory of Nyssa, The Early Church Fathers*, London, 1999.
Mortley, R., "Plotin: le langage de la négation", in *Logos et Langage Chez Plotin et Avant Plotin*, ed. M. Fattal, Paris, 2003, 247–54.
Muckle, J., "The Doctrine of Gregory of Nyssa on Man and the Image of God," *Mediaeval Studies* 7, 1945, 55–84.
Mühlenberg, E., *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa: Gregors Kritik am Gottesbegriff der klassischen Metaphysik*, Göttingen, 1966.
Muyldermans, J., "Evagriana. Le Vat. Barb. Graec. 515," *Le Muséon*, 51, 1938, 191–226.
———, "Evagriana de la Vaticane," *Le Muséon*, 54, 1941, 1–15.
———, *Evagriana Syriaca. Textes inédits du British Museum et de la Vaticane*, Bibliothèque du Muséon, 31, Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1952.
———, "Evagriana coptica," *Le Muséon*, 76, 1963, 271–6.
Nussbaum, M., *The Fragility of Goodness*, Cambridge, 1986.
———, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1990.
———, and A. Rorty, *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima*, Oxford, 1992.
Nutton, V., *Ancient Medicine*, London, New York, 2004.
O'Brien, D., *Plotinus on the origin of matter*, Naples, 1991.

Oesterle, H. J., "Probleme der Anthropologie bei Gregor von Nyssa. Zur Interpretation seiner Schrift 'De hominis Opificio'", *Hermes*, 113, 1985, 101–14.

O'Laughlin, M. W., *Origenism in the Desert: Anthropology and Integration in Evagrius Ponticus*, Harvard, Mass.: Dissertation, Harvard University, 1987; UMI ProQuest (http://www.umi.com/).

———, "New Questions Concerning the Origenism of Evagrius," in Robert J. Daly, ed., *Origeniana Quinta*, Leuven, 1992, 528–34.

Onians, R. B., *The Origins of European Thought*, Cambridge, 1951.

Ousley, D. A., *Evagrius' Theology Theology of Prayer and the Spiritual Life,* Chicago, IL: Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1979; UMI ProQuest (http://www.umi.com/).

Parmentier, M., "Evagrius of Pontus, 'Letter to Melania'", *Bijdragen, tijdschrift voor filosofie en theologie* 46, 1985, 2–38.

Pelikan, J., *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism*, Gifford Lectures 1992–93, New Haven, 1993.

Pépin, J., *Théologie cosmique et théologie chrétienne*, Paris, 1964.

Peroli, E., *Il Platonismo e l'antropologia filosofica di Gregorio di Nissa. Con particolare riferimento agli influssi di Platone, Plotino e Porfirio*, Platonismo, Milan, 1993.

Philippou, A., "The Doctrine of Evil in St. Gregory of Nyssa", *SP* 9, 1970, 251–6.

Pochoshajew, I., *Die Seele bei Platon, Plotin. Porphyr, und Gregor von Nyssa*, Frankfurt, New York, 2004.

Popper, K., *The Open Society and its Enemies*, 2 vols, Princeton, 1950.

Pottier, B., *Dieu et le Christ seIon Grégoire de Nysse*, Namur: Brepols, 1994.

Puech, H. C., "La Ténèbre mystique chez Ie Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite et dans la tradition patristique," in *En quête de la Gnose*, 2 vols, Paris, 1978, vol. i, 119–41.

Rahner, K., "Die geistliche Lehre des Evagrius Ponticus," *Zeitschrift für Ascese und Mystik*, 8 1933, 31–47.

Refoulé, F., "La christologie d'Évagre et l'origénisme," *OCP* 27, 1961, 221–66.

———, "Évagre fut-il origéniste," *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 47, 1963, 398–402.

Reichenback, B., *Is Man the Phoenix? A Study of Immortality*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1983.

Rist, J. M., "Mysticism and Transcendence in Later Neoplatonism," *Hermes* 92, 1964, 213–25.

———, "Basil's 'Neoplatonism': Its Background and Nature," in *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic. A Sixteen Hundreth Anniversary Symposium*, ed. P. Fedwick, Toronto, 1981, 137–220.

———, "Pseudo-Ammonius and the Soul/Body Problem in some Platonic texts of late Antiquity," *AJP*, 1988, 402–15.

———, *Augustine. Ancient Thought Baptized*, Cambridge, 1994.

———, "Plotinus and Christian Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, ed. L. Gerson, Cambridge, 1996, 386–413.

Ritter, A., "Die Gnadenlehre Gregors von Nyssa nach seiner Schrift 'Über das Leben des Mose,'" in *Gregor* von *Nyssa und die Philosophie*, eds H. Dörrie, M. Altenburger, and U. Schramm, Leiden, 1976, 195–239.

Robinson, J. A., *Origen*. *Philokalia*, Cambridge, 1893.

Romano, F., "Azione morale e libero arbitrio in Plotino – La virtu non ha padrone (*aretê adespoton*)", in M. Vegetti and M. Abbate eds, *La repubblica di Platone nella tradizione antica*, Firenze, 1999, 151–91.

Rondeau, M. J., "Le commentaire sur les Psaumes d'Evagre le Pontique," *OCP* 26, 1960, 307–48.

———, "Exégèse du Psautier et anabase spirituelle chez Grégoire de Nysse," in *Epektasis: Mélanges patristiques offerts* au *Cardinal Jean Daniélou*, eds J. Fontaine, and C. Kannengiesser, Paris, 1972, 517–31.

———, "D'où vient la technique exégétique utilisée par Grégoire de Nysse dans son traité 'Sur les titres des psaumes'?" in *Mélanges d'histoire des religions offerts à Henri-Charles Puech*, Paris, 1974, 263–87.

Rousseau, O., "Le rôle important du monachisme dans l'Eglise d'Orient", *Il Monachismo Orientale*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 153, Rome, 1958.

Rousseau, P., *Basil of Caesarea*, Berkeley, 1994.

Russell, N., *The Lives of the Desert Fathers*, intro. B. Ward, Cistercian Publications, USA, 1980.

Ryle, G., *The Concept of Mind*, Harmondsworth, 1973.

Sambursky, S., *Physics of the Stoics*, London, 1959.

Schwyzer, H. R., "Zu Plotins Deutung der sogenannten Platonischen Materie," *Zetesis*, Antwerp-Utrecht, 1973, 266–80.

Shaw, G., *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus*, Penn State University Park, 1995.

Silvas, A. M., *The Ascetikon of St. Basil the Great*, Oxford, 2005.

Sleeman, J. H. and Pollet, G., *Lexicon Plotinianum*, Leiden, 1980.

Staats, R., *Gregor von Nyssa und die Messalianer*, Patristische Texte und Studien 8, Berlin, 1968.

Stead, G. C., "Ontology and Terminology in Gregory of Nyssa," in *Gregor von Nyssa und die Philosophie: Zweites lnternationales Kolloquium Gregor von Nyssa* (Münster 18–23 September 1972), eds H. Dörrie, M. Altenburger, and U. Schramm, Leiden, 1976, 107–19.

———, *Divine Substance*, Oxford, 1977.

———, "The Concept of the Mind and the Concept of God in the Christian Fathers," in *The Philosophical Frontiers of Christian Theology*, eds B. Hebblethwaite, and S. Sutherland, Cambridge, 1982, 39–54.

———, *Philosophy and Christian Antiquity*, Cambridge, 1994.

Stevenson, J., *A New Eusebius: Documents Illustrating the History of the Church to A.D. 337*, SPCK, 2nd edn, 1987.

Stewart, C., "The Desert Mothers: The Portrayal of Women in the Sayings and the Stories of the Desert," *Vox Benedictina* 2, 1985, 5–23.
———, *Working the Earth of the Heart. The Messalian Controversy in History, Texts, and Language to AD 431*, Oxford 1991.
———, "Evagrius Ponticus and the 'eight generic logismoi'" (pre-publication copy kindly given me by Columba).
———, *Cassian the Monk*, Oxford, 1998.
———, Introduction to *Purity of Heart in Early Ascetic and Monastic Literature*, eds Harriet A. Luckman, and Linda Kulzer, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1999, 1–16.
———, "Imageless Prayer and the Theological Vision of Evagrius Ponticus," *JECS* 9, 2001, 173–204.
Strawley, J., "St Gregory of Nyssa on the Sinlessness of Christ," *JTS*, 1906, 434–41.
Thunberg, L., *Microcosm and Mediator. The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, Chicago and La Selle, Illinois, 1995.
Tixeront, J., *Histoire des dogmes dans l'antiquité chrétienne* II, Paris, 1912 (History of Dogmas II, St. Louis, 1914).
Trigg, J. W., *Origen: Bible and Philosophy in the Third Century*, John Knox, Atlanta, 1983.
———, *Origen*, Early Church Fathers Series, Routledge, New York, 1998.
Tugwell, S., *Ways of Imperfection. An Exploration of Christian Spirituality*, Templegate, Springfield, Illinois, 1985.
Turcescu, L., "Person' versus 'Individual,' and Other Modern Misreadings of Gregory of Nyssa," in *Rethinking Gregory of Nyssa*, ed. S. Coakley, Blackwell, 2003, 97–110.
———, *Gregory of Nyssa and the Concept of Divine Persons*, Oxford, 2005 (AAR).
Turner, D., *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism*, Cambridge, 1995.
Turner, J. D., "The Setting of the Platonizing Sethian Treatises in Middle Platonism", in *Gnosticism and Later Platonism*, eds, J. D. Turner, and R. Majercik, Atlanta, 2000, 179–224.
Valantasis, R., *Spiritual Guides of the Third Century: A Semiotic Study of The Guide-Disciple* Re*lationship in Christianity, Neoplatonism, Hermeticism, and Gnosticism*, Harvard Dissertations in Religion 27, Minneapolis, 1991.
Vander Waerdt, P. A., "The Peripatetic Interpretation of Plato's Tripartite Psychology", *GRBS*, 1985, 283–302.
———, "Peripatetic Soul-Division, Posidonius, and Middle Platonic Moral Psychology", *GRBS*, 1985, 373–94.
Verghese, T. P., "DIASTEMA and DIASTASIS in Gregory of Nyssa", in *Gregor von Nyssa und die Philosophie*, eds H. Dörrie, M. Altenburger, U. Schramm, Leiden 1976.

Vitestam, G., ed., *La seconde partie du traité qui passe sous le nom de "La Grande Lettre d'Evagre le Pontique à Mélanie l'Ancienne,"* Scripta Minora Regiae Societatis Humaniorum Litterarum Lundensis, 1963–4, no. 3 (Lund: Glerrup, 1964).

Vivian, T., *The Coptic Life* (*Four desert fathers: Pambo, Evagrius, Macarius of Egypt, and Macarius of Alexandria*), with R. Greer, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 2004.

———, "Coptic Palladiana II: *The Life of Evagrius*" (*LH* 38), *Coptic Church Review* 21, 2000, 8–23.

Vlastos, Gregory, "The Individual as an Object of Love in Plato", in *Platonic Studies*, 1981, 2nd edn, Princeton, 3–42.

Völker, W., *Gregor von Nyssa als Mystiker*, Wiesbaden, 1955.

Vollert, W., *Die Lehre Gregors von Nyssa vom Guten und Bösen und von der schliesslichen Überwindung des Bösen*, Leipzig, 1897.

Walker Bynum, C., *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336*, New York, 1995.

Wallis, R. T., *Neoplatonism*, 2nd edn, London, 1995.

Ware, K., (and Dempf, A.), "Nous and Noesis in Plato, Aristotle and Evagrius of Pontus: Evagrios Pontikos als Metaphysiker und Mystiker," *Diotima* 13, 1985, 158–63.

———, "The Origins of the Jesus Prayer: Diadochus, Gaza, Sinai" in *The Study of Spirituality*, eds C. Jones, G. Wainwright, and E. Yarnold, New York, Oxford University Press, 1986, 175–84.

———, "My Helper and My Enemy: The Body in Greek Christianity," in *Religion and the Body*, ed. S. Coakley, Cambridge Studies in Religion 8, Cambridge, 1997, 90–110.

Warren, Smith, J., *Passion and Paradise. Human and Divine Emotion in the Thought of Gregory of Nyssa*, Crossroad, New York, 2004.

Wedin, M., *Mind and Imagination in Aristotle*, New Haven, 1988.

Young, F. M., "Adam and Anthropos: A Study of the Intersection of Science and the Bible in Two Anthropological Treatises of the Fourth Century", *VigChr* 37, no. 2, 1983.

Young, R. Darling, "The Armenian Adaptation of Evagrius' Kephalaia Gnostica," in Robert J. Daly, ed., *Origeniana Quinta*, Leuven, 1992, 535–41.

———, "Evagrius the Iconographer: Monastic Pedagogy in the *Gnostikos*," *JECS* 9, 2001, 53–71.

Williams, R., *[The Wound of Knowledge] Christian Spirituality: a theological history from the New Testament to Luther and St. John of the Cross*, Atlanta, 1991 [1979].

———, "Macrina's Deathbed Revisited: Gregory of Nyssa on Mind and Passion", in *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, eds L. Wickham, and C. Bammel, Leiden, 1993, 227–46.

———, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, Grand Rapids, Mich., 2002.

Wilmart, A., "Origine veritable des homélies pneumatiques", *RAM* 1, 1920, 361–77.

Wilson-Kastner, P., "Macrina: Virgin and Teacher", *Andrews University Seminary Series* 17, Spring 1979, 105–118.

Wimbush, V. L., ed., *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, Minneapolis, 1990.

Worster, D., *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*, 2nd edn, Cambridge, 1994.

Zachhuber, J., *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden, 2000.

———, "Once again. Gregory of Nyssa on Universals", *JTS* 56, 2005, 75–98.

Zizioulas, J., *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, Crestwood, NY, 1985.

———, "On Being a Person: Towards an Ontology of Personhood," in *Persons, Divine and Human. King's College Essays in Theological Anthropology*, eds C. Schwöbel, and C. E. Gunton, Edinburgh, 1991.

Index