

Ἐγὼ τὸ Ἀλφά καὶ τὸ Ὠμέγα, ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος:
Aristotelian Teleology and Christian Eschatology in Origen's *De Principiis*
(An Eriugenian Reading of Origen)

by

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I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the archē and the telos
-Revelations 22:13

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness"
-Genesis 1:26

That is why a man should make all haste to escape from earth to heaven;
and escape means becoming as like to God as possible
-Theaetetus 176b

But we must not follow those who advise us, being men, to think of human things, and, being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us
-Nicomachean Ethics 1177b 30

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Abstract

The central logic of Origen's *De Principiis* rests upon the axiom that "the end must be like the beginning." Despite the importance of this principle, Origen never elaborates upon it, but simply asserts it as the incontrovertible ground of his philosophical and theological system. This thesis is an attempt to unravel this enigmatic axiom with the help of Aristotelian philosophy. While Origen is typically regarded as a "Platonist", I argue for the equally important Peripatetic character of Origen's thought. It is this latter element, I maintain, that holds the key as to why "the end must be like the beginning." In sum, I argue that, as simultaneously the "activity of being" and the "actuality of existence," God is both the *archē* and the *telos* of the created cosmos. As actuality (*ἐνέργεια*), God eternally creates the world and leads it to perfection; as eternally-being-actualized, the world is eternally created and moved towards perfection – the realization of eternal wellbeing. Despite the shared activity (*ἐνέργεια*) of Creator and creation, the two remain importantly distinct. Like iron in the fire, the latter becomes 'like' (*ὁμοίωσις*) the former while remaining substantially itself.

List of Abbreviations Used

| | |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| CCels | <i>Contra Celsum</i> |
| CommJohn | <i>Commentary on John</i> |
| CommMatt | <i>Commentary on Matthew</i> |
| CommRom | <i>Commentary on Romans</i> |
| De Gen et Cor | <i>On Generation and Corruption</i> |
| DePrinc | <i>De Principiis (Peri Archōn)</i> |
| Meta | <i>Metaphysics</i> |
| NE | <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> |
| Peri | <i>Periphyseon</i> |

Biblical

| | |
|-----|-------------|
| Col | Colossians |
| Cor | Corinthians |
| Dt | Deuteronomy |
| Gn | Genesis |
| Heb | Hebrews |
| Is | Isaiah |
| Jn | John |
| Ps | Psalms |
| Mal | Malachi |
| Mk | Mark |
| Mt | Matthew |
| Rom | Romans |
| Wis | Wisdom |

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Chapter One: Introduction

This work emerged from a desire to understand a very basic question; namely, what does Origen mean when he repeatedly insists that “the end must be like the beginning”? What does he mean by “end”, “beginning” and “like”? and why is it that the end *must* be like the beginning? While this maxim, as many scholars have noted, encapsulates the core logic of the *De Principiis*, Origen never elaborates upon it. Instead, he presents it as a kind of incontrovertible premise upon which his philosophical and theological¹ system rests. In this, Origen has largely been followed by those few commentators who have bothered to remark upon this enigmatic axiom. Like the former, the latter have left the riddle unresolved preferring, it would seem, to piously (and perhaps prudently!) maintain a sacred silence. The central aim of this thesis is, consequently, to examine this enigmatic yet foundational premise which underlies Origen’s worldview – his protology and eschatology, his doctrine of eternal creation and universal restoration – and to hazard an explanation.

Given the teleological nature of the question at hand, I was inevitably drawn to that greatest of all ancient teleological thinkers – Aristotle.² In this, I have been immeasurably

¹ For the duration of this work I shall use the terms ‘philosophy’ and ‘theology’ interchangeably. Like his Greek, Jewish, and Christian contemporaries, Origen is at once a ‘philosophical theologian’ and a ‘theological philosopher’. Each term implies the other, and I use them accordingly.

² Throughout my thesis I employ the terms “Aristotle,” “Aristotelian,” “Aristotelianism,” “Peripatetic”, etc., in a broad and largely interchangeable fashion. Origen does show direct familiarity with the works of Aristotle, whom he mentions (often favorably) by name nearly a dozen times in *Contra Celsum*. See G. Dorival, “Origène at la philosophie grecque”: 195. At the same, as a student of Ammonius Saccas, Origen was also likely familiar with the writings of Alexander of Aphrodisias as, according to Nemesius, the latter was read in the school of Ammonius Saccas. Nemesius, *De Natura Hominis*, 3.58. The aim of my thesis is not to establish a direct connection between Aristotle and Origen, but to show how the thought of “Aristotle” – be it Aristotle himself or later Aristotelian, or Peripatetic thinkers – helps one to arrive at a better understanding of Origen’s philosophical theology.

aided by David Berchman's, *From Philo to Origen*, an indispensable work which confirmed and enriched my growing intuition that the Aristotelian tradition might provide the key to solving the riddle at the heart of the *De Principiis*. While it is commonplace (and rightly so) to refer to Origen as a "Platonist", few scholars apart from Berchman (and Cadiou)³, have extensively treated of the Aristotelian, or Peripatetic, character of Origen's thought. It has become my conviction that, in the absence of this absolutely crucial element, it is impossible to arrive at an accurate and balanced understanding of Origen's thought. Following Berchman, I have approached Origen (d. 254 AD) from his historical locus within what the former refers to as "late Middle Platonism", a rich and transitional period of philosophy (c.150-220) characterized by its turn towards Peripateticism.⁴ During this period, the growing influence of Aristotelian thought becomes unmistakable in thinkers such as Albinus/Alcinous, Numenius, and Clement, and continues with Origen, Ammonius Saccas, and ultimately Plotinus. Origen, so to speak, is at once "the last of the Middle Platonists" and, as a contemporary of Plotinus and fellow student of Ammonius Saccas, among the "first of the Neoplatonists".

In what follows, I have chosen to emphasize the Peripatetic character of Origen's thought, while keeping references to Plotinus, and Neoplatonism generally, to a minimum. The reason for this is simply to try to redress the imbalance in Origenist scholarship, which has tended to emphasize Origen's Platonism, or Neoplatonism, at the expense of his

³ Although Cadiou's treatment is limited to only a few paragraphs, it remains an important early acknowledgement of the importance of Aristotle for Origen. See R. Cadiou, *La Jeunesse d'Origène* 201-203.

⁴ Berchman, *From Philo to Origen* 55-57; 83-112.

Aristotelianism.⁵ Beginning with the pioneering work of Eugène De Faye, and continuing on through Crouzel, Daniélou, and Trigg, up to present commentators such as Scott, Edwards, and Ramelli⁶, the tendency has been to regard Origen as a Platonist, while neglecting the all-important Peripatetic element of his thought. This imbalance has led to certain exaggerations and entrenched misunderstandings of Origen extending as far back as Jerome and Justinian. The accusations of the latter, meanwhile, have tended to strengthen these misunderstandings. Among the most damaging are those pertaining to Origen's so-called doctrine of pre-existence and the corresponding doctrine of *apokatastasis*, or universal return. Here, the Platonic lens has been especially distorting. Despite overwhelming textual evidence to the contrary, commentators continue to ignore the deeply hylomorphic character of Origen's thought, choosing instead to portray him as a kind of Platonic "dualist".⁷ As a result, Origen's views concerning the eternity of the world, his repeated insistence upon the inseparability of soul and body, form and matter – crucial to his philosophical and theological system – have been almost entirely overlooked.

A key contributing factor to this seemingly wilful misreading of Origen may be traced to what Cavadini calls the "hermeneutic of suspicion." The latter refers to a deep mistrust within Origen scholarship towards Rufinus' Latin translations of Origen's works (especially the *De Principiis*). This "hermeneutic of suspicion" largely stems from the editorial efforts of Koetschau (1913), who accused Rufinus of having modified his

⁵ *Ibid*, 114-116. Admittedly, there is something highly suspect and artificial about juxtaposing "Platonism" and "Aristotelianism" in this way. In fact, it is virtually impossible to clearly separate these two schools in the thought of Origen and his contemporaries. Each informs and modifies the other. Whether Origen is a "Platonist" or an "Aristotelian" is really a matter of emphasis. I have chosen to emphasise the latter.

⁶ While Ramelli prioritizes Platonism as the dominant influence on Origen, she does acknowledge the importance of Peripateticism. Cf. I. Ramelli, "Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism."

⁷ The notion of Platonic dualism is itself a dubious and misleading one. Cf. my "Being and Time in Plato's *Timaeus*" for a more perspectival reading of Plato.

translation of the *De Principiis* to systematically purge it of heretical opinions. At the same time, Koetschau “supplemented” Origen’s text with fragments taken from hostile sources “as though they were unbiased, objective witnesses to the original Greek.”⁸ Butterworth (1936), meanwhile, whose translation of the *De Principiis* remains the sole English language version, uncritically follows Koetschau’s flawed methodology. Thus, while a deeply critical attitude towards Rufinus is entirely justified – the latter openly admits to having modified Origen’s text⁹ – a correspondingly critical attitude towards the testimonies of hostile sources such as Jerome and Justinian tends to be peculiarly lacking. The most common consequence of this has been to dismiss the centrality of embodiment for Origen as merely a Rufinian modification. As I argue below, this corporealism is so fundamental to Origen’s worldview that attributing it to a few lines pencilled in by Rufinus is utterly untenable. The fact that commentators continue to assert this can only be explained by the tendency to see Origen as a Platonist in the crudest sense; namely, as a thinker whose system is constructed upon a radical intelligible/sensible, mind/body dualism.

In light of these difficulties – compounded by Origen’s own *zetetic*¹⁰ method – I have adopted the following methodology. Firstly, I have limited myself primarily to a consideration of Origen’s great philosophical masterpiece, the *De Principiis*. Any consideration of other works has been solely for the sake of illuminating obscurities in this work. While this approach has justly been criticised in recent times for failing to account

⁸ See J.C. Cavadini, *On First Principles* vii-ix. For Butterworth’s comments, see “Translator’s Introduction”: xxxiii-lxix.

⁹ See Preface of Rufinus, *De Principiis* III.

¹⁰ By this somewhat obscure term, I indicate the questing character of Origen’s thought, what Crouzel famously calls “une théologie en recherché”. The fact that Origen proceeds by open speculation at times makes it difficult to ascertain his ultimate position (if any). On the other hand, much of the hostile witness against Origen is derived from taking an open-ended question the latter has posed and turning it into a rigid, dogmatic statement.

for the breadth of Origen's thought as a whole, my aim here is not to offer any kind of comprehensive account. Instead, I am primarily and unapologetically interested in Origen the philosopher. In particular, I am interested in Origen the *Aristotelian* philosopher. Thus, what follows is essentially a revisionist reading of the *De Principiis*, resulting from a largely (though not exclusively) Peripatetic perspective. From time to time I shall turn to later Origenists¹¹ such as Gregory of Nyssa, Eriugena, and Meister Eckhart in order to clarify the thought of the Master. Finally, I have chosen to reverse the longstanding hermeneutic of suspicion. Instead of casting a doubtful eye upon Rufinus, I regard the testimonies of Jerome, Justinian, and other hostile witnesses with extreme guardedness. In general, textual evidence from within and without the *De Principiis*, along with the logical progression of Origen's thought, largely vindicates Rufinus' work as a translator. Whatever the latter may have modified or omitted, it is my conviction that the basic tenets of Origen's theological system remain intact and have been more or less faithfully transmitted.

How does all of this relate to my original quest to understand Origen's enigmatic axiom that the "end must be like the beginning?" The answer, in a word, is Aristotle.¹² It is only by turning to the latter that one can understand the fundamental premise which underlies, if not the whole of Origen's thought, at least the whole of the *De Principiis*.

¹¹ The term "Origenist" typically refers to the mystics of the Palestinian desert such as Evagrius, Gregory Thaumaturgus, Didymos the Blind, Stephen Bar Sudali, and others. These individuals were explicitly identified as followers of Origen in antiquity, and condemned accordingly. Present scholarship tends to regard them as radical followers of Origen who frequently took his teachings to extremes well beyond Origen himself, thus bearing a significant responsibility for misunderstandings leading to Origen's eventual condemnation. I use the term here in reference to Gregory of Nyssa, Eriugena, and Meister Eckhart in a slightly subversive manner. While not "Origenist" in the sense articulated above, all three are importantly influenced by Origen. Gregory, along with his fellow Cappadocians Gregory Nazianzus and Basil of Caesarea, compiled the *Philokalia*, an important collection of Origen's writings, while Eriugena and Meister Eckhart cite Origen directly in their works and, seemingly oblivious to his condemnation, refer to him as "the blessed Origen".

¹² See note 2, above.

Simply put, the reason “the end must be like the beginning” is because both are ultimately two perspectives of a single activity (*ἐνέργεια*), God. The way *to* Athens and the way *from* Athens are, as Aristotle states, in one sense different and in another sense the same. It is this understanding of the shared activity of agent and patient that informs Origen’s understanding of God and world, Creator and creature. As the Actuality of Being, God is at once the supreme *archē* whence all beings derive, and the ultimate *telos* towards which all beings are moved. As Unceasing Activity (*ἐνέργεια*) God eternally creates the world and guides it towards perfection; as perpetually in motion, the world is eternally created and drawn towards completion, towards the actuality of being (*ἐνέργεια*). Despite the shared activity (*ἐνέργεια*) of agent and patient, God and world, the two poles remain importantly distinct, and it is for this reason that Origen uses the term ‘like’ (*ὁμοίωσις*). God is the source and consummation of the world, yet not in such a way that leads to a conflation of the actualizing agent and the patient being actualized. The way from Athens and the way to Athens are importantly *different*. The distinction between these two entities constitutes the fundamental divide in Origen’s cosmos. Given that God is the sole Reality, there is only one *archē* and one *telos* with respect to all derivative realities. As such, the aim of the former is to become as like as possible to the latter. That is to say, the individual and collective aim of existence is to realize its intrinsic capacity, not merely for being, but for eternal *wellbeing*. To become, as Plato and Aristotle proclaim, as like (*ὁμοίωσις*) to God as possible.

In a sense, this thesis can be read in two complementary ways: 1) as an extended exploration into why and how, for Origen, “the end must be like the beginning,” and 2) as a broad revisionist reading of the *De Principiis*, one of the most important and contested

works of early Christian philosophy. Both approaches aim towards developing a deeper understanding of the role played by Aristotelian teleology in the shaping of early Christian eschatology – particularly with respect to the doctrine of *apokatastasis*. As I hope to show, Origen’s universalism is rooted in his understanding of God as *energeia*; that is, as the Activity of Being whose unceasing omnipotence constitutes beings, and whose unfailing providence perfects those same beings in conjunction with their freewill. The following dissertation unfolds in a simple and straightforward manner: I begin at the beginning with a consideration of Origen’s first principles (*ἀρχαί*), move on to treat that which proceeds from these first principles, and conclude with a return to these principles as end (*τέλος*). In this way, mirroring the cyclical motion of being itself, we shall move from beginning to beginning, thus ending where we began – with God, the supreme *archē* and ultimate *telos* of the world and beings.

In brief, I begin Chapter One, which deals with Origen’s first principles (*ἀρχαί*), not with Aristotelian teleology, but with a brief consideration of the Neopythagorean structure which underlies Origen’s protology. Through an analysis of several of the latter’s philosophical sources, chiefly Eudorus and Numenius, I lay out the basic Neopythagorean structure of the two “Ones”, consisting of a radically transcendent 1st god and a derivative 2nd god. Drawing upon Origen’s other philosophical works, such as the *Contra Celsum* and *Commentary on John*, I argue that this same structure of a twofold divinity informs the first principles of the *De Principiis*. God the Father is a radically transcendent One, while the Logos-Son is a derivative Monad at once *homoousios* with, yet contingent upon, the Father. Having established the basic framework, I then proceed to argue that Origen’s 1st god, God the Father, is a *Nous Akinetos* whose essence is *energeia*, while his 2nd god, the Logos-Son,

is a *Nous Kinetos*. The first is eternal actuality (*ἐνέργεια*); the second is eternally-being-actualized. As such, the Son is *essentially* one with the Father, yet *existentially* subordinate. God the Father is the supreme source and consummation of the cosmos, while the Logos-Son, as the instrument of creation and agent of restoration, acts as a secondary *archē* and *telos*.

In equating Origen's God with *energeia*, I follow Aryeh Kosman's rendering of this crucial Aristotelian term, not merely as "actuality", but equally as "activity". God is at once "the actuality of being" and "unceasing activity". As the Actuality of Being, God is the *telos* of all created and contingent beings; as Unceasing Activity, God is the *archē*, the creative source of all beings. It is this latter perspective that I argue informs Origen's insistence upon the unceasing creativity of the divine omnipotence. Given that God's omnipotence is eternally active (or eternal activity; *ἐνέργεια*), Origen concludes that what proceeds from this must be correspondingly eternal; namely, the timeless generation of the Son, and the eternal createdness of the world. While the second forms the basis for Chapter Two, the first occupies the remainder of Chapter One. As the eternally begotten outflow, or emanation (*ἀπόρροια*) of the divine *energeia*, the Logos-Son is at once contingent upon God the Father, and in perpetual contemplation of the latter as his end (*τέλος*). Insofar as the Father is unceasing actuality and the Son eternally-being-actualized, the two share a single activity (*ἐνέργεια*); they are in a sense one, and in another sense different. This shared activity between God the Father and the Logos-Son serves as a paradigm for the subsequent relation between God and world; the former eternally creative, the latter eternally created.

In Chapter Two I show how the unceasing activity of the Father, whose omnipotent nature radiates being throughout the cosmos in a timeless act of emanation and creation,

constitutes the cosmos. I argue that the divine omnipotence is not confined to the intelligible creation in the Logos but, in and *through* (*διὰ*) the latter, extends to the furthest limits of the sensible world. As such, I argue that the divine Will serves as the supreme generative principle of the cosmos, from which proceeds the Logos as the totality of *logika*, the intelligible essences of embodied beings. As the principles and prefigurations of things, the latter do not exist as separate forms, but find their instantiation in an eternal, *material* creation. I then move on to examine the intelligible content of the Logos from the perspective of Origen's much-maligned doctrine of "pre-existent souls". Given the centrality of embodiment in the *De Principiis* – a fact frequently ignored by ancient and contemporary commentators alike – I reject the notion of a literal pre-existence comprised of incorporeal minds, arguing instead that these are best understood in an ontological and eschatological sense. As such, the pre-existent minds, or *logika*, represent the original natures, the intrinsic origins and ends of all *embodied* rational beings.

I conclude by addressing some objections to my revisionist reading of Origen's doctrine of pre-existence, stemming primarily from the accounts of his ancient theological adversaries. Due to the inseparability of soul and body for Origen, I argue that, like Gregory of Nyssa, Origen's doctrine of creation and fall is best understood in terms of simultaneity. As such, creation is a kind of *synergeia*, in which God creates the world in conjunction with rational beings; the former establishes the original purity of the cosmos, while the latter constitute themselves and the world in all its diversity. In essence, I try to show how Origen's cosmology consists of a dynamic hierarchy of creative principles: God is the supreme *archē* of the universe, the simplicity of Being; the Logos is the second *archē*, the totality of beings; while the *logika* are the multiple *archai*, the potencies and prefigurations

of created beings. From these three “beginnings” proceeds the entire cosmos as a unified multiplicity, an ordered whole in which divine providence and rational freedom coincide.

Having dealt with the *archē*, and what proceeds from the *archē* (or *archai*), I move on in Chapter Three to sketch the corresponding movement from the outermost reaches of creation back to their origin and end in God. Given that the activity of the actualizing agent and the patient being actualized coincide, this final chapter in a sense describes the same process elucidated thus far – only this time from the perspective of the recipient. From this vantage point, the *archē* becomes the *telos*, the end coinciding with the beginning. In this final chapter, I present Origen’s doctrine of return as a kind of cosmic *kinēsis*, in which the final *apokatastasis* is not the *annihilation* of history but its ultimate *actualization*.

I begin this final chapter with an analysis of several key terms pertaining to Origen’s doctrine of universalism, arguing that, for Origen, *restoratio* comes to be assimilated to *consummatio*. As such, the final *apokatastasis* is not limited merely to the restoration of a prior condition, but points primarily to the deification of the cosmos, the actualization of being. Having established this, I move on to consider the all-important distinction of “image” and “likeness” and the movement between them. I show how this movement (*κίνησις*) is simultaneously a movement from potency to actuality, and from accident to essence. While the first is purely Aristotelian, the second draws together Platonic participation with Aristotelian ethics. Together, these dual conceptions of the *itinerarium mentis in Deum* embody a necessary tension between the return as both divinely destined *and* freely chosen. Like creation, deification is a kind of *synergeia*. I conclude my thesis by arguing that the final *apokatastasis*, when God will be “all in all” (I Cor 15:28), does not involve the destruction of the body or the material universe, but its

ultimate transfiguration. Given the “psychosomatic” and hylomorphic character of Origen’s cosmos, the deification of the world necessarily includes its corporeal aspect. All embodied rational beings are potentially fire and spirit – a potency actualized by the “consuming fire” (Dt 4:24; Heb 12:29) of the divine *energeia*. Like iron in the forge, beings are transformed into God while remaining substantially themselves.

Before continuing on to the task at hand, a note concerning the subtitle of this thesis. While the emphasis throughout is on the Aristotelian,¹³ or Peripatetic character of Origen’s *De Principiis*, my interpretation is equally influenced by a prior reading of Eriugena’s *Periphyseon*. Insofar as Eriugena is himself a disciple of Origen, it seemed justifiable to employ the former to amplify certain key positions of the latter. My identification of Eriugena as a latter-day Origenist is rooted in the *Periphyseon*, a work, to quote Robert Crouse, “whose very title may have been modelled on Origen’s title [*Periarchōn*],” and in which “the influence [of Origen] is loud and clear.”¹⁴ In Book V of the *Periphyseon* Eriugena incorporates whole passages from the *Periarchōn* into his own work, while referring to its allegedly heretical author in glowing terms as “the blessed Origen.” Indeed, the very notion of *apokatastasis*, or universal return, which forms the basis for the final book of the *Periphyseon* comes directly from Origen, who remains to this day its most (in)famous proponent.¹⁵ Eriugena also draws heavily upon thinkers such as Gregory of

¹³See note 2, above.

¹⁴Crouse calls the *Periphyseon* “the strongest explicit witness to the influence of Origen in the philosophical theology of the Latin West.” R. Crouse, “Origen in the Philosophical Tradition of the Latin West: St. Augustine and John Scottus Eriugena”: 565-569. On the structural similarity between *Periphyseon* and *Periarchōn* cf. É. Jeuneau, “Le *Periphyseon*: Son Titre, Son Plan, Ses Remaniements”: 16.

¹⁵ For a more detailed comparison between Origen and Eriugena see my “*Ἀποκατάστασις*: The Resolution of Good and Evil in Origen and Eriugena”: 195-213. As I demonstrate there, Eriugena adopts many key principles from Origen while attempting to reconcile them with Augustine, and the Latin tradition generally.

Nyssa, Maximus Confessor, and Ambrose, all of whom were influenced by Origen. In addition, the very structure of Eriugena's *Periphyseon* parallels Origen's *Periarchōn*: both are systematic works of Christian philosophy, conceived in four volumes,¹⁶ with Origen's work being the first of its kind, and Eriugena's the second roughly five centuries later. Finally, the movement of the entire *Periphyseon* towards eschatology is reminiscent of Origen's *Periarchōn*, whose aim is the final perfection of all things.¹⁷

Despite subtle, yet important, differences between the thought of Origen and Eriugena, there is much that they share in common – above all their love of eschatological speculation. If Origen is the greatest ancient advocate of the doctrine of *apokatastasis*, Eriugena is undoubtedly its greatest mediaeval proponent. In this regard, the single, most important point I have drawn upon here is Eriugena's eschatological understanding of paradise. The latter's insight in this case seemed to me to provide the solution to Origen's much-maligned doctrine of pre-existent souls. Rather than see this in literal terms as a pre-incarnate state of beatitude whence the *logika* fell – an interpretation at odds with Origen's insistence upon the eternity of *this* world and the inseparability of soul and body – I have adopted Eriugena's ontological understanding of paradise. As such, the latter does not indicate a lost state of beatitude, but represents the “original nature” of beings; paradise is the kingdom of heaven *in potentia*, whose actualization will occur in the *eschaton*. In addition, I have drawn upon Eriugena's notion of the simultaneity of creation and fall – though this originally belongs to Gregory of Nyssa. For the interested reader I offer, mostly

¹⁶ Jeaneau rightly points out that Eriugena originally conceived of his work in four volumes but ended up needing a fifth to bring it to completion. É. Jeaneau, “Le Periphyseon: Son Titre, Son Plan, Ses Remaniements” 20.

¹⁷ I. Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis* 778.

in the form of footnotes, a kind of a running commentary comparing Origen with Eriugena on certain key points.

Chapter Two: Origen's Protology

2.1 Neopythagorean First Principles

Origen's first principles, as Berchman, de Faye, Koch and other notable scholars¹⁸ have clearly demonstrated, is rooted in the philosophical milieu of Middle Platonism – that unusually rich and eclectic period of Hellenistic philosophy stretching approximately from 80 B.C. to A.D 220. In particular, Origen (d. 254) is situated within a period some scholars label “late” Middle Platonism, a stage characterized by its turn towards Peripateticism.¹⁹ This turn to Aristotle is evident in thinkers such as Numenius, Alcinous, and Clement, and is abundantly so in Origen's own writings. As I hope to show, this Peripatetic element holds the key to understanding Origen's *De Principiis*. In addition to this all-important Aristotelian aspect, several other philosophical streams converge in Origen, mingling with, modifying, and enriching his Platonism. Prominent among these is the Neopythagorean doctrine of the two “Ones”, which distinguishes between a transcendent Henad, and a lesser Monad. In what follows, I shall begin by laying out this basic Neopythagorean structure of Origen's first principles, and then proceed to a more detailed exploration of the Peripatetic character of these principles. I shall argue that Origen's first One (God the Father) is a *Nous Akinetos* whose nature is unceasing activity, or *energeia*, while his second One (the Logos) is a *Nous Kinetos* whose eternally actualized nature is contingent upon the former as its principle and perfection. As such, God is the ultimate *archē* and *telos* of the spiritual and material cosmos, the supreme Beginning to which the End must be likened.

¹⁸ D. Berchman, *From Philo to Origen*; E. de Faye, *Origen and His Work*; H. Koch, *Pronoia Und Paideusis*.

¹⁹ D. Berchman, *From Philo to Origen* 55-57; 83-112.

The fundamental structure of Origen's theology consists of two *archai* and three hypostases. The two *archai* are God and the Logos, while the three hypostases refer to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God the Father and the Logos-Son are the chief metaphysical principles (*ἀρχαί*), while the Holy Spirit serves primarily as a soteriological agent.²⁰ Unlike later Trinitarian theology whose principal task will be to hammer out the distinction between *ousia* and *hypostases*, and the relations between them, Origen's theological problematic centres primarily upon the distinction between a supremely transcendent, 1st god, and a derivative, 2nd god; that is, between God²¹ the Father, and the Logos-Son. The Holy Spirit does not seem to play a significant metaphysical role; it is not so much a principle, as a source, or agent of sanctification. At this early stage in the development of Christian dogma, Origen presents us, not with Trinitarian theology, but with a triadic or, strictly speaking, dyadic protology.

In order to understand Origen's first principles, it is helpful to compare his thought with that of his philosophical predecessors.²² The basic structure of Origen's protology is indebted to the Neopythagorean system of the two "Ones", shared by many Middle Platonist thinkers. While the Pythagorean tendency within Platonism goes back to the earliest days of the Academy,²³ what is characteristic of "Neopythagoreanism" is its

²⁰ D. Berchman, *From Philo to Origen* 123.

²¹ I have chosen to capitalize the word "God" only when it indicates the name of a particular god, i.e. God the Father. In the lower case, "god" is synonymous with "deity", "divinity" or, as in the case of deified individuals, "divine".

²² In the following discussion I offer only the barest sketch necessary to illuminate the philosophical ground from which Origen's theology springs. For a more detailed treatment I refer the reader to Robert Berchman's, *From Philo to Origen, Middle Platonism in Transition*, and John Dillon's indispensable, *The Middle Platonists*.

²³ J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* 38.

incorporation of the first two hypotheses of Plato's *Parmenides*.²⁴ Whereas the basic Pythagorean scheme seems to have consisted of two principles, the Monad and the Dyad, the Neopythagorean system posits three: A radically transcendent One ($\tau\acute{o} \acute{\epsilon}\nu$), below which exist the Monad and the Dyad. Eudorus identifies the Monad as Form and Limit, the Dyad as Matter and the Unlimited. What unites these opposing principles is the One ($\tau\acute{o} \acute{\epsilon}\nu$), which transcends all opposition, and indeed all attributes whatsoever. According to Simplicius (*In Phys.* 181, 10ff.) Eudorus claimed that:

The Pythagoreans postulated on the highest level the One as a First Principle, and then on a secondary level two principles of existent things, the One [Monad] and the nature opposed to this [Dyad]. And there are ranked below these all those things that are thought of as opposites, the good under the One, the bad under the nature opposed to it. For this reason these two are not regarded as absolute first principles by this School; for if the one is the first principle of one set of opposites and the other of the other, then they cannot be common principles of both, as the (supreme) One [Hen].²⁵

As we can see, the notion of two "Ones" – a supreme One and a subordinate One – stems from the need for an ultimate, unitary principle of reality. Insofar as the Monad is the contrary of the Dyad it is not ultimate, but relative; it is not the unconditional One, or Good, but simply one in relation to many, good in relation to bad. What is needed is an unqualified first principle, a simple One that both transcends, and is the ultimate source of, the fundamental duality of Monad and Dyad, Form and Matter.

What emerges in Eudorus is thus a twofold understanding of deity modelled upon the first two hypotheses of Plato's *Parmenides*; namely, a radically transcendent Henad and a subordinate Monad. The Henad exists in a wholly unqualified manner while the

²⁴ See E.R. Dodds, "The *Parmenides* of Plato and the Origin of the Neoplatonic 'One'."

²⁵ J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* 126-127; Alcinous, *Didaskalikos*, xxxii, note 17.

Monad and the Dyad possess a qualified existence. As such, the fundamental division of reality occurs between an unqualified 1st One identified as True Being and the Supreme God (*ho hyperanō theos*), and a qualified 2nd One as accidental being, and a derivative god. The Dyad/Matter is, in the absence of qualifying Form, Non-being (*mē on*). This fundamental division between a Supreme Principle that is unqualified Being *per se*, and the rest of intelligible and sensible reality as qualified, derivative being offers a solution to the problem of an ultimate first principle. Yet, it inevitably creates a second problem; namely, that of overcoming the abyss that has opened up between a radically transcendent Source, and the world which supposedly derives from it – an abyss that the Eudorean Monad ultimately fails to overcome.²⁶

Eudorus' doctrine of the two "Ones" is bequeathed (be it directly or indirectly) to the Jewish Philo and the Christian Clement, both of whom embrace the Neopythagorean scheme of a radically transcendent 1st god (God the Father) and a subordinate 2nd god (the Logos),²⁷ while attempting to bridge the chasm between God and world.²⁸ Both thinkers in distinct ways press the Logos (itself a kind of Neopythagorean, Stoic hybrid) into service as the necessary mediating factor. In essence, Philo conceives of the Logos as simultaneously transcendent and immanent. In its transcendent aspect, the Logos is at once identical to the mind of God and, as the place of the Ideas, a demiurgic mind actively involved in the creation of the world. In its immanent aspect, the Logos plays the role of the *anima mundi*, animating and binding all things together into a unified whole. Clement

²⁶ R. Berchman, *From Philo to Origen* 23-27; J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* 126-128.

²⁷ Strictly speaking, Philo does not explicitly identify the Logos as a "2nd god". Still, as Dillon points out, the strong distinction Philo draws between God and the Logos "amounts to very much the same thing." *The Middle Platonists*, 367.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

largely follows Philo's lead, while further conceiving of the Logos as an independent hypostasis. Insofar as the Logos is, for both thinkers, at once rooted in God and implicated in the creation and preservation of the world it serves as an effective mediator bridging the chasm between a radically transcendent, unitary principle, and the multiplicity of the world.²⁹

In addition to deriving this Stoicized Neopythagorean theology from Philo and Clement, it is likely that Origen derives the notion of a first and second god directly from Numenius (2nd Cent. A.D),³⁰ who stands in close proximity to Origen and his teacher Ammonius Saccas. Although Numenius rarely uses Eudorus' terminology of Henad and Monad, his understanding of first principles exhibits a similar division between a primary and secondary divinity. In essence, Numenius posits two principles: a first god (*πρῶτος θεός*), which he calls the Good-in-itself (*αὐτοαγαθόν*), and a second god, which he designates the good (*ἀγαθός*), or the Good Creator (*δημιουργὸς ἀγαθός*). The first is simple (*ἀπλοῦς*), self-directed (*τὸ ἑαυτῷ συγγιγνώμενος*), and free from all labours (Frag.I.26.3, 27a).³¹ Numenius calls him "the Standing One" (*ὁ ἐστῶς*), whose stationary character exhibits a kind of "innate" motion (*κίνησιν σύμφυτον*; Frag.30.21). That this intrinsic activity is pure contemplation is confirmed by Numenius who calls the first "wholly contemplative" (*θεωρητικὸς ὄλως*; Frag.16).³² The second god, on the other hand, being tasked with the work of creation is described as being in motion (*κινούμενος*; Frag. I 30.20). In contrast to the first, the second is outwardly directed – towards the first as its principle

²⁹ See R. Berchman, *From Philo to Origen* 55-62; de Faye, *Origen and His Work* 99-102; H.F Hägg, *Clement of Alexandria and the Beginnings of Christian Apophaticism* 180-185.

³⁰ R. Berchman, *From Philo to Origen* 111.

³¹ Numenius, *Extant Works*.

³² J.P. Kenney, "Proschresis Revisited: An Essay in Numenian Theology": 221.

and towards the lower elements to which it imparts order.³³ Numenius identifies the first god, the Good-in-itself (*αὐτοαγαθόν*), with the Supreme Good of the *Republic*, and the second god, the good (*ἀγαθός*), with the Demiurge of the *Timaeus*. It is through participation in the first and only (*τοῦ πρώτου τε καὶ μόνου*) that the second derives its goodness (Frag.34.10).

While Numenius (whom Origen calls “the Pythagorean”) adopts the Neopythagorean theology of the two “Ones”, his emphasis is less on establishing an ultimate principle of unity. Instead, drawing upon Platonic and Aristotelian terminology, Numenius stresses the ultimate simplicity (*ἀπλοῦς*), and akinetic actuality (*ὁ ἐστῶς*),³⁴ of the first principle, while attempting to reconcile this with the multiplicity and motion of the world. As the Good-in-itself (*αὐτοαγαθόν*) the 1st god is the supreme source of the 2nd god who is derivatively good (*ἀγαθός*), while the latter mediates this derivative goodness to the world. In Platonic terms, the 2nd god derives its being through participation in the 1st god, while the ensouled cosmos does so through participation in the 2nd, demiurgic divinity. Alternatively, to put it in Aristotelian terms, the *Nous Akinetos* (*Nous/Unmoved Mover*)³⁵ imparts its unceasing activity (*ἐνέργεια*) to the *Nous Kinetos*, which in turn actualizes the

³³ *Ibid*, 220.

³⁴ I reconcile Numenius’ description of the 1st god as simultaneously at rest and possessed of intrinsic motion in terms of *energeia*. To say that he is at rest indicates that absence of kinesis, or change in the first principle; to state that he possesses intrinsic motion points to the dynamic character of the 1st god as purely contemplative activity (*θεωρητικὸς ὄλως/ἐνέργεια*).

³⁵ I have borrowed the terms “*Nous Akinetos*” and “*Nous Kinetos*” from Robert Berchman, who links them to Albinus and Alexander of Aphrodisias. I use these terms in order to give full expression to the Peripatetic character of Numenius’ and Origen’s first principles. See R. Berchman, *From Philo to Origen* 87,139.

motions of the world. Both formulas, as Berchman states, “stand irreconcilably side by side.”³⁶

Numenius’ theoretical framework suggests a thorough blending of Neopythagorean, Platonic, and Peripatetic principles. The basic structure, consisting of a radically transcendent 1st divinity, and a considerably less transcendent 2nd divinity, is Neopythagorean; the terminology and relationship between the two *archai* is interchangeably Platonic and Aristotelian. The emphasis throughout is upon safeguarding the dignity of a transcendent first principle. The 1st god is radically transcendent, aloof from any direct involvement with the world; he is a *Nous Akinetos* who, abiding in unceasing contemplation, inspires motion as supreme object of desire. At the same time, the 2nd god as the demiurge and instrument of creation mediates the unqualified Goodness of the 1st god to the world, thereby bringing the latter to actuality. As we can see, Numenius shares the problem of transcendence and mediation with our previous thinkers, yet differs significantly in his articulation of this problematic. Importantly for the subject at hand, we find unmistakable signs in Numenius of a turn towards Peripateticism.

The same Neopythagorean system of a twofold divinity that we see in Eudorus, Philo, Clement, and Numenius lies at the heart of Origen’s theological system. In essence, Origen combines the Logos doctrine of Philo and Clement with Numenius’ understanding of a 1st and 2nd god. In the *Contra Celsum*, Origen’s great work of philosophical apologetic, we find three explicit references to a first and second divinity. The first occurs at *CCels.*

³⁶ See R. Berchman, *From Philo to Origen* 110. A prime example of a wholly Peripateticized doctrine of causation may be found in Numenius’ contemporary Alcinous (Albinus). The latter’s *Handbook of Platonism* offers excellent documentation of the Peripatetic character of the late Middle Platonism with which we are concerned here. Though less explicit and more fragmentary, I have chosen to draw upon Numenius, as the influence of the latter on Origen is much more firmly established.

V. 39 where Origen insists that, “though we may call [the Logos] *a second god* (δεύτερον θεόν), it should be understood by this that we do not mean anything except the virtue (ἀρετήν) which includes all virtues, and the Logos which includes every logos.” A second reference occurs at VII. 57 when Origen responds to Celsus’ disparaging view of the incarnate Logos. He states: “But him who accepted death for mankind, to whom God bore witness by the prophets, Celsus would not regard as worthy *of the second place of honour* after the God of the universe” (ἄξιον εἶναι τῆς δευτερευούσης μετὰ τὸν θεὸν τῶν ὄλων; CCels.VII.57.10). Both of these passages explicitly identify the Logos as a secondary divinity, subordinate to God as primary.

The third reference to a first and second god, occurring at VI 61, is especially illuminating. Here, Celsus mocks a literalist reading of Genesis, insisting that it is wrong to claim that God works with his hands. Origen is in full agreement: “Further, it is not right also for *the first God* (πρῶτον θεόν) to work with his hands. And if you understand the words ‘to work with one’s hands’ in the strict sense, neither does it apply to *the second god* (τὸν δεύτερον)”. This passage implies two things: first, that it is inappropriate to attribute work *of any kind* to the first god – *even in the allegorical sense*; second, that it *is* appropriate to ascribe work to the second god, provided this is understood allegorically. Origen explains: “Just as it is not absurd for God to work with his hands in this [allegorical] sense, so it is not absurd for him to give orders, that *the works performed by the one who receives the orders* may be beautiful and praiseworthy because *it is God who has directed their making*” (CCels.VI 61). In addition to providing evidence for a first and second divinity, this passage gives us precious information concerning their respective roles. Like the 1st god of Numenius, Origen’s God remains aloof, unsullied by any active involvement with

the world, while the 2nd god, the demiurgic Logos, performs the work of creation under the lofty supervision of the first.³⁷ Origen's eagerness to safeguard the lofty transcendence of the supreme principle is virtually identical to that of Numenius; in terms of the 2nd god his chief innovation is to identify it with the Logos.

Before turning to the *De Principiis*, a final passage from *Origen's Commentary on John* II.2 is worth noting. Plainly borrowing from Numenius, Origen makes a distinction between "God with the article and God without it". He observes that sometimes John refers to God as *ὁ θεός* while at other times he simply refers to God as *θεός*. The former, he concludes, indicates "the uncreated cause of all things" while the latter is used "when the Logos is named God". Following Numenius, Origen calls the primary divinity God-in-himself (*αὐτοθεός*), while the second is simply god (*θεός*). This is exactly the distinction Numenius makes between the Good-in-itself (*αὐτοαγαθόν*), and the good (*ἀγαθός*) – the latter, as with Origen, referring to the second, demiurgic divinity. Like Numenius, Origen employs the Platonic language of paradigm and copy, maintaining that the subordinate god (*θεός*) is divine through participating³⁸ in God-in-himself (*αὐτοθεός*). As *θεός*, the Logos is eternally contingent upon the Father who is *αὐτοθεός*, and the supreme source of divinity. As simultaneously transcendent and immanent, the Logos mediates between the

³⁷ This scheme echoes a fragment of Numenius where the latter likens the 1st and 2nd god to that of a farmer and a sower – the latter doing the work of sowing under the direction of the former (Frag. 28). The notion that it is inappropriate for God to be too actively involved in the making and administration of the world is found in the Pseudo Aristotelian treatise *de Mundo* 6 (398b 1ff). "If it was beneath the dignity of Xerxes to appear himself to administer all things and carry out his own wishes and superintend the government of his kingdom, such functions would be still less becoming for a god. Nay, it is more worthy of his dignity and more befitting that he should be enthroned in the highest region, and that his power, extending through the whole universe, should move the sun and moon and make the whole heaven revolve and be the cause of permanence to all that is on this earth...It is most characteristic of the divine to be able to accomplish diverse kinds of work with ease and by simple movement..." Cited in H. Chadwick, *Contra Celsum* 376, note 5.

³⁸ This reference to "participation" is from Origen's *CommJohn*. The language of participation with respect to the Logos is absent from the *De Principiis*.

transcendent first principle and the created cosmos. In sum, Origen inherits the Neopythagorean structure of a twofold divinity from Numenius along with the Logos theologies of Philo and Clement. By bringing together this increasingly rich and complex fusion of Neopythagorean, Stoic, Platonic, and Peripatetic elements, Origen formulates his own solution to the problem of a supreme, unitary principle and its relation to the world of multiplicity. What is unique about Origen's approach, as I will presently argue, is his understanding of the 1st and 2nd god in terms of *energeia*.

2.2 *Noûς Ἀκίνητος: The Unbegotten Father as Energeia*

Having established the basic framework, it is time to explore the content of Origen's theology in greater detail. In the following sections I shall focus on bringing out the Peripatetic character of Origen's first principles, showing how the first is a *Nous Akinetos* whose nature is unceasing activity, or *energeia*, while the second is a *Nous Kinetos* contingent upon the former as its origin and end. In doing so, we shall, at times, be forced to depart from the secure shores of textual citations that we have thus far clung to with such tenacity, in order to embark upon a more speculative and tentative journey of reconstruction. As such, it might be helpful to reassure ourselves at this perilous juncture by recalling Origen's Aristotelian credentials. Gilles Dorival points out that, «Origène fait dans le *Contre Celse* onze références à Aristote».³⁹ According to Dorival, Origen had access to an alphabetical lexicon of Aristotle's works, cites doxographical sources, and refers directly to the Peripatetic thinker Hermippus of Smyrna. In the *De Principiis* Origen

³⁹ G. Dorival, "Origène et la Philosophie Grecque": 195. In several of these references Origen makes a point of speaking favourably of Aristotle, calling his philosophy "sensible", and singling out his doctrine of providence as "less irreverent" than that of the Epicureans (*CCels.* I.10, 21).

makes clear allusions to Aristotle's *Physics* and *De Anima*.⁴⁰ It is also likely that Origen read Alexander of Aphrodisias, as it is reported⁴¹ that the latter was read in the school of Ammonius Saccas. Thus, as Berchman argues, "it is clear that Origen knew enough about later Aristotelianism so that we can pose some preliminary questions about his use of Peripatetic theory in his first principles."⁴²

Before entering into uncharted territory, however, I would like to return briefly to Neopythagoreanism. In the *De Principiis*, Origen unites Numenian and Eudorean terminology, defining his first God simultaneously as a One and Nous: God, he insists,

Must not be thought to be any kind of body, nor to exist in a body, but to be a simple intellectual nature (*intellectualis natura simplex*), admitting in himself of no addition whatsoever, so that he cannot be believed to have in himself a more or a less, but is Unity (*μονάς*), or if I may say so, Oneness (*ἐνάς*)⁴³ throughout, and the mind and fount (*mens ac font*) from which originates (*ex quo initium*) all intellectual nature or mind (*mens*; *DePrinc.* I.1.6.10).⁴⁴

Like Numenius, Origen describes his first principle as a simple (*simplex=ἀπλοῦς*), incorporeal, Nous (*mens*). Origen calls God *Monas*, and then, as though with greater precision, *Henas*. Like Eudorus' *Henad*, Origen's God is a transcendent, unqualifiable One devoid of attributes and beyond predication.⁴⁵ In addition, Origen's first God is a "Standing One" (*ὁ ἐστῶς*), whose stationary character is a kind of "innate" motion (*κίνησιν σύμφυτον*;

⁴⁰ Cf. II.XI.1 concerning motion; II.VIII.1 concerning the soul as that which is "capable of feeling and movement"; cf. *De Anima*, III.3 427a16.

⁴¹ Nemesius, *De Natura Hominis*, 3.58.

⁴² R.Berchman, "Origen on *The Categories*: A Study in Later Platonic First Principles": 233.

⁴³ Rufinus retains these Greek terms in his Latin translation

⁴⁴ I have modified Butterworth's translation slightly to conform it more literally to the Latin text.

⁴⁵ At I.1.5 Origen denies that any material characteristics can be ascribed to God who is "incomprehensible and immeasurable (*incomprehensibilem atque inaestimabilem*)", and exceeds the scope of embodied human minds. Elsewhere Origen refers to God as "beyond being" (*ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας*; *CCels* VII 45) or, in a more qualified sense, "beyond being in virtue of his being and power" (*ὕπερ ἐκεῖνα οὐσίας πρεσβεία καὶ δυνάμει*; *CommJohn* XIII 21.19-22; XIII 26.152).

see Numenius above). This is evident from the passage in *Contra Celsum* VI.61 that we examined above, which suggested that it was inappropriate to attribute *any* kind of work to the first god – even allegorically speaking. Instead, as with Numenius, all work of creation and administration was allotted to the second god, who was a mind in motion, a *Nous Kinetos*. This same passage, as we saw,⁴⁶ also echoed the Numenian fragment of the farmer and the sower. Origen’s Supreme God, like Numenius’ cosmic farmer, does not work but merely supervises the labours of the demiurgic sower. The close parallels between Numenius and Origen’s understanding of the first and second god (let us not forget the striking correspondence between *ἄτοαγαθόν/ἀγαθός* and *ἄτοθεός/θεός*) suggest that we can safely attribute the more explicit terminology of the former to the latter; namely, the distinction between a first god who is at rest (*ὁ ἐστώς*), and a second god who is in motion (*κινούμενος*).

Finally, Origen’s first god is intrinsically contemplative. This is evident at *De Princ.*I.1.6 where Origen tells us that, as an incorporeal *Nous*, God “does not need physical space to move and operate”, and yet his “simple and wholly mental existence (*natura illa simplex et tota mens*) can admit no delay or hesitation in any of its movements or operations (*moveatur vel operetur*)”. Somewhat imprecisely, Origen interchangeably uses the language of motion (*κίνησις*) and operation (*ἐνέργεια*) to indicate the innate activity of his supreme principle. That this “motion” has nothing remotely to do with change or alteration will be seen shortly. Thus, as with Numenius, the only kind of activity that could plausibly be attributed to Origen’s simple, self-directed, divine Mind is that of unceasing self-

⁴⁶ See note 36 above.

contemplation. Like Aristotle's self-thinking-thought (*ἡ νόησις νοήσεως νόησις*),⁴⁷ Origen's first principle is a *Nous Akinetos* whose simple nature is synonymous with unceasing activity – an activity that is perhaps best understood as a kind of changeless intentionality or eternal willing.⁴⁸ Insofar as the slightest hesitation in this noetic activity would immediately compromise the divine simplicity, God is simultaneously at rest *and* eternally active.

As we have seen, Origen's first principle is a rich blend of Pythagorean, Platonic, and Peripatetic elements perhaps best described as a transcendent *Nous-Henad*. I would like to take this characterization one step further by arguing that Origen's first God is essentially *Energeia*; that is, an *eternally active* Unmoved Mover, a *Nous Akinetos* who actualizes the world as the ultimate formal, efficient, and final cause. My identification of God as *energeia* is indebted to Aryeh Kosman's rendering of this term in the dynamic sense of "activity", rather than the more static sense of "actuality". While the understanding of *energeia* as activity is, as Kosman points out, nothing new, it has become obscured in the commentarial tradition of the past century.⁴⁹ The latter's retrieval of this dynamic view of *energeia* as "*the activity of being*" sheds important light upon the profoundly Aristotelian character of Origen's God. In contrast to Kosman, in what follows I render *energeia* alternately as "activity" and as "actuality". By equating God with *energeia* I maintain that he is *both* "unceasingly active" *and* the "actuality of being". By the former I emphasize the dynamic character of God's unceasing creativity and providential concern for beings; by

⁴⁷ *Metaphysics, Lambda 1074b34-35.*

⁴⁸ I develop this thought more fully in Chapter 2.

⁴⁹ See A. Kosman, *The Activity of Being*, Preface viii-xi.

the latter I stress the more stationary sense of God as the Unmoved Mover, the supreme object of desire for beings. The first indicates God as *archē*; the second as *telos*.⁵⁰

This understanding of God as unceasing Activity (*ἐνέργεια*) comes out most strongly in Origen's insistence upon the eternity of creation:

For if anyone would have it that certain ages, or periods of time, or whatever he cares to call them, elapsed during which the present creation did not exist, he would undoubtedly prove that in those ages or periods God was not almighty, but that he afterwards became (*postmodum factus est*) almighty from the time when he began (*coepit*) to have creatures over whom he could exercise power (*ageret potentatum*). Thus God will apparently have experienced a kind of progress (*profectum quondam accepisse*), for there can be no doubt that it is better for him to be almighty than not to be so (*De Princ.* I.2.10.5).

For Origen, the eternity of the world (itself an Aristotelian notion) follows necessarily from his understanding of first principles. To suggest that there was a time when the world did not exist is at once to suggest that there was a time when God was devoid of activity (*operatio*), a time when he was not yet in full possession of his own omnipotent nature – a notion that Origen calls “absurd” (*ἄτοπον*; Greek frag. *ibid*) and “impious” (*De Princ.* I.4.3.10). In this passage we encounter something beyond the Neopythagorean refusal to implicate the first god in the work of creation. Instead, the chief absurdity here is the illogical suggestion that God, who *is* Actuality (*ἐνέργεια*), could undergo a kind of progress, or *κίνησις*, from potentially omnipotent to actually omnipotent.⁵¹

⁵⁰ I want to be clear that I use the words “emphasis” and “stress” with extreme seriousness. I am *not* proposing a dichotomy between the *archē* as “active” and the *telos* as “static”. God is at once the “fullness of being” and the “activity of being”, and this holds true simultaneously for both the *archē* and the *telos*.

⁵¹ See also *De Princ.* I.4.3: “And it is absurd and impious to suppose that these powers of God (*virtutes dei*) have been at any time in abeyance for a single moment”, or that they “should at any time have ceased from performing works (*operibus*) worthy of themselves and have become inactive (*immobiles*).”

The same point emerges with respect to the Father's begetting of the Son. Here, too, Origen calls it absurd and impious "either that God should advance (*proficeret*) from being unable (*non potuit*) to being able (*posset*), or that, while being able, he should act as if he were not and should delay to beget wisdom" (*DePrinc.* I.2.2). As with unceasing Omnipotence, it is impossible for God to progress from not being Father to being Father, since begetting, like omnipotence, belongs to his very nature as God – a nature that is *essentially* productive yet admits of no change, or alteration, or locomotion whatsoever. Of further interest in this latter passage is the suggestion of degrees of potency and actuality. Not only is it impious to suggest that God progresses from first potency to second potency, so to speak, it is equally offensive to suggest that God's second potency might remain inactive. As *ἐνέργεια* (Greek frag. *DePrinc.*I.2.12), God's creativity and productivity are never in abeyance. Origen's God is changeless (i.e. unmoving) precisely in his unceasing activity, his unwavering intentionality. As *archē*, he acts as the unshakeable Ground of Being, the supreme source of all that is; as *telos*, he abides as the Fullness of Being, the changeless goal of all changeable creatures.

It would be a mistake to claim that Origen's theological concerns are identical to those of Aristotle. His determination to safeguard the simplicity of the divine nature, central to his understanding of God as *energeia*, is perhaps more Neopythagorean than it is Aristotelian. Still, in keeping with the pre-Plotinian tendency to conflate the Neopythagorean Henad with the Aristotelian Being and Nous,⁵² Origen identifies his first principle as Mind, and describes it using the Aristotelian language of *dynamis* and

⁵² It is important to remember that in this pre-Plotinian world Nous is not yet the totality of the Ideas; instead, the latter are relegated to the demiurgic Logos. The understanding of Nous among Middle Platonists often contains characteristics akin to the Plotinian One.

energeia.⁵³ While any reconstruction of Origen's first principles must necessarily be tentative, given his explicit use of Aristotelian terminology, as well as the profoundly Peripatetic character of his Middle Platonic sources, it seems reasonable to characterize Origen's first principle as a *Nous Akinetos*. In a way that is really quite marvelous, Origen's God is simultaneously a Platonic Good, a Neopythagorean One, and an Aristotelian Nous/Unmoved Mover. As stationary (ἑστώς) yet endowed with a kind of innate motion (κίνησιν σύμφυτον), God is pure Actuality. As the fundamentally creative, generative, beneficent Ground of Being, God is unceasing Activity-itself. For Origen, as with Aristotle, *akinesis* and *energeia* are inseparable.

2.3 Νοῦς Κίνητος: The Eternally Begotten Logos

Having given some account of Origen's first God, we turn now to his second God, the demiurgic Logos. Of the many diverse aspects of the Logos, what chiefly interests us here is its characterization as a secondary divinity, a *Nous Kinetos* contingent upon the first as its origin and end. Similar to the Neopythagorean Monad, the Logos as a mind in motion acts as a mediator between the uncreated Mind of the Father and the created minds of the *logika*. The Logos is dependent upon God as its principle, while itself serving as the principle of the created order; the Logos exists as an image of the Father, while the *logika* exist as images of the Logos. Thus, the Logos-Son as second god has a twofold activity: he abides in unceasing contemplation of God as his principle and end, while himself acting

⁵³ (I.3.6.20; I.3.7.30; I.2.2.17; I.3.8.11; I.4.3.10). See index of *Origenes Werke* under *virtus=dynamis* for an exceedingly long list of textual references to this term in the *De Principiis*, 420. Gersh notes that the Neoplatonists apply both terms interchangeably to God; the same can be said for Origen. See *Iamblichus to Eriugena* 33.

as the *archē* and *telos* of the created cosmos. I shall address the first activity here and the second in our subsequent chapters.

In describing the relation of the Logos-Son to God the Father, Origen repeatedly emphasises two complementary characteristics: his derivative nature, and his identity of essence. The way that Origen expresses this identity/distinction of the Logos is through the metaphors of image and emanation, both of which he finds in scripture. To begin with the former, Origen turns to Paul, who declares that “the only-begotten Son is ‘the image of the invisible God’” (Col 1:15), and that he is “‘the express image of his substance’ (Heb 1:3)”. The Book of Wisdom, meanwhile, states that the Logos (as *Σοφία*) “is an unspotted mirror of the working of God and an image of his goodness” (Wis 7:25ff) (*DePrinc.* I.2.5). Origen distinguishes between two possible senses of “image”: 1. that of an artefact such as a painting or statue; or 2. that of a child who so resembles its parent that it is said to be a perfect “image” or “likeness” of the latter. Origen applies the first example to the human created “in the image and likeness of God” (Gn 1:26), while by the second he indicates the Logos. Just as Seth was the image of Adam “after his own kind” (*speciam*; Gn 5:3), so the Logos “is the invisible image (*imago*) of the invisible God”, an image or formal identity that “preserves the unity of nature (*naturae*) and substance (*substantiae*) common to a father and a son” (*DePrinc.* I.2.6).

In reference to the Logos, Origen appears to identify “image” with “form”. This is suggested both by the scriptural citation where Seth is simultaneously image and “kind” (*species/εἶδος*), and by Origen’s own identification of *imago* with *natura* and *substantia*. The Logos is a perfect reproduction of the formal essence of the Father. As such, there is perhaps an echo of the Aristotelian distinction between art and nature here – a resonance

that recurs whenever Origen describes the Creator using Aristotle’s analogy of the human craftsman.⁵⁴ If this is so, we have a helpful clue for how to understand the relation between God and the Logos. Unlike artefacts, which rely upon an external artificer to endow them with form, the form of natural objects is intrinsic to them. In the case of nature, form begets form. Just as the human is the formal, efficient and final cause of another human,⁵⁵ so God the Father is the formal, efficient and final cause of the Logos-Son. Form, as Aristotle reminds us in the *Physics* (II. 198b1) is akin to the first principle insofar as it acts as an unmoved mover. Origen’s use of the metaphor of image thus serves to emphasize the identity of form, or *ousia* between God and the Logos. It is as Supreme Paradigm that God acts as the *archē* of the Logos and, through the latter, the *archē* of the entire cosmos.

That the 1st god serves as the *archē* of the 2nd god is clear from multiple passages in the *De Principiis*. We read, for example, that the Son “draws his being” from the Father (*DePrinc.* I.2.2); that the Logos has “no beginning (*initium*) but God himself (I.2.9); and that the Son’s existence “springs (*trahens*) from the Father himself, yet not in time, nor from any other beginning (*initio*)” (I.2.11; see also I.2.5; 1.2.13). In *Commentary on John*, Origen identifies the Father as the principle of the Son on the basis of the opening line of the Prologue: *Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος* (*CommJohn* I.19, 20, 21, 23). All of these passages point to the derivative character of the Logos who, as image, is *essentially* identical yet *existentially* contingent upon the Father as its Archetype. As *ἀὐτοθεός* God is the source and consummation of the Logos as *θεός*. That God is the *telos* of the Logos follows

⁵⁴ In yet another marvelous moment of syncretism, Origen appears to describe his Platonic Craftsman using Aristotle’s analogy of the human craftsman – the latter itself ultimately being derived from the former! *CommJohn* 1.21; D. Sedley, *Creationism and its Critics in Antiquity* 173-181.

⁵⁵ Biologically speaking, at any rate. Theologically speaking, it is God who is the final cause of the human – and ultimately of the whole of creation.

logically from the above. As the supreme Good, God is not only the origin of everything, but the universal goal towards which all things (including the Logos) tend.⁵⁶ More particularly, Origen's repeated insistence that the Logos-Son is the perfect "likeness" of God the Father, that the Son is an "unspotted mirror" of the Father, points to the latter as the *telos*, that is, the *perfection* (τελείωσις) of the former.⁵⁷ The Logos realizes its own nature through its perfect conformity to its divine principle. The Logos, says Origen, is God by "remaining always in uninterrupted contemplation of the depths of the Father" (παρέμενε τῇ ἀδιαλείπτῳ θεῶν τοῦ πατρικοῦ βάθους; *CommJohn* II.2). In Neoplatonic terms, the Logos "proceeds" from the Father as his principle and "reverts" back upon him as his end. It is by means of this reversion, this unceasing orientation towards God-in-himself as its desired end, its *telos*, that the Logos is God.

While we already encountered the characterization of the second God as an image of the first in Numenius, what is perhaps noteworthy here is the absence of the corresponding language of participation.⁵⁸ Instead, Origen approaches the Logos from the perspective of cause rather than effect, drawing primarily on metaphors of emanation and procession. Here, too, Origen is able to draw on scriptural sources: The Book of Wisdom (itself a late Hellenistic work)⁵⁹ refers to the Wisdom of God as "a breath of the power of God, and an ἀπόρροια (that is, emanation)⁶⁰ of the glory of the Almighty" (*DePrinc.*

⁵⁶ I am indebted to Dr. Eli Diamond for pointing out to me that the very notion of the Good as *archē* is intrinsically teleological. Though Aristotle is sometimes called the great teleological thinker of antiquity, this could equally be said of Plato insofar as he establishes the Good as his ultimate principle.

⁵⁷ See R. Berchman, *From Philo to Origen* 127.

⁵⁸ This could of course be simply due to the invisible hand of Rufinus. If authentic, it serves to distinguish the causal relations within the Godhead from those of the Godhead and the world – the latter of which are described in terms of participation.

⁵⁹ See J. Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy* 96.

⁶⁰ Rufinus here retains the Greek ἀπόρροια, or "effluence", translating it in brackets as *manatio*.

I.2.9.15), while Paul calls the Son the “brightness of God’s glory” (*splendour gloriae*; Heb 1:3; *DePrinc.* I.2.8.1). Origen himself describes the Logos, as an act of the divine will “proceeding” (*procedens*) from the mind of the Father (*DePrinc.* I.2.6.4, 15). In contrast to the language of image, the metaphors of procession and emanation emphasize the separateness of the Logos as a distinct hypostasis. The latter is the *dynamis* of God, the instrument through which the latter as *Nous Akinetos* accomplishes the work of creation. By uniting the metaphors of image and emanation, Origen is able to express the derivative character of the Logos as a distinct entity, or hypostasis, while simultaneously emphasizing its identity of essence with God. As image, the latter is *essentially* identical; as emanation he is *existentially* subordinate.

Origen’s use of the metaphor of emanation (*ἀπόρροια*) provides another valuable clue for understanding his first principles. In his superb study of Neoplatonism, *Iamblichus to Eriugena*, Stephen Gersh shows how the metaphor of emanation expresses the outflow of the causal activity of *energeia*. The metaphor of emanation, as he rightly states, “is a prominent feature of Neoplatonic thought and describes the way in which spiritual principles – for pagan writers the One, the henads, etc., for Christians God and his divine attributes – exercise causality.”⁶¹ The same may be said of Origen, who applies it to the causal relations within the Godhead – in this case the way in which the One produces the Monad/Logos. Origen’s precise language of *ἀπόρροια* (preserved by Rufinus) is significant. The Greek verbs *ῥεῖν* (“to flow” or “stream”), *ἀπορρεῖν* (“to flow forth”), and the substantive *ἀπόρροια* (“effluence”) are key terms of emanation used by later figures such as Proclus and Damascius. This causal effluence is described by the former as

⁶¹ S. Gersh, *Iamblichus to Eriugena* 17.

streaming forth from some prior principle or fount, while the latter uses it in reference to light emanating from the One.⁶² As we have seen, Origen similarly describes the Father as fount, and the Son as “brightness”. As the “brightness of the Father”, and an emanation of the divine *dynamis*, the Logos is the eternally “begotten” outflow of divine *energeia*. Just as fire emanates light so God radiates Wisdom. As with the Neoplatonists, so with Origen this divine efflux constitutes a second, subordinate principle, or hypostasis.

As in the case of image, so here with the metaphor of emanation, Origen stresses the *archē* side of the equation, leaving us to reconstruct the *telos* side. In this regard, what Gersh has to say about the later Neoplatonism of Proclus and Damascius is remarkably relevant to the earlier Origen. Gersh demonstrates that at the heart of Neoplatonic theology, lie two fundamental transformations of Aristotelian causality: The first is the transposition of the Aristotelian doctrine of causation from physical or psychological phenomena to the realm of spiritual principles; the second involves its combination with emanation theory.⁶³ To begin with the first, Gersh identifies two senses of potency in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*: the primary kind of potency is defined as “a source of change in another thing or in the thing itself *qua* other” (*Meta.* VIII.I 1046a 11), while the other is the passive potency of “being acted upon by something else or by itself *qua* other” (*ibid.*, 11-13). Potency1 is the power of A to produce change in B, while potency2 is the power of B to be changed by A. In addition to these, Gersh identifies a third kind of potency in Aristotle, applicable to both of the above: this potency (potency3) points to the potential for A to be an actual agent of change in B, and the potential of B to be actually changed by A. Insofar as the actualization

⁶² *Ibid* 18.

⁶³ *Ibid* 32.

of these respective potencies coincides, Aristotle states that there is a sense in which the two potencies are the same (1046a 19ff). For example, in the case of sense perception the potency of the sense organ and the potency of the sense object could be said to share a single actuality (*ἐνέργεια*), i.e. the actual experience of sound or vision.⁶⁴ In the *Physics*, Aristotle states that, “the actualization of the mover is not other than that of the moveable, for it must be the fulfilment of both” (*Phys.* III.3. 202a 13-16). Aristotle explains this correlation between the actualities of the agent and the patient by saying that the same slope can be in different senses simultaneously an upward and a downward one (202a 18-20). This Aristotelian doctrine of causation, as we noted above, was taken up by the Neoplatonists and, in conjunction with emanation theory, applied to the realm of spiritual principles.

The first consequence of this Neoplatonic appropriation and transformation of Aristotle involves the first principle, or God as emanative source. While this source can be characterized by the active potency (potency1) of Aristotle’s agent (the power of A to effect change in B) it cannot be associated with the third potency (the power of B to be changed by A), as the latter involves a movement from potency to act. Though applicable to physical objects, this latter potency cannot be applied to spiritual realities. To do so would imply imperfection in the first principles and implicate them in a process of change; namely, of conversion from weakness to strength, from potentially active to actually active. Thus, explains Gersh, “in the Neoplatonic theory the notion that the source or agent has potency1 is retained while its further characterization in terms of potency3 is replaced by its

⁶⁴ Aristotle, *De Anima* III.2426a 4-5; S. Gersh, *Iamblichus to Eriugena* 30.

assimilation to simple act (or activity).”⁶⁵ In terms of philosophical language, this leads to the use of potency (*δύναμις*) and activity (*ἐνέργεια*) as “equally frequent technical terms for the notion of causality implicit in the radiating source.”⁶⁶ While the exclusion of potency³ from the emanating source effectively precludes the Aristotelian (partial) identification of the actuality of agent and patient, the intimacy between cause and effect persists within the Neoplatonic understanding of procession and return. There is a continuing sense in which the active potency of the emanating source coincides with the actualization of the passive potency of the recipient. As with Aristotle, there is a sense in which the way down is simultaneously the way up.⁶⁷

What I wish to take from all of this, is the way in which the Aristotelian and Neoplatonic understanding of causality finds a compelling parallel in Origen in a least two ways. First, is Gersh’s point about the interchangeability of the terms potency and act with reference to spiritual principles. The same is true for Origen who simultaneously refers to God as *dynamis* and *energeia*, with the understanding that the former is an eternally *active* potency, or causal power that is never for a single instant in abeyance.⁶⁸ Interestingly, this latter Neoplatonic understanding of the divine *energeia* is essentially that of Kosman’s rendering of *energeia* as “the exercise of a capacity.”⁶⁹ This brings us to our second point; namely, Origen’s tireless insistence that God’s unceasing activity is, so to speak, “dependent”⁷⁰ upon a correspondingly eternal recipient. For Origen, the actuality (*ἐνέργεια*)

⁶⁵ *Ibid* 32.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*.

⁶⁷ *Ibid* 40-45.

⁶⁸ Among other things, this suggests that the transformation of Aristotelian doctrine that Gersh recognises in Proclus is likely already underway by Origen’s time.

⁶⁹ A. Kosman, *The Activity of Being: An Essay on Aristotle’s Ontology*, Preface, viii.

⁷⁰ Such a notion would undoubtedly be abhorrent to Origen, and I use it in the most colloquial sense possible here. Origen means precisely the opposite: the effect is eternally contingent upon its eternal cause.

of divine potency is unthinkable apart from an eternally-being-actualized patient. For God to be truly omnipotent, creative, generative, or providential, he requires objects upon which these powers may be constantly exercised. Because Origen explicitly excludes the possibility of change or progress within his first principle as *energeia*, there can never be a time when God was not fully actual, emanating unceasing activity and causal power.

Because, as Aristotle puts it, the way down and the way up coincide, the causal power emanating from the source to the recipient involves a corresponding activity (*ἐνέργεια*) from the recipient to the source. The unceasing activity of God as omnipotent requires a corresponding actualization of the emanated and created orders. The agent is eternally actualizing; the patient is eternally being actualized. In a certain sense, they could be said to share a single *energeia*. Insofar as it is always that which is already actual, which brings what is potential to actuality, the *archē* and the *telos* coincide. As *archē*, God imparts his activity (*ἐνέργεια*) to the world; as *telos* he is the actuality (*ἐνέργεια*) towards which the world is eternally striving. The same is true for the timeless begetting of the Logos. The Father unceasingly begets the Son as the effluence (*ἀπόρροια*) of his own causal power. Unlike creatures, however, the Logos has never undergone a progression from potentially divine to actually divine. Instead, the passive potency of the Logos as a recipient of the divine *energeia* merely points to his contingent nature as *Nous Kinetos*, a mover himself moved by a prior actuality. As image, the Logos-Son is in perpetual possession of his *telos* – perfect likeness to the Father; as effluence, he exists as a distinct hypostasis, a second god whose subsistence hangs upon the unwavering contemplation of his origin as end.

Chapter Three: Creation and Fall – The Cosmic Drama Unfolds

3.1 *The Activity of Creation*

We noted in our previous chapter how God's nature as an eternally active Creator implied a correspondingly eternal creation. The actualizing agent and the patient being actualized in a sense share a single activity, seen from opposite perspectives. If this is so, Origen's doctrine of creation is in reality a doctrine of "actualization". Indeed, given that the created order has no beginning in time, creation can only mean the ontological dependence of the world upon a prior, generative principle. In the *De Principiis*, this principle is ultimately the Omnipotent Father understood as *energeia*; that is, unceasing, eternally actual, noetic activity. In what sense is this activity creative? How is it that God's actively-being-what-he-is spontaneously produces a correlative reality? While the word "spontaneous" (i.e. non-deliberative and thus, mistakenly, "automatic") in reference to God will undoubtedly raise the ire of some theologians, spontaneity need not be conflated here with "necessity".⁷¹ It belongs to the changeless simplicity of the divine *ousia* that it is, by its very nature, productive in a way that entirely transcends any dichotomy between creation as necessary,

⁷¹ As Higgins-Brake says in relation to Plotinus: "...the highest form of freedom is a complete liberation from external determinations, which can only be found in the nature of the Good, insofar as it is prior to all determinations and the source of them." A. Higgins-Brake, *Freedom and the Good: A Study of Plotinus' Ennead VI.8 (39)* p.10. The same can be said for Origen. Insofar as spontaneous action springs from the non-discursive wisdom of *nous*, rather than the deliberative action of *dianoia*, it is in fact the ultimate expression of freedom. Cf. Plotinus, *Ennead VI.8 (39)* 3, 20-25; 4, 25-40. See also, the remarks of Leroux in W.J. Hankey, *One Hundred Years of Neoplatonism* 100-102. In denying that the gods can be jealous, Proclus "teaches with Aristotle that the life-giving action of the Good is eternal and incessant. The Good is not sometimes good and sometimes not. Generosity is natural to it. This places its creativity beyond volitional choice between alternatives." W.J. Hankey, "*Ab uno simplici non est nisi unum: The Place of Natural and Necessary Emanation in Aquinas' Doctrine of Creation*": 11. This too can be said of Origen. See what follows immediately below on the eternal creativity of the Good/God.

or as an act of voluntary deliberation. Indeed, I shall maintain that it is precisely God's eternal willing that spontaneously creates the eternal cosmos.

To begin with, Origen tells us that God "had no other reason (*causam*) for creating except himself (*se ipsum*), that is, his goodness" (*DePrinc.* II.IX.6). God himself is the cause of there being a world; it is not that God "had" a cause or reason, which compelled him to create, but that he *is* the reason, i.e. the *cause* (*αἰτία*). The activity (*ἐνέργεια*) of the Good is, by its very nature, to emanate or generate goodness and, as Origen points out, it is absurd "to suppose that there was a time when goodness did not do good and omnipotence did not exercise its power" (*DePrinc.* III.V.3). In keeping with our understanding of God as *energeia*, we can say that God's nature, i.e. the *activity of being God*, is synonymous with the activity of being omnipotent and good. This is quite simply what God *is*. Because it belongs to the very nature of goodness to bestow benefit, and of omnipotence to exercise power, God by his very being produces and sustains a world. Because God is, the world is – in much the same way that light is because the sun is. Nor is this analogy in any way inappropriate. Gerald Bostock argues that, like the Hermeticists, Origen belongs to a theological tradition that sees "creation as a continual emanation from God, flowing from him like rays from an eternal sun."⁷² Indeed, Origen explicitly states that, "the works of divine providence and the plan of this universe are as it were rays (*radii*) of God's nature" (*DePrinc.* I.I.6; I.II.11). From this point of view, Origen's description of creation scarcely differs from his description of the begetting of the Son. Indeed, as we shall see shortly, creation and generation are inseparable. The metaphor of emanation

⁷² G. Bostock, "Origen's Philosophy of Creation": 255.

describes the causal efficacy that flows from the actualizing agent and, as such, serves as an apt description of the spontaneous creativity of the divine *energeia*.

A question needs to be addressed here. Given that God is Mind, what is the content of the divine thinking? While the obvious answer would be that Origen follows the Middle Platonic convention of identifying the Ideas as the thoughts of God, this solution cannot be applied to Origen's first principle (and, as we shall see, only in a qualified sense to the second). We have seen how Origen's 1st god is a simple, unqualifiable *Nous-Henad*, simultaneously at rest and unceasingly active. Like the Plotinian One, Origen's first principle is a Unity that transcends multiplicity.⁷³ As such, Origen's God cannot be the locus of the Ideas; nor does he think them as the content of his mind – a task that properly belongs to the Logos as a unity-in-multiplicity. What, then, is the “content” or character of the Omnipotent Nous? In other words, what is the most fundamental noetic activity that lies at the very core of the cosmos as its ultimate origin and end? If we are to believe Origen, it is none other than the unceasing divine Will, understood as a simple, unified, omnipotent and unwaveringly benevolent *pre-articulate* intentionality.

That the Will of God *is* the spontaneously constituting activity of Being is evident from the eternal begetting of the Logos-Son. Origen states that the Son's birth from the Father “is as it were an act of his will proceeding from the mind.” He further insists that “an act of the Father's will ought to be sufficient to ensure the existence of what he wills; for in willing he uses no other means than that which is produced by the deliberations of

⁷³ It is crucial to remember that Nous does not have the same characteristics for Origen (and other Middle Platonists) as it does for Plotinus. For Origen, Nous is much closer to the Plotinian One while the Logos simultaneously resembles the Plotinian Nous as a unity-in-multiplicity and, in its immanent character, the World Soul. While Origen anticipates Plotinus in some ways, it remains for the latter to offer a fully articulated system of hypostases.

his will” (*DePrinc.* I.II.6). These latter sentences echo the idea that God’s very Being is the “reason” or cause of the existence of the world. There is a world for no other reason than that God *wills* there to be one. The language of will helps us to understand how the activities of goodness and omnipotence are fundamentally *noetic* activities. The supremely good and omnipotent intentionality of the divine Nous is by its very nature productive (to intend, after all, is to intend *something*). Unlike Plato’s demiurge, Origen’s Omnipotent Father employs neither the intelligible forms nor matter to create the cosmos; he requires nothing beyond his own will to ensure the existence of what he wills. Instead, these latter emanate from him as the spontaneous expression of his unceasing intentionality, the intention that there be not merely being, but eternal wellbeing.⁷⁴ Moreover, the simplicity of the divine nature means that there is no distinction between the activity of God’s being and the activity of his benevolent and all-powerful willing. This is simply what God *is*. Thus, we may draw the conclusion that Eriugena inevitably draws six centuries later: creation as a procession of the divine will is for Origen, at least implicitly, creation *ex deo*.⁷⁵ Indeed, it could be argued that this is the only way to describe creation philosophically without succumbing to some form (however subtle) of anthropomorphism.

⁷⁴ The divine will includes the eventual apokatastasis: “And we must believe that in this condition [the transfigured being] remains forever unchangeably by the *will* of the Creator” (III.VI.6). Even the diversification of material bodies is an expression of the divine will insofar as their aim is to help realize the rehabilitation and eternal wellbeing of creatures.

⁷⁵ Origen’s suggestion that matter is itself made of immaterial qualities (IV.IV.7) makes it possible for matter, in conjunction with form, to emanate from the divine Mind “like rays of God’s nature” (I.I.6). As the sole *archē* of the cosmos, God unceasingly generates the intelligible and sensible worlds. Origen, however, does not fully develop these ideas in the *De Principiis*. Unlike Eriugena, who *will* develop them, Origen does not yet even subscribe to the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, nor is he especially preoccupied with the divine *nihil*. Both of these notions, along with the idealist understanding of matter are present in seminal form in the *De Principiis*, yet await further development at the hands of Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus Confessor, before finding their fullest flowering in Eriugena. Cf. *Peri. III* p.149-153, 221, 237.

We mentioned a moment ago that Origen describes both creation and generation in the same way, and that this indicated their inseparability. In essence, this dual process (or procession) could be described as the singular, “pre-articulate” intentionality of the divine Nous eternally “begetting” the Logos as its manifold articulation. Given the utter simplicity of Nous, the only activity that can be attributed to it is an unwavering Will. Indeed, the latter offers an attractive solution to the question of the content of Origen’s first principle insofar as it is: i) a noetic activity, ii) simple, and iii) immovably active. The divine Will essentially wills itself; that is, it wills there to be beings, and it wills that these beings be what *It* is, namely, the fully realized activity of Being. In this way the divine Mind is simultaneously the source (*ἀρχή*) and consummation (*τέλος*) of the world. This Will of God the Father, who, as Origen tells us is “prior (*ἐπέκεινα*)⁷⁶ to thought and being” (*CCels.* VI. 64; VII. 38), finds its rational articulation in, and through (*per*), the manifold wisdom of the Logos-Son. Thus, the eternal begetting of the Logos coincides with the eternal creation of the world. In contrast to the simplicity of the Father, the Son as the “Idea of ideas” (*ιδέαν ιδεῶν*) and “Being of beings” (*οὐσίαν οὐσιῶν*) is a unity-in-multiplicity (*ibid*).

Given the inseparability of begetting and creation, it is not surprising that, in the *De Principiis*, we primarily learn about the latter through Origen’s discussion of the former. Origen’s doctrine of generation and creation is, in addition to the metaphor of emanation, modelled upon a psychological analogy. The Logos-Son, Origen tells us, proceeds from the Father like “an act of will proceeding from the mind” (*DePrinc.* I.II.6, 9). To understand

⁷⁶ While the seeds of the *via negativa* are unmistakably present in Origen, he bequeaths the full development and flowering of these seeds to Gregory of Nyssa, Dionysius, and Eriugena. As with other pre-Plotinian thinkers, Origen does not yet clearly distinguish between One, Nous, and Being. Thus, at times he refers to God as a One beyond being, at other times as Nous/Being. Origen is less concerned with the *ineffability* of God, than he is with the unceasing *activity* of God.

what Origen means by this analogy it might be helpful to consider a concrete example. Let us assume for instance that some saintly individual, say, Pope Francis, carries within himself the singularly benevolent intention to bring peace to humanity. While it is likely that the Holy Father will periodically remind himself of his noble aspiration, perhaps briefly reflecting upon it each morning and in moments of prayer, it is *not* the case that he goes about his day constantly needing to articulate this to himself. Instead, the Pope's benevolent will is simply *there* in a nonverbal, *pre-articulate* manner. This singularly benevolent will, by its very nature, spontaneously produces a multitude of correspondingly benevolent thoughts whose aim (*τέλος*) is none other than the realization in action of this very intention. As such, the will is a singular, noetic (one might say intuitive) activity of potentially unlimited causal efficacy. At the same time, the multiplicity of thoughts (and actions) proceeding from the Papal will remain unified insofar as they are nothing other than the expression of a single-mindedly, benevolent intention.

In precisely the same way, the Logos proceeds from the mind of the Father as the rational articulation of the latter's unwavering Will – it is in and through the Word that God utters the cosmos. As with the Supreme Pontiff, so the thoughts proceeding from the Omnipotent Father remain unified as the multiple expression of a singularly benevolent intention. As such, God the Father is One while the Logos-Son is a unity-in-multiplicity; he is the “Idea of ideas” (*ιδέαν ιδεῶν*) and “Being of beings” (*οὐσίαν οὐσιῶν*). Nor can it be the case that the multiplicity of thoughts themselves lack efficacy. Instead, the latter find their spontaneous expression in concrete action, the creation and administration of the sensible world. Insofar as the diversity of this world is contained within the overarching

embrace of divine providence, it constitutes a unified multiplicity. Thus, God is Unity, the Logos a unity-in-multiplicity, and the world a unified multiplicity.

As with the Father, the crucial question pertaining to the Son is the content of his thought: what is the content of this rational articulation of the divine Will? We noted above that the Logos thinks the Ideas only in a qualified sense. There is, in fact, considerable debate as to the precise nature of the original, spiritual creation that abides eternally within the Logos. Crouzel understands it as consisting of the Platonic Ideas and Stoic reasons,⁷⁷ while Scott argues that its content is that of the pre-existent intellects.⁷⁸ Edwards rejects the created intellects as the content of the Logos, while pointing to its Aristotelian character as the genera and species of created things.⁷⁹ Finally, Berchman understands the Logos as the primary intelligible who contains within himself the secondary intelligibles as the eternal genera and species of creation. These latter are not transcendent Ideas in the Platonic sense, but rather “prefigurations” that receive their actualization in matter.⁸⁰

Leaving aside the question of the pre-existent intellects for the time being, textual evidence suggests that Crouzel is mistaken concerning the Platonic content of the Logos, while Berchman is correct. Origen rarely (if ever) speaks of the forms as transcendent Ideas in the Platonic sense. In fact, he explicitly rejects the latter as mere “*phantasia mentis*”, insubstantial imaginings unworthy of the mind of God (*DePrinc.* II.III.6). While Origen undoubtedly misrepresents the Forms here, Koch is right that the latter have little positive

⁷⁷ H. Crouzel, *Origen* 189-190.

⁷⁸ M.S.M. Scott, *Journey Back to God* 53.

⁷⁹ M.J. Edwards, *Origen against Plato* 65, 96.

⁸⁰ See R. Berchman, *From Philo to Origen* 130.

role to play in Origen's metaphysical scheme.⁸¹ Instead, Origen typically refers to the content of the Logos as "outlines" and "prefigurations"⁸², or as the eternal genera and species of created things. Thus, Origen states that "the creation (*conditio*) was always present in form⁸³ (*formata*) and outline (*descripta*)" (*DePrinc.* I.IV.4) and that, "there have always existed in wisdom, by a pre-figuration (*praefigurationem*) and pre-formation (*praeformationem*), those things which afterwards⁸⁴ (*protinus*) have received substantial existence (*substantialiter facta sunt*)" (I.IV. 5). In response to Solomon's declaration that there is "nothing new under the sun" (Eccl. 1:9,10) he concludes that "undoubtedly all genera and species (*πάντα τὰ γένη καὶ τὰ εἶδη*) have forever existed" (*ibid*; Greek frag.). Elsewhere, Origen states that implicit in Wisdom was "every capacity (*virtus*) and form⁸⁵ (*deformatio*) of the creation that was to be, both those things that exist in a primary sense (*principaliter*) and of those which happen in consequence of them (*accidunt consequenter*)" (*DePrinc* I.II.2). Lastly, Wisdom contains within herself the "beginnings (*initia*) and causes (*rationes*) and species (*species*) of the whole creation...outlined (*descriptae*) and prefigured (*praefiguratae*) in herself" (*ibid*).

As we can see, Origen makes no reference to transcendent Ideas that serve as the intelligible paradigms of sensible copies. Instead, he speaks of the forms as "outlines" or "sketches", "pre-formations" and "delineations". The intelligible world is not so much the

⁸¹ Koch quoted in R. Berchman, 129: "...für Origenes haben die Ideen keine Funktion; sie stehen da als ein überrest vom ursprünglichen Platonismus, welchem man sich nicht hat bequemen können."

⁸² Origen's understanding of the Forms as "prefigurations" is taken up by Dionysius (DN 5. 824C), and Eriugena who identifies them with the Greek *proorismata*, or "predestinations" and the *theia thelemata*, or "divine wills". The latter equates these with his own primordial causes, the second division of nature (*Peri.* II 615-617A; Uhlfelder).

⁸³ *Formata* is not so much "form" as "shape = *morphē*". The former is usually rendered as "species."

⁸⁴ Or "forthwith", "immediately", "at once".

⁸⁵ More literally "delineation" or "representation".

realm of true being of which the sensible world is a pale reflection, as it is the eternal genera and species, the potencies and principles of things instantiated in matter.⁸⁶ It is not entirely clear whence Origen derives this understanding of the forms. Insofar as these potencies and prefigurations are understood as seeds to be actualized in matter, they resemble the Stoic *logoi spermatikoi*.⁸⁷ As with the Stoics, Origen's Logos is the rational principle of the cosmos that structures reality in accordance with its Reason.⁸⁸ As the Idea of ideas, the Logos contains the totality of the *logika* within himself as the potencies and principles of creation. Indeed, Origen's Logos mirrors that of the Stoics in its immanent character⁸⁹ – the crucial difference, of course, being that Origen's Logos (and that of his Jewish/Christian predecessors) is an *incorporeal*, spiritual entity. The *logoi spermatikoi* are no longer subtle pneumatic seeds implanted in matter, but immaterial, immanent forms that structure the cosmos.

In addition to this Stoic model it is possible to understand Origen's Logos in a curiously Peripatetic fashion. That is to say, Origen describes his demiurgic Logos in terms of one of Aristotle's (and Plato's) favourite analogies: that of the human craftsman.⁹⁰ For Origen, the forms in the mind of God are *not* the Platonic paradigms, but the skill or art of the Creator. Just as the human craftsman possesses the form of a house within his mind, so the Creator (i.e. the Logos) contemplates the eternal "blueprints" or "outlines" of creation. There are at least two passages that illustrate this: We have already touched upon the first

⁸⁶ See R. Berchman, *From Philo to Origen* 129, 131-132.

⁸⁷ H. Crouzel, *Origen* 189; R. Berchman, *From Philo to Origen*, 130.

⁸⁸ D. Baltzly, "Stoicism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

⁸⁹ At one point Origen describes the universe as, "an immense, monstrous animal, held together by the power and reason of God as by one soul" (II.1.3; 2). With Origen (as indeed with Clement and Philo) the Logos in its immanent aspect approximates the role of the pagan world soul.

⁹⁰ David Sedley argues that Aristotle's use of the craft and craftsman analogy to demonstrate the teleological character of nature is itself inspired by Plato's Demiurge. See note 33, above.

in Chapter One concerning the two senses of “image”. Here, you may recall, Origen stated that in reference to the Logos, image was to be understood in terms of the likeness of a child to its parent. In reference to created beings such as humans, on the other hand, image was to be analogously understood as an *artefact*: “an object painted or carved on material such as wood or stone” (*DePrinc* I.II.6). The world, Origen suggests here, is like an artefact that reflects the skill of the Artisan. It reflects it precisely as the instantiation in matter of, so to speak, the art of cosmic carpentry. Our second passage from the *Commentary on the Gospel of John* is more explicit:

For I consider [states Origen] that as a house or ship is built and fashioned in accordance with the sketches (*ἀρχιτεκτονικοὺς τύπους*) of the builder or designer, the house or the building having their beginning (*ἀρχὴν*) in the sketches and reckonings (*τύπους καὶ λόγους*) in his mind, so all things came into being in accordance with the designs (*λόγους*) of what was to be, clearly laid down by God in wisdom (*CommJohn* I. 114).

Just as the master builder contains within his mind the actual ability to build a house (efficient cause), along with the preconceived plan of what a house is (formal cause), and what end it will serve (final cause)⁹¹, so the Divine Craftsman carries within his Wisdom the eternal outlines or “architectural sketches” as the *archai* of the created cosmos in all its genera and species.⁹² Within the Logos abides every capacity for existence, the whole of reality traced out beforehand in precise detail. In this way the simple Will of the Father for things to *be*, finds its rational articulation in the Logos as the multiple prefigurations of *beings* that comprise the totality of the world.

⁹¹ At II.XI.4 Origen compares the efficient, formal, and final causes of an artefact concealed within the mind of the human artisan to the causes of things hidden in the mind of God.

⁹² These genera and species, as Berchman argues, are not merely intelligible potencies, but the *actual* genera and species of the sensible world. See *From Philo to Origen* 129.

For Origen, the forms in the mind of God are not so much Platonic, as they are Aristotelian.⁹³ They are not the intelligible realities of which sensibles are inferior reflections, but rather the intelligible principles (*initia*) and prefigurations of sensible things. In Stoic terms, these principles are the immanent seeds, or formal potencies that find their actualization in matter; in Aristotelian terms, they are “*energeiai*”, the eternally actual, unceasingly active formulae that constitute the cosmos. Either way, the content of Origen’s Logos does not consist of abstract universals in the manner of the Platonic Forms. Instead, whether we think of the ideas as potencies to be actualized in matter, or as prefigurations that unceasingly receive their instantiation in creation, the divine thinking is inextricably bound up with the sensible, material world.

Just as the unceasing *energeia* of the Father produces the secondary *energeia* of the Logos, so the latter has for its content the eternal *energeiai* as the formal principles of the cosmos. These latter are the immediate efficient, formal, and final causes of creation, the immaterial essences of things instantiated in matter.⁹⁴ In the same way that the builder builds in virtue of the building art, so the divine Craftsman creates in virtue of the eternal

⁹³ Origen’s adoption of Aristotelian causality refers more to the latter’s understanding of art rather than nature. At the same time, Origen applies the Aristotelian understanding of art to nature itself when he conceives of the divine Demiurge as “analogous” to the human craftsman. The important distinction that Aristotle establishes between art and nature becomes blurred in Origen. God is the supreme artisan and the cosmos the ultimate work of art. The relation between art and nature for Origen is perhaps best understood in terms of the *imago dei*; the human craftsman is not so much an analogy, as an *image* of the divine Craftsman, human creativity is a reflection of the creativity of God. What is analogy in Aristotle becomes reality in Origen.

⁹⁴ See *Metaphysics*, VII.7, 1032b5-14: “but from art proceed the things of which the form is in the soul of the artist. (By form I mean the essence of each thing and its primary substance)”; “for the medical art and the building art are the form of health and of the house, and when I speak of substance without matter I mean the essence”. Origen understands the divine Artisan as analogous to the human artisan. Given the eternity of the world, the incorporeal essences of things within the divine Mind are eternally instantiated in matter as actual, corporeal creations. The Logos thus serves as the formal principle of matter. As such, Creator and creation are intimately interconnected – like two sides of the same coin, as Eriugena says somewhere in the *Periphyseon*.

principles within his mind. While it is possible for these pre-existent forms to remain dormant in the mind of the builder until such time as he chooses to impose them on matter, this cannot be the case for our Cosmic Carpenter. Unlike the human craftsman, Origen's divine Craftsman is not subject to motion (*κίνησις*). He never progresses from potentially creative to actually creative (*DePrinc.* I.I.6; I.II.10).⁹⁵ As full-blown *energeia*, God is unceasingly engaged in the activity of creation; that is, of eternally instantiating, in and through (*per*) the Logos, the eternal forms and prefigurations in matter. As such, there must be a corresponding eternally-being-created, sensible world.⁹⁶ It is not enough for God as actuality to be merely generating the potencies and prefigurations of things within his Wisdom. If God is to be actually and authentically omnipotent, he must govern an actual world of instantiated forms. One might say that God eternally realizes himself in the world even as the world is eternally-being-realized in God.

If this understanding of Origen's Logos is correct, it suggests an important revision of the conventional understanding of Origen's doctrine of creation. So long as we understand the Logos as the place of the Platonic Forms, it is possible to assume a doctrine of double creation in which the primary act of creation refers to the intelligible world of being, while the secondary creation refers to the sensible world of becoming. The former can then be assimilated to the heavenly realm of the angels, while the latter becomes the domain of corporeal creatures. The chief appeal of this view is that it enables one to maintain the belief in a temporal beginning of the world presided over by a Creator deity.

⁹⁵ This is true whether we think of this as a movement from 1st potency to 2nd potency/1st actuality or from 1st actuality to 2nd actuality.

⁹⁶ Cf. Philo, *De Opificio Mundi*, VI.24: "And if anyone were to desire to use more undisguised terms, he would not call the world, which is perceptible only to the intellect, anything else but the reason of God (i.e. the Logos), *already occupied in the creation of the world.*"

In other words, it is a safeguard against the “emanationist” view of creation, in which God unceasingly creates the world “by necessity” (or, as I prefer, *spontaneously*),⁹⁷ rather than as a deliberate act of will. The Platonic view is in this instance more amenable to orthodoxy than the Aristotelian. By means of the former Crouzel is able to assert that, “this explanation [of the content of the Logos] given in terms of Platonic and Stoic philosophies contains nothing contrary to the faith [when and by whom defined he does not say] and is found again in many later Fathers, including Methodius himself and Augustine.”⁹⁸ By limiting the eternal creation to the divine thinking and rejecting the notion of the pre-existent intellects, Crouzel “rehabilitates” Origen, transforming him into an orthodox thinker who merely taught what all subsequent have thinkers have taught, not least the great Augustine.

If, however, we understand Origen’s Logos doctrine in the way that I am proposing, this is no longer possible. God’s spontaneous activity (*energeia*) does not terminate with the Logos but, precisely in and *through* (*per*) the Logos, extends to the very limits of creation. What the intelligible world ultimately points to is the spiritual rootedness of all sensible beings. All creatures have their source in the Logos who, as the Being of beings, is the sum total of the principles of creation. In essence, Origen’s cosmology consists of a dynamic hierarchy of creative activity: God is the supreme *archē* of the universe, the simplicity of Being; the Logos is the second *archē*, the totality of beings; while the *logika* are the multiple *archai*, the potencies and principles of created beings. To conclude with our psychological analogy, the unwavering will of the Father finds its rational articulation

⁹⁷ For an important discussion concerning the false dichotomy constructed between emanation and creation, see W.J. Hankey, “*Ab uno simplici non est nisi unum*”.

⁹⁸ H. Crouzel, *Origen* 190.

in the Logos, while the latter brings this articulated intention to actuality as an actual, substantial creation.

3.2 *The Myth of Pre-existence*

In trying to come to some sort of basic understanding of the content of Origen's Logos, we have made scarcely any mention of Origen's (in)famous "doctrine" of pre-existent souls. It is to this task that we must now turn. Of all the teachings of Origen, this one has perhaps generated the most controversy from antiquity to the present day. As we noted at the start of our discussion, varied and even opposing opinions exist as to the nature and existence of the so-called "pre-existent souls" or intellects (*noi/noes; rationes mentes; logika; logikoi*). Some scholars, such as Crouzel and Edwards, are critical of the notion of pre-existence while others, such as Scott and Martens, unreservedly embrace it. While Crouzel does not reject the notion of pre-existence *per se*, he *does* reject the understanding of the pre-existent souls, or *logika*, as the content of the Logos. He argues instead that the latter did not exist as eternally created beings within the Logos, but were created afterwards at some later point in time.⁹⁹ For Crouzel, who seems intent on maintaining a clear separation between Creator and creation, the eternally created universe in the Logos pertains primarily to the Platonic Ideas. Mark Edwards, on the other hand, goes so far as to claim that "Origen never embraced [the doctrine of pre-existence], either as an hypothesis or as an edifying

⁹⁹ *Ibid* 190, 206. Crouzel does not enlighten us as to when or where this intelligible creation *extra mentem dei* may have taken place. Indeed, the only proof that Crouzel offers for this assertion is a single passing reference where Origen states that rational beings "were made when before they did not exist" (II.IX.2). This passage, which stands in opposition to Origen's repeated insistence upon the eternity of creation, is better understood as referring to the particular lives of individual beings who, like the endless succession of distinct worlds, do indeed come to birth and pass away.

myth.”¹⁰⁰ Instead, he interprets Origen’s pure intellects (*noes katharoi*; *DePrinc* I.8.1) simply as indicating a time when minds were untroubled by their embodied existence.¹⁰¹ In other words, the “pre-existent” intellects describe an original, *earthly* life of pure contemplation untrammelled by bodily concerns.¹⁰² Neither Crouzel nor Edwards is willing to admit the pre-existent intellects into the eternal realm of the Logos.¹⁰³

A more subtle solution that seems to have gained a recent following is that suggested by Marguerite Harl; namely, pre-existence as divine foreknowledge. According to Harl, “les “causes” qui concilient l’inégalité des sorts humains avec l’affirmation de la “justice” de Dieu sont non dans une pre-existence pré-cosmique, mais dans la prescience [de Dieu].”¹⁰⁴ As this statement indicates, the need to reconcile the inequality of the world with divine goodness lies at the heart of Origen’s doctrine of pre-existence.¹⁰⁵ While Harl’s intention is not to deny the cosmological reality of pre-existence so much as to suggest an alternative interpretation, others such as John Behr embrace her proposal as definitive. For Behr, the idea of “a host of eternally existing [pre-cosmic] intellects” is best understood as referring to the “anteriority of the foreknowledge of God.”¹⁰⁶ According to this view, which is vaguely reminiscent of Gregory of Nyssa, God’s foreknowledge coincides with the free

¹⁰⁰ M.J. Edwards, *Origen against Plato* 89.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid* 96.

¹⁰² Though Edwards does not bother to elaborate, it would seem that he assimilates the doctrine of pre-existence to the biblical notion of a terrestrial paradise – a move consistent with the anti-Platonic character of his work.

¹⁰³ One of the reasons for this is undoubtedly the theological concern over the co-eternity of the creature with God.

¹⁰⁴ M. Harl, “La Préexistence des Âmes dans l’Oeuvre d’Origène.”

¹⁰⁵ For a good account of the theological motives behind Origen’s doctrine of pre-existence see Crouzel, *Origen*, 206-8. Also P. Martens, “Embodiment, Heresy, and the Hellenization of Christianity”.

¹⁰⁶ J. Behr, *The Way to Nicaea. The Formation of Christian Theology* 196-197. See *DePrinc*. II.IX.7.

will of creatures in such a way that their individual fates are simultaneously determined by both.¹⁰⁷

In contrast to the above-mentioned positions, scholars such as Scott and Martens openly affirm a more literal reading of the doctrine of pre-existence, in which the *logika* originally dwelt in a pre-cosmic unity within the Logos as its noetic content.¹⁰⁸ From this more conventional point of view, embodiment is consequent upon the fall and the sensible world subsequent to an originally pristine, intelligible world. The main problem with this view, as I hope to show, is that it fails to appreciate the centrality of embodiment for Origen. As such, it inevitably leads to a profound devaluation of sensible creation and history. Though Origen avoids the extreme pessimism of the gnostic views concerning embodiment, the value of the latter (in the conventional interpretation of Origen's cosmology) nonetheless remains primarily instrumental. The chief merit of material existence lies in its pedagogical value. It is by means of their embodiment that souls are rehabilitated – with the aim that they will someday return to their original *pre-incarnate* existence as pure minds. The whole of history is, in a sense, an inconvenient concession to a primal error, in which God condescends to create a world in order to rescue his hapless creatures. From this point of view, the purpose of history is the overcoming of history, the aim of life the reparation of a wrong leading to the restoration (*apokatastasis*) of an original blessedness.

¹⁰⁷ This is not to say that the advocates of this view hold to the simultaneity of creation and fall. It seems, rather, that this view does not so much seek to *harmonize* the motions of the *logika* with divine foreknowledge as *replace* the former with the latter. In other words, the *logika* (or at least the free choices of the *logika* understood as the “anterior causes” of subsequent diversity) are identified *as* divine foreknowledge, by which God knows and accommodates for what we are going to do before we do it. As such, this position is ultimately a subtler attempt at “explaining away” the doctrine of pre-existence.

¹⁰⁸ M.S.M. Scott, *Journey Back to God*; P. Martens, “Embodiment, Heresy, and the Hellenization of Christianity.”

In contrast to this and the positions elucidated above, I would like to propose my own interpretation of Origen's much maligned "doctrine" of pre-existence, an interpretation that is simultaneously ontological and eschatological.¹⁰⁹ In doing so, I hope to present Origen's doctrine of creation in a more meaningful (and more accurate) light as a kind of cosmic *kinēsis*, in which the final *apokatastasis* is not the *annihilation* of history but its ultimate *actualization*.¹¹⁰ As such, I shall emphasise the importance of embodiment for Origen, something often ignored or dismissed by ancient and contemporary commentators alike. As such, I propose that we understand the doctrine of pre-existence, not as referring to some original noetic paradise lost on account of the fall, but to the ontological ground and eschatological¹¹¹ aim of all *embodied* rational natures. As I hope to show, the doctrine of pre-existence is best understood as pointing to the unified intelligible nature, the invisibles essences or principles (*archai*) of sensible beings, the realization of which stands as their true aim (*telos*).

I argued above that the divine omnipotence extends to the limits of creation, and that consequently the eternity of the cosmos is not limited to the intelligible world, but includes the sensible, material world that we presently inhabit. If we accept that Origen's 1st god is unceasing actuality (*ἐνέργεια*), and his 2nd god is unceasingly-being-actualized, it follows that there must be an eternally-being-actualized sensible world. This is so for at least two reasons: first, Origen is clear that, like the Father, there is no *kinēsis*, no progression from potency to act in either the Son or the Holy Spirit (*DePrinc.* I.III.4). Though contingent

¹⁰⁹ See M. Harl, "Préexistence des Âmes": 247-250.

¹¹⁰ This will largely be the thesis of my third and final chapter dealing with the return of all things to God as their ultimate *telos*.

¹¹¹ Students of that great latter day disciple of Origen, John Scottus Eriugena, will recognize the parallel here to the latter's eschatological understanding of paradise.

upon the Father as their principle, the latter divinities are eternally actual. As such, there was never a time when they were not in full possession of their powers. This implies that, like God the Father, the Logos-Son has always exercised his demiurgic capacity. Indeed, Origen repeatedly insists that the Logos is a perfect reflection of the “energy (*ἐνεργείας*) or working (*inoperationis*) of God” (*DePrinc.* I.II.12)¹¹², and that “all things that the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise” (Jn 5:19; *DePrinc.* I.II.6). Those scholars who wish to limit the eternal creation to the intelligible world within the Logos fail to grasp the significance of the Logos as the true image of the Father and the instrument of creation (*per quem inoperatur pater*; *DePrinc.* I.II.12). It is not only in, but *through* (*per*) the Logos, that God exercises his omnipotence (*DePrinc.* I.II.10). Secondly, Origen’s understanding of the intelligible world as consisting of the principles and prefigurations of things, as formal essences in the Aristotelian rather than the Platonic sense, implies a correlative material world as the place of their eternal instantiation.¹¹³ Indeed, as I hope to show, Origen embraces Aristotelian hylomorphism to an extent that seems largely to have escaped the notice of scholars of Origen.¹¹⁴

To begin with the central theme of divine omnipotence, there are several passages in Origen that support the view that this implies an eternal, *material* creation. This is suggested from the outset when Origen argues that God’s omnipotence assumes the existence of the universe: “For if anyone would have it that certain ages (*saecula*), or

¹¹² Rufinus preserves the Greek *ἐνεργείας* here and then translates it into Latin as *inoperationis*.

¹¹³ Just as the eternal activity of God implies an eternally being created world, so the prefigurations of things in the Logos, precisely insofar as they are “*energeiai*”, that is, the eternally actual formal, final, and efficient causes of things, equally imply a corresponding instantiation in matter. If this were not the case, their causal efficacy, especially in terms of efficiency and finality, would be compromised.

¹¹⁴ Notable exceptions are Koch and Berchman.

periods of time (*spatia*), or whatever he cares to call them, elapsed during which the present creation did not exist (*cum nondum facta essent quae facta sunt*), he would undoubtedly prove that in those ages (*saeculis*) or periods (*spatiis*) God was not almighty” (*DePrinc.* I.II.10). The reference here is *not* to some pre-cosmic, pre-spatiotemporal world but to *this* world, the actual, created cosmos situated in time and space. Later, in response to the question as to what God was doing before the world began, Origen responds: “God did not begin to work (*coepit operari*) for the first time (*tunc primum*) when he made this (*istum*) visible world (*visibilem mundum*), but that just as after the dissolution of this world there will be another one (*alius mundus*), so also we believe that there were others before this one existed” (*DePrinc.* III.V.3; I.IV.5). Here, Origen draws on the Stoic notion of an infinite succession of worlds, or aeons, to resolve the issue concerning the temporal or eternal character of the cosmos. While this particular world has a temporal beginning, the universe as a whole (understood as the totality of an infinite succession of worlds), is eternal¹¹⁵ – a fact that follows inevitably from God’s unceasing creativity. Here, too, it is not on account of an intelligible creation that God is eternally active, but a material cosmos subject to endless cycles of creation and dissolution.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ David Hahm argues that this Stoic understanding of endless cycles of cosmic destruction and regeneration is not incompatible with the Aristotelian view of the eternity of the world. Just as the eternity of the species of living beings is maintained by way of reproduction, so it is with successive worlds. Indeed, Stoic cosmology relies a good deal on biological terms to explain itself. Understood rightly, Aristotle sees no contradiction between his theory of the eternity of the world and that of endless cycles of regeneration: “To say that the universe alternately combines and dissolves is no more paradoxical than to make it eternal but varying in shape.... So that if the totality of body, which is a continuum, is now in this order or disposition and now in that...then it will not be the world that comes into being and is destroyed, but only its dispositions” (*Cael.* I. 10. 280a12-25). This, it seems to me, is precisely Origen’s view. For the latter, the hylomorphic creation is never destroyed but undergoes endless transformations. See D. Hahm, *The Origins of Stoic Cosmology* 185-199.

¹¹⁶ Origen is perhaps the sole Christian thinker who, with a little help from the Stoics, manages to reconcile Moses with Aristotle!

The relation between God and world is thus somewhat analogous to that of form and matter (keeping in mind, however, that God himself is the source of matter).¹¹⁷ Just as in Aristotle's understanding of causality the shared activity of the agent and the patient occurs in the recipient, so God realizes his omnipotence within the created order; as *energeia*, God serves as the ultimate, efficient, formal, and final cause of formless matter (*ὕλη, materia*) understood as pure potentiality (*capax*).¹¹⁸ In a sense, what God is actually, the universe is potentially; namely, the fullest realization of the activity of *being*. The more proximate formal principle of the world, however, is of course the Logos. The fact that Origen describes the universe as an immense creature, "held together by the power and reason of God (*virtute dei ac ratione; DePrinc. II.I.3*)", points to the Logos as the rational principle of the cosmos, its immediate efficient, formal, and final cause.¹¹⁹ Just as the form of the human body contains within itself the particular forms of every organ and member of that body, so the Logos as the totality of the *logika*, the principles and prefigurations of things is the formal principle of the unified diversity of the world (*ibid*). All things are held together by the power of the Logos in such a way that, despite the variety of motions of individual minds, the universe as a whole remains ordered to a single end – the perfection of being (*DePrinc. II.I.2*).

¹¹⁷ Cf. Philo, *De Opificio Mundi*, IV (16) – VI (25); *De Providencia, I*.

¹¹⁸ Origen follows the Aristotelian understanding of matter as non-being in the sense of pure potency, the capacity for form/being (*Physics*. I. 7, 191a 8-12; I. 9, 191b35-192a35; *Metaphysics* VII.7, 1032a22; *DePrinc. II.I.5, III.VI.7*). Like Aristotle, Origen regards the notion of unqualified matter as purely conceptual. In reality, matter never exists apart from form; matter is always qualified matter (IV.IV. 6-7). As non-being, matter is pure potency; it is the *hypokeimenon*: *quod subiacet corporibus et capax est qualitatis (ibid)*. For a good account of Origen's doctrine of matter see Berchman, *From Philo to Origen* 131-134.

¹¹⁹ As Berchman argues: "The relation of material things to intelligible things [for Origen] is the relation of noetic act to the potentiality of matter to be acted upon." And again: "The relation of sensibles to the intelligibles is not that of copy to model, the Platonic thesis, but that of matter to form, the Peripatetic thesis. *Ibid* 131.

The place where the hylomorphic character of Origen's thought reveals itself most strikingly is in his understanding of the relation between soul and body. While Origen's enemies repeatedly accused him of teaching a radical soul/body dualism, his actual position is far more subtle. For Origen, a direct correlation exists between the soul's spiritual state and the kind of body it possesses; as such, he never rejects the body *per se* as somehow evil or a source of evil. Instead, his view of embodiment and matter is considerably more optimistic than is commonly thought. This is brought out in a passage often dismissed by commentators as a Rufinian interpolation,¹²⁰ in which Origen states that only the divine triad can live apart from a body. Consequently, Origen concludes that, "while the original creation (*principaliter creatas*) was of rational beings, it is only *in idea and thought* (*opinionem quidem intellectu solo*) that a material substance is separable from them" (*De Princ.* II.II.2).¹²¹ Although, he concedes, this material substance *seems* (*videri*) to have been produced for them, or after them (*pro ipsis vel post ipsas*), rational beings have in reality never lived apart from bodies (*ibid*). The "original creation" here does not refer to an original bodiless existence, but rather to the ontological priority of minds in relation to bodies, in which the former precedes the latter as its formal principle. This is further suggested in a passage where Origen wonders whether, just as the Father is the source

¹²⁰ There is a great deal of suspicion towards Rufinus entrenched in Origen scholarship (at least in the English speaking world). This "hermeneutic of suspicion" largely stems from Koetschau who accused Rufinus of having modified his translation of the *De Principiis* in order to systematically purge it of heretical opinions. At the same time, Koetschau "supplemented" Origen's text with fragments taken from hostile sources "as though they were unbiased, objective witnesses to the original Greek." Butterworth, whose translation of the *De Principiis* remains the sole English language version, uncritically follows Koetschau's flawed methodology. See Cavadini, *On First Principles* vii-ix. For Butterworth's comments, see "Translator's Introduction" (*ibid*; xxxiii-lxix).

Given the many other passages (as we shall soon see) that point to the inseparability of soul and body, there is no reason to reject the one above as inauthentic.

¹²¹ See also *De Princ.* II.I.4-5, IV.IV.7-8, where Origen maintains that matter is never found to exist apart from qualities. For Origen, like Aristotle, matter is always *informed* matter.

(*origo et fons*) of the Son yet in a way that there is no before (*anterius*) or after (*posterius*), “some similar kinship or close connection (*societas vel propinquititas*) may not be understood to exist between rational natures and bodily matter” (*DePrinc.* II.II.1). In this illuminating passage, not only does Origen reaffirm the inseparability of soul and body, he also offers a rare clue to the ontological relation between them. Just as the Father is the *archē* of the Son, so the mind, Origen seems to say, is the principle of the body.¹²² As with God and the Logos, the body is not temporally but *ontologically* subsequent to mind. Just as the Son is the image eternally emanating from the Father, so the body is, so to speak, the timeless externalization of the mind, an outward projection or reflection of its inward condition.¹²³

Though some commentators insist that the above passages are merely Rufinian modifications, there are numerous other passages that express precisely the same view. For example, Origen specifically raises the question as to whether, just as bodily matter once did not exist, it will someday be resolved back into non-existence. Can it possibly happen, he asks, for any being to live without a body? His answer is no. Bodily matter, he insists, “in whatever form it is found, whether carnal as now or as hereafter in the subtler and purer form which is called spiritual, the soul always (*semper*) makes use of”, will never be destroyed (*DePrinc.* II.III.2; sc. IV.III.15, IV.IV.8). Instead, as the apostle Paul teaches, it will be transfigured, the corruptible body putting on incorruption. Moreover, Origen argues, the destruction of bodily matter in the *apokatastasis* would destroy the freedom

¹²² At *DePrinc.* II.X.3 Origen refers to the soul as the essence of the body, which ensures the continuity of the individual as a soul-body composite subject to death and resurrection.

¹²³ There is also an interesting parallel between the Logos as the instrument of God, and the body as the *organon* of the mind.

intrinsic to rational creatures. One of the consequences of this radical freedom is the ever-present possibility of repeated falls from the state of beatitude – a view for which Origen was, needless to say, much criticised (*DePrinc.* II.III.3).¹²⁴ Because the diversity of the world is produced by the actions of individual souls in conjunction with matter, the destruction of the latter would undermine the freedom of the former. In other words, without changeable matter beings would be incapable of change. Is it likely that Rufinus would have penned such an unorthodox argument in favour of the beginningless existence of bodies? It seems exceedingly doubtful.

The notion that material bodies will not be destroyed but rather *transformed* in the final restoration is expressed in numerous places by Origen. In response to the Pauline statement that, “the form of this world shall pass away” (1 Cor 7:31), Origen argues that “it is not by any means an annihilation or destruction of the material substance that is indicated, but the occurrence of a certain change of quality (*inmutatio quaedam fit qualitatis*) and an alteration (*transformatio*) of the outward form” (*DePrinc.* I.VI.4). Citing Isaiah, Origen maintains that the final *apokatastasis* will involve not the destruction, but the *renewal* (*innovatio*) of heaven and earth, the *transmutation* (*transmutatio*) of the form of this world (Is 65:17; *DePrinc.* I.VI.4). Origen emphatically rejects the notion that “material or bodily nature will utterly perish” (*ibid*) at the end and consummation of the world, reiterating his conviction that it is impossible for created beings “to exist without material substance and apart from any association with a bodily element” (*ibid*). Instead,

¹²⁴ This is, of course, not to say that Origen insisted that there *must* or even *would* be endlessly repeated falls from beatitude. The point is that creatures never lose their freedom; they are never compelled to love the Good by the slightest necessity. Origen is utterly uncompromising in his view of the radical freedom of rational beings.

he suggests that in the end every bodily substance may assume an exceedingly pure, ethereal character.¹²⁵ This tentative suggestion is later repeated when Origen proposes that, “bodily substance, itself, being united to the best and purest spirits, will be changed (*permutata*), in proportion to the quality or merits of those who wear it, into an ethereal condition (*in aetherium statum*)” (*DePrinc.* II.III.7).¹²⁶ As the essence of the body, the soul is inextricably bound to the latter – a bond that survives the death of the individual and makes possible their bodily resurrection (*DePrinc.* II.X.3).¹²⁷

Given how counterintuitive this reading of Origen may seem to some, I have felt it necessary to cite as many passages as possible without unduly testing the patience of the reader. All of the statements I have presented fly in the face of conventional interpretations of Origen as some sort of world-negating Gnostic, or Platonic “dualist”.¹²⁸ Is it possible that all of these affirmative statements concerning bodily matter flow from the devious pen of Rufinus? If so, we will be forced to conclude that the entire *De Principiis* is hopelessly

¹²⁵ Here Eriugena departs significantly from Origen. Unlike the latter, the former envisions the eventual dissolution of the body into spirit, and spirit into God. Cf. *Periphyseon* V. 990B; 985C-994B; 1020C. See also *Peri.V* 986C: “When I read of such things [i.e. the preservation of bodily substance] in the books of the Holy Fathers,” Eriugena exclaims, “I stagger, so to speak, amazed and horror-struck [!]”

¹²⁶ See also *Contra Celsum* IV.57. For Origen the value of matter, as the *ὑποκειμένην ὕλην* of creation lies in its indeterminacy, its capacity (*δεκτικὴν*) to receive whatever qualities the divine Will chooses to impose upon it in keeping with the diverse merits of rational beings. At *CCels.* III.41 Origen asserts that not only the human soul (*ἀνθρωπίνην ψυχὴν*), but also the mortal body (*θνητὸν σῶμα*) of Christ was transformed into God.

¹²⁷ There is one passage that strikes a more pessimistic tone. Here, in contrast to the many positive statements concerning embodiment, Origen refers to the possession of bodies as “burdensome” and as “impeding the activity of spirits” The ultimate hope, he declares, is to be “delivered from the bondage of [bodily] corruption into the liberty of the glory of the sons of God” (Rom 8:20, 21; *DePrinc.* I.VII.5). While the pessimistic language here could be interpreted as a wholesale rejection of the body, it is only when taken in isolation that this is possible. The majority of passages, as we have seen, speak of the *transformation* of the body, rather than its destruction. From this point of view, to be delivered from corruption means that our present bodies will someday “put on incorruption”. The mention of glory in the above statement is key to rightly understanding Origen’s meaning here. Compare II.III.2: “And when this body, which one day we shall possess in a *more glorious form*, shall have become a partaker of life, it will then, in addition to being immortal, become also incorruptible.” Also *DePrinc.* III.VI.6; III.VI. 9.

¹²⁸ Needless to say, such a view is as inaccurate of Plato as it is of Origen who allegedly follows him.

corrupted. Indeed, the only reliable testimonies remaining to us would be those faithfully preserved by Jerome, Justinian, and the remaining horde of brooding heresiologists! It is a peculiar phenomenon that the same scholars who (rightly) regard Rufinus with suspicion completely lose their critical faculties when it comes to the testimonies of Origen's adversaries. Too often, it seems to me, the invisible hand of Rufinus is conjured up to explain away those passages that refuse to conform to one's cherished preconceptions of Origen, and thus simply *cannot* be authentic.

Given that Origen's cosmos consists of eternally instantiated forms in which matter has never existed apart from qualities, nor minds apart from bodies, it becomes difficult to maintain the notion that minds once enjoyed a separate existence at some "time prior to time,"¹²⁹ and that embodiment occurred subsequently to a primal fall from this beatific state. Instead, on the basis of the above passages which point to the eternity of the material world and the inseparability of soul and body, I am compelled to conclude that Origen's doctrine of pre-existence ought not to be taken as literally referring to some sort of original, pre-cosmic reality inhabited by incorporeal intellects. Instead, as with the *Phaedrus* myth to which it is so clearly indebted, it is best understood as the poetic expression of a deeper truth. The original, prelapsarian "community of souls", I would like to argue, does not refer to some primal paradise lost, but rather to the fundamental, unified ground of all sentient beings. The *logika* are the eternally created *archai* within the eternally begotten *archē* that is the Logos, the Form of forms. In other words, the myth of pre-existence points to the

¹²⁹ Struggling to maintain his literal understanding of Origen's doctrine of pre-existence as involving a subsequent temporal creation, Scott goes so far as to posit a "*pre-pre-existence*" of souls. Needless to say, it is not Origen's doctrine that "buckles under the weight of imaging a *pre-pre-existent* eternity of the rational minds," but Scott's own interpretation. See *Journey Back to God* 58.

ontological priority of soul to body, form to matter, and ultimately, Creator to creation; it expresses the rootedness of all creatures in God as the noetic ground of their existence. The original creation points to our “original nature”, the primal purity that *is* what we most fundamentally *are* in the depths of our being.

3.3 Creation as Synergeia

Having argued for the eternity of the material world, and thus for the eternal createdness of the individual as a soul-body composite, it is necessary to deal with the chief objections to this point of view related to the conventional understanding of the fall as constitutive of the corporeal, sensible world. Why is it that this latter view maintains such a prominent position when, as I have argued on the basis of textual evidence, it is clearly erroneous? The answer, not surprisingly, lies in the many ambiguities within the *De Principiis* that bedevil any scholar who aspires to work on Origen. To begin with, Origen is himself somewhat to blame. The speculative character of his writing as, to borrow Crouzel’s phrase, “une théologie en recherche”, discourages the reader from solidifying Origen’s views into rigid doctrines. While refreshingly undogmatic, this open approach played into the hands of his opponents who tended to do precisely that. As Jennifer L. Heckart ironically remarks, Origen’s adversaries were much more certain that he was wrong than Origen was certain that he was right!¹³⁰ The result of all this is that there are several statements in the *De Principiis* that conflict with our thesis and must, in all fairness, be addressed. While the majority of these are derived from hostile testimonies, they nonetheless cast a shadow of ambiguity that is better acknowledged than ignored. Given

¹³⁰ Heckart, Jennifer L., “Sympathy for the Devil? Origen and the End”: 50.

Origen's speculative method, the controversy concerning Rufinus' translation, and the tendency of critics to distort or exaggerate his meaning, the best any scholar of Origen can hope for is to offer a plausible reconstruction.¹³¹ I claim to offer nothing more, nor less. In the spirit of Origen, I leave it to the reader to choose the most compelling argument.

Having said all that, one of the most surprising things about the *De Principiis* is in fact how rare references to a pre-existent unity of souls are. The only explicit references to be found consist of a cluster of disputed fragments, which Koetschau inserts at various "lacunae" in his translation of the *De Principiis*. Thus, according to a fragment taken from Jerome, Origen states that, "all rational creatures who are incorporeal and invisible, if they are negligent, gradually sink to a lower level and take to themselves bodies suitable to the regions into which they descend" (*De Princ.* [K-B] I.IV.1). From the *De Sectis* of Pseudo-Leontius of Byzantium, we learn that Origen taught that, "before the ages minds were all pure" (*πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων νόες ἦσαν πάντες καθατοί*), and that they fell as a result of the devil's rebellion (*De Princ.* [K-B] I.VIII.1, 1-5).¹³² Further down, a sentence Koetschau cobbles together from several passages of Antipater of Bostra reiterates the notion that souls "revolted from their former blessedness" and "were endowed with bodies in consequence of the fall from their first estate" (*τὴν τοῦ πρώτου ἤτταν*; *De Princ.* [K-B] I.VIII.1 23 [5]). Finally, in a fragment taken from Gregory of Nyssa, Koetschau has Origen state that "whole nations of souls (*ἔθνη τινὰ τῶν ψυχῶν*) are stored away somewhere in a realm of their own (*ἐν ἰδιαζούσῃ τινὶ πολιτείᾳ*), with an existence comparable to our bodily

¹³¹ See R. Berchman, *From Philo to Origen* 114.

¹³² Leontius also gives us here the term "pre-existing souls" (*προὔπῆρχον αἰ ψυχῆν*).

life” (*DePrinc.* [K-B] I.VIII.2, 12).¹³³ Koetschau fills out these passages with other fragments taken from Jerome, Theophilus of Alexandria, and Justinian.¹³⁴

None of the above passages are present in any extant translation of Rufinus, and are absent from the *Sources Chrétiennes* critical edition (1978-80) of the *De Principiis*.¹³⁵ Crouzel justifiably points out that the considerable lacunae that Koetschau presumes to reconstruct on the testimonies of Origen’s enemies “il ne la justifie guère: il n’y a en effet aucune raison de l’accepter”.¹³⁶ With the exception of Gregory of Nyssa, Koetschau’s reconstruction draws entirely upon sources hostile to Origen. Such unsympathetic sources can hardly be relied upon for an accurate rendering of the master’s doctrine.¹³⁷ The passage taken from Gregory of Nyssa, on the other hand, is not an actual quotation of Origen, but a general statement in which Gregory argues against the ideas of pre-existence and transmigration, commonly associated with Plato and Origen (neither of whom he explicitly mentions by name). For Koetschau, the authenticity of these comments rests solely on the fact that they happen to agree with the statements of Origen’s worst critics, Jerome and Justinian!¹³⁸ Yet one might well argue for precisely the opposite conclusion: given that Gregory’s comments so closely mimic those of Origen’s adversaries, it would seem that he is simply repudiating those same vaguely Platonic doctrines that have come to be

¹³³ See Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, Chapter 8.

¹³⁴ See Koetschau’s *De Principiis*, 66-75, esp. the plethora of explanatory footnotes.

¹³⁵ The classic English translation of the *De Principiis* by Butterworth (1936), as well as Cavadini’s recent redaction (2013), are based on Koetschau’s critical edition (1913). Concerning the latter’s “hermeneutic of suspicion” see note 46 above.

¹³⁶ H. Crouzel, *Traité Des Principes* 114-115, note 5.

¹³⁷ In at least one place, Jerome indeed “faithfully” reproduces Origen’s words – with the twist that he attributes to Origen a view that the latter is articulating solely in order to *reject* it. The editor, meanwhile, uncritically accepts the view of Jerome as authoritative. See II.III.3 and notes 5 & 6 p.446 Cavadini, *De Principiis*, 2013 edition.

¹³⁸ Butterworth, *Origen on First Principles* 72, note 8.

associated with Origen and the so-called “Origenists”, doctrines which by Gregory’s time have become established heresies in the Church. While it would be going too far to wholly reject the above-considered statements, the extent to which they accurately reflect Origen’s thought is, unfortunately, impossible to ascertain.

Aside from these disputed passages, the primary remaining ones that could lend themselves to a literal interpretation of the doctrine of pre-existence are the following:

What other cause [asks Origen] can we imagine to account for the great diversity of this world except the variety and diversity of the motions and declensions of those who fell away from that *original unity and harmony (ab illa initii unitate atque concordia)* in which they were first (*primitus*) created by God? (*DePrinc. I.I.1*)

These beings, disturbed and drawn away from the state of goodness (*ab illo bonitatis statu*), and then tossed about by the diverse motions (*motibus*) and desires of their souls, have exchanged *the one undivided goodness of their own nature (unum illud et indiscretum naturae suae bonum)* for minds that vary in quality according to their different tendencies (*ibid*).

All these considerations seem to show that when the mind (*mens*) departed (*declinans*) from its *original condition and dignity (statu ac dignitate)* it became or was termed a soul (*anima*), and if ever it is restored and corrected it returns to the condition of being a mind (*mens*) (*DePrinc. II.VIII.3*).

Unlike our disputed passages, there are no explicit references in the above statements to a pre-cosmic “city of souls”, or to an original *pre-temporal* noetic purity prior to the ages. There is no mention of the devil’s role in precipitating the fall, nor even any explicit mention of a subsequent embodiment stemming from the fall. There is nothing in these passages that compels us to believe in a literal pre-existence of souls. What these passages *do* point to is the existence of an “original” (*initium*), unitary nature that underlies the

diversity and inequality of ordinary experience. It is worth recalling that Origen uses *initium* and *principium* interchangeably in the *De Principiis* to indicate the *archē*, or source of beings. Thus, the “original unity” (*initii unitate*) mentioned above could be understood in a purely ontological manner as the unitary principle, or source, from which all diversity flows forth. This unitary principle, the “undivided goodness of our own nature” (*indiscretum naturae suae bonum*), is ultimately none other than the *imago dei*, the rational principle (*ἀρχή*) that, though obscured by the fall, endures as the noetic nature whose realization is the goal (*τέλος*) of every rational creature.

The true aim of Origen’s “doctrine” of pre-existence is twofold: it is at once a theodicy, and a defence of freewill. On a deeper level, it is an attempt to reconcile the simplicity of the supreme principle with the diversity of the world. Given that there is no variation or change within the divine perfection, it follows that the creation that proceeds from this will exhibit a like uniformity. As Origen states, “there was [in the divine simplicity] no cause (*causa=aitia*) that could give rise to variety and diversity” (*DePrinc.* II.IX.6). Instead, the causes of diversity are to be sought in the diverse motions of created minds endowed with freewill. Thus, while God is directly responsible for the original purity and equality of beings, their true nature so to speak, the latter are themselves responsible for the diversity and inequality of the world. This is an interesting variant from the *Timaeus*, where the demiurge creates the immortal gods who then create mortal, changeable humans. In both narratives, a principle of mediation is required to bridge the gap between divine impassibility and the changeability of the world. What is remarkable in Origen’s case is how this mediation occurs through the rational creatures themselves. Like the demiurgic *nous* in whose image they have been moulded, the *logika* are essentially creative. Their

capacity for self-determination, a *dynamis* that constitutes the very cosmos in all its rich complexity, mirrors the creative power of their omnipotent archetype.

Having abandoned the idea of a temporal interval between an original, spiritual creation of the world and its subsequent fall into materiality, how are we to understand these two, distinct events? How do we reconcile original unity with timeless diversity? The most plausible solution, it seems to me, is that suggested by Gregory of Nyssa and later adopted by Eriugena; namely, that the eternally created cosmos and the declension of souls happen simultaneously. In Gregory's system, divine foreknowledge coincides with the diversification of beings through embodiment. While such a doctrine of simultaneity is not typically ascribed to Origen, the following passage clearly points in its direction:

This arrangement (*dispositionem*), therefore, [writes Origen] which God established afterwards (*postea*), when he had already from the beginning of the world (*ab origine mundi*) foreseen (*prospectis*) the thoughts and motives (*rationibus causisque*) both of those who through spiritual defect deserved (*merebantur*) to descend into bodies and those who were carried away (*raptabantur*) by their eager desire for visible things... this arrangement, I say, some men have not understood (*DePrinc. III.V.5*).¹³⁹

The language here of the reasons and causes (*rationes causaque*) of diversification having been foreseen (*prospectis*) by God from the "beginning"¹⁴⁰ of the world, reminds one of the simultaneity of creation and fall in Gregory of Nyssa and Eriugena. Indeed, there are numerous passages in the *De Principiis* that maintain that the providential ordering of the world as a kind of "meritocracy" is as much an expression of the eternal

¹³⁹ See also *DePrinc. IV.IV.8* "...so of necessity God had foreknowledge (*praenoscebat*) of the differences that were to arise among souls or spiritual powers, in order to arrange that each in proportion to its merits might wear a different bodily covering of this or that quality...."

¹⁴⁰ Given the eternity of creation, the temporal language of "afterwards" (*postea*) and "beginning" (*ab origine*) must be taken metaphorically.

Wisdom of the Creator as the activity of creation (see esp. *DePrinc.* II.IX.6-8). One might say that for Origen, as with Gregory and John Scottus, Creation and fall represent a kind of *synergeia*, in which the free movements of rational beings constitute the world in consort with divine forethought.¹⁴¹ God eternally creates the world in its original purity, while creatures (in conjunction with God) unceasingly constitute themselves and the cosmos in its subsequent diversity.¹⁴² Divine Will is the cause (*aitia*) of being; freewill is the cause (*aitia*) of the diversification of being.

When we join the above passage to the one cited earlier (section 2.2), in which Origen stated that, though bodily matter “*seems (videri)* to have been produced for them or after them (*pro ipsis vel post ipsas*),” rational beings have *never actually lived apart from bodies* (*DePrinc.* II.II.2), we inevitably arrive at the idea of a simultaneous creation and fall. In this latter passage, Origen is more or less explicitly telling us that the literal notion of a fall from an original, incorporeal state into a state of corporeality is an illusion. In reality, the reasons and causes concerning the diverse embodiments of the *logika* were, and *are*, eternally anticipated by the divine Wisdom from beginningless time. As such, divine Will and rational freedom collaborate in the eternal production of the cosmos. While it is possible (and indeed useful) to *conceptually* distinguish (*ibid*) between creation and fall, original unity and subsequent diversity, Origen’s insistence upon the timeless union of soul and body makes it impossible to separate them in actual reality. Instead of an original fall

¹⁴¹ Just as Gregory of Nyssa’s doctrine of eternal progress, and his view that matter consists of the conjunction of intelligible qualities already exist in seminal form in Origen’s *De Principiis*, so too, I believe, Gregory’s doctrine of simultaneity has its ultimate roots here, in Origen. Thus, while Gregory openly repudiates overly simplistic interpretations of Origen, he discreetly appropriates and develops the deeper implications of the latter’s thought within his own theological writings. The same can be said for Maximus Confessor. See von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy* 33-37.

¹⁴² We see here perhaps the seed of the lofty anthropology of Gregory of Nyssa taken up and developed by John Scottus Eriugena, in which the human is the “workshop” of creation.

from incorporeality to corporeality, Origen posits *degrees* of corporeality that range from subtle, ethereal figures to coarse bodies of flesh and bone. As such, the body is a reflection of the soul, outwardly manifesting the interior state of the individual. The key point of this entire doctrine is simply to recognize that God is the cause of the original perfection that underlies the whole of reality, while creatures are responsible for their subsequent stations in life. In this way, with a single, magisterial stroke, Origen manages to uphold divine justice while preserving the rational freedom of beings. Providence and freewill coincide.¹⁴³

In challenging the notion of a literal pre-existence, my aim has not been, as it is with Crouzel, to draw Origen into the welcoming embrace of Christian orthodoxy. Much less am I motivated by that peculiar hostility towards Platonism that informs the polemical work of Edwards. My aim is neither polemical nor apologetic. Instead, I want simply, on the basis of a close reading of Origen, to offer a philosophical interpretation based upon the largely overlooked Peripatetic character of Origen's thought, an interpretation capable of speaking with renewed vigour to the contemporary philosophical theologian. While my reading bears some resemblance to the "pre-existence as divine foreknowledge" interpretation, it differs substantially. This latter view, it seems to me, is still motivated by hostility towards the doctrine of pre-existence. Like the others, its aim is to preserve the separation of God and world by assimilating the *logika* to the divine forethought in such a way that the former no longer have any actual existence of their own. Against this view, I

¹⁴³ In fact, in a feat of intellectual jujitsu, Origen demonstrates not merely that God is not responsible for the evil and inequality in the world, but that this very inequality is the greatest proof of God's justice. The reason for this is that each and every being experiences the precise consequences of their own good or bad actions. The divine justice, in this sense, resembles the Buddhist notion of karma, the moral law of cause and effect.

want to *affirm* the eternal rootedness of rational creatures in the Logos, yet in a way that avoids the literalism of Scott and Martens. Instead, by interpreting the doctrine of pre-existence in an ontological and eschatological sense I hope to go beyond the dialectic of rejection and affirmation, in order to glimpse the inner significance of Origen's poetic narrative.

In sum, I hope to have shown in this chapter how Origen's cosmology unfolds according to a dynamic hierarchy of creative principles: the unceasing intentionality of God as a simple One acts as the supreme *archē* of the universe, its ultimate efficient, formal, and final cause; the Logos as the rational articulation of the divine Will and the totality of the principles of creation, is the second *archē*, a unity-in-multiplicity; finally, the *logika* as the embodied essences of rational creatures, represent a third level of *archai*, which together comprise a unified multiplicity. From these three "beginnings" proceeds the entire cosmos as a complex, ordered, hylomorphic whole, in which divine providence and rational freedom coincide. Having gained some understanding of what Origen means by "beginning" (*initium/principium*), it now remains to see how this conforms to his understanding of "end". In what sense the "end is like the beginning", and how the multiplicity of beginnings and ends are ultimately reconciled into a single unity in the final *apokatastasis* is the task for our third and final chapter.

Chapter Four: Apokatastasis as Cosmic Kinesis

4.1 Restoration as Consummation

Up to this point we have dealt largely with the *archē*, and with what proceeds from the *archē* (or *archai*). In doing so, we have shown how God the Father as a Nous-Henad unceasingly generates the Logos-Son, while the latter eternally creates the world according to the principles and prefigurations in his mind. As such, the intentionality of God as a simple One acts as the supreme *archē* of the universe, the Logos as the rational articulation of the divine Will acts as the second *archē*, while the *logika* as the embodied essences of rational creatures, represent a third level of *archai*. This “unfolding” of divinity into the world proceeds in a threefold manner: from the supreme Unity of the Father, to the unity-in-multiplicity of the Logos, to the unified multiplicity of the created cosmos.¹⁴⁴ What remains now is for us to sketch the corresponding movement from the outermost reaches of creation back to their origin and end in God. Given that the activity of the actualizing agent and the patient being actualized coincide, this final chapter in a sense describes the same process elucidated thus far – only this time from the perspective of the recipient. From this vantage point, the *archē* becomes the *telos*, the end coinciding with the beginning. In what follows, I hope to present Origen’s doctrine of return as a kind of cosmic *kinēsis*, in which the final *apokatastasis* is not the *annihilation* of history but its ultimate *actualization*.

¹⁴⁴ One thinks here of the Latin adage: *Ab Uno Simplici Non Est Nisi Unum*. See Hankey, “*Ab Uno Simplici Non Est Nisi Unum: The Place of Natural and Necessary Emanation in Aquinas’ Doctrine of Creation*.”

We begin with a basic yet often overlooked question pertaining to Origen's eschatology; namely, does *apokatastasis* merely signify a salvific return to an original lost perfection, or does it point *beyond salvation* to an ontological process of self-*actualization*? While this question is by no means a novel one, it tends to be overshadowed by enduring controversies concerning the nature of restoration; i.e. how universal is it? Does it include the salvation of the devil? Will there be repeated falls? Will bodies be dissolved in the *apokatastasis*? Is it ultimately pantheistic? Thus, while Crouzel addresses some of these concerns in his treatment of the subject, he never raises the question of what, if anything, lies beyond restoration *per se*.¹⁴⁵ De Faye and Daniélou, for their part, take for granted that *apokatastasis* merely implies a return to an original, *pre-incarnate*, state of perfection.¹⁴⁶ While more recent scholarship points to the emergence of a subtler understanding of the doctrine of *apokatastasis*, for the most part it still lacks the argumentation necessary to bring about a much needed shift in the understanding of Origen's eschatology. Thus, Greer, Scott, and Ramelli all maintain that the end is more than simply a return to a lost beginning, claiming instead that *apokatastasis* represents the attainment of a higher and more enduring perfection than was originally present.¹⁴⁷ In doing so, however, they primarily base their position upon those passages in Origen that point to the end as deification (such as Origen's distinction between "image" and "likeness"), while making no attempt to reconcile these passages with those that seem to support the understanding of *apokatastasis* as a simple restoration, or universal salvation. Consequently, we are left with two divergent accounts

¹⁴⁵ H. Crouzel, *Origen* 257-266.

¹⁴⁶ J. Daniélou, *Origen* 218, 289; E. de Faye, *Origen and His Work* 148.

¹⁴⁷ See R.A. Greer, *Origen* 22; M. Scott, *Journey Back to God* 131; I. Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis* 134-161.

of Origen's eschatology. The first maintains that *apokatastasis* indicates restoration, the second insists that *apokatastasis* is synonymous with deification. In what follows I shall attempt to reconcile these two accounts by showing how, mirroring the simultaneity of creation and fall, salvation and deification are ultimately inseparable.

One of the sources of disagreement concerning Origen's eschatology stems (as is often the case) from textual ambiguities within the *De Principiis* itself. Origen, as Rabinowitz helpfully points out, interchangeably uses two distinct terms when speaking of the end, which Rufinus translates as *restoratio* (*ἀποκατάστασις*) and *consummatio* (*συντέλεια*).¹⁴⁸ On the basis of these terms, Rabinowitz argues for a distinction in Origen's thought between a present/individual salvation, and a future/cosmic restoration. Like our first group of commentators, Rabinowitz' understanding of *apokatastasis* is limited to the narrow sense of a return to an anterior condition. Her chief insight is to recognize a distinction between a personal and collective restoration. While Origen's soteriology can certainly be understood in this way, the distinction that I want to draw from this is a somewhat different one. In what follows, I want to argue that the term *restoratio* is best understood in a salvific sense (be it personal or cosmic) as the restoration of a principal good, while *consummatio* points *beyond salvation* to the deification of the cosmos, the actualization or *perfection* (*τελείωσις*) of all rational natures. Ultimately, given the eternity of the world and thus the inseparability of creation and fall, *restoratio* comes to be assimilated to *consummatio*, with the result that for Origen *apokatastasis* becomes basically synonymous with *theosis*.

¹⁴⁸ C.E. Rabinowitz, "Personal and Cosmic Salvation in Origen" : 320.

To begin with then, what is meant by the term *apokatastasis*? According to Crouzel, “Le mot grec *apokatastasis* signifie restauration, restitution, rétablissement, d’une chose ou d’une personne, dans son état antérieur:” As such it can be applied “à la guérison d’un malade, au retour d’une saison, à celui d’un astre dans sa position antérieure.”¹⁴⁹ The key point, as Crouzel makes clear, is that *apokatastasis* involves a return to an anterior state, a reestablishment of a prior condition or status – be it the restoration of health, the cycles of the seasons, or the return of a constellation to its original position. This basic definition of *apokatastasis*, which informs Crouzel’s understanding of the return, has a firm grounding in both philosophy and scripture. The Stoics used the term *apokatastasis* to indicate the return of the cosmos back into its fiery principle, while Scripture often uses it in the sense of healing; for example, when Jesus restores the withered hand (Mt 12:13; Mk 3:5). In its eschatological usage, too, it refers to a cosmic restoration consequent upon the fall from paradise. The most common usage of *apokatastasis*, then, in the sources available to Origen is simply that of a restoration or return to a prior state.

In Rufinus’ translation of the *De Principiis*, Origen interchangeably employs the terms *restituere*, *reparare*, and *revocare* to indicate the restoration, salvation or subjugation of the world in and through Christ. While we cannot be certain what Greek terms lie beneath the Latin ones, in one passage at least Origen appears to quote Acts 3:21, which speaks of the times of the restoration of all things (*χρόνων ἀποκαταστάσεως πάντων*). Since Rufinus here translates the Greek *apokatastasis* with the Latin *restitutio* (*De Princ.* II.III.5), we can safely assume that *restitutio* is equivalent to *apokatastasis*. As our Latin lexicon shows, *reparare* and *revocare* both convey a sense similar to *restitutio*, indicating a

¹⁴⁹ H. Crouzel, “L’Apocatastase chez Origène”: 282.

reparation or recalling of a previous state. Thus, in his initial discussion of the return Origen states, “We believe, however, that the goodness of God through Christ will restore (*revocet*) his entire creation to one end, even his enemies being conquered and subdued (*subactis ac subditis*)” (*DePrinc.* I.VI.1). Origen identifies this restoration or revocation with the scriptural language of the subjection (*subjectio*) of all things to Christ (cf. 1Cor 15:24-27), which he further identifies with salvation (*salvatio; ibid*). One is restored through one’s subjection to Christ, which is none other than salvation. Thus, the emphasis in this initial discussion of the return is entirely salvific: *restoratio=subjectio=salvatio*.¹⁵⁰ Origen invokes his dictum that “the end is always like the beginning” (*semper enim similis est finis initiis*) arguing that, just as all the diversity in the world stems from a single origin (*initio*) so too it must be recalled to a single end (*unum finem; DePrinc.* I.VI.2).¹⁵¹ In essence, the discussion is a fairly conventional one that, despite its uniquely Origenist flavour, basically conforms to accepted notions of sin and salvation in which the fallen creation is restored or recalled back to its original beatitude, or paradise lost.

What is extremely interesting, however, is Origen’s use of *reparatio* elsewhere in the *De Principiis*. In virtually every instance other than the above mentioned passages we find *reparatio* used in conjunction with terms such as *consummatio* (*συντέλεια*), *perfectio* (*τελείωσις*), and *finis* (*τέλος*), while the use of *salvatio* largely disappears. Thus at II.XI.3 Origen equates the restoration (*reparetur*) of the mind having been nourished (*nutrita*

¹⁵⁰ In Book II.1 Origen employs the language of *restitutio* and *reparatio* and explicitly links these terms with *revocatio*, both in the discussion there and by linking this latter discussion to the previous one in Book I: *per quem omnia restituenda in statum initii sui libro superiore dissertum est* (II.I.1); *Deus vero per ineffabilem sapientiae suae artem omnia, quae quoquomodo fiunt, ad utile et ad communem omnium transformans ac reparans profectum... in unum quenda revocat operis studiique consensum...*

¹⁵¹ This is axiomatic for Eriugena’s *Periphyseon* also – esp. Book V dealing with the Return.

mens) by wisdom with a state of wholeness and perfection (*integrum et perfectum*). At III.VI.8 Origen concludes that “the end (*finem=τέλος*) and consummation (*συντέλεια*) of all things should consist of a return (*revocari*) to this beginning (*principium=ἀρχή*).” At III.VI.9, Origen uses *consummatio* and *restitutio* seemingly interchangeably¹⁵², while at III.V.7 he equates *subjectio*, *restitutio*, *reparatio*, and *salvatio* with *perfectio*: “The subjection (*subjectio*) of Christ to the Father,” he says, “reveals the blessedness of our perfection (*perfectio*is).” Moreover, the subjection of the Son to the Father marks the perfect restoration of the entire creation (*perfecta universae creaturae restitutio*) which is none other than the salvation of the one subjected (*subjectio salutaris*). In all of these passages *restoratio* (*ἀποκατάστασις*) and *perfectio* (*τελείωσις*) are closely associated. While this latter term along with its variants (*finis=τέλος*, *consummatio=συντέλεια*) could perhaps be understood as simply indicating the recovery of an original lost completion, the force of the Greek terms suggests something more. In Greek, the language of perfection (*τελείωσις*) is purposive, indicating the realization or consummation of a specific aim (*τέλος*); that is to say, it is *teleological*. From the Aristotelian point of view, the idea of a return to an originally lost perfection is philosophically incoherent;¹⁵³ it only makes sense if we understand the *archē* and the *telos* as being united as efficient, formal, and final cause.

¹⁵² *Hoc itaque modo in consummatione ac restitutione omnium fieri putandem est...*

¹⁵³ This is the basis for Maximus Confessor’s great criticism of Origen. Maximus argues from an Aristotelian point of view that the Origenist notion of an original motion *away* from perfection (i.e. the fall of the *logika*) towards imperfection is contrary to reason. In contrast to the Origenist scheme of stasis – kinesis – genesis, Maximus posits one of genesis – kinesis – stasis. As such, the natural motion of the creature is always *towards* perfection, completion, and rest. In other words, motion is *teleological*. This “correction” of Origen is itself present in Origen’s understanding of the movement from “image” to “likeness”. In refuting the Origenist myth of pre-existence, Maximus in fact points to its deeper, philosophical meaning. Though my interpretation differs slightly from that of Maximus, I see myself as essentially doing the same thing. see *Ambiguum 7*, in *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ* 45-74; H.U. von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy* 127-136; P. Argarate, “Maximus Confessor’s Criticism of Origenism”: 1037-1041.

From this latter perspective, one *can* speak of a “return” to the beginning – so long as what one means by this is the reversion upon, or realization of one’s principle, rather than the recovery of a prior condition.

That this latter meaning is what Origen has in mind, is strongly suggested in two further passages. In the first Origen considers whether the time of the restoration of all things (*χρόνων ἀποκαταστάσεως πάντων*; Acts 3:21) might refer, not simply to the end or restitution of a single age, but to the consummation and completion of *all* ages, the culmination of history “when the universe reaches its perfect end” (*cum ad perfectum finem universa pervenient*; *DePrinc.* II.III.5). The language here is wholly teleological. Instead of *restitutio*, we have the term “*pervenio*”¹⁵⁴ which has the meaning of “reaching”, “arriving”, or “attaining”, rather than simply “returning” or “restoring”. Moreover, given that there is no discernible beginning to the endless cycles of the ages, it is unlikely that Origen is suggesting a temporal end of the cosmic aeons here; the eschaton, as he makes clear elsewhere, does not involve the *destruction* of the world, but its *transfiguration* (*DePrinc.* I.VI.4).¹⁵⁵ Instead, the end (*τέλος*) of the ages points to the perfection of history, the deification of the cosmos. This is corroborated by the language of *henosis*. Origen suggests here that the will of the Saviour that all creatures be one (*ἐν*) in him as he is one

¹⁵⁴ What Greek term might lie beneath Rufinus’ translation is difficult to say.

¹⁵⁵ Eriugena too argues for the ultimate transfiguration of the world rather than its destruction. Like Origen, Eriugena holds to the principle that God never destroys what he has created. The *nature* of this transfiguration, it seems to me however, is markedly different. The latter is a much more thoroughgoing idealist and thus, though he insists (like Origen) upon the preservation of body and soul in the return, all is ultimately resolved into spirit. Origen’s tentative suggestion that corporeal bodies are ultimately derived from incorporeal qualities is never developed in the *De Principiis*; for Eriugena, it forms the basis of his understanding of transfiguration. As usual, Eriugena wants (and arguably gets) to have it both ways. Cf. *De Princ.* IV.IV.7; *Peri.* V. 874B, 876A-C, 879A-B, 880A, 887A. Cf. esp. *Peri* V. 985C-988B which could perhaps be read as an explicit criticism of my reading of Origen!

(ἐν) in the Father (John 17:21)¹⁵⁶ points to something beyond the ages “when all things are no longer in an age, but ‘God is all in all’” (πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν; 1 Cor 15:28). The end of time, so to speak, marks the beginning of eternity. Or, to put it another way, the *telos* of history is the realization of eternity as its *archē*. Crucially, for Origen, *apokatastasis* does not involve the destruction of time, but its ultimate completion.¹⁵⁷

One of the most powerful statements of universal perfection, or deification occurs at *DePrinc.* III.VI.2-3. Here, Origen distinguishes between God being *in* all things, and God *being* all things. At present, God is the former. Insofar as God is the Ground of Being, He is *in* all things, and all things insofar as they are, i.e. derive their being through participation in God’s Being, are *in* Him. This mutual indwelling is simply the precondition for existence, the bare fact of being.¹⁵⁸ The perfection of being, which Origen calls “the perfection of blessedness” (*perfectionem beatitudinis*) and “the end of things” (*rerumque finem*) indicates the state in which God is not merely *in* all things but in fact *is* all things. This cosmic deification will come about when every rational nature has been so purified and illuminated that “the mind will no longer be conscious of anything besides or other than God, but will think God and see God and hold God and God will be the mode and measure of its every movement” (*DePrinc.* III.VI.3). In this state, everything the subject perceives, desires, possesses is God, the supreme and unitary Good. As such, the mind is no longer fragmented by its desire for finite, apparent goods, while the separation between

¹⁵⁶ ἵνα πάντες ἐν ᾧσιν · καθὼς σύ , πάτερ , ἐν ἐμοί , κἀγὼ ἐν σοί , ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ἐν ἡμῖν ᾧσιν · ἵνα ὁ κόσμος πιστεύσῃ πιστεύῃ ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας.

¹⁵⁷ This is reminiscent of Aristotle who maintains that the ‘end’ is not simply any end, but the *best* end. Thus, while the end of human life is death, this is not its true end, or *telos*. The true end of the human is to be like God. The same is true for Origen on both a personal and a cosmic level.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. *Periphyseon* III. p.155, 163.

subject and object, thought and being, Creator and creature is virtually dissolved. In this state, truth and being are unified to such a degree that every good is recognized as *the* Good, every truth as *the* Truth, every being as Being Itself. In knowing God Who is Being, the rational nature attains its end (*τέλος*) the fullness of being, the actuality of existence. In keeping with the shared activity (*ἐνέργεια*) of agent and patient, the soul becomes God even as God “becomes” it. The experience of purgation is simultaneously the journey towards actualization, in which being realizes its potency for *well-being*. As such, *apokatastasis* is wholly assimilated to perfection (*τελείωσις*), *henosis* and universal *theosis*.¹⁵⁹

Lest our enthusiasm lead us to an overhasty conclusion, there is a final passage that must be considered. Immediately following upon his riveting discussion of deification, Origen abruptly returns to the language of restoration. Once again he speaks of the end (*finis*) being renewed (*reparatus*) according to the beginning (*principium*), of the procession (*exitus*) of things brought back (*conlatus*) to their origins (*initiis*), and of the restoration (*restituet*) of that state “which rational nature once (*tunc*) enjoyed when it had no need to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (*DePrinc.* III.VI.3). Here, Origen’s use of the temporal adverb “*tunc*” suggests that beings once enjoyed a state of beatitude and perfection, a state which was mysteriously lost, and which shall be restored when God is (once again) “all in all” (I Cor 15:28). This notion of restoration, as Origen’s critics were quick to point out, inevitably carries with it the suggestion of repeated falls. If it happened once, what guarantee is there that it will not happen again, and again, *ad infinitum*? This view, however, is at odds with something Origen says just prior to this where he claims that, because the ultimate state of deification involves the total abolition

¹⁵⁹ Cf. *Periphyseon* V. 893D-894A.

of evil, “there will no longer be any contrast between good and evil” (*ibid*). As a result, he argues, the perfected soul wholly absorbed in unceasing contemplation of the Good, which has become all things to it, will no longer be tempted by the lesser fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. This final state is in stark contrast to the so-called ‘original’ state of the *logika*, who *were* confronted with a contrast between good and evil, and very much succumbed to the temptation to eat of it. It cannot be the case, then, that the end is in every way identical to the beginning. While Origen is adamant that freewill is preserved in the final *apokatastasis*, it would seem that the *nature* of this freedom is profoundly altered. One might say that the dualistic rational freedom (the knowledge of good and evil) necessary for moral agency present “in the beginning”, finds its consummation in the unitary *sapiential* freedom to eternally choose the Good “in the end.”¹⁶⁰ If so, then restoration once again implies deification, a return to a higher origin – the beginning as end in the sense of completion (*τελείωσις*), or consummation (*συντέλεια*).¹⁶¹

The reason for this dual conception of the return ultimately goes back to a longstanding tension, already present in Plato and beautifully encapsulated by Plotinus in *Ennead IV.8*, between the descent of the soul as creative, or as catastrophic. In *IV.8* Plotinus tries to reconcile Plato’s more pessimistic statements concerning the soul’s embodiment, such as one finds in the *Phaedo*, with the more optimistic view expressed in the *Timaeus*.¹⁶² On the one hand, the descent of souls into bodies can be seen as a fall from

¹⁶⁰ The soul of Jesus being the preeminent example of this ultimate freedom beyond good and evil.

¹⁶¹ This is the equivalent in Origen to what Wayne Hankey refers to as “inclusive perfection” or “inclusive finality” in Aquinas. “By this [term],” states Hankey, “I mean end as return to source, or beginning, but with this difference, the beginning as end includes what is traversed between the source and the end.” Wayne J. Hankey, *SECUNDUM QUOD MATERIA PATIETUR: LE PLAN DE LA SOMME DE THÉOLOGIE*. Having plunged into the depths of wickedness and suffering, having come to truly know evil and developed an insatiable yearning for the good, the *logika* are no longer susceptible to temptation.

¹⁶² A.H. Armstrong, introductory note to Plotinus *Ennead IV* 394.

freedom into bondage; on the other hand, the embodiment of souls in the sensible world is necessary for the latter's perfection. What is a loss from the perspective of the soul, is a gain from the point of view of the sensible world. This same tension pervades Origen's worldview. Sometimes he speaks of embodiment in pessimistic tones as a "subjection to vanity" on account of sin, at other times he insists upon the goodness of the material world and the necessary and beneficial union of soul and body. Like Plotinus, Origen regards the fall as simultaneously catastrophic and creative. For the soul, the fall leads to a diminished ontological status; it is no longer *nous*, but *psyche*. At the same time, the fall serves as a catalyst for God's creativity, extending the divine omnipotence to the furthest reaches of being. Just as the Logos acts as the instrumental cause of the transcendent Father, so it is by means of the procession, the diverse motions of the *logika*, that the Logos is itself diversified and enters into and animates the world. Ultimately, for Origen as with Plotinus, the fall is both necessary *and* free, evil *and* good.¹⁶³

Given this dual conception of the fall, it is not surprising that the return is also described in a double sense as simultaneously a restoration and a consummation. The tension in Origen's eschatology as to whether the *apokatastasis* is merely a return to a prior state, or the realization of a superior beginning, exactly mirrors the tension between the understanding of the fall as creative or as catastrophic. From the latter perspective, the return marks the restoration of a lost beatitude; from the former, it indicates the final actualization, the ultimate perfection of the creative process. Seeing, however, that for

¹⁶³ See Plotinus, IV.8.5. Ultimately, what I have been calling the simultaneity of creation and fall in Origen is really just a way of talking about this tension between the understanding of the fall as at once creative and catastrophic.

Origen, as indeed for Plotinus, the world has no beginning in time, it is impossible to posit an originally pristine state which the *logika* once enjoyed and which, having been lost, will someday be restored to them. The creation and diversification of the world, as we have seen, is not some event belonging to the remote past, but is happening *now*. It is fully contemporary. At each moment the universe proceeds from the fount of Being in its original purity; at each moment it is constituted in all its diversity by the fall, the diverse motions of the *logika*. Just so, the inverse motion of the restoration and deification of the world is not only a future possibility, but a present reality – it is an ongoing process involving the rational persuasion and free conversion of all rational beings as we speak. Life is pedagogy. As such, the so-called “restoration” marks a return to an *intrinsic* perfection that has never *actually* been known. The return, is a return to oneself, the recollection of one’s ever-present, yet *eternally neglected* original nature. On the cosmic level, the *apokatastasis* points to the ultimate recovery of the pristine, eternally pure essence which lies hidden at the heart of the universe, which is none other than the *actualization* of its origin as end. Paradise, as Eriugena makes explicit some centuries later, is an eschatological reality.

4.2 From Image to Likeness

Having resolved, to the best of our ability, the textual ambiguity pertaining to the language of *restoratio* and *consummatio*, showing how the former ultimately comes to be assimilated to the latter, it is necessary to consider a second pair of terms; namely, that of “image” (*imago*) and “likeness” (*similitudo*). In the *De Principiis*, Origen recognizes a crucial distinction between the human created according to the “image” (*κατ’ εἰκόνα*), and the

human created according to the “likeness” (*καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν*) of God (Gn 1:26). Like Philo and Clement before him, Origen identifies the scriptural language of likeness to God with the *ὁμοίωσις θεῶ* of Plato’s *Theaetetus* (176b).¹⁶⁴ The end towards which every rational nature is progressing is, as both philosophy and scripture concur, “to become as far as possible like God” (*DePrinc.* III.VI.1). As such, “image” points to one’s original nature as unrealized potency, while “likeness” indicates the ultimate realization of this original nature as actuality. In what follows, I shall argue that the best way to understand the distinction between “image” and “likeness” that Origen finds in Genesis, is by way of two pairs of intertwining Aristotelian concepts: 1) that of potency and actuality 2) that of essence and accident. In terms of the former, the definitive statement is found at *DePrinc.*

III.VI.1. Origen states:

Now the fact that he said, “He made him in the image of God,” and was silent about the likeness (*similitudine*), points to nothing else but this, that man received the honor of God’s image in his first creation (*prima conditione*), whereas the perfection (*perfectio*) of God’s likeness was reserved for him at the consummation (*in consummatione*). The purpose of this (*ut*) was that man should acquire it for himself by his own earnest efforts to imitate God, so that while the possibility (*possibilitate*) of attaining perfection (*perfectio*) was given to him in the beginning (*in initiis*) through the honor of the “image,” he should in the end (*in finis*) through the accomplishment of these works obtain (*consummare*) for himself the perfect “likeness” (*perfectam...similitudinem*).

As we can see, “image” refers here to a kind of original possibility, or potency for deiformity, while “likeness” points to the ultimate actualization of this potentiality. The goal of human life, as both philosophy and scripture concur, is “to become as far as possible like God”, and this *ὁμοίωσις θεῶ* is brought about by one’s own efforts to imitate God, to

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Philo, *De Mundo* 69, 71; Clement, *Miscellanies* (Stromata) XIX (108), XXII (118).

live a life in conformity with the divine will. In this passage, Origen's conception of the beginning (*initium=ἀρχή*) and end (*finis=τέλος*) of creation, of the original condition and final consummation of beings is markedly different from what he has seen thus far. Instead of the Christian paradigm of fall and restoration, we have the Aristotelian model of potency and act. The original condition (*prima conditione*) does not need to be *restored*, but was given in order (*ut*) to be *realized*. The goal of human life – and of the *logika* as a whole – is to become god, to realize the fullness of being, of eternal *wellbeing* (*DePrinc.* I.III.7). Paradise is not a lost condition, but an intrinsic potency to be actualized.

The understanding of image as potency is subtly but unmistakably present throughout the *De Principiis*. One way in which it manifests is through the language of “seeds” (*semina*), “capacity” (*capax*), and “ability” (*posse*). Thus, at IV.IV.9 Origen insists that, given that the mind is *capax dei* and able (*potest*) to know God, it ought likewise to be capable (*possit*) of perpetual existence. As such, it “always (*semper*) possesses within (*in se*) some seeds (*semina quaedam*) as it were of restoration and recall to a better state (*melioris*).” While the paradigm here is once again that of fall and restoration, it nonetheless points to an intrinsic potency for perpetuity and the presence of innate seeds of virtue capable of realization. On the basis of this Origen argues that the substance of rational beings created in the image of God is wholly indestructible. The original nature may become obscured by the fall, but its true potency can never be destroyed. As such, the goal of deiformity remains an ever-present possibility to be realized through one's own efforts and imitation of God (*DePrinc.* IV.IV.10). At II.XI.4 Origen speaks of this seminal potency as “an eager longing for the reality of things (*rei ipsius*) [that] is *natural to us and implanted (insita)* in our soul” (see also, *DePrinc.* I.I.6). This intrinsic, natural longing for

truth and being is reminiscent of Aristotle's famous, "all men desire by nature to know." In the *Metaphysics*, this innate curiosity represents the seed of wisdom, already present from the very beginning, which will find its fullest flowering in the knowledge of God in *Lambda 7*. Similarly, in the *De Principiis* the natural longing for God implanted (*insita*) in the mind points to a kind of noetic seed, the cultivation of which leads to an ever greater capacity for God culminating in the actualization of one's innate potency for divine knowledge.

The connection between "image", "seed", and "potency" is confirmed by bringing together two, closely related passages, one from the *De Principiis* and another from Origen's *Commentary on Romans*. At *DePrinc.* I.III.6, citing Paul's proclamation that "the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart" (Rom 10:6-8), Origen argues that all rational beings, insofar as they are rational, participate in the Logos and thus "have implanted (*insita*) within them some seeds as it were (*semina quaedam*), of wisdom and righteousness, which is Christ." Here, the natural longing for wisdom implanted (*insita*) in the soul, and the indestructible seeds (*semina*) of virtue are joined together and identified with Christ. All rational creatures (*logika*) are potentially Christ (Logos). To quote Meister Eckhart, all beings possess a kind of "god-seed" within them as their original nature.¹⁶⁵ At *CommRom.* 8.2.5. Origen explicitly links this notion to the Aristotelian understanding of potency and actuality. He distinguishes between something *potentially* (*possibilitas*) existing in a subject and something *actually* (*efficiens*) doing so, a distinction which he

¹⁶⁵ In his discussion of God-seed, Eckhart twice cites Origen "that great authority". See D. O'Neil, *Meister Eckhart, from Whom God Hid Nothing* 93, 95.

says “the Greeks call *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια*.”¹⁶⁶ Just as there is a difference between a child who is potentially (*possibilitate*) rational, and an adult who is actually (*efficacia*) rational, says Origen, so too there is a difference between Christ being within us potentially and being so actually. The former is merely capable (*capax*) of receiving Christ, the latter is actually (*effectu*) doing so (*CommRom.* 8.2.6). The basis of this discussion is the very same Pauline passage from the *De Principiis*: “the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart” (Rom 10:6-8). The Logos, as scripture proclaims, is omnipresent, he is in our midst (Jn 1.26; Mt 18.20); yet he is only truly and *actually* present in those who have realized their innate capacity for reason and attained perfect knowledge of God; indeed, *become god*.¹⁶⁷ Christ, Origen insists, is only “potentially (*possibilitate*) in the midst of those who do not know him...but among those who believe [he is there] in actuality (*efficacia*)” (*CommRom.* 8.2.6). Origen’s explicit use of the Aristotelian terminology of *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια* here to interpret the same Pauline passage treated in the *De Principiis*, confirms our reading of terms such as “*capax*”, “*semina*”, “*insita*”, and “*posse*” as Latin equivalents for the Greek *δύναμις*, and our identification of them with the *imago dei* (cf. *DePrinc.* I.VIII.3).

Given that all rational natures possess the seed of deiformity intrinsic to their very nature as *logika*, how are we to understand Origen’s equally strong assertion that they are at the same time indeterminate? That virtue does not belong to them *essentially*, but merely

¹⁶⁶ Here, preserved in Rufinus’ Latin like precious gems, we have the crucial Greek terms *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια*. Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 2.1, 1103a; *De Anima* 2.2, 414a.

¹⁶⁷ Here I follow the convention of referring to the deified individual as a lowercase “god.” This convention serves to illustrate the simultaneous identity and difference that pertains to God and the deified creature. Origen is careful never to conflate the Source of Being with derivative beings, the latter remaining eternally contingent upon the former.

accidentally? Among created things, Origen maintains, “there is nothing which does not admit of good and evil and have a capacity (*capax*) for either” (*DePrinc.* I.VII.2). This dual capacity means that every being without exception has the intrinsic potency to become both good *and* evil, while not compelled by necessity to become either. Just as every human nature has the capacity to become a sailor, to learn the art of grammar or medicine, yet it does not follow from this that every man will *actually* be a sailor, a schoolmaster, and a doctor; so too, says Origen, the fact that rational creatures simultaneously possess a potency for good and for evil, does not mean that some will necessarily become good while others will become evil. No creature, Origen insists, is by nature (*naturam*) good or evil, but has the power (*posse*) to choose one or the other. Even the devil, despite the fact that he chose evil, possesses an equal capacity for good (*DePrinc.* I.VIII.3). Consequently, while the members of the Trinity possess virtue as a part of their essence (*substantialiter*), creatures possess it “as an accidental addition” (*accidens; ibid*). Given their *non-essential* character, the moral and intellectual virtues need to be acquired through personal effort and, in the absence of the requisite zeal, are in perpetual danger of being lost.

This understanding of potency appears to be in tension with what we discovered above. Instead of god-seed, we seem to have a seed of multiple possibilities; the seed of reason can become whatever it chooses to become – be it angel, devil, human, or god.¹⁶⁸ What *is* essential to the rational nature, according to this account, is its freedom to choose, its radical power for self-determination; *in nuce*, its unrestricted freewill. This view, of course, is inextricably bound up with Origen’s theodicy. God is good, and therefore cannot

¹⁶⁸ Origen thus anticipates Pico della Mirandola in his conception of the radical freedom of self-determination possessed by rational beings by a good 1000 yrs. In doing so, Origen is simply following Plato, *Phaedrus* 246a-249c; also “The Myth of Er”, *Republic* X. 614b-621d, and Philo *De Mundo*, 69-71.

be the source of evil natures. Nor does his justice allow him to create some beings as superior to others. As such, there is no fixed hierarchy in Origen’s cosmology (Pico scholars take note!). All beings are created free and equal and, consequently, possess a power of self-determination that is nothing short of dreadful.¹⁶⁹ If one wishes to plunge into the abyss of death and wickedness and become demonic one is free to do so; if one aspires to the good and, ascending beyond the abode of angels, chooses to become a radiant god and source of blessedness to others, one is likewise free to do so. Such is the radical freedom – and with it the awful weight of moral responsibility – that Origen bestows upon all rational creatures. Yet how are we to square this conception of the indeterminacy of the *logika*, with the notion that they are intrinsically good, that they are fundamentally *christi in potentia*? After all, Origen is clear that the soul *does* have virtue as its *telos*, and if ever it fails to conform to its true aim it will experience a punishment that is largely self-inflicted; namely, the suffering ensuing from its own “unstable and disordered condition” (*DePrinc.* II.X.5). Indeed, insofar as the *logika* are rational, they are not indeterminate in a wholly unqualified sense. To be rational, after all, implies making rational choices; and this ultimately means choosing the good. For who but a madman or a fool freely chooses what is to their own detriment?

The key to reconciling the disparity in Origen’s thought between the indeterminacy of rational natures and their formal determination *as* rational natures, I would like to suggest, lies in Aristotle’s discussion of the various senses of potency in *Metaphysics* IX. At IX.2 Aristotle draws an important distinction between non-rational and rational

¹⁶⁹ One thinks of Sophocles’ famous declaration at *Antigone* 332: “πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ κοῦδὲν ἀνθρώπου δεινότερον πέλει.”

potencies. The former refers to natural potencies, while the latter refers to potencies “accompanied by a rational formula” (*μετὰ λόγου*; *Meta IX.2 1046b1*). It is for this reason, says Aristotle, that “all arts, i.e. all productive forms of knowledge are potencies; they are originative sources of change in another thing or in the artist himself considered as other” (*Meta IX.2 1046b1-4*). Unlike natural potencies, which are capable of producing only one effect, rational potencies are capable of producing contrary effects. For example, while fire is only ever capable of heating, the medical art is capable of producing both sickness and health (*ibid*). The reason for this, as Aristotle explains, is that knowledge is a rational formula (*λόγος*), and the same rational formula both explains a thing *and* its privation. A doctor with a deep understanding of pathology simultaneously knows how to help and to harm a patient. Yet, crucially, these contrary effects do not belong to the medical art in the same way. The true aim, or nature of medicine is not to harm, but to heal. Thus, while rational potencies, unlike those belonging to nature, are capable of contraries, only the positive effect belongs to it essentially (*καθ’ αὐτὸ*) while the negative effect belongs to it as a kind of accident (*τινὰ κατὰ συμβεβηκός*; *Meta IX.2 1046b12*).

This leads to a final, crucial distinction between non-rational and rational potencies; namely, the former produce their effects by natural necessity, while the latter involves a free choice stemming from desire (*ὄρεξις*) or deliberation (*προαίρεσις*). In the case of fire, there is only one option: the production of heat. In the case of a rational potency such as medicine, however, there are two contrary options: the production of health or of harm. If the latter potency were governed by necessity, it would have to produce both contrary effects at the exact same time, i.e. simultaneously healing and harming the same patient – something which is clearly impossible. Thus, say Aristotle, “there must, then, be something

else that decides; I mean by this, desire or will (*ὄρεξις ἢ προαίρεσις*)” (*Meta IX.5 1048a10*). Implicit in every rational potency, every productive art, then, is the element of freewill, of choosing to act in accordance with the true aim of one’s art, or choosing to use one’s knowledge to act contrary to that aim. In other words, there is an element of indeterminacy intrinsic to every rational potency, a crucial freedom from necessity. As a result, rational potencies do not arise automatically in the way that non-rational potencies do (such as sense perceptions), but must be actively acquired by means of learning and practice. The ability to see is innate, while the capacity to play the flute, for example, must be acquired (*Meta IX.5 1047b31*).

This Aristotelian sense of rational potency, it seems to me, provides the key to understanding Origen’s dual conception of the potency of rational natures. Just as the rational potencies of the productive arts are at once “indeterminate” and determined, so too is the rational potency of the *logika*. In the same way that the knowledge of healing is inseparable from that of harming, so the knowledge of virtue implies a corresponding understanding of vice. In order to know the good, one must be capable of distinguishing it from what is not good. Every rational creature, insofar as it is rational, has this intrinsic capacity for discernment; it is free to partake of the knowledge of good and evil, to choose to associate itself with one or the other. This is the original potency of the *logika* as we find it portrayed in Genesis: within every rational nature, so to speak, is implanted the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Yet, as with the medical art, this twofold knowledge is not the final word. As Aristotle makes clear, the fact that the medical art is capable of contraries does not mean that it possesses the capacity for healing and for harming in the same way (*Meta IX.21046b12*). The true aim of the medical art, its formal essence, its *telos*, is not

ultimately to harm, but *to heal*. The fact that it is capable of contraries, does not mean that the doctor is unqualifiedly free to choose between one or the other. Instead, his true freedom lies in using his dual knowledge to bring about a healthy constitution. In precisely the same way, the dual capacity of the *logika*, their freedom to choose between good and evil does not mean that they are radically indeterminate. Instead, the true aim, the *telos*, of every rational nature, *qua* rational, is to freely choose the good, to attain to the wisdom of God and to realize its intrinsic capacity for deformity. As such, there is no conflict between Origen's understanding of rational potency as in one sense determined, and in another sense indeterminate. Once again, fate and freedom, so to speak, coincide.

As we noted above, Origen describes the indeterminacy of the *logika* in the Aristotelian language of essence and accident. The Father, Son, and Spirit are essentially (*substantialiter*) good, wise, and holy, while the *logika* are merely so by accident (*accidens*). For Origen, the distinction between essence and accident serves as the fundamental divide between uncreated and created reality. God the Father is the supreme *archē* and sole source of good, the Good-in-itself (*ἀπτοαγαθόν*), from whom the Son, the 'merely' good (*ἀγαθός*), and the Holy Spirit unceasingly derive their own essential goodness (*DePrinc.* I.II.13). Though existentially subordinate, the latter theologicals are nonetheless essentially good on account of their being *homoousios*¹⁷⁰ with the Father (*DePrinc.* I.II.13; I.II.10; I.VIII.3). The *logika*, on the other hand, as created beings fall outside this essential unity of the Godhead¹⁷¹ and thus possess goodness, insofar as they

¹⁷⁰ This term, of course, does not yet possess the supreme theological significance that it will acquire after Nicaea. Origen's equal insistence upon the *essential* unity of the Hypostases along with his *existential* subordination of the Son and the Spirit to the Father has allowed posterity to regard him at once as a proto-Arian and a pioneer of Orthodoxy.

¹⁷¹ See R. Berchman, *From Philo to Origen* 155.

possess it, as a non-essential attribute, or accident. While Origen derives the distinction between essence and accident from the Aristotelian tradition, his use of these terms is largely Platonic. That is to say, Origen describes the relation between essence and accident in terms of participation. All beings that exist and are rational, says Origen, are so by participation in God and the Logos, the sources of Being and Wisdom, while it is through participating (*participatione*) in the grace of the Holy Spirit that “those beings who are not holy in essence may be made holy” (*DePrinc.* I.III.8; cf. IV.IV.5). Origen insists that whenever created things are called good, they are so called by an “inexact (*abusive*) use of the word, since the goodness contained in them is accidental and not essential” (I.II.13). The implication is that their accidental goodness is derived from their participation in the essential Good. The degree to which creatures participate in the essential Goodness, Wisdom, and Holiness of God depends upon their receptivity to (*DePrinc.* I.I.2; I.II.8; I.III.8), zeal and affection for (I.III.8; I. VIII.3; II.VI.5; IV.IV.4), and imitation of (III.VI.1; IV.IV.4, 10) their principle. In other words, to the extent that beings revert upon their principle, to precisely that extent are they determined by that principle.

In keeping with Origen’s twofold understanding of potency, we find in the *De Principiis* a correspondingly dual conception of the *itinerarium mentis in deum*. The movement from image to likeness is at once the actualization of a potency, and a movement from being accidentally good to being “essentially” good.¹⁷² The movement from potency to act has largely been dealt with above, and is not difficult to understand. “Image” represents the intrinsic potency for deformity within every rational nature, while

¹⁷² The ontological hierarchy is thus as follows: God the Father is the Good-in-Itself (*Autoagathos*), the Logos-Son is contingently and eternally good (*agathos*), while the *logika* are accidentally good. The aim of the latter is to move from an unstable to a stable possession of the good as “a kind of nature.”

“likeness” represents the realization of this potency as actual deformity. By means of the diligent cultivation of the god-seed within each of us, eventually, with the help of divine providence, we come to enjoy the full fruition of our original nature – eternal wellbeing. What is perhaps more difficult to understand is Origen’s parallel description of this process as a movement from accident to essence. These two conceptions of the journey are in fact complementary. The first model, that of potency and actuality, indicates the original goodness of beings as their *archē*, while pointing to the realization of this good as their *telos*, their true goal and purpose in life, the destiny which the supreme Good has ordained for the entire cosmos. The second model, that of essence and accident, emphasises the freedom of rational beings to consciously *choose* this aim as their own. As such, there is a necessary and creative tension within Origen’s conception of the Return between deification as the individual and collective destiny of beings pre-ordained, so to speak, by God, and deification as something freely chosen and achieved by means of diligent and prolonged effort on the part of the creature. God is the supreme *archē* and *telos* of the universe, the source and consummation of eternal wellbeing, whose creative and providential activity (*ἐνέργεια*) is unceasing; the *logika* are perpetually in motion (*DePrinc.* II.XI.1),¹⁷³ at once intuitively attracted to their goal and yet capable of choosing or rejecting it.

In essence, the journey begins from possessing goodness as external to oneself, as mere potency or accident, and progresses towards the actualization of this potency and the

¹⁷³ Origen states here: “It is certain that no living creature can be altogether inactive and immovable, but that it is eager for every kind of movement and for continual action and volition; and it is clear, I think, that this nature resides in all living beings. Much more then must a rational being such as man be always engaged in some movement or activity.”

possession of goodness as intrinsic to oneself. Origen's model is both rooted in Aristotle, and grounded in the experiential wisdom of the desert; it is both philosophical and ascetic. For novices starting out on the path of perfection, virtue is at first experienced as painfully external to oneself – it quite literally feels *un-natural*, and requires great discipline, exertion, and constant attentiveness. There is a perpetual danger of backsliding, of losing one's discipline and succumbing to temptation, boredom, or negligence. Indeed, Origen consistently attributes the fall to “satiety” (*satietas*), “negligence” (*neglegentiam*), or “sloth” (*desidia*). (*DePrinc.* I.III.8; I.IV.1; II.IX.2:).¹⁷⁴ The passion of “sloth”, or *desidia*, is in fact a later Latin derivative of the Greek “*acedia*”¹⁷⁵ – what the Evagrian tradition of desert spirituality calls “the mother of all vices”.¹⁷⁶ *Acedia* refers to a peculiar passion that all ascetics must face and come to terms with; namely, an unbearable, tormenting restlessness that threatens to drive the ascetic from his cell in desperate pursuit of distraction. *Acedia* is a kind of dissatisfaction with the Good, a desire to exchange the simplicity of being, for the immediate gratification of lesser goods. As such, it is reminiscent of the *desidia* or *satietas* that precipitates the fall of the *logika*. The way to guard against this destructive tendency is through cultivating an *insatiable* yearning for, and an unwavering attention to, God, the supreme Good (*DePrinc.* I.III.8; see above). If boredom and satiety precipitate the fall, it is boundless zeal and constant spiritual attentiveness that leads to restoration and deification. Origen's cosmic understanding of

¹⁷⁴ Remarkably, Origen never attributes the fall to a perversion of the will. Instead, as with the “gnostic” traditions of India, it is essentially due to ignorance, i.e. boredom, carelessness, or negligence. The fall, and the return, is intellectual.

¹⁷⁵ See J. Radden, *Moody Minds Distempered: Essays on Melancholy and Depression* 37-38.

¹⁷⁶ See G. Bunge, *Despondency*, for a concise treatment of this topic.

the fall and restoration is both inspired by asceticism and serves as the archetype for the individual journey to enlightenment.¹⁷⁷

The philosophical basis for the practice of asceticism can be found in Aristotle. A primary reason for the ascetic life stems from the fact that beings do not possess the good as an intrinsic part of their nature. The contingency or externality of the moral and intellectual virtues, what Origen terms their accidental character, means that the path to perfection requires prolonged education and exertion. Unlike natural potencies such as the ability to see or hear, rational potencies like the art of flute playing, or the art of living a virtuous life need to be acquired. Aristotle explicitly links his discussion of the rational potency of art in *Metaphysics Theta* with his discussion of virtue as a rational potency in *Nicomachean Ethics* II.1. Just as in the former work Aristotle contrasts the natural potency of the senses with the rational potency of flute playing (*Meta* VIII. 1047b 31), so in the latter work he contrasts the natural potency of sight with the rational potency of playing the lyre. In this latter case, however, the example of lyre playing serves to illustrate the rational potency of virtue.¹⁷⁸ While the ability to see is given, the capacity for virtue, like art, needs to be acquired: “the virtues (τὰς ἀρετὰς),” says Aristotle, “we get by first exercising them (ἐνεργήσαντες πρότερον), as also happens in the case of the [other] arts as

¹⁷⁷ Importantly, Origen does not conceive of the fall as a single, catastrophic, historical event; Instead, individual minds “decline by slow degrees” as a result of their negligence or satiety (*DePrinc.* I.III.8). Just as a geometrician or a doctor does not suddenly lose his hard-earned knowledge overnight but does so gradually as a result of negligence, so too the soul gradually and almost imperceptibly declines from its knowledge of the good (*DePrinc.* I.IV.1). Origen’s suggestion of repeated falls, more than anything, stems from the practical wisdom of asceticism. The spiritual practitioner needs constant mindfulness to guard against backsliding, and is capable of recovering himself by means of attention and exertion.

¹⁷⁸ Origen likewise uses art as analogous to virtue. For example, he compares the gradual decline of souls from the Good to the progressive loss of knowledge and skill of the geometer or doctor stemming from neglect. Virtue is an art and science that requires education, training, and maintenance (cf. *DePrinc.* I.IV.1).

well (*τῶν ἄλλων τεχνῶν*)” (NE II.1 1103b1). Just as we become builders or lyre players by building or playing the lyre, so too we become virtuous by engaging in (*πράττοντες*) virtuous activities. At the same time, Aristotle hints at the dual nature intrinsic to every rational potency. It is from the same causes and means (*ἐκ τῶν αὐτῶν καὶ διὰ τῶν αὐτῶν*), he states, that virtue is both produced and destroyed, that we become both good lyre players and bad lyre players (NE II.1 1103b7). A single *logos* underlies every art. Whether or not one realizes the true aim of any given art – be it the musical, building, or ethical art – ultimately depends upon the artist.

It is precisely this “indeterminacy”, this dual capacity of the ethical art to produce or destroy virtue, that accounts for what Origen deems its “accidental” character. As creatures, rational beings are not virtuous by essence, but possess an intrinsic capacity *to become* virtuous if they so choose. As Aristotle puts it, though the virtues neither arise in us by nature, nor contrary to nature, nonetheless “*we are adapted by nature to receive them*” (*πεφυκόσι μὲν ἡμῖν δεῖξασθαι αὐτάς*; NE II.1 1103a25). Origen similarly describes the *logika* as possessing a natural capacity for, and receptivity to, God, i.e., the Good as source of the virtues (*DePrinc.* IV.IV.8). Indeed, in the absence of this natural receptivity there would be no basis for the ethical life. We can throw a stone into the air ten thousand times, Aristotle declares, and still we cannot train it to move upwards rather than downwards (NE II.1 1103a20). Natural potencies are fixed; rational potencies are free. Thus, the way to become morally and intellectually virtuous is through education and training: “We are adapted by nature to receive [the virtues],” says Aristotle, “and they are made perfect by habit” (*τελειουμένοις δὲ διὰ τοῦ ἔθους*; NE II.1 1103a25). As a result of repeated acts of virtue, we gradually learn to become virtuous and, given enough time,

these virtuous activities eventually give rise to stable states of character (*ἔξεις*) – “ἐκ τῶν ὁμοίων ἐνεργειῶν αἱ ἔξεις γίνονται” (NE II.1 1103b20).¹⁷⁹ Insofar as the virtues flow *naturally*, as it were, from these states of character (*ἔξεις*), the latter may be regarded as a kind of “second nature.” While this “second nature” lacks the absolute permanence of a first nature, it does possess the relative permanence of deeply ingrained habit, of a fixed disposition.¹⁸⁰ In Origenist terms, virtue ceases to be accidental and becomes, in a certain qualified sense, “essential.”

In the *De Principiis*, Origen joins this Aristotelian understanding of virtue as *hexis*, to the Platonic understanding of virtue as participation. The former, as we noted above, provides the philosophical basis for the practice of asceticism. The life of *ascesis*, as the name indicates, is fundamentally a life of training, of spiritual exercises and education (or perhaps, *re-education*). For Origen, life itself is a kind of *ascesis*. Whatever circumstances arise for us, both now and in whatever future existence(s) there might be, present an opportunity for training in virtue. Whatever challenging or painful phenomena confront us in our lives as a consequence of our past actions provide a precious opportunity to train in the virtues of patience and courage; whatever privations we are forced to endure provide an opportunity to let go of greed and fixation, to cultivate generosity of spirit. Our coarse, physical embodiment, says Origen, offers an extended training (*eruditio*) in virtue culminating in our eventual perfection (*DePrinc.* II.III.2). It is through our own exertion

¹⁷⁹ From like activities the corresponding habits come to be. The language of ‘likeness’, or *homoiosis*, and ‘*energeia*’ is intriguing here. Like produces like, activity produces a kind of actuality. Through the imitation of God, we become godlike; by action we actualize our potency for deiformity.

¹⁸⁰ I owe this understanding of *hexis* as ‘second nature’ to my correspondence with Dr. Eli Diamond. According to the latter, though Aristotle does not use the term ‘second nature’, it is perfectly consistent with his ethical view that what the soul has become, or possesses, is akin to a kind of nature.

and attentiveness to wisdom that we become wise (*DePrinc.* I.VIII.3). As with Aristotle, Origen's ethical education is not primarily theoretical, but is rooted in practical action.¹⁸¹ It is through cultivating the virtues that we become virtuous. Asceticism is mind training.

In addition to this, Origen draws upon the Platonic notion of participation. Because created beings merely possess virtue as an accident, it is only through participation in the essential Good of the Godhead that they can come to possess virtue "essentially"; that is, with the stability of a kind of "second nature". The acquisition of virtue is thus brought about through a combination of spiritual training (*DePrinc.* I.II.7), and grace (I.III.8); it is by participation in the illuminating and sanctifying powers of the Son and the Holy Spirit that beings become wise and holy (I.III.8). This participation, in turn, depends upon one's own capacity, or receptivity to the Good. As *energeia*, the Father's providential activity radiates unceasingly throughout the cosmos through the agency of the Son and the Holy Spirit. The task of the creature is to render itself receptive to this divine activity (*ἐνέργεια*), or grace, to expand its capacity for God by means of ascetic practise. By acting virtuously, one's capacity for virtue becomes actualized; in Platonic terms, one begins to *participate* in virtue. This fledgling participation in turn renders one more receptive to the Good as the source of virtue, and hence *more* capable of participating in it. In this way the path progressively unfolds. Eventually, after a lengthy course of training (in some cases involving multiple ages or lifetimes), this participation becomes so complete that participated and participator, agent and patient merge and become (virtually) indistinguishable. Divine grace and human exertion, participation and habituation thus

¹⁸¹ See J. Lear, *The Desire to Understand* 152-160.

conspire to lead the individual to the perfection of deiformity (*DePrinc.* I.III.8). As with creation, the consummation of the world is a *synergeia*.

At the point where participated and participator merge, virtue ceases to be merely accidental, i.e. unstable and external to the participating self, and instead acquires the intrinsic stability of a kind of “second nature”. In a qualified sense, it may be said to have become “essential”. The paradigmatic example of this is the soul of Christ. Origen is clear that the soul of Jesus is in every way identical to every other created soul – save in one respect. While the rest of the *logika* fell to varying degrees from their original union with the Logos, the soul of Jesus remained in unwavering contemplation of its principle (*DePrinc.* II.VI.3-5). On account of its unrelenting zeal for the Good from beginningless time, says Origen, “all susceptibility to change or alteration was destroyed, and what formerly depended upon the will (*arbitrio*) was *by the long influence of custom (longi usus affectu)* changed into nature (*naturam*)” (*DePrinc.* II.VI.5). Origen’s language of custom or habit (*usus*) changing into nature is strikingly similar to Aristotle’s understanding of habit giving rise to stable states of character. It is by means of lengthy habituation and participation that virtue ceases to be merely accidental and becomes “essential”. At this point virtue no longer depends upon *will (arbitrio)*, i.e. upon having to consciously choose virtue over non virtue, but flows spontaneously from the virtuous self as a kind of “second nature”.¹⁸²

¹⁸² The gradual transformation of will into nature in Origen, is in contrast to Eriugena who draws a clear distinction between will and nature. For the latter, God punishes the wicked will (which he did not create), while preserving the immutable nature (which he did create). Origen recognizes no such distinction. The freewill of the *logika* is intrinsic to their nature as rational beings; as such, the rehabilitation of the will is at once the restoration of the rational nature. Whatever dichotomy may have existed between nature and will at the beginning, is resolved in the transformation of the unstable will into stable nature in the end. See my “*Apokatastasis* in Origen and Eriugena”, esp. 207-209.

Yet, how is it that something accidental can become essential? Origen resolves this apparent incongruity by drawing upon an image derived from Stoicism;¹⁸³ namely, the image of iron in the fire. Just as the soul as a rational potency is capable of both good and evil, says Origen, so a lump of iron is susceptible to both cold and heat. Yet suppose we place the lump of iron in a furnace and leave it there for a long time; so long in fact that the iron becomes wholly permeated by fire – to the extent that one can no longer discern in it anything *but* fire? At this point, says Origen, it is in fact “far truer (*quod verius est magis*) to say of it...that it has been completely transformed into fire (*totam ignem effectam*), because we can discern nothing else in it except fire” (*DePrinc.* II.VI.6). If one were to try to touch or handle the iron, one would no longer encounter the power of iron but of fire. In the same way the soul of Christ, though intrinsically capable of good and evil, through its timeless immersion in the Good was transformed into pure goodness and came to possess virtue unchangeably as a kind of “essence”. Insofar as the soul of Jesus is not ultimately different from any other soul, it serves as the paradigm for every rational creature’s progression from possessing virtue as an accident to possessing it as a kind of essence (*DePrinc.* IV.IV.4). That is to say, from being potentially god to being actually god.

The chief difference, of course, between the soul of Christ and all the other *logika* is that the former has always been in perfect possession of its end, while the latter have not. In the same way that the Logos is God by “remaining always in uninterrupted contemplation of the depths of the Father” (*παρέμενε τῇ ἀδιαλείπτῳ θεῶι τοῦ πατρικοῦ*

¹⁸³ The Stoics used it to describe how one corporeal substance (soul) could permeate another corporeal substance (body).

βάθους; *CommJohn* II.2), so the soul of Jesus is god through its timeless reversion upon the Logos. Thus, the Father alone is unqualifiedly God, the Logos is contingently God, while Christ is so accidentally. All three partake of a single divine *ousia*: The Father is the Source, the Logos his eternal emanation, Christ the eternally perfected creature. Yet, while the former two are essentially divine, the latter is only accidentally so. The soul of Jesus thus possesses the supreme dignity of having freely *chosen* the good, of having played a crucial and conscious role in its own divine constitution. As such, it serves as the model for all the *logika*. Though the latter have never been in perfect communion with their principle, the example of Christ points to their own intrinsic potency for divine union. By means of the parallel conceptions of potency and act, accident and essence, Origen walks a fine line between identity and distinction. As minds, the *logika* possess a certain “kinship”¹⁸⁴ with the divine Mind, they are all gods *in potentia*. As creatures, they are accidentally, rather than essentially divine; they are not *homoousios* with the Father yet possess the capacity of becoming *homoi-ousios*, the realization of which stands as their true aim, or *telos*. Like iron in the fire,¹⁸⁵ every rational nature is capable of becoming so immersed in God that it is *more* true to say of it that it is god, rather than creature. The ultimate aim of creation is to freely choose the Good, to actualize its capacity for deiformity, to realize itself by transcending itself.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Plato *Timaeus*, 41c.

¹⁸⁵ Eriugena also draws upon this famous image in his discussion of the return in Book V of the *Periphyseon*. It seems not insignificant, however, that he prefers the related image of air becoming light. The heightened subtlety of this latter image is better suited to Eriugena’s idealism. Cf. *Periphyseon* III. p.173; V. 879A-B, 987C.

¹⁸⁶ “But we must not, as Aristotle proclaims, “follow those who advise us, being men, to think of human things, and, being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us” (NE, 1177B30). As with Aristotle, Origen paradoxically urges us to realize ourselves by transcending ourselves.

4.3 Transfiguration

Before bringing this chapter concerning the end and consummation of things to its conclusion, we need to consider the ultimate fate of the body and the material cosmos as a whole. Given that Origen was accused of denying the resurrection body in antiquity, an accusation that persists even among some contemporary scholars, it seems necessary to conclude with a consideration of this important and misunderstood aspect of Origen's thought. In what follows, I hope to show how the movement from natural and corruptible body, to spiritual and incorruptible body exactly parallels the soul's movement from image to likeness. As such, the movement from contingency to constancy, potential deformity to actual deformity does not exclude the body, but includes it in the actualization of creation. As such, the end and consummation of the cosmos, when God is finally "all in all" (I Cor 15:28), does not involve the *destruction* of this material world but its *transfiguration*.

To begin with, we need to gain a better understanding of Origen's conception of matter and its relation to, and distinction from, the body. Origen refers to matter alternately as *hyle* (ὕλη),¹⁸⁷ *hypokeimenon* (*quae subesse/quod subiacet corporibus*), and substance (*substantia*) (*DePrinc.* II.I.4; II.II.1; IV.IV.6,7). Body, on the other hand, consists of *qualified* matter; that is, matter to which the four qualities of heat, cold, wet, and dry have been added (*DePrinc.* II.I.4). In keeping with Aristotelian physics, the four qualities combine to make up the four elements, while these primitive bodies in turn combine to make up all other bodies (*De Gen et Corr* II.1-3). Although Origen distinguishes between

¹⁸⁷ The Greek term is twice preserved and then translated into Latin with: "*id est materiam*" (*DePrinc.* II.I.4; IV.IV.6).

bare, unqualified matter and the qualified matter of bodies, he regards the former as a purely conceptual reality (*ibid*). While matter as the underlying substance of body “exists in its own proper nature without qualities”, it never *actually* exists apart from qualities. Thus, Origen concedes, “it is by the intellect alone (*intellectu solo*) that this substance which underlies (*quod subiacet*) bodies and is capable of receiving qualities (*capax qualitatis*) is discerned to be matter” (*DePrinc.* IV.IV.6; cf. *De Gen et Corr* 329a25). In the same way that soul and body have never existed apart from each other, so from beginningless creation matter and qualities have existed together in perfect union.¹⁸⁸ Origen’s view of creation is thoroughly “psychosomatic” and hylomorphic. Matter is a purely hypothetical reality, a kind of underlying substance that is both necessary yet entirely unknowable in itself. In essence, it is a kind of principle of indeterminacy, of pure receptivity (cf. *DePrinc.* IV.IV.7) which provides the basis for every possible transmutation within creation. It is the changeless underlying substance (*ὑποκείμενον*) to which all qualities are added as accidents (*DePrinc.* IV.IV.6).

The indeterminacy of matter as the underlying substance of bodies provides the necessary counterpart to the indeterminacy of rational natures. Just as the latter possess a radical freedom for self-determination, so the former possesses a limitless capacity for being determined; the latter are *capax dei*, the former is *capax qualitatis*. In the same way that the diverse motions of the *logika* are responsible for the diversity of the world, so it is material bodies that enable this diversification to unfold (*DePrinc.* II.I.4). In fact, it is

¹⁸⁸ On account of the inseparability of matter and qualities Origen notes that: “some who were desirous of inquiring more deeply into these questions have ventured to assert that bodily matter consists of nothing else but qualities” (*DePrinc.* IV.IV.7). This, of course, is the view that Gregory of Nyssa famously adopts and transmits to Eriugena.

precisely the compound nature of creatures as embodied minds that accounts for their accidental character. The three divine Hypostases are simple, uncreated, incorporeal, and essential; creatures are compound, created, corporeal, and accidental. This, as we noted above, is the fundamental divide in Origen's cosmos; namely, the Real, and what is derived from, or participates in the Real. The *telos* of creation, of the relatively real, is to become as like (*ὁμοίωσις*) to Reality as possible, to participate in and be determined by its *archē* to the point of merger. To become, as it were, actual and "essential". In this regard, Origen's depiction of the qualities of hot and cold, wet and dry as accidents presents an intriguing parallel to the accidental character of the virtues. Just as the moral virtues are accidental to rational natures, so the sensible qualities are accidental to bodily nature. Because matter is capable of receiving all qualities, bodies are capable of being endlessly transformed into each other. As the most primitive bodies, the four elements do not possess fixed natures, but merely provisional ones. Water can become earth, air can become fire and so on (*DePrinc.* II.I.4). This accidental and provisional character of matter and bodies provides the necessary counterpart for the *logika* as free moral agents, and is of utmost importance for the transfiguration of the cosmos.

The link between the indeterminacy of mind and matter, so to speak,¹⁸⁹ is more clearly revealed in *DePrinc.* IV when Origen adds the qualities of hardness and softness to the original four qualities, for a total of six: hot, cold, wet, dry, hardness, and softness (*DePrinc.* IV.IV.7). Bostock's suggestion that Origen derives these additional qualities

¹⁸⁹ Needless to say, we could not be further from the mind/matter dichotomy that such language instinctively evokes in the minds of modern, post-Cartesian individuals. For Origen, the distinction between mind and matter, body and soul, is purely conceptual. Both are inextricably bound together within a thoroughly hylomorphic and psychosomatic reality.

from Plato's *Timaeus* is a compelling one.¹⁹⁰ In the *Timaeus*, Plato describes the transformation of the elements through a process of solidification and dissolution. Thus, “water becomes earth through solidification (*πηγνύμενον*)...and air through being melted down (*τηκόμενον*) and dissolved (*διακρινόμενον*). It becomes fire through being warmed...and again the fire when quenched becomes air, and air having been thickened (*πυκνυόμενον*)...and compressed becomes water and then earth again” (*Tim.* 49B-C). As Bostock points out, what drives these elemental transformations appears to be the qualities of solidification and dissolution, or hardness and softness. If Origen understood the transformations of the elements in these terms, it would “help to explain why the qualities of hardness and softness were added to his list of the four primary qualities.”¹⁹¹ These additional qualities, as Bostock rightly maintains, provide the link between bodily and spiritual transformation. In the same way that the elements rise and fall in cyclical transformations – fire cooling, solidifying, descending to the earth; earth warming, softening, and ascending to the heavens – so ensouled bodies rise and fall in response to qualitative changes. Thus, says Origen, whenever material substance “is drawn down to lower beings it is formed into the grosser and more solid condition of body (*in crassiorem corporis statum solidioremque*)...But when it ministers to more perfect and blessed beings, it shines in the splendour of ‘celestial bodies’ (*caelestium corporum*)” (*DePrinc.* II.II.2; II.X.1). The qualitative changes to which these bodies are subject correspond directly to the qualitative changes within the psyches of the associated bodies. The body,

¹⁹⁰ G. Bostock, “Quality and Corporeity in Origen”: 329.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.* 330.

Origen explicitly states, “will be changed (*permutata*) in proportion to the *quality* (*qualitate*) and merits of those who wear it” (*DePrinc.* II.III.7).

There is then, for Origen, a direct correlation between sensible and spiritual qualities. Minds which are aflame with the love of God ascend and become fiery, while those whose fervour has cooled descend to the level of souls (that is, cooled off minds) and become weighed down by earthy bodies. Origen also speaks of the soul becoming hardened due to negligence, and contrasts the “stony heart” of wickedness to the “heart of flesh”, the latter being soft and receptive to the truth (*DePrinc.* III.I. 14-15). The parallel between sensible and spiritual qualities is most strikingly evident in Origen’s descriptions of the fall and return. As we just noted, Origen describes the fall in qualitative terms as a kind of spiritual cooling. He observes that scripture calls God “a consuming fire” (*DePrinc.* I.I.2; II.XIII.3; Heb 12:29; Dt 4:24, 9:3) who, “maketh his angels spirits and his ministers a burning fire” (Heb 1:7; Ps 104:4). In addition, we are commanded to be “fervent in spirit” (Rom 12:11). All of this, he says, proves God “to be hot and fiery” and, consequently, “those who have fallen away from the love of God must undoubtedly be said to have cooled in their affection for him and to have become cold” (*DePrinc.* II.VIII.3). Origen goes on to associate the qualities of cold and wet with the devil, whom scripture describes as a dragon living in the frigid waters of the sea. It is plausible, therefore, he concludes, that the word *psyche* is derived from *psychesthai* (to cool).¹⁹² Souls are simply minds (*noes*) whose love of God has grown cold, whose “participation in the divine fire” has been diminished (*ibid*). In the same way, then, that the elements are not fixed natures, but are capable of changing into one another due to the presence or absence of particular qualities, so the *logika* possess

¹⁹² Cf. Philo, *De Somniis* 1, VI. 31.

merely provisional natures and bodies composed of fluctuating spiritual and sensible qualities. At the heart of reality thus lies a radical freedom, a freedom that is nonetheless contained and directed by an overarching Reason.

It is most interesting, from this qualitative point of view, to consider Origen's understanding of hell and deification. While these two concepts may at first seem like an odd pairing, they are in fact closely related. The torment of hell and the bliss of deification are merely contrary perspectives of a single divine inferno.¹⁹³ For sinners, the furnace of divine love is a refining fire burning away the impurities of their original, jewel-like natures (*DePrinc.* (II.X.6; I.I.2; cf. Is 66:16, 17; Mal 3:3); it is the discerning fire that consumes bad thoughts and awakens sinners to awareness of the seeds of evil within them (*CommMatt.* X.II, III; cf. Mt 13:37). Sinners, whose love has grown cold and who have thus acquired heavy, earthy bodies, can only be restored and perfected by subjection to the blazing inferno of divine love which, dissolving the hardness of their hearts, transforms them into fervent fire. All creatures, though capable of embodying any elemental quality are potentially, and indeed most properly, fire. In order to become fire, or, better, *fiery*, they require the presence of actual fire, the eternal conflagration of the divine *energeia*. This process of actualization begins with the purgation of hell and culminates with the perfection of paradise; the refiner's furnace becomes the forge of the metallurgist, in which the cold, hard iron of the soul is transformed into the molten fire of an ardent spirit (cf. *DePrinc.* II.VI.6).

¹⁹³ See E. Jeuneau, "La Métaphysique du Feu," for a superb treatment of this theme in Eriugena. While Origen lacks the notion of theophany, so central to Eriugena's thought, his monistic understanding of God as the purifying and deifying fire leads to a similar kind of perspectivalism here.

As we noted earlier, the indeterminacy of the *logika* does not mean that they are *radically* indeterminate. Insofar as they are rational, their true aim lies in the realization of truth and the acquisition of virtue. The same must also hold true for bodies. Insofar as matter exists solely for the purpose of serving the created order it cannot be said to be wholly devoid of teleology. As with Aristotle, bodies are the instruments of the soul; they exist to serve the aims of the latter, or rather, the latter *is* the aim (*ἐντελέχεια*; *De Anima*, 415b15). Unlike Aristotle, however, Origen's understanding of individual substance is fluid. Though eternal, the universe and its inhabitants are not fixed, but free, and capable of radical transformations. In a sense, there is only a single, unchanging substance underlying the diversity of the world, and that is the compound rational substance. The world is originally spirit, and its aim is to realize itself as spirit. Thus, while the capacity for self-determination essential to the *logika* as moral agents results in a diversity of provisional natures, their true essence is that of *nous*, or spirit¹⁹⁴ (cf. *DePrinc.* II.VIII.3). Similarly, the corresponding diversity of bodies are merely fragments of one original material substance (*DePrinc.* IV.IV.8), at once indeterminate yet potentially fiery. Given that created minds cannot exist apart from bodies, cannot, in fact, be truly free and self-determining without the support of the underlying matter of the body (cf. *DePrinc.* II.II.1; II.III.3), the deification of creation simultaneously embraces mind *and* body. The compound nature of the creature is ultimately that of spirit *and* fire.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ I adopt here Michael Chase's rendering of *nous* as spirit. See *Plotinus, or, the Simplicity of Vision* 28 note 10.

¹⁹⁵ At *CCels* III.41-42, Origen explicitly defends the corporeality of Christ himself, stating that the *mortal body* and *human soul* of Jesus was deified and transfigured along with his mind.

To insist that the body is ultimately destroyed in the final *apokatastasis* shows a crucial misunderstanding of Origen's doctrine of creation and deification. As we have repeatedly stated, the fundamental divide within Origen's cosmology lies between the Creator as simple, essential, and incorporeal, and the creature as compound, accidental, and corporeal. Scholars who persist in dismissing the corporeality of the latter as a Rufinian modification have allowed their minds to be poisoned by the exaggerations of Jerome and other hostile critics.¹⁹⁶ Not only does Origen corroborate this view in Greek writings¹⁹⁷ that have not been tampered with, the very logic of the *De Principiis* hangs upon this fundamental divide. The corporeality of creatures is inextricably bound up with their accidental, indeterminate character as free moral agents. Denying the centrality of embodiment negates the very possibility of freewill (cf. *De Princ.* II.III.3) – and with it the entire cosmic drama of creation and fall, restoration and consummation. Contrary to Origen's critics, the fall does *not* lead to embodiment *per se*, but merely to coarse and *corruptible* embodiment. The diverse motions of the *logika* produce correspondingly diverse bodies situated within diverse circumstances, in keeping with the twin workings of freewill and providence. While Origen describes earthly embodiment as a “subjection to vanity”, this is merely one aspect of his corporealism. Equally important to him is the Pauline notion of the glorious resurrection body.

¹⁹⁶ G. Bostock, in his otherwise superb article cited herein, in the end succumbs to this ancient and erroneous view so widely propagated by the enduring editorial work of Koetschau and Butterworth.

¹⁹⁷ In a Greek fragment of Origen's lost Commentary on Genesis, the latter distinguishes between the luminous body (*ἀγγοειδής*) in Paradise and the leather garments subsequent to the fall. This further suggests that the 'original' state of beings is one of subtle embodiment, while the fall gives rise to coarse, fleshly embodiment. See L. R. Hennesey, “Incorporeality in Origen's Eschatology”: 375.

One of the fundamental principles of the *De Principiis* is that God never destroys what he has created: “things which were made by God for the purpose of permanent existence cannot suffer a destruction of their substance” (*DePrinc.* III.VI.5).¹⁹⁸ Substance, as we have seen, is twofold: rational nature and bodily matter – *both* of which, Origen is clear, were made “in the beginning” (*DePrinc.* II.IX.1; IV.IV.8). Of these “universal natures” (*generales naturas*), one corporeal the other incorporeal, “each undergo their own different [yet wholly interrelated] changes” (*DePrinc.* III.VI.7). Thus, while beings are capable of undergoing endless transformations for better or for worse in keeping with their merits, with respect to substance they are wholly *incapable* of being destroyed. Origen distinguishes between form (*habitus*) and substance (*substantia*). Thus, while Paul states that “the form (*σχῆμα*) of this world shall pass away” (1 Cor 7:31), David speaks of the heavens being changed as a garment (Ps 102:26). For Origen, these passages point to a qualitative alteration, or transformation of the outer form, or appearance of things in the *eschaton*: “it is not by any means an annihilation or destruction of the material substance (*substantiae materialis*) that is indicated, but the occurrence of a certain change of quality (*qualitatis*) and an alteration of the outward form (*habitus*)” (*DePrinc.* I.VI.4). The prophet Isaiah, too, corroborates this view when he speaks of “a new heaven and a new earth” (Is 65:17). Thus, the final *apokatastasis*, when God will be “all in all” (I Cor 15:28) heralds the renewal (*innovatio*) of “heaven and earth”, i.e. incorporeal *and* corporeal nature, the

¹⁹⁸ Eriugena will make this a cornerstone of his great metaphysical epic, the *Periphyseon*, as well. Beyond Origen, however, Eriugena sees *all* substance – mind *and* body – as ultimately intelligible and incorporeal. Thus, while he follows Origen’s insistence upon the preservation of the substance of soul and body, for Eriugena the body is not preserved *qua* corporeal, but *qua* incorporeal. For Origen, a subtle corporealism is preserved, indeed, *must* be preserved. Eriugena mocks this idea at *Peri.* V. 985C-988B (see note 131 above).

transmutation (*transmutatio*) and alteration of the entire psychosomatic, hylomorphic universe.¹⁹⁹ Like the mind, the body to which the mind is inseparably joined is not annihilated but *transfigured*.²⁰⁰ It becomes, on account of its purity and clarity, a kind of “ethereal” body (*DePrinc.* I.VI.4).

Origen is careful to assert that this ethereal, or spiritual body is not ultimately different from the earthy, fleshly body. It is for this reason that he explicitly rejects the Aristotelian notion of ether as a fifth element (*DePrinc.* III.VI.6). The spiritual body may have an ethereal character, but this is merely a metaphor for spiritual refinement. Origen is adamant (pardon the pun)²⁰¹ that the resurrection body does not consist of some special celestial element; it is not different in nature from the earthly body but a transfigured version of the latter: “...and if”, he insists, “it is necessary, *as it certainly is*, for us to live in bodies, we ought to live in no bodies but our own” (*DePrinc.* II.X.1). The spiritual body consists of the very same underlying matter as the fleshly body – it has simply undergone a profound *qualitative* transformation. That is to say, it has undergone a movement from accidentally fiery to “essentially” fiery, and from potentially spiritual to actually spiritual.²⁰² As we noted above, the indeterminacy of matter does not mean that it is wholly

¹⁹⁹ Many scholars, basing themselves on the testimonies of Jerome, insist precisely the opposite; namely, that in order for God to be “all in all” (I Cor 15:28) all trace of corporeality must disappear.

²⁰⁰ Eriugena’s understanding of this crucial point is complex. He insists upon the preservation of soul and body while positing the dissolution of one into the other. Thus body dissolves into soul, soul into spirit, spirit into God (*Peri* V. 876A-B). Like Origen, Eriugena insists upon the preservation, within this transformation, of the substance of the body “like air permeated by light.” Given the latter’s idealist understanding of substance, it is less clear what this actually means for the ultimate fate of the body. Cf. *Peri*. V. 874B: “For the whole of human nature will be resolved into the single Mind so that nothing shall remain therein save that Mind alone by which he shall contemplate his Creator.” V. 879A: For nothing exists in human nature which is not spiritual and intelligible, *for even the substance of the body is intelligible*.” V.993B: “...for every intelligent physicist accepts as an axiom that the nature and substance of bodies is itself incorporeal.” This, it seems to me, is a considerable departure from Origen.

²⁰¹ Origen’s nickname was Adamantios on account of his indefatigable asceticism.

²⁰² See G. Bostock, “Quality and Corporeity in Origen”: 334-335.

devoid of teleology. Insofar as matter is subservient to mind, was created exclusively *for* mind, it cannot but partake of the purposiveness of the latter. If the original nature and ultimate aim of the soul is to become spirit, then the original nature and ultimate aim of matter is correspondingly to become fiery. As soul/body composites, each of us carries within ourselves the seeds of transfiguration, the capacity to be transformed into fiery spirits. Like the iron in the fire, we have the potency to become gods, to become wholly other while remaining essentially ourselves.

What is true for every individual soul/body composite is true for the entire universe: “We believe,” says Origen, “that the quality of a spiritual body is something such as will make a fitting habitation not only for all saints and perfected souls *but also for that “whole creation”* (*veram etiam omnem illam creaturam*) which is to be delivered from the bondage of corruption” (*DePrinc.* III.VI.4; cf. Rom 8:21). This fitting habitation, or “habitation of blessedness” (*DePrinc.* III.VI.6; cf. Rom 9:21) refers both to the individual resurrection body, and to the collective abode of deified spirits; it is the “house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor 5:1; *DePrinc.* II.III.6; III.VI.4; III.VI.6). Origen weaves together these notions with the Pauline distinction between things “seen” and “temporal”, and things “unseen” and “eternal” (cf. 2 Cor 4:18). In using the term “unseen”, he argues, Paul does *not* mean “invisible” – what the Greeks call *ἀσώματα* – but rather the *not yet* seen (*nondum tamen videri*; *DePrinc.* II.III.6).²⁰³ The distinction, therefore, is not between corporeal and incorporeal, but between the coarse and corruptible corporeality of the present state of the world, and the subtle, transfigured corporeality of the world to come.

²⁰³ We have here yet another confirmation of Origen’s corporealism, which goes far beyond the few, obvious passages allegedly penciled in by Rufinus.

The abode of blessedness, eternal in the heavens “promised” to the saints (*DePrinc.* II.III.6) points to the glorified mind and body of the deified cosmos. It is the “new heaven” and the “new earth” prophesied by Isaiah. Just as the so-called pre-existent unity of souls indicates the original nature of the cosmos as the world’s intrinsic potency for deformity, the abode of blessedness points to the realization of this potency as actual likeness to God. The kingdom of heaven is paradise actualized.

In sum, Origen presents a stunning and profoundly optimistic view of the cosmos as both radically free and essentially divine. Paradise is the original nature of the world, while the aim of the latter is to realize itself as the kingdom of heaven. As such, there is no real dichotomy in Origen between sacred and profane. Heaven, earth, and paradise are merely qualitative stages of a single world, *this* world, travelling the path towards self-actualization and “essentialization”. Individual and collective destinies coincide in a universal deification that is simultaneously spiritual *and* material, freely chosen *and* providentially ordered. Like the Stoic conflagration, the *apokatastasis* involves the eventual dissolution of the entire cosmos into the Divine Fire as its supreme *archē* and ultimate *telos*. Yet, like iron in the fire, the present world is not annihilated but transfigured; the hylomorphic universe becomes divine while remaining world, it becomes eternally and unchangeably *fiery*, without wholly dissolving into and actually becoming Fire. Origen never conflates source with recipient. God is actuality (*ἐνέργεια*), the world is eternally-being-actualized. Unlike the Logos, for whom this merely indicates the contingency of his eternally perfected activity (*ἐνέργεια*), the actualization of creatures is still a work in progress. It is, so to speak, an incomplete activity, a motion (*κίνησις*), *or cosmic kinesis* culminating in deification. This consummation, however, does not involve the destruction

of the world, but the actualization of a new and more glorious mode of being, the transformation of corruptibility into incorruptibility.²⁰⁴ From being potentially Christ, the universe will become actually Christ; that is to say, the *logika* will at last become “one spirit” with the Logos, contingently yet unchangeably enjoying the activity of eternal (*ἐνέργεια*) wellbeing.

²⁰⁴ Once again, Eriugena would undoubtedly claim to teach precisely the same thing. Ultimately, however, Eriugena takes things much further than Origen. Whereas Origen preserves the distinction between God and creature in terms of simple/incorporeal vs. compound/corporeal, Eriugena accomplishes this by distinguishing between Uncreated and created. For the latter, who is able to draw upon the riches of Plotinus, Proclus, and Dionysius, everything proceeds from Mind (*proōdos*), remains Mind (*monē*) and ultimately returns to Mind (*epistrophē*). Insofar as everything is Spirit, it must resolve back into Spirit. Origen, on the other hand, is not yet a full-fledged idealist; instead, he understands the cosmos in Aristotelian terms as a fundamentally hylomorphic reality. Matter provides the necessary substratum for changeable qualities, while the body is the indispensable instrument of the soul. As I argue elsewhere, Eriugena adopts many of Origen’s fundamental ideas in the *Periphyseon*, but modifies them in light of later Greek and Latin philosophical/theological developments. See my “*Ἀποκαταστασις*: The Resolution of Good and Evil in Origen and Eriugena”: 195-213.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

To briefly summarize, we began Chapter One with a consideration of Origen's first principles (*ἀρχαί*). Having established the basic Neopythagorean framework of a radically transcendent 1st god and a derivative 2nd god, we proceeded to argue that the former, God the Father, was a *Nous Akinetos* whose essence was *energeia*, while the latter, the Logos-Son, was a *Nous Kinetos*. The first is eternal actuality (*ἐνέργεια*); the second eternally-being-actualized. As such, we saw how God the Father was the supreme source and consummation of the cosmos, while the Logos-Son, as the instrument of creation and agent of restoration, acted as a secondary *archē* and *telos*. Given that God's omnipotence is eternally active (or eternal activity; *ἐνέργεια*), we saw how what proceeds from this must be correspondingly eternal; namely, the timeless generation of the Son, and the eternal createdness of the world. In terms of the former, we argued that, as the eternally begotten outflow, or emanation (*ἀπόρροια*) of the divine *energeia*, the Logos-Son is at once contingent upon God the Father, and in perpetual contemplation of the latter as his end (*τέλος*). Insofar as the Father is unceasing actuality and the Son eternally-being-actualized, the two were seen to share a single activity (*ἐνέργεια*); they are in a sense one, and in another sense different. This shared activity between God the Father and the Logos-Son then served as a paradigm for our subsequent discussion concerning the relation between God and world; the former eternally creative, the latter eternally created.

In Chapter Two we argued that the divine omnipotence is not confined to the intelligible creation in the Logos but, in and *through* (*διὰ*) the latter, extends to the furthest limits of the sensible world. As such, the principles and prefigurations of things as the

content of the Logos do not exist as separate forms, but find their instantiation in an eternal, *material* creation. Given the centrality of embodiment in the *De Principiis*, we argued against the notion of a literal pre-existence comprised of incorporeal minds, maintaining instead that the latter are best understood in an ontological and eschatological sense as the origins and ends of *embodied* rational beings. The inseparability of soul and body for Origen led us to conclude that, like Gregory of Nyssa, Origen's doctrine of creation and fall is best understood in terms of simultaneity. As such, we noted how creation is a kind of *synergeia* in which God creates the world in conjunction with rational beings, the former establishing the original purity of the cosmos, the latter constituting themselves and the world in all its diversity. In essence, we saw how God served as the supreme *archē* of the universe, the simplicity of Being; the Logos the second *archē*, the totality of beings; while the *logika* acted as the multiple *archai*, the potencies and prefigurations of created beings. From these three "beginnings" proceeded the entire cosmos as a unified multiplicity, an ordered whole in which divine providence and rational freedom coincide.

Having dealt with the *archē*, and what proceeds from the *archē* (or *archai*), we proceeded in Chapter Three to sketch the corresponding movement from the outermost reaches of creation back to their origin and end in God. In this final chapter, we presented Origen's doctrine of return as a kind of cosmic *kinēsis*, in which the final *apokatastasis* is not the *annihilation* of history but its ultimate *actualization*. On the basis of terminological analysis, we argued that Origen's understanding of *apokatastasis* is not limited to the narrow sense of restoration, but points primarily to the deification of the cosmos. We then proceeded to consider the all-important distinction of "image" and "likeness", and the movement (*κίνησις*) between them. This latter is as at once a movement from potency to

actuality, and a progression from accident to essence. The consummation of this dual motion as cosmic deification, we concluded, did not involve the destruction of the body or the material universe, but its ultimate transfiguration. Like iron in the forge, beings are transformed into God while remaining *substantially* unaltered.

With the fusion of God and cosmos, we end up where we began – with the shared activity (*ἐνέργεια*) of agent and patient, God and creature – yet in a way crucially different from our starting point. Unlike the Logos who, as eternally-being-actualized, abides in unceasing contemplation of his principle as end, the world on account of its created and contingent nature must freely choose this end, undergoing the historical journey from potentially god to actually god. In its subjection to the Father through the Son, the world becomes “one spirit”, yet in a way that preserves the fundamental hierarchy of Origen’s ontology: the actualized creature remains contingent upon the eternally-being-actualized Logos, who in turn remains contingent upon the Omnipotent Father as the sole, supreme *Energeia*. As we have had occasion to remark, Origen’s cosmos is rooted in a kind of three-tiered structure of first principles. God the Father acts as the supreme *archē* of the universe, the simplicity of Being; the Logos-Son serves as the second *archē*, the totality of beings; while the *logika* act as the multiple *archai*, the potencies and prefigurations of created beings. From this threefold hierarchy proceeds the entire cosmos as a unified multiplicity, a diversity of wills woven together into a single harmonious whole under the direction of an all-encompassing divine Will.

Given this complexity, the answer to our question as to why “the end must be like the beginning” is correspondingly manifold. It is possible, in fact, to see a threefold nesting of “likenesses”. The first likeness pertains to the realization of one’s original, “paradisical”

nature, the actualization of one's intrinsic potency for deiformity. This involves a movement (*κίνησις*) simultaneously from potentially *logikos* to actually *logikos*, and from possessing virtue as an accident, to possessing virtue "essentially", as a kind of "second nature". At the beginning, virtue remains extrinsic to the self; in the end, it has become wholly internalized. At this initial level, then, the end coincides with the beginning as the actualization of one's original nature, and the "essentialization" of virtue. The end is simply the fulfilment of what was present from the very beginning; namely, one's form or essence as rational creature. On the level of self-realization, "likeness" essentially means "identity"; like an acorn blossoming into a majestic oak tree, one has fully and truly *become* oneself. God-seed, as Meister Eckhart says, grows up into God.

This self-realization is, in turn, nested within a second "likeness". To become *logikos* is to realize one's similitude to the Logos as one's immediate *archē*. The rationality of beings is a potency bestowed upon them by the Logos, and actualized through participation in and habituation (*ἔξις*) to, the Logos. In a sense, the journey is one of becoming both *capable* of God and *accustomed* to God. Insofar as the *logika* remain contingent upon the Logos, possessing virtue not as an inalienable part of their essence, but as a kind of stable "second nature", "likeness" at this stage does not indicate identity (*ὁμοούσιος*) but *similitude* (*ὁμοίωσις*). The compound, created, psychosomatic natures of the *logika* become fully rational without becoming Reason Itself. Like the iron in the fire, they become saturated with God, without actually *becoming* God. The actualizing agent (Logos) and the patient being actualized (*logika*) remain distinct while sharing in a single, rational activity (*ἐνέργεια*). As such, the *logika* enjoy the highest beatitude available to rational creatures – unceasing contemplation of the Logos as their rational principle.

Lastly, to realize one's likeness to the Logos (*ὁμοίωσις λόγῳ*), is at once to realize one's likeness to God (*ὁμοίωσις θεῷ*), the third and final nesting of "likenesses". For the *logika*, to become fully rational is to realize the fullness of being in a way peculiar to their nature. Just as an acorn realizes the fullness of being through actualizing its oakish form, so the rational being realizes itself through becoming fully rational. Insofar as this latter is a mode of *being*, it imitates God who *is* the Fullness of Being. As such, God the Father serves as the supreme *archē* and ultimate *telos* of the whole of creation. The *telos* of every being is simply to *be*, in the fullest and truest sense of the term, and this is literally what God *is* (*ὁ ᾧν*). As unceasing activity (*ἐνέργεια*), God is the source (*ἀρχή*) of the universe; as eternal actuality (*ἐνέργεια*), God is the desired consummation (*τέλος*) of the universe. Insofar as God is himself *noetic* Being (*Mens*), the ontological perfection of the created *noes* (*mens*), represents an especially intimate likeness. The whole of creation is potentially spirit (*nous*), a potency that will be fully and universally actualized only in the final *apokatastasis* when, having been subjected to the Father through the Son, all will become "one spirit", and God will be "all in all." At this point, self-knowledge coincides with the twofold knowledge of God and the Logos. These three are not so much progressive stages of knowing, as a triadic hierarchy of ends, each nested within the other.

We have seen, then, how the answer to the question of why the "end must be like the beginning" is at once manifold and simplex. The latter because the threefold hierarchy of principles and ends are ultimately enfolded within the single and supreme *archē* and *telos* that is God the Father, whom we have alternately termed God-in-himself (*αὐτοθεός*), *Nous Akinetos* and *Energieia*. The ultimate reason, as we stated at the outset and not inappropriately restate here, as to why the "end must be like the beginning" has to do with

the shared activity (*ἐνέργεια*) of God and cosmos, Creator and creature. Both, as Eriugena so boldly states in the *Periphyseon*, are ultimately two perspectives of a single actuality (*ἐνέργεια*). God is eternally active; the world is eternally being “activated”. As the Fullness of Being God is at once the supreme *archē*, the source of beings, and the ultimate *telos*, the consummation of beings. Despite the shared activity (*ἐνέργεια*) of agent and patient, God and world, the two poles remain importantly distinct; the world never becomes *homoousios* with God, but rather *homoi-ousios*, or “like”. God is simple, essential, and incorporeal; creatures are compound, accidental, and corporeal. Like the iron in the fire, the final *apokatastasis* does not involve the annihilation of this hylomorphic universe, but its glorious transfiguration.

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