Vice and Self Examination in the Christian Desert: An Intellectual Historical Reading of

Evagrius Ponticus

By

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This thesis offers an analysis of the vice tradition of the fourth-century monk Evagrius Ponticus. While Evagrius, like others before him, understands that virtue and vice have an affective component, and that these affections are reactions to mental images, for Evagrius these images are veridically thinner than what we find in earlier discussions of passion in ancient philosophy. As a result, vice is less a matter of false reasoning and false perception than it is a matter of the excessive dwelling on representations connected with events of one’s personal history, to the point that the passions aroused at the time of those events become globalized dispositions. Evagrius’s concern with how memories lead us to dwell on these “bad thoughts” proves to be point of contact with psychoanaly which many modern authors, including Michel Foucault, have detected; yet a close analysis of what Evagrius takes to be involved in self-examination reveals that Foucault’s account of the “technologies of the self” fails to take into account Evagrius’s interest in the distinction between the endowed self, that self which is examined, and the ideal self, the goal of the ascetic activity.
In Memoriam
Conor P. Barry (1982-2007)
and
Alan J. Biszko (1982-2011)

I’ll wait and I’ll wait. And if it all ends. What will be is. Is is.
- James Joyce
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Introduction

The present study is a work of intellectual history exploring the psychology of Evagrius Ponticus, the fourth-century Egyptian monk whose theory of the “eight bad thoughts” – gluttony, lust, avarice, anger, acedia, sadness, vainglory, and pride - later evolved into the medieval tradition of the “seven deadly sins.” In particular, I will consider how Evagrius both inherited and departed from the ancient philosophical tradition. In articulating his theory of the eight bad thoughts or logismoi, Evagrius understood these bad thoughts as certain kinds of mental representations – pictures of ourselves taking pleasure in certain objects, such as food, sex, money, and so forth. In order to determine which of the bad thoughts we are susceptible to, Evagrius maintained that we must examine our representations to see which we are inclined to linger on and what emotional reaction we have to them.

In his articulation of how the examination of mental representations is significant for moral progress, Evagrius is, in one sense, continuing a discussion that stems back at least as far as late Stoicism (and perhaps further back to Socrates, according to some interpretations of the so-called “elenctic method,” though this is outside the scope of the present study). In another sense, however, the way in which Evagrius, like his predecessor Origen, understands the examination of mental representations to play a role in moral therapy is substantially different from what we find in Stoicism. Here, I argue that the relevant distinction between Epictetus and Evagrius is that for the latter, the proper object of study for moral progress is the effect that one’s own idiosyncratic experiences have had on one’s inclinations, while for the former, the examination of one’s representations is undertaken for the sake of determining their objective truth-content. This may appear to be a subtle distinction; yet it has significant ramifications for how we think about the different psychological theories of these two authors. Insofar as the
examination of one’s mental contents is, for Evagrius, less a matter of working out the objective truth of those contents than it is with discerning how one’s emotional dispositions are a consequence of one’s previous, historical, idiosyncratic experiences, we find in Evagrius a concern with how personal experience beyond education alone shapes one’s dispositional desires rather than a concern with false reasoning.

In identifying this concern with personal historical experience as the relevant difference between Evagrius and the Stoic tradition, I am in disagreement with Michel Foucault’s treatment of the “technologies of the self,” those practices of self-care which he claims originated in Greco-Roman philosophy. Foucault argues that taking care of oneself is constituted by the act of self-cognition; while this emphasis on self-cognition is, according to Foucault, evident in the traditions of both Stoicism and Christian monasticism, he claims that the latter anticipates psychoanalysis in emphasizing confession of one’s “bad thoughts” to a spiritual advisor. Yet we find in Evagrius’s writings little evidence that the verbalization of these bad thoughts is particularly significant. I will argue that because of Foucault’s misconstrual of the significance of the examination of mental representations in the thought of Epictetus, he fails to appreciate the difference between Epictetus and Evagrius and, therefore, what is distinctive about Evagrius’s discussion of self-examination in his discussions of the vices that he bestowed to the medieval period.

Evagrius was born in Ibora, Pontus to a xōrepiskopos in 345. He became the student of the Cappadocians, first Basil and, after the latter’s death, Gregory Nazianzen. According to the evidence of his student, Palladius, he accompanied Nazianzen to Constantinople in 379, where he wrote the only work that survives from before the time he spent in the desert, the doctrinal
anti-Arian work *On the Faith*. While in Constantinople, he fell in love with the wife of a Roman official, which led to a (reportedly) unconsummated emotional affair which threatened to cause political problems for the advocates of Nicene trinitarianism. As the Coptic life of Evagrius reports,

> After all this learning . . . on account of his pride and arrogance, he fell into the hands of the demon who brings about lustful thoughts for women, as he told us later after he had been freed from this passion. Indeed, the woman loved him very much in return. But Evagrius was fearful before God and did not sin with her because, in fact, the woman was married and Evagrius also followed his conscience because her husband was a member of the nobility and greatly honoured and, furthermore, Evagrius thought deeply about the magnitude of shame and sin and judgment and realized that all the heretics whom he had humiliated would rejoice. (*LE* 5 trans. Vivian; cf. *LH* 38.3)

According to the *Lausaic History* 38.4-7 and his Coptic *Life* 6-7, Evagrius was visited in a dream by angels in the form of Roman soldiers and a friend, warning him that he would be arrested if he were to continue with the affair. Distressed, he confessed to Melania the Elder; nevertheless, he continued in “vain habits and bodily pleasures” (*LE* 8) until Melania received his confession again and sent him to the desert (*LE* 8, *LH* 38.9-10).

Evagrius moved first to the monastic community in Nitria and, later, Kellia (‘the Cells’). In Kellia he became close to the two Macarii and to the Tall Brothers, in particular Ammonius. The rigor of his asceticism is reported to have given him health problems; whether these difficulties led to his early death or not is difficult to know, but he died in 399, at the age of 54. Whether Origen’s thought was widespread in these communities has been a matter of debate; in any case, the Origenist controversies would soon come to visit the desert shortly after Evagrius’s death, leading Evelyn White to describe his early demise as “opportune”; shortly after his passing, the Egyptian monastic communities became embroiled in the anthropomorphite

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controversies. While he was initially an Origenist, the bishop Theophilus of Alexandria would eventually denounce Origenism, apparently due to pressure from the Anthropomorphite monks. According to reports on the Fifth Ecumenical Council, Evagrius was allegedly condemned in 553, along with Origen and Didymus the Blind. Despite this, his ascetic thought would continue to influence the Greek-speaking world, where certain of his writings were preserved under the names of Basil and Nilus of Ancyra, and the Latin West through his student John Cassian, while his more speculative work would continue to have influence in the Syriac world; a number of his texts, including the controversial *Kephalaia Gnostica*, survive in Syriac and Armenian translations.

In Chapter 1, we will look at discussions about representational thought in Plato and Epictetus. We will see in Plato a concern both with the false belief that one has knowledge about matters of virtue – a false belief which the elenchus is meant to refute – as well as with false images which lead the emotional parts of our soul astray. Epictetus is concerned only with false beliefs; in examining what Epictetus as to say about this activity of examining one's beliefs, I will argue against the wide-spread Foucauldian interpretation which sees Epictetus breaking with the psychology of Plato and Aristotle in a significant way.

In Chapter 2, I consider how Origen receives certain aspects of Epictetus’s thought on moral responsibility, while nevertheless shifting the emphasis on the examination of mental representations. While Epictetus is concerned with whether our beliefs are false, Origen is concerned with how the affective reactions we have to certain representations indicate whether our soul is more aligned with our body or our spirit, an analysis which does not involve the truth

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2 Evelyn White (1926-1933), pp. 2.135-137.

3 Guillaumont (1962), pp. 52-54.
or falsity of these representations. I will suggest that insofar as Origen is concerned with articulating a part of our psychology which is responsible for endorsing desires, rather than with cognition, he stands at the beginning of a trajectory in Western thought which would culminate in the development of a distinct faculty of a will.

Chapter 3 will outline Evagrius’s theory of vice in its historical context and consider Evagrius’s theory of how imagination gives rise to the passions. Here I will argue, against Richard Sorabji and others, that we do not find a significantly Stoic theory of the passions in Evagrius’s thought. Rather, I will argue that the *Timaeus* is far more significant for understanding Evagrius’s theory of the passions and why, within the context of this theory of passion, *askésis* is morally therapeutic.

Chapter 4 will explore Evagrius’s discussions of the importance of examining the representations that appear in our dreams and fantasies, and how these discussions reflect the veridically thinner way of understanding the content of the mental representations that appear to us – that is, we do not examine these representations to see if they are true or false, for they are not described as having this content. Rather, we examine our representations in order to discern what historical events in our past have led us to dwell on certain sorts of objects. Chapter 5 will consider in detail the passion of anger, and look at what aspects of Evagrius’s thought have led some readers to perceive Freudian elements in Evagrius’s thought. The conclusion will critique Foucault’s discussion of the “care of the self,” as well as suggest that Lloyd Gerson’s distinction between the endowed and the ideal selves may provide a more useful lens through which to read ascetic transformation than the body/soul paradigm.
Chapter 1: Mental Representations in Plato and Epictetus

One of the central features of Evagrius’s moral psychology is his acute interest in how examining mental representations plays a fundamental role in moral progress. In this, he follows an established discourse in ancient philosophy. Yet one of the significant differences between Evagrius and the philosophical tradition he inherits is that Evagrius is not concerned with the falsity of mental representations, but with what they tell us of the way our characters have been shaped by our historical experiences. This fact distinguishes him from the discussions of the examination of mental representations in Plato. Granted, Plato does inform in other respects Evagrius’s thought on mental representation; in particular, the discussion of the non-rational part of the soul as subject to images in Republic X and in the Timaeus informs Evagrius’s understanding of mental images. Yet Plato’s Socrates is concerned with false beliefs and false mental images. Evagrius’s lack of interest in the falsity of mental representations also distinguishes him from Epictetus, who is concerned with the false propositional content in our phantasiai.

While the process of testing one’s beliefs about what one ought to value in order to see if they pass muster is found in both Plato and Epictetus, the particular idea that will influence Evagrius is that which he receives from Origen’s transmission of Epictetus. Evagrius, however, in many senses has a more Platonist psychology than Origen, as we will discuss in Chapter 3; he is also no longer concerned with false beliefs, but with mental images. Yet unlike Plato, Evagrius is not concerned with how images can be false. In the present chapter, we will look at the background that will shape the thought of both Origen and Evagrius; looking at both Origen and Epictetus’s discussions of the examination of representations will help us appreciate how Evagrius’s thought on the subject is a departure from the ancient background.
1.1 Plato on False Beliefs and False Images

Contemporary discussions of Plato’s treatment of false representations have perhaps most often focused on the false beliefs Socrates aims to ferret out in the elenchus. Correctly or not, in the wake of the work of Gregory Vlastos\(^4\) it has become widespread to consider Plato’s division of the human soul as it spelled out in dialogues such as the Republic, the Phaedrus, and the Timaeus (and perhaps the division of the human person in the Phaedo into body and soul as well) as a critique of Socrates’s so-called “intellectualism,” such as it is alleged to be found in earlier dialogues like the Protagoras. In the latter dialogue, Socrates argues against the great sophist that virtue is knowledge and that, as a corollary, the experience of akrasia (often translated as “weakness of will” or “incontinence”) is an illusion. We never act against what we judge to be the best thing for us (here, taken to be pleasure)\(^5\) – as a result, when we act against our best interest, it is because we are ignorant of what is good for us. This is why philosophy – the so-called “art of measurement” – is so important, for it helps to dispel the ignorance we have about what the best thing is for us, defended as the best thing simpliciter. In attempting to dispel the ignorance of those around him through philosophical discussion, Socrates aims to help his interlocutors become more virtuous and happier. In later dialogues (such as the Republic and the Phaedrus) Socrates considers the possibility of the appetitive part of the soul acting against the judgment of the rational part of the soul; the model of the divided soul is evident again in the Timaeus. As a result, many readers of Plato’s dialogues have taken the Republic as a departure


from the *Protagoras*. Yet this view that we find a radical break between the early “Socratic” Plato on the one hand and the middle and late “anti-Socratic” Plato on the other (or the early and late Plato on the one hand and the middle Plato on the other) has come under fire from those scholars arguing that Plato’s thought on ethics in particular is more consistent than Vlastos’s reading allows.⁶

One of the problems with Vlastos’s interpretation is that the later dialogues *Philebus* 22b, *Timaeus* 86d-e and *Laws* 731c each reaffirm the claim from the earlier *Protagoras* that no one does wrong willingly. How, precisely, Plato maintains this view is outside of the scope of my present argument. We should note, however, that there appears to be at least an analogy between Socrates’s concern to dispel the false belief in his interlocutors that they have knowledge of virtue in the earlier dialogues and his concern with the false images the lower parts of the soul cognize in the later dialogues. His treatment of images in the middle and later dialogues therefore might be thought of as an extension of his concern to ferret out the false belief that one has knowledge of virtue, rather than as a break from these earlier dialogues, insofar as they are each concerns about the destructive implications of false representations for the acquisition of virtue. In looking at how Plato is concerned with the truth or falsity of mental images, I will focus on the *Republic*, a dialogue from Plato’s “middle” period and the *Philebus*, a dialogue from the so-called “later” period (with a look at the *Timaeus* as well).

1.1.1 The Elenchus and False Belief

Arguably the most forceful discussions of the role of the examination of mental representations for moral progress are found in Plato’s depictions of Socrates’ elenctic arguments. The elenchus has often been associated with Socrates, who is known to us not only

from the writings of Plato, but from the writings of Xenophon as well. As we look at Plato’s depiction of Socrates engaging in elenctic discourse, however, we should keep in mind two things. On the one hand, while Plato gives us a vivid portrayal of his teacher, there were many others who also wrote dialogues of Socrates, but which do not survive; these writings, however, may have been available to other figures in antiquity, such as Epictetus, whose use of Socrates we will consider below. On the other hand, while Socrates made use of the elenchus, he did not invent it himself.

Despite these caveats, Plato’s Socrates no doubt shaped the way in which the character of Socrates was received in later discussions. Throughout many of Plato’s dialogues, we find Socrates challenging those who think they understand virtue and the virtues to provide both a definition and a consistent account of that definition, with the result that his interlocutors are often left at a loss. Take, for example, the *Euthyphro*, where Socrates enters into a debate with Euthyphro as he is on his way to accuse his own father of murdering a slave. Socrates and Euthyphro begin a debate about the nature of piety;

S: Come then, let us examine what we mean. An action or a man dear to the gods is pious, but an action or a man hated by the gods is impious. They are not the same, but quite opposite, the pious and the impious. Is that not so?
E: It is indeed.
S: And that seems to be a good statement?
E: I think so, Socrates.
S: We have also stated that the gods are in a state of discord, that they are at odds with each other, Euthyphro, and that they are at enmity with each other. Has that, too, also been said?
E: It has.
S: What are the subjects of difference that cause hatred and anger? Let us look at it this way. If you and I were to differ about numbers as to which is the greater, would this difference make us enemies and angry with each other, or would we proceed to count and soon resolve our difference about this?

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7 See Kahn (1996) Ch. 1 for discussion.

8 On the Parmenidean elenchus, see Lesher (2002).
E: We would certainly do so.
S: Again, if we differed about the larger and the smaller, we would turn to measure and soon cease to differ.
E: That is so.
S: And about the heavier and the lighter, we would resort to weighing and be reconciled.
E: Of course.
S: What subject of difference would make us angry and hostile to each other if we were unable to come to a decision? Perhaps you do not have an answer ready, but examine as I tell you whether these subjects are the just and the unjust, the beautiful and the ugly, the good and the bad. Are these not the subjects of difference about which, when we are unable to come to a satisfactory decision, you and I and other men become hostile to each other whenever we do?
E: That is the difference, Socrates, about those subjects.
S: What about the gods, Euthyphro? If indeed they have differences, will it not be about these same subjects?
E: It must certainly be so.
S: Then according to your argument, my good Euthyphro, different gods consider different things to be just, beautiful, ugly, good and bad, for they would not be at odds with one another unless they differed about these subjects, would they?
E: You are right.
S: And they like what each of them considers beautiful, good, and just, and hate the opposites of these?
E: Certainly.
S: But you say that the same things are considered just by some gods and unjust by others, and as they dispute about these things they are at odds and at war with each other. Is that not so?
E: It is.
S: The same things then are loved by the gods and hated by the gods, and would be both god-loved and god-hated.
E: It seems likely.
S: And the same things would be both pious and impious, according to this argument?
E: I’m afraid so. (7a7-8a8 trans. Grube)

Here, we find Socrates demonstrating to Euthyphro that he does not, in fact, have knowledge of piety; the assumption here is that if Euthyphro cannot offer a consistent account, as he evidently cannot, he cannot have knowledge of what piety is. Over the course of the dialogue, Euthyphro and Socrates continue to revise their definition of piety, concluding when Euthyphro, having reached a state of *aporia*, walks off in a huff. Nehamas has offered a penetrating analysis
of this dialogue, in arguing that Euthyphro is a stand-in for the audience;\(^9\) while we may assent to many of Socrates’s propositions, ultimately we fail to incorporate their consequences – that is, that we do not know how to live virtuously – into our own lives.

The above passage, in which Socrates begins with a statement accepted by his interlocutor and so leads him to a contradiction, provides a relatively standard elenctic discussion in Plato’s dialogues, though one should keep in mind the argument of Carpenter and Polansky that the arguments in Plato’s dialogues that purport to be elenctic are diverse, and perhaps too diverse to admit of any single formal analysis.\(^10\) Yet how exactly the elenchus is meant to function as a philosophical method has been greatly debated. There is little agreement among scholars about whether the method can produce knowledge, or simply dispel false beliefs. Vlastos has argued that Socrates cannot even demonstrate the falsity of the refutand – the most he can demonstrate is inconsistency.\(^11\) A number of critiques have been raised against Vlastos’s criticism of Socrates on this point. Irwin has argued that while Socrates does not claim to possess knowledge, strictly speaking, a lifetime of engaging in elenctic conversations has given the moral beliefs he is committed to (such as his belief that death is not a misfortune) some plausibility.\(^12\) Benson, on the other hand, has argued that a close examination of the texts reveals that Socrates does not intend to use the elenchus to establish any positive teachings,\(^13\) and that a preoccupation with Vlastos’s problem prevents one from appreciating other significant problems

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10 Carpenter and Polansky (2002).


12 Irwin (1995) Ch. 11.

13 Benson (1995); see also Kraut (1983).
relating to the elenchus. Nehamas, however, notes that there is at least one instance in which the elenchus results in a positive conclusion; in *Apology* 22-23, where Socrates examines the Athenians in order to see if the Delphic oracle is right that no one in Athens is wiser than he. Gerson, on the other hand, argues that Plato employs Socrates’s elenctic arguments for the sake of exhorting the reader to take up the philosophical life; because knowledge or *epistêmê* consists in the noetic grasp of the Forms, simply having coherent beliefs cannot, for Plato, constitute knowledge. In defending this reading, Gerson offers an interpretation of Plato’s Platonism which understands more continuity to exist across Plato’s dialogues than one finds in Vlastos’s reading.

Whether the elenchus is meant to produce positive conclusions or not, there is at least one false belief that the elenchus is clearly at least designed to dispel; the belief of the one refuted that he has knowledge. Moral progress requires that one first recognize that one does not know what virtue is. In later dialogues, these false beliefs that one has knowledge of virtue are not the only mental representations with which Plato’s Socrates will express concern. The false images to which the lower parts of the soul are subject have morally problematic consequences as well.

1.1.2 Images and the Division of the Soul in the *Republic*

As I noted above, Plato’s various theories of the divided soul are often understood as a rejection of so-called “Socratic” philosophy; to see why this is so, we should examine perhaps

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14 Benson (2002).


16 Gerson (2002).
the most systematic rationale behind the theory of the divided soul, given in *Republic IV*.\textsuperscript{17} Whether the division commits Plato to a theory of the soul which is divided into sub-agentive parts, or homunculi, is an issue that has divided scholars. This question depends, in part, upon whether the lower parts of the soul are capable of desiring things under the aspect of the good. Plato’s discussion of the desires of the appetite makes this difficult to discern.\textsuperscript{18} Plato begins his discussion of the division of the soul with the so-called Principle of Opposites, the claim that no two parts of the soul can both move toward something and move away from it. “It is obvious that the same thing will not be willing to do or undergo opposites in the same part of itself, in relation to the same thing, at the same time. So, if we ever find this happening in the soul, we’ll know that we aren’t dealing with one thing but many” (436b8-10 trans. Grube). Socrates here offers an example of a person who is thirsty but knows he should not drink as an example of a person subject to two contrasting impulses. On the one hand, there is appetite, which desires things like food, drink, and so forth. These sorts of desires, however, cannot be qualified; appetite might desire a drink that is hot, but appetite desires a drink and something hot independently of one another. Whether appetite can desire something as good (even if it cannot desire something as hot or cold or sweet) is somewhat more unclear; “Let no one catch us unprepared or disturb us by claiming that no one has an appetite for drink but rather good drink, nor food but good food, on the grounds that everyone after all has appetite for good things, so

\textsuperscript{17} Specifically, the example of the thirsty person who, despite his thirst, manages not to drink when he believes it to be disadvantageous for him to do so betrays the idea that Plato is concerned solely with akratic forms of mental conflict; for this person manages not to give in to his appetite. Ferrari (2007) p. 169.

\textsuperscript{18} For the view that Plato is committed to a theory of homunculi, see Bobonich (2002) p. 248, who draws in part on accounts that ascribe strong cognitive capacities to the lower parts of the soul in Irwin (1977) and (1996), though he departs from Irwin on crucial points. For other interpretations attributing significant cognitive capacities the lower parts of soul, see Moline (1981) and Cooper (1999) Ch 3. Against the homunculi reading, see Lorenz (2006) and Gerson (1994) Ch 3. Stalley goes further and rejects the reading on which the tripartition is intended as realist; see Stalley (2007). See also Anagnostopoulos (2006) and Price (1995) Ch. 2.
that if thirst is an appetite, it will be an appetite for good drink or whatever, and similarly with the others” (438a trans. Grube). This issue has divided scholars like Lorenz and Bobonich; in any case, it will not be resolved here, though we will see in Chapter 3 that for Evagrius, the desires of the appetite are not described as desires for anything that might potentially be good (the alleged ambiguity we find in Plato is not evident in Evagrius).

In any case, these opposing desires account for psychic conflict. Suppose for some reason this person calculates that drinking at this particular moment would be bad for his health. “Therefore, if something draws [the soul of the thirsty person] back when it is thirsting, wouldn’t it be something different in it from whatever thirsts and drives it like a beast to drink? It can’t be, we say, that the same thing, with the same part of itself, in relation to the same, at the same time, does opposite things” (439b3-6 trans. Grube).¹⁹ Socrates here argues that the soul cannot be pulled to act in a direction and to act against that impulse with respect to the same part of itself. Because the thirsty person is subject to an impulse away from drink, it must have a part which, unlike appetite, is capable of calculation; “Doesn’t that which forbids in such cases come into play – if it comes into play at all – as a result of rational calculation, while what drives and drags them to drink is a result of feelings and diseases?” (439c6-8 trans. Grube)

In addition to reason and appetite, there is a third part of the soul, the spirited part, which is described as an ally to reason against appetite. He offers as an example of this phenomenon the story of Leontius, whose appetite receives sexual pleasure from looking on the corpses of bodies, but whose rational part judges this desire to be wrong. The spirit here

¹⁹ Cooper (1999) Ch. 3 suggests that Plato offers an account of appetite in which the appetitive part is engaged in some sort of imagining activity, yet this analysis does not quite work, because the desires of appetite are here understood as desires which are not capable of qualifications of this sort. The appetites desire to gaze on bodies, then, cannot be desire to gaze on sexually arousing bodies, but simply the desire for gazing on bodies as such.
reinforces reason by expressing shame and anger over this desire. Socrates argues that this is a distinct part of the soul on the grounds both that children have spirit but not reason (441a7-b1). This distinction between the different parts of the soul is often taken as one of the major dividing lines between the earlier and the middle dialogues. Yet before interpreting this division as offering an entirely different psychology from the earlier dialogues, we should look at Republic X first. Whether the lower parts of the soul can engage in some form of cognition has been debated; what we do find in Republic X is the idea that the lower parts of the soul are at least subject to images. Here, we find a division of the soul which is rather different from what we find in Republic IV; Plato offers us an account of how images are responsible for the arousal of certain passions. In his indictment of the imitative poet, he describes how such a person is bad for the city because he gratifies the lower parts of the souls of citizens through images which are far removed from the truth;

Like a painter, he produces work that is inferior with respect to truth and that appeals to a part of the soul that is similarly inferior rather than the best part. So we were right not to admit him into a city that is to be well-grounded, for he arouses, nourishes, and strengthens this part of the soul and so destroys the rational one, in just the way someone destroys the better sort of citizens when he strengthens the vicious ones and surrenders the city to them. Similarly, we’ll say that an imitative poet puts a bad constitution in the soul of each individual by making images that are far removed from the truth and by gratifying the non-rational part, which cannot distinguish the large and the small but believes that the same things are large at one time and small at another. (605a7-c2 trans. Grube)

The parts of the soul that are subject to passions are the non-rational part of the soul, the parts of the soul which experience passions like appetitive desire, anger, and fear. That the lower part is gratified through the misrepresentation of objects refers back to Republic IX, where

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20 Annas claims that Plato’s theory here is defective, for there is no way that the optical illusions can account for passions. See Julia Annas (1999) p. 339. Moss, on the other hand, argues that the lower parts of the soul are subject to optical illusions because they cannot critically reflect upon their content in Moss (2008) p. 57. For more on Republic X also Moss (2007), Ganson (2010), and Harte (2010).
Socrates considers how those who do not take pleasure in what is, to on, misperceive the size of certain pleasures, and hence often think they are in a state of pleasure when they are not. What is worth observing, however, is that here Plato is concerned with whether the images that are associated with the passionate parts of the soul are true or false. The implication here seems to be that if the soul is subject to an image removed from the truth, it will experience emotions beyond what is appropriate to it.21

1.1.3 Images in Late Plato: The Timaeus and the Philebus

In the later dialogues, we find Plato treating the images that arouse passion as the product of judgments. Plato revisits the division of the soul in the later dialogue, the Timaeus. Here, the rational part of the soul exists in the head, with the appetitive part in the liver and the spirited part in the heart.22 This division is described as purposeful; the spirit or thumos, for instance, is located at the heart, so that it might better initiate the physiological reactions with which anger is associated.

That way, if spirit’s might should boil over at a report from reason that some wrongful act involving these members is taking place – something being done to them from outside or even originating from the appetites within – every bodily

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21 This raises an interesting question for the issue of whether Plato understands the soul as divided into different homunculi. Might it not be possible to think that akrasia is a consequence of the fact that the human person who decides to act in a way (rather than one part overwhelming another part) does so because he or she cannot tell the difference between the representations of their lower soul and the representations of the rational part of the soul? This would introduce a second-order kind of ignorance to the ignorance discussed in the Protagoras. I leave this suggestion for another time.

22 See Lorenz (2006) pp. 95-110. Johansen has argued that the version of the tripartite soul bears some differences to that given by the Republic, in particular in the way in which the lower parts of the soul are characterized as participating in the teleological end of the human person, though here he might be overstating his case; the lower parts of the soul do participate in the virtue of justice. This understanding of the embodied human being as a teleologically-ordered psychosomatic whole, as opposed to what we find in the Phaedo, may well have influenced Aristotle’s hylomorphism, though we do not of course find the idea of the soul as the first actuality of the body. See Johansen (2004) Ch. 7 and Carone (2005) Ch.3.
part that is sensitive may be keenly sensitized, through all the narrow vessels, to the exhortations or threats and so listen completely. (70b3-10 trans. Zetyl)  

Likewise, the appetite is placed far away from the rational part, so that it might be less inclined to disturb the rational part’s functioning.

The part of the soul that has appetites for food and drink and whatever else it feels a need for, given the body’s nature, they settled in the area between the midriff and the boundary toward the navel. In the whole of this region they constructed something like a trough for the body’s nourishment. Here they tied this part of the soul down like a beast, a wild one, but one they could not avoiding sustaining along with the others if a mortal race were ever to be. They assigned it its position there, to keep it ever feeding at the trough, living as far away as possible from the part that takes counsel, and making as little clamour and noise as possible, thereby letting the supreme part take its counsel in peace about what is beneficial for one and all. (70d7-71b2 trans. Zetyl)

Once the soul is put into the body, the lower parts of the soul are infused with various capacities for cognition and affect. As we saw in Republic X, we have an association between sense perception and the passions.

So, once the souls were of necessity implanted in bodies, and these bodies had things coming to them and leaving them, the first innate capacity they would of necessity come to have would be sense perception, which arises out of forceful disturbances. This they all would have. The second would be love, mingled with pleasure and pain. And they would come to have fear and spiritedness as well, plus whatever goes with having these emotions, their lives would be just, whereas if they were mastered by them, they would be unjust. (42a2-b3 trans. Zetyl)

The association between the passions of the lower parts of the soul and sense-perception is made again in 69d.

And within the body they [the lesser gods] built another kind of soul as well, the mortal kind, which contains within it those dreadful but necessary disturbances: pleasure, first of all, evil’s most powerful lure; then pains, that make us run away from what is good; besides these, boldness also and fear, foolish counsellors both; then also the spirit of anger hard to assuage, and expectation easily led astray.

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23 The lower parts of the soul, described as the “mortal parts,” are often understood to be temporary in the Timaeus. Robinson, however, offers a dissenting view, in which he suggests that it is possible to read the Timaeus as a continued meditation on the Phaedrus, in which the three parts of the soul are described as existing prior to the soul’s descent into the body. See Robinson (1990). Against this reading, see Gerson (2003) pp. 138-139.
These they fused with unreasoning sense perception and all-venturing lust, and so, as was necessary, they constructed the mortal type of soul. (69c8-69d6 trans. Zetyl)

Moss has understood these passages to imply that passions like fear and anger and so forth are associated with the part of the soul which engages in sense perception; she has argued, based on this reading, that passions are understood by Plato as responses to quasi-perceptual appearances. This, she maintains, positions Plato as a cognitivist about passion, though in a qualified way; while passions are not a response to beliefs, they are a response to imaginative cognitions of the world. 24 Whether Moss’s reading of the lower parts of the soul as involved in sense perception is correct is an issue I leave for another time; what I would like to note here, however, is that at least some of the descriptions that Plato offers of the formation of the passions involve a judgment on the part of thought. The passions of fear, calm, and so forth are therefore given a certain kind of pedagogical value which allows the calculating part of the soul to help adjust the soul’s appetites through passions like fear or shame.

So the force of the mind’s thoughts could frighten this part of the soul whenever it could avail itself of a congenial portion of the liver’s bitterness and threaten it with severe command. And by infusing the bitterness all over the liver, it could project bilious colors onto it and shrink the whole liver, making it wrinkled and rough. It could curve and shrivel up the liver’s lobe and block up and close off its receptacles and portal fissures, thereby causing pains and bouts of nausea. And again, whenever thought’s gentle inspiration should paint quite opposite pictures, its force would bring respite from the bitterness by refusing to stir up or to make contact with a nature opposite to its own. It would instead use the liver’s own natural sweetness on it and restore the whole extent of it to be straight and smooth and free, and make that portion of the soul that inhabits the region around the liver gracious and well behaved, conducting itself with moderation during the night when, seeing that it has no share in reason and understanding, it practices divination in dreams. (71b4-d4 trans. Zetyl)

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24 See Moss 2011. (forthcoming) That emotions have a quasi-perceptual character has been argued for in de Sousa (1990).
As Christopher Gill has noted, in the *Timaeus* we find a particular emphasis on the diseases of the body as causative in moral wrongdoing.\(^2^5\) He draws upon the work of M.M. MacKenzie (now McCabe), who has claimed that Plato argues for three different conceptions of accounting for moral wrongdoing – the ignorant soul of the *Protagoras*, the disordered soul of the *Republic*, and the diseased soul of *Timaeus* 86b-87b.\(^2^6\) Because different parts of the soul are associated with different parts of the body in the incarnate state, the soul can only function properly when the body is functioning properly as well. Virtue therefore requires in part the physical exercise of the body in order to keep it – and therefore the soul – in functioning order (88b7-d1; cf. *Republic* II and III). Having the right affective reactions to circumstances requires us to engage in certain sorts of physical activities. The idea that virtue requires bodily askēsis is an idea that will become heavily influential in Greco-Roman Christian asceticism.

The *Philebus* again takes up the concern with the falsity of images. In arguing against a hedonistic picture of the good life, Socrates offers a distinction between true and false pleasures. In this dialogue we find a revision of the analysis of false pleasure and pain from *Republic* IX; here, Socrates offers four distinct, apparently different ways of understanding true and false pleasures.\(^2^7\) On the one hand, pleasures can be true or false if the propositional content in which one takes pleasure is true or false (36c-41a). Pleasure and pains can also be false if their size is overrated (41a-42c). Pleasure is false when it is confused with the state of hēsuchia, the state of

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\(^2^6\) MacKenzie (1981) Ch. 10. I would qualify MacKenzie’s reading here by suggesting that the disordered soul and the diseased soul are, rather than departures from the view that moral wrongdoing derives from ignorance, elaborations on what the ignorant soul is like; both the disordered and the diseased person lack knowledge of the Forms. This is more than I can argue for here, however.

being in between pleasure and pain (42c-44b). Pleasures are also false if the kinds of pleasures are intrinsically mixed with pain (44c-47d).

Before beginning his analysis of the different kinds of true and false pleasures, Plato offers us a description of the nature of pleasure itself. Here again, he analyzes pleasure as a refilling, though the account given here is somewhat more sophisticated than what we find in the Republic and the Gorgias. Plato’s account of pleasure and pain is informed by his distinction between limit and unlimitedness, a distinction which also makes an appearance in that other notoriously complicated late dialogue, the Parmenides. In every living being, the natural state is understood as some combination of limit and unlimitedness, which determines whether an animal is in a state of pleasure, a state of pain, or a state of neutrality; “When the natural combination of limit and unlimitedness that forms a living organism is destroyed, this destruction is pain, while the return towards its own nature, this general restoration, is pleasure” (32b1-4 trans. Frede).

As a restoration, pleasure must therefore be understood as an experience an animal feels in moving toward a state of being. “Now, pleasure, since it is a process of generation, necessarily comes to be for the sake of some being” (54c7-8 trans. Frede). This analysis of pleasure provides the basis for Plato’s anti-hedonistic argument; for because pleasure is the process of moving toward something else, it is not something which can be considered a complete good. While pleasures cannot be taken as goods in themselves, they are feelings we experience as we are pursuing something which we perceive to be a good. Socrates spends much of the dialogue working out this distinction between true and false pleasures – that is, true and false generations towards an ousia.
Socrates begins by comparing the truth and falsity of pleasure to be analogous to truth and falsity of propositions.

[Socrates]: If what is believed is mistaken mustn’t we agree that the belief that then makes the mistake is not correct and does not believe correctly? [Protarchus]: Of course. [S]: Well then, if, in turn, we observe some pain or pleasure making a mistake regarding that at which it is pained or the reverse, shall we attribute to it ‘correct’ or good’ or any fine terms? [P]: We would not be able to, if pleasure were in fact to make a mistake. [S]: But pleasure certainly seems frequently to arise in conjunction not with a correct belief but with a false one. [P]: Of course. And in such a case we then also say the belief I false, but no one would ever call the pleasure false. (37e1-38a2 trans. Frede)

In response to Protarchus’s objection that the falsity of the propositions in which one takes pleasure expands to the falsity of the pleasure itself, Socrates offers an account of anticipatory pleasures using the analogy of the soul’s painter and scribe, which record certain words and images onto our soul. As we receive certain memories and perceptions, the scribe writes an account of these impressions into our soul. “If memory and perceptions concur with other impressions at a particular occasion, then they seem to me to inscribe words in our soul, as it were. And if what is written is true, then we form a true judgment and a true account of the matter. But if what our scribe writes is false, then the result will be the opposite of the truth” (39a1-5 trans. Frede). This scribe is followed by a painter, who follows the scribe by painting pictures of the things the painter records. Whether the words and paintings of the scribe and painter are true or false determines whether the pleasures or pains we take in these records are true or false. “When a person takes his judgments and assertions directly from sight or any other sense-perception and then views the images he has formed inside himself, corresponding to those judgments and assertions” (39b8-c2 trans. Frede).

In addition to pleasures and pains of things we are currently experiencing, we can also have anticipatory pleasures or pains. Because, through memory of past pleasures and pains, our
soul can re-experience such a pleasure or pain without a *pathos* in the body, if the soul has an expectation of a certain event it can experience a pleasure or pain when imagining that event.

Anticipatory pleasures and pains offer us one type of way of thinking about their truth and falsity, for sometimes we are wrong about in what we predict we will take pleasure or pain.

Consider Socrates’s comparison between the anticipatory pleasures of the good and bad person;

[Socrates]: And someone often envisages himself in the possession of an enormous amount of gold and of a lot of pleasures as a consequence. And in addition, he also sees, in this inner picture of himself, that he is beside himself with delight. [Protarchus]: What else! [S]: Now, do we want to say that in the case of good people these pictures are usually true, because they are dear to the gods, while quite the opposite usually holds in the case of wicked ones, or is this not what we ought to say? [P]: That is just what we ought to say. [S]: And wicked people nevertheless have pleasures painted in their minds, even though they are somehow false? [P]: Right. [S]: So the wicked people as a rule enjoy false pleasures, but the good among mankind true ones? [P]: Quite necessarily so. [S]: From what has now been said, it follows that there are false pleasures in human souls that are quite ridiculous imitations of true ones, and also such pains. (40a6-c6 trans. Frede)

What is the difference between the good person’s (usually) true anticipatory pleasures, and the bad person’s (usually) false anticipatory pleasures? Frede suggests that Socrates here provides a revision of the account given in the *Republic*, where the philosopher is understood as the one whose pleasures are most truly pleasures. Here, she claims, it is not that the pleasures are taken in different kinds of objects in the sense that the forms are ontologically different in kind from food, sex, and the like, but that the difference is in whether the same sorts of objects actually exist. “The fact that they are ‘ridiculous imitations’ proves that Plato is not here talking of fundamentally different kinds, such as the philosopher’s pleasures vs. the ordinary person’s pleasures. As is soon pointed out, ridiculous pleasures are false enjoyment of nonexistent beauty,
wealth, or cleverness.” On Frede’s reading, the false anticipatory pleasures are made false by the fact that the particular things we take pleasure in do not come about.28

Verity Harte offers a different interpretation of false pleasure. According to Harte, whether the anticipatory pleasure we take in our images or judgments is a true pleasure depends not upon whether what we take pleasure in really exists, but upon whether we actually experience pleasure when we obtain what we think will be pleasurable. Harte argues that “Socrates’ notion of an anticipatory pleasure is not one whose pleasure consists in anticipating. Rather, when we find ourselves in the confident expectation of a pleasure to come, an anticipatory pleasure is understood to be an advance installment of the pleasure anticipated.”29 Harte offers two different accounts of what it means for such pleasures to be false, accounts which she draws from Bernard Williams and Sabina Lovibond. On the model provided by Williams, I may take pleasure in the prospect of winning the lottery. But if I actually win the lottery and discover that my beliefs about what winning the lottery meant are false – I failed to take into account all the relatives who would come hounding me for money, my friends will get jealous and desert me, and so forth, all of which I failed to anticipate when I was merely imagining winning the lottery – my anticipatory pleasure will be false.30 Lovibond, on the other hand, offers a different account of why my anticipatory pleasure was false; winning the lottery might turn out to be everything I expect it to be, but it might turn out that when that happens, I discover that I fail to be pleased. This failure to be pleased is what accounts for the falsity of my


30 Williams (1959).
anticipatory pleasure in winning the lottery. Harte argues that Lovibond’s model offers us the best account of the force of the analogy between the false pleasures predicted by the painter’s images, because such an account does the most for helping Socrates illustrate, against Protarchus, that the falsity of the pleasure goes beyond the falsity of the beliefs upon which that pleasure is based.

Whatever the correct interpretation of the difference between true and false pleasures may be, we find here a concern with the idea that if the soul’s scribe records false judgments, the soul’s painter will record false images, and false pleasure, pain, fear, or anger will result. If our images are false, our affects will be false, and we will fail to be good. Just as the virtuous person, in the earlier dialogues of Plato, does not have false beliefs about the good, the virtuous person in the later dialogues not only is not subject to these false judgments, but is also not subject to false images.

Whether the lower parts of the soul can be said to be subject to cognition or not, they do appear to be subject to images which, in the later dialogues, are the product of judgments. The concern with the idea that there is some relation between judgments and passions would have a much stronger formulation in Stoicism, where passions are understood to be a kind of judgment. In the later Stoic Epictetus, we will find an analysis of passion in terms of the truth or falsity of our beliefs, rather than a concern with images, a concern he himself characterizes by reference to the figure of Socrates. We will find Origen, who professed to have been influenced by Epictetus and who passed on the Stoic concern with impetuous action to Evagrius Ponticus, somewhat more ambiguous about the sort of content that arouses passions. In Evagrius, however, we return

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31 Lovibond (1989-90).

to a more explicit use of the idea that passions are aroused by images, rather than by assent to propositions. Though he conceives of *askēsis* differently than does Plato, Evagrius, like Plato in the *Timaeus*, understands *askēsis* as necessary for the rehabilitation of the lower parts of the soul.

### 1.2 Epictetus on Phantasia

Epictetus drew significantly upon who he thought Socrates was in his own articulation of the examination of thoughts. While Plato and Platonism undeniably have an impact on Origen’s thinking, it is the version of examining one’s representations which we find in Epictetus which most impacts Origen. As Origen announces in *Contra Celsum*, while “Plato is only in the hands of those reputed to be scholars, Epictetus is admired by the ordinary people who have the urge to be benefited, and who perceive improvement from his words.”

As we will see in the next chapter, Origen, following Clement, deployed the theory of representations against the so-called Gnostics. Yet there is a significant difference between how Origen employs the theory of hormetic representations and how it is used by Epictetus. Origen is primarily concerned with from where within us our representations come - that is, with whether a certain representation appears to be something worthy of assent because our soul is more aligned with our body, the subject of appetitive desire, or with our spirit, the contemplative part of us that remains united to the Holy Spirit even when we are in fleshly form. This is a significant departure from Epictetus, whose primary concern with examining one’s mental representations is to see whether they are true or false.

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33 Long (2002) p. 260 takes this to be a reference to the *Encheiridion*, but there is some evidence that Origen had access to the *Discourses* as well; see the following chapter for more discussion. Origen was neither the first nor the last Christian to show interest in the philosophy of Epictetus; for a study on the Christian adaptations of the *Encheiridion* (Pseudo-Nilus’s adaptation, the *Paraphrasis Christiana*, and the adaptation of Vaticanus Gr 2231) as well as discussions of Simplicius’s commentary, see Boter (1999).
While Epictetus often makes reference to the figure of Socrates, it should be noted that Epictetus’s discussions with his interlocutors differ from instances of the Socratic elenchus in Plato’s dialogues in at least two important ways; on the one hand, Epictetus is clearer that these discussions can lead to positive conclusions, and on the other hand, is also clearer that these discussions are discussions one can have with oneself.\(^\text{34}\) In claiming that Epictetus is primarily concerned with the truth or falsity of our mental representations, I argue against an influential interpretation of his theory of assent which has understood his theory of the interpretation of representations as concerned with the activity by which we become subjects. This construal has been initiated by Foucault, who asks in *The Hermeneutics of the Self* what

emerges from the idea that life must be grasped as a test? What is the meaning and objective of life with its formative and discriminating value, of life in its entirety seen as a test? Well, it is precisely to form the self. One must live one’s life in such a way that one cares for the self at every moment and that at the enigmatic end of life – old age, moment of death, immortality (immortality as diffusion in the rational being or personal immortality, it doesn’t matter) – what one finds, what anyway must be obtained through the *technê tou biou*, the way of dealing with the events of life, must be inserted within a care of the self that has now become general and absolute. One does not take care of the self in order to live better or more rationally, and one does not take care of the self in order to govern others properly, which was Alcibiades’ question. One must live so in order to establish the best possible relationship to oneself.\(^\text{35}\)

Some version of this reading has been defended by A.A. Long, Charles Taylor, Richard Sorabji, and Charles Kahn.\(^\text{36}\) Against this interpretation, Christopher Gill has argued that we do not find a discussion of the creation of a subject in the way that these interpreters construe; on Gill’s view self-examination is something one does by dialectical discussion, rather than by

\(^{34}\) While Weiss (2006) argues that the elenchus is primarily an exercise one performs with other people, McCabe (2006) argues points out that philosophical conversation one can engage in with oneself is crucial to *Republic* VII.

\(^{35}\) Foucault (2001) p. 441.

introspection. Here, I will provide further evidence for Gill’s rejection of the Foucauldian interpretation by looking at what Epictetus has to say about the concept of *sunaisthēsis*. I will conclude by suggesting that it is Epictetus’s exhortations that we view the world from the standpoint of the universe – exhortations which change what we take to constitute “mine” – that modern interpreters have mistaken for a concern that Epictetus is concerned with the establishment of a distinctively first-person point of view or a “private self.” I contend that the exhortation to alter our understanding of what belongs to us does not reflect a concern with private epistemological access.

1.2.1 Chrysippus of Soli: The Moral Psychology of Early Stoicism

Epictetus’s theory of mental representations took as its starting point the moral psychology of the third-century BCE Stoic scholarch, Chrysippus of Soli. In defending the view that human beings are morally responsible even if they are not free to do otherwise, Chrysippus built on the theory of the voluntary developed by Aristotle in his ethical works. Aristotle offers two different accounts of the idea that human beings are only responsible for their actions if they are the origin or the archê of their actions, one in *Eudemian Ethics* II.6-9 and one in the *Nicomachean Ethics* III.5. As he says in the *EE,*

Every substance is by nature a sort of principle; therefore each can produce many similar to itself, as man man, animals in general animals, and plants plants. In addition to this man alone of animals is also the source of certain actions; for no other animal would be said to act. Such principles, which are primary sources of movements, are called principles in the strict sense, and most properly such as have necessary results. (1222b15-21 trans. Solomon)

According to this theory of the voluntary, human beings are not responsible for their actions when, as he says in the *EN,* “it appears therefore to be that of which the cause is outside, the person compelled contributing nothing” (1110b15-17 trans. Ross and Urmson). Voluntary actions can therefore be actions that we do either from the rational desire, those desires of our
prohairesis or choice, or non-rational desire (unlike the account we get in the Protagoras), as long as the origin of the cause is from within us. As Susan Meyer has noted, there does seem to be a shift in Aristotle’s thought on the voluntary from the EE to the later treatise, the EN. In particular, it is unclear whether in the earlier work Aristotle has a sense that mixed actions – actions which are compelled on account of the threat of pain (for example, sailors who have to overthrow their cargo to prevent their ship from sinking – are instances in which the voluntariness of the action must be qualified, as he has in the later treatise.37

Yet while Aristotle was possibly the first ancient philosopher to develop a systematic account of the voluntary, whether he is an incompatibilist, who understands agents as capable of acting one way or the other, or a compatibilist, who understand human agency as something which can be preserved whether one has the freedom to act on way or the other, is a contested question.38 Richard Sorabji has offered one of the most influential defenses of interpreting Aristotle as an incompatibilist. He argues that we find Aristotle’s commitment to the human freedom to act one way or another in the famed discussion of a hypothetical sea battle in De interpretatione 9, where Aristotle argues that it is foolish to suggest that deliberation has no bearing on whether we find ourselves engaged in battle;

What is, necessarily is, when it is; and what is not, necessarily is not, when it is not. But not everything that is, necessarily is; and not everything that is not necessarily is not. For to say that everything that is, is of necessity, when it is, is not the same thing as saying unconditionally that it is of necessity. Similarly with

37 See Meyer (1994) as well as Heinaman (1988) for an account of the theory of compulsion and voluntary action in EE and Eliasson (2010) for an account of the reception of Aristotle’s theory of what is “up to us” in the Pseudo-Aristotelian text Magna Moralia. In addition to Eliasson’s remarks, I might also note that one of the differences between Magna Moralia and Aristotle’s corpus is the fact that while Aristotle does not set up a description of the difference between reason and appetite as Hume analyzes in his description of the combat between reason and passion (due to the fact that he understands reason to be involved in akratic action, through the performance of the practical syllogism that leads to action), whether the Magna Moralia does as well is less clear. This may be attributable to the anti-Stoic polemic of the text, though I will not try to defend this suggestion here.

38 For contemporary discussions of the issue of freedom, see the essays in Kane (2001) and Watson (2003).
what is not. And the same account holds for contradictories: everything necessarily is or is not and will be or will not be; but one cannot divide and say that one or the other is necessary. I mean, for example: it is necessary for there to be or not to be a sea-battle tomorrow; but it is not necessary for a sea-battle to take place tomorrow, nor for one not to take place—though it is necessary for one to take place or not to take place. (19a23-33 trans. Ackrill)

Sorabji understands this as a critique of determinism; “Aristotle’s own line of reply attacks the determinist’s use of “was true” by saying that predictions about contingent matters only become false at the time of the thing predicted.” According to later interpreters, such as Alexander of Aphrodisias, this argument entailed that because Aristotle committed himself to the view that human beings were free to deliberate about whether the sea-battle would happen, he likewise committed himself to the view that they were therefore free to either wage the battle or not, a fact upon which the possibility of the ascription of praise or blame for engaging in such an action depended.

On the other hand, there is also evidence that Aristotle adopted a compatibilist account, according to which our actions are determined by the shape of our character. Everson has defended the view that Aristotle understood human beings to be responsible for their character despite the fact that they are not free to act otherwise than they do in fact act. As he says in EN III.5,

But if without being ignorant a man does the things which will make him unjust and will make him be unjust voluntarily. For neither does the man who is ill become well on those terms—although he may, perhaps, be ill voluntarily, through living incontinently and disobeying his doctors. In that case it was then open to him not to be ill, but not now, when he has thrown away his chance, just as when you have let a stone go it is too late to recover it; but yet it was in your power to throw it, since the moving principle was in you. So, too, to the unjust and to the self-indulgent man it was open at the beginning not to become men of this kind, and


so they are such voluntarily, but now that they have become so it is not possible for them not to be so. (1114a15-22 trans. Ross and Urmson)

Here, Aristotle argues that because our previous decisions created our current character, the fact that we as adults are no longer free to act one way or the other does not mean that we are not morally accountable for our actions. While Everson takes this as an indication of Aristotle’s compatibilism, the fact does remain that Aristotle seems to take our moral responsibility as dependent upon the fact that at some previous time in our lives we were able to contribute by our actions to the formation of our own character. What Aristotle’s own position was on these matters was is a question I leave for others to work out. I would note in passing, however, that while *De interpretatione* 9 does seem to suggest that Aristotle understood future events as undetermined, the fact that he does not link this issue with his discussion of voluntary action in either *Eudemonic Ethics* or in *Nicomachean Ethics* seems to suggest that he did not consider this fact relevant to moral responsibility.

In Chrysippus’s case, on the other hand, actions for which we are morally responsible are more clearly defined as actions which are up to us in the sense that they are the product of causes from within us, but which are not instances in which we are free to act otherwise. Because our soul, or which is a part of the *pneuma*, is material, it is part of the causal web of the universe. While our character is therefore conditioned by cosmic forces, the Stoics argued that we are nevertheless morally responsible for our actions because the proximate cause for these actions is internal to us. This cause takes the form of assent to mental representations. According to the Stoics, both human beings and non-human animals are subject to mental representations.⁴¹

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⁴¹ God needed animals that use impressions, like us; he had special need of us, though, because we understand their use. And so for the beasts it is enough to eat, drink, sleep, breed and do whatever else it is that satisfies members of their kind. But for us who have been given the faculty of understanding, this is not enough. Unless we act appropriately, methodically, and in line with our nature and constitution, we will fall short of our proper purpose.” (*Discourses* I.6.13-15 trans. Dobbin)
Unlike the lower animals, however, human beings receive not only representations, but rational representations, in that every representation has a corresponding lekton, or sayable – that is, a proposition. This propositional content can be either true or false. Because human beings have representations with this content, they are free to give or withhold their assent to the propositions contained within any given representation. A certain subset of representations – impulsory representations – will also provoke an impulse to act. While in the case of the lower animals, being subject to an impulsory representation is a necessary and sufficient condition for performing that action (excepting external constraints), for human beings such representations are merely necessary, not sufficient causes. This is why human behavior, unlike animal behavior, is subject to moral evaluation.

While one’s assent to representations has an internal cause within the human soul, those causes were determined by one’s character, which was formed by external pressures caused by providence. In explaining how we are the principle of our own actions despite their determination by fate, Chrysippus compared human minds to a cone and a cylinder (Cicero, On Fate 41). A cone and a cylinder might be subject to an identical push from the outside, but their resulting movements will be quite different. Likewise, the minds of people with different characters, when presented with the same phantasia, will react in different ways. In this way, human beings, like the cone or cylinder, are the principles of their own movements. While morally depraved human beings could not choose to become good any more than a cone can choose to be a cylinder, this fact did not prevent Chrysippus from claiming that they are nevertheless morally accountable for their actions. Chrysippus’s views became the basis for much of subsequent Stoic philosophy, and frequently provided the target for philosophers of

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other schools who rejected Stoic ideas about the compatibility of Stoic determinism and moral responsibility. As the next chapter will illustrate, while Origen borrowed a great deal of his moral psychology from the Stoics, including Chrysippus, he nevertheless redeveloped those concepts within an incompatibilist framework, in which human action was not predetermined.  

On Chrysippus’s model, passions are understood as particularly violent impulses that result when one has assented to a certain kind of erroneous representation (SVF 2.886, SVF 3.462). Passions are not a kind of mental phenomenon distinct from belief, but are rather a certain kind of belief. Passionate reactions are cognitive failures, insofar as they are caused by false beliefs about what has value for us. Should we find ourselves confronted with an impulsive representation that misrepresents the nature of our well-being, we are able to deny our assent to it if we detect the falsehood.

Despite the fact that he maintained that passions are a sort of belief, and that in order to experience them we must give our assent to a certain kind of impulsive representation, Chrysippus nevertheless recognized that human beings are occasionally subject to passions that they experience as outside of their control. He analyzes this experience by contrasting it to the difference between walking and running:

43 What position Chrysippus is arguing against is unclear. Bobzien argues that there is no evidence that Chrysippus was aware of the possibility of an incompatibilist position in Bobzien (1998), pp. 234-324. Salles, on the other hand, argues that Chrysippus is in fact arguing against what he takes to be Aristotle’s libertarianism in Salles (2005). For more on Stoic determinism and compatibilism, see Long (1971), Bobzien (1999), D. Fredde (2003), M. Frede (1987) and (2011) Ch. 3.

44 Whether the “middle” Stoic Posidonius returned Stoic moral psychology back to a Platonizing picture of passion, in which the passions were located in a part of the soul different from reason is notoriously complicated. Cooper (1998) and Gill (1998) have both argued that Posidonius meant more to refine Chrysippus’s views than to reject them. Cooper arguing that the non-rational capacities account for affects below the level of passions and Gill arguing that the non-rational capacities account for such experiences as the decay of grief over time when our beliefs about someone’s death being a misfortune have not changed. Against this line of interpretation, Sorabji has argued that Zeno, Chrysippus, and Posidonius each had different views on passion; Zeno held that passions were associated with judgments, Chrysippus held that passions were judgments, and Posidonius held that one could be subject to passions which were not judgments, albeit rarely. See Sorabji (1998) and Sorabji (2006) pp. 93-108, as well as Brennan (1998) and Kidd (1971). That Posidonius, according to Gill, may have perceived a failure on the part of
When one walks through impulse, the movement of the legs is not excessive, but is to some extent fitted to the impulse, so that if the person wishes to stop or make a change, he can do so. But when people run through impulse, this is no longer the case: the movement of the legs is excessive and contrary to the impulse, so that they are carried away and [the legs] do not obediently make a change right when one initiates it, as in the previous case. I think that something very similar happens also in the impulses [involved in emotion], because of overstepping the measure that is in accordance with reason, so that when one has an impulse [of this kind] one is not being obedient to reason (Galen, *PHP* 4.2.8-18 trans. Graver)

Initially, this passage strikes one as self-contradictory; for how can running – and, by analogy, passion - be both through impulse and contrary to impulse? Margaret Graver has suggested this can be resolved by positing two different impulses. In the act of walking, one assents to an impulsory representation that causes one to walk, and then to a second impulsory representation that causes one to cease from walking. In the case of running, however, one assents to an impulsory representation that causes one to walk, but then, because of the force of this impulse, one is physically incapable of perfectly acting in accordance with the second impulse, that of ceasing to run. So it is, Graver suggests, for emotions; once we have assented to a particular emotion, ceasing to be subject to that emotion is not always within our control.  

1.2.2 Prohairesis and Moral Responsibility

Epictetus, a former slave who taught Stoicism in Rome three centuries after Chrysippus, borrowed a great deal of his philosophy from the famous scholarch, although he made his own contributions and adaptations to Stoic philosophy as well. One of the central aspects of his moral psychology was his relentless emphasis on the freedom of moral choice, whatever external circumstances might be, for defining human well-being or *eudaimonia*. While Chrysippus was

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Chrysippus’s monism to adequately account for the excessiveness of passions might shed light on the failure of some readers to appreciate the nuances of this particular aspect of Chrysippus’s psychology; see, for instance, Fowler (1997) p. 18. For discussion on the idea of excessive impulse in *erōs*, see Inwood (1997) p. 66.

particularly concerned with the details of the causal mechanisms of human action, Epictetus seems to have shown more concern for the practical application of this theory. This involved, among other issues, sustained discussion of how to go from being a true slave to being a true free person. Because of the connection between rationality and freedom, Stoics had long maintained that the truly free person is the one who acts in accordance with right reason, that is, with the reason virtuous human beings share with Zeus and that permeates the universe. While Epictetus shares this commitment with the earlier Stoic tradition, he considers freedom not only as a causal description of one’s control over one’s thoughts and actions, but as the psychological experience of being free from frustrated desires for externals that are outside of one’s control. While the entire Stoic tradition takes eudaimonia as identical with human virtue, a concern with the attainment of a life lived in ataraxia, or tranquility, dominates the Discourses rather strikingly.

According to Epictetus, the pursuit of eudaimonia consists in coming to possess an awareness of what truly belongs to us. He argues that unhappiness is a consequence of the failure of human beings to acquire an accurate understanding of their relationships to externals. Conventionally, and pre-philosophically, most human beings consider things such as their bodies, their possessions, their titles, and their family members as “theirs” in a meaningful sense. As a result, when one of these possessions is endangered, or lost, we are troubled by feelings of fear or deprivation. In building upon the early Stoic position that eudaimonia is constituted by

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46 In contrast to the social distinctions between a free person and a slave, the Stoics maintained that the only truly free person is the Stoic sage, regardless of his actual social status, one of the famed “Stoic paradoxes.” For discussion, see Vogt (2008) Ch. 1.

47 Troels Engberg-Pedersen has defended the view that Paul’s use of freedom derived from the Stoics; his evidence, however, does not really convince, given that eleutheria is a well-established ideal in Greco-Roman society. See Engberg-Pedersen (2004).
virtue alone, Epictetus argues that these things only appear good to the one who fails to understand his own nature adequately, and that they cannot influence our well-being without our assent. Because such externals are not truly ours, but merely on loan to us from the gods, they cannot be reasonably considered as constitutive of what is in our interest, or *sumpheron*; our only true possession, and therefore the only thing about us which ought to be a matter of concern to us, is our *prohairesis*, or capacity for choice. 48 If we perceive external circumstances as impinging upon our pursuit of *eudaimonia*, it is because our *prohairesis* has enslaved itself by assenting to our desires for what lies outside of ourselves, rather than committing itself to our moral perfection. Once we learn to adequately identify the moral condition of our *prohairesis* as the only factor determining our well-being, we free ourselves from the distress that comes when our pursuit of externals is frustrated;

> Whoever is making progress, after learning from philosophers that desire is directed toward good things and avoidance directed toward bad, and having also learned that impassivity and a good flow of life are not attained except through unerring desire and unfailing avoidance – that person will do away with desire altogether, or else defer it to another time, and exercise avoidance only on things within the moral sphere. Because they know that if they try to avoid anything outside the moral sphere they are going to run into something contrary to their aversion and face disaster. (*Discourses* I.4.1-2 trans. Dobbin)

When we experience distress over things like bodies, social status, and so forth, it is not the circumstances themselves that make us feel this pain – rather, it is our thoughts about them, as the fact that we have made the mistake of thinking of such externals as strictly “ours” places our sense of our well-being in those things which we cannot control. Because our *prohairesis* is free to decide what is desirable, if we find ourselves confronted with external circumstances conventionally thought of as unpleasant, or even tragic, we can alter our opinions so that we view these externals as indifferents. “In general, remember that it is we who torment, we who

48 “I have learned to see that everything which happens, if it be outside the realm of my moral purpose, is nothing to me.” *Discourses* I.29
make difficulties for ourselves – that is, our opinions do” (Discourses I.25.28). Because our prohairesis can change these thoughts, we are free to revise the ones that trouble us. It is only when prohairesis decides to attach value to external and precarious things that it constrains itself, and the individual suffers the actual, rather than merely apparent, misfortune of being constrained, not by the external object, but by itself. “Just keep in mind: the more we value things outside our control, the less control we have.” (Discourses IV.4.23) Having an appropriate understanding of our relationship to externals means that we are able to use our mental representations correctly; such is the proper activity of prohairesis.

The pursuit of moral progress requires that one advance in one’s mastery of the three topoi, or fields of study, a feature of Epictetus’s thought on emotion that distinguishes it from that of earlier Stoics. His theory of the topoi is a central part of both his moral psychology and his educational philosophy. The student of philosophy who pursues eudaimonia by learning how to live rationally must learn how to control the three psychological capacities covered by the topoi. The first topos is that of desire and avoidance. This is the primary topos, as unhappiness arises when we desire things outside of our prohairesis. Because confusion about what is desirable is so ubiquitous, Epictetus advocates the suspension of desire for the trainee who has not yet mastered all three topoi. While the student abstains from desire until such time when he truly considers virtue as the goal of the happy life, he still ought to apply his capacity for avoidance with respect to doing moral harm. The second topos is that of impulse and repulsion with respect to actions appropriate to one’s social roles, or prosopa.

After one has learned some basic control over these first two domains of psychological experience, one can advance to a study of one’s powers of assent and denial, the third topos. The person who has mastered the principles that inform right assent and denial has achieved the level
of rationality ascribed to the ideal sage, and completely grasps the underlying principles that establish the norms for every domain of human life. Mastering one’s capacity for assent ensures that one will never be in error, even when one is drunk or depressed. While those who have completed their study of the first two *topoi* will have mastered them only imperfectly, and will still be liable to error with respect to their desires and impulses, the one who has mastered the *topos* of assent will act without error in all three *topoi*. The division of the three *topoi* helps Epictetus explain how one can talk about moral progress, despite the fact that in Stoic philosophy virtue is an all-or-nothing state. One comes closer to achieving the virtue of the ideal sage by advancing in one’s control over the first two capacities, even if such control does not yet amount to virtue.\textsuperscript{49} After one has learned to use one’s capacities of impulse and assent appropriately, one no longer has to suspend desires, but can use them rationally – that is, towards virtue, a desire that cannot be frustrated since its attainment is within one’s powers. When one no longer desires externals outside of one’s control, one has achieved a state of *ataraxia*, frequently translated as tranquility or peace of mind.

The fact that Epictetus connects *ataraxia* to the life lived rationally is reflective of the general philosophical atmosphere of the Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic period. As Julia Annas has discussed, both the Pyrrhonic skeptics and the Epicureans maintained that *ataraxia* constitutes human *eudaimonia*. For the Pyrrhonic skeptics, one achieves *ataraxia* when one no longer allows oneself to be conflicted by contradictory opinions, but has accepted uncertainty by suspending judgment.\textsuperscript{50} For Epicurus, while one cannot be *eudaimôn* without being virtuous, virtue nevertheless remains a mere instrument to well-being, rather than well-being itself. The

\textsuperscript{49} For a fuller discussion of the three *topoi*, see Long (2002). pp. 112-118

\textsuperscript{50} See *PH I* 25-26, 28-29.
true end for human beings, according to the Epicureans, was pleasure, which could be divided into kinetic and katastematic, or static, pleasures. Because the latter was understood as the most stable kind of pleasure, and because ataraxia was to be understood as the state in which one had fulfilled all of one’s desires, this particular state ought to be taken as the end of human life. In the *Discourses*, Epictetus shares the general Hellenistic emphasis on ataraxia, to the extent that it occasionally seems that he, like the Epicureans and the Pyrrhonians, understood the psychological enjoyment of ataraxia as the goal of human life, and virtue as merely a means of achieving it. Such a move would be a major departure from traditional Stoic ethics indeed. Gisela Striker has observed how the texts seem to invite this view, but has argued that the position on ataraxia is one which considers is as a necessary consequence of virtue, but is nonetheless not to be confused with the true aim of human life.

Striker’s reading of ataraxia renders it as something of a fringe benefit that results from the attainment of the true end of human life, that of moral virtue. I think, however, it is possible to read Epictetus’s version of the concept as one in which ataraxia is more constitutive of human well-being than Striker allows. As she herself notes, one of the problems with translating the term as “tranquility” is that Epictetus seems more interested in the negative implications of the word, in the idea of the absence of disturbances, than in the more positive connotations of delight suggested by Seneca’s discussions of tranquillitas. Striker observes how there can be several nuances to this negative sense. “It may just mean freedom from trouble, unperturbedness; but it may also have the stronger sense of imperturbability . . . which renders the person that has it immune to influences that might interfere with his peace of mind.”

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51 Striker (1996) p. 188. See also Irwin (1986).

52 Striker (1996) p. 186
that ataraxia implies that the person who bears the character trait is imperturbable can be pushed further than Striker does. Consider how often Epictetus describes the person who acts with the understanding that her only concern is what is “up to her” as unhindered and unimpeded. If living virtuously is a matter of living as though only one’s moral character, and not one’s relation to externals, is a matter of concern, then living virtuously is a matter of being unperturbed by externals because one refuses to allow oneself to be so troubled. Based on this reading, ataraxia is not a mental state distinguishable from virtue, which arises on account of one’s having achieved virtue, but rather is a partial description of what the virtuous person is like; ataraxia describes, in part, what it is like to be virtuous. When so understood, this description illuminates why virtue is its own reward. For as Philosophy says to human beings:

‘Oh humans, if you heed me, wherever you may be, whatever you may be doing, you will not suffer pain, you would not experience anger, you would not be compelled, you would not be hindered, but you would live with detachment (apatheis) and free (eleutheroi) of all things.’ When someone has this kind of peace, not by Caesar – why, how could he possible proclaim it? – but by God through reason, is this person not satisfied when alone? When he contemplates and reflects, ‘Now no evil can befall me, for me there is no such thing as a brigand, for me there is no such thing as an earthquake, everything is full of peace, everything full of tranquility (ataraxia); every road, every city, every fellow-traveller, neighbour, companion, all are harmless.’ (Discourses III.13.11-13 trans. Dobbin)

The emphasis on maintaining the psychological experience of ataraxia even in the face of conventional misfortune is important for understanding what Epictetus means by our having freedom with respect to the things that are “up to us.” As Bobzien has noted, commentators have occasionally been tempted to read Epictetus’s discussions of human freedom as a departure from Chrysippus’s compatibilism. Yet as she points out, nowhere in Epictetus’s discussions of freedom does he seem to be interested, or even aware of, the question of compatibilism. For
Epictetus, freedom is more a question of being free from anxiety about external affairs than a question of the freedom to do otherwise.\textsuperscript{53}

1.2.3 Moral Virtue and Human \textit{Prosopa}

While the correct use of representations by our \textit{prohairesis} provides the most basic description of human morality, our relationships with other human beings provide the norms that determine whether we are using our representations in accordance with reason. The relational aspect of human conduct is central to Epictetus’s rationalistic account of morality, and one that might seem to be at odds with his view that everything that falls outside of our \textit{prohairesis} is not our concern. Occasionally, his exhortations to his students to limit their sense of their well-being to the correct use of representations might suggest a rather isolated picture of the Stoic sage. If one studies logic for the purpose of exercising this capacity, might not the good life consist entirely of doing logic correctly, and ignoring all aspects of practical life? Yet despite the fact that he considers externals as irrelevant to our well-being, he nevertheless puts forward a fundamentally social understanding of human psychology and morality. The fact that we ought to consider our \textit{prohairesis} as our sole true possession, and our well-being as entirely a matter of whether we use of our representations in accordance with reason, does not mean that our relationships with other human beings are irrelevant to our morality. Indeed, such an attitude about what is truly in our interest is necessary for right conduct within those relationships, for it is the only way we are able to master\textsuperscript{54} those irrational psychological movements – emotions –

\textsuperscript{54} Even the most staunch defender of Epictetus’s moral psychology must admit that he takes this sentiment to rather disturbing levels; see, for example, his suggestion that one rehearse for oneself the death of one’s child, so that should it happen one will not be distraught (\textit{Discourses} III.24.88). While to many readers, both ancient and modern, Epictetus’s theory of \textit{prohairesis} produces a rather cold reading of human relationships, it may also reflect the stark reality of life’s precariousness in the ancient period. That Marcus Aurelius, having himself lost several children in their childhood, endorsed Epictetus on this point is not likely to be coincidental.
that threaten to undermine our ability to act as our social roles demand. This is illustrated, for example, by Arrian’s story about Epictetus’s rebuke to the father who fails to respond adequately to his child’s illness because he is overcome with grief at the thought of losing her. In pressing the father on his claim that his reaction to his daughter’s illness is natural,

I mean, if you were sick, would you want your family, your wife, your children and the rest, to be so caring as to walk away from you and leave you to yourself? ‘No.’ And would you want to be so loved by them that because of their love, you would always suffer sickness in isolation? . . . If we saw things differently we would act differently, in line with our different idea of what is right and wrong. This, then, was the cause of Achilles’ lamentations – not the fact that Patroclus dies, since other people don’t carry on so when a friend or companion dies – but the fact that he chose to lament. The same cause lies behind your desertion of your daughter – you thought it was a good idea at the time. Conversely, if you stay with her, it would be for the same reason. . . . In other words, it isn’t death, pain, exile or anything else you care to mention that accounts for the way we act, only our opinion about death, pain, and the rest. (Discourses I.11 25-26, 30-33 trans. Dobbin)

The actions of the paterfamilias are the result of his prohairesis assenting to his false representation of his daughter as “his” in a meaningful sense.\textsuperscript{55} The structure of the argument I think indicates that Frede’s assessment of Stoic passions does not, at least, apply in the case of Epictetus; while Frede suggests that the Stoics were concerned not just with our representations, but the way we hold our representations to be the case, Epictetus goes after not his interlocutors’ views toward certain representations but certain beliefs themselves. In the case of the father in this passage, Epictetus demonstrates to him that it is because he believes such a response to be the natural response of a loving father that he is overcome by the irrational movements that prevent his acting as the situation requires.\textsuperscript{56} While those of the Peripatetic school maintained that emotions are an important part of interpersonal relationships, Epictetus argued that the

\textsuperscript{55} Frede (1986).

\textsuperscript{56} Epictetus’s argument here turns on his understanding of the normativity of human nature; that is, that human nature is fundamentally rational. See Striker (1986).
ability to act as a father or citizen or friend depends upon proper examination of one’s representations; “But only if I identify with my *prohairesis* can I be someone’s friend – or son, or father – in the true sense, because only then will my self-interest be served by remaining loyal, honest, patient, tolerant and supportive, and by maintaining my social relations” (*Discourses* II.22.20 trans. Dobbin). Confusion about what is “up to one” produces assents to false representations – such as the impulse to run away in distress in the face of a child’s illness, rather than remain and tend to her.

In these passages on how correct use of our representations makes proper human relationships possible, we find a vision of human morality in which one is capable of acting as one’s relationships require only if one has recognized that these relationships are themselves irrelevant to one’s own well-being – what matters is how we act within them. Epictetus considers the relational aspect of human morality, in that these relationships provide the embedded contexts that determine what constitutes a good use of our *prohairesis*. Proper use of our *prohairesis* is reflected in our performance of appropriate actions, or *kathêkonta*. What actions are appropriate for us to take depends in part upon the social roles in which we happen to find ourselves. Michael Frede has argued that Epictetus distinguishes these roles, or *prosopa*, from moral character, a distinction that has occasionally been overlooked by modern readers.

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57 On Epictetus’s innovations on the concept, see Inwood (1985) pp. 116-118. Sedley (1999) discusses the debates around appropriate actions, both those internal to the Stoic school (the Stoic Ariston rejected Zeno’s account of appropriate action, allegedly on the grounds that he rejected the idea that some indifferents could be preferred, a notion which played a role in Zeno’s understanding of appropriate action) and between the Stoics and the Platonists. For more on the Stoics on rules, see Inwood (2005) Ch. 4.

58 In a move that is perhaps influenced by his compatibilism, Epictetus does not have a great deal to say about the extent to which human beings can *choose* the social roles in which they find themselves, and consequently does not comment upon what norms ought to dictate such selection. These roles are generally treated as externals givens, Whether Helvidius Prius, for example, might have avoided becoming a senator in the first place does not seem to be subject to consideration.

59 Frede (2007). Julia Annas, for example, assimilates the two concepts in Annas (2007a).
Likewise, in discussing Panaetius’s theory of the four *persona*ae as they are discussed in Cicero’s *De officiis* I, the theory which informed Epictetus’s theory of the *prosopa*, “it amounts to little more, ultimately, than that of the individual’s actual or potential location in a social grid or class-structure. This rather minimal conception of personality seems to be linked with the fact that the person is often regarded, in the discussion, as the player of one or more socially defined roles.”

The social roles we occupy at any given time are matters of *ta ektos*, external circumstance. While we ought not to care about what social roles we find ourselves in, that we conduct ourselves according to the standards of those roles is the *only* thing we ought to care about, as it is the only thing within our power. Epictetus offers the conduct of the senator Helvidius Prius as an example of a figure who maintains the appropriate attitude towards his *prosopon*; while being a Roman senator was a matter of no importance to him, as long as Caesar ordered him to be a senator he would do as a good senator would, whether those actions would lead to his demise or not. Socrates, likewise, was equally content either to serve in the army as a youth or teach Athenian youths in the marketplace as an older man, depending upon what station providence demanded of him; yet despite his indifference to those roles given to him by providence, he would perform what was dictated by those roles to the utmost that they required, and do so happily, even in instances when doing so led him to experience what, by conventional mores, were considered occasions of harm; “Remember that you are an actor in a play, the nature of which is up to the director to decide. If he wants the play to be short, it will be short, if he

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60 Gill (1989) p. 171

61 Frede (2007). “You find that skilled ballplayers do the same thing. It’s not the ball they value, it’s how well they throw and catch it that counts as good or bad.” (Discourses II.5.15) Epictetus is not the only Stoic figure concerned with social roles. Cicero records that Panaetius developed the theory of the four *persona*e in *De officiis* I, and Seneca’s *De Beneficiis* is likewise concerned with the way in which people act within their social roles. See Woolf (2007), and Inwood (2005) Ch. 3.
wants it long, it will be long. And if he casts you as one of the poor, or as a cripple, as a king or as a commoner—whatever role is assigned, the accomplished actor will accept and perform it with impartial skill. But the assignment of roles belongs to another” (*Enchiridion* 17 trans. White). As one who had come to live in accordance with the reason that permeates the universe, Socrates understood the roles given to him by God as themselves of no importance, but acting well within those roles as all-important.

1.2.4 Moral Struggle and Impetuous Action

Epictetus’s vision of human well-being is deeply rationalistic. He understands human *eudaimonia* as constituted by virtue alone. Human virtue, in turn, is achieved through the correct use of representations by our faculty of choice, our *prohairesis*. What constitutes correct use of representations will be informed by the social roles in which we are embedded. Despite his intellectualism, however, Epictetus maintains that while our *prohairesis* is always free to choose virtuously, the formation of habits is nevertheless an important part of being able to act appropriately on a regular basis;

Every habit and faculty is formed or strengthened by the corresponding act; walking makes you walk better, running a better runner. If you want to be literate, read, if you want to be a painter, paint. . . The same goes for moral inclinations. When you get angry, you should know that you aren’t guilty of an isolated lapse, you’ve encouraged a trend and thrown fuel on the fire. When you can’t resist sex with someone, don’t think of it as a temporary setback; you’ve fed your *akrasia*[^62] and made it harder to uproot. It is inevitable that continuous behavior of any one kind is going to instill new habits and tendencies, while steadily confirming old ones. (*Discourses* II.18.1-2,5-7 trans. Dobbin)

When we fail to examine and respond to certain representations correctly, these lapses are problematic not only as onetime failures, but also because they impact the mind’s overall ability

[^62]: Dobbin translates *akrasia* here as weakness, but given the distinction between *akrasia* as weakness (*astheneia*) and *akrasia* as impetuousness (*propeteia*), I have chosen to leave the term here untranslated. The complex relationship between Epictetus and Aristotle requires a study of its own.
to handle correctly similar representations in the future. Dispositional weaknesses have a tendency to reinforce and strengthen themselves, as the more often a person gives in to a false representation and commits a misdeed, the more susceptible that person becomes to the persuasiveness of similar false representations later on. The claim that failing to handle correctly representations as they come intensifies our moral weaknesses is an insight that will become important for Origen, and through him, Evagrius, as they develop their theory of temptation.

The formation of habits is closely connected to whether one is susceptible to impetuous behavior. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle considers two forms of akratic behavior, weakness and impetuous action. In instances of *propeteia*, one acts irrationally not because one acts against one’s better judgment, but because one has too easily changed one’s mind about what one ought to do. This way of understanding practical irrationality, because it leant itself to a monistic theory of mind, became popular in Stoic accounts of moral wrongdoing. Epictetus draws on this concept in explaining how,

> when it comes to the first and foremost cause of good and bad conduct; when it’s a matter of doing well or ill, of failure or success – only then do we proceed blindly and impetuously (*propeteîs*), only then are we found to lack anything like a scale or measure. Something appears to me and right away I react. Am I better than Agamemnon and Achilles, insofar as they do and suffer such wrongs by following their appearances, while the appearances\(^{63}\) do not satisfy me? (*Discourses* I.28.30-31 trans. Dobbin)

Epictetus develops this formulation of *akrasia* in his discussions of practical irrationality, in which agents do not examine their representations before they assent to them.\(^{64}\) By failing to subject her representations, and their accompanying impulses, to critical examination, the agent ends up following false representations blindly. Such individuals are described by Epictetus as

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63 Here, I have altered Dobbin’s reading of *phainomenon* as “sense impression” to “appearance.”

64 Salles (2007).
mainomenoi, or madmen, yet this description applies, not only to those conventionally considered insane, but to human beings generally; “What kind of person, then, pays no attention to this matter [of appearances], do you think? Well, what do we call people who accept every one indiscriminately? – Madmen. – And do we act any differently?” (Discourses I.28.33 trans. Dobbin)

While bad habits result in propetetic akrasia, virtuous habits help combat it. For Aristotle, habit alone is not sufficient for a person to be virtuous, as a truly virtuous person not only has the correct habits but also rational understanding for why certain actions are morally appropriate. Though not sufficient, it is, however, necessary; a virtuous person instinctively knows what actions are virtuous, just as a master craftsman instinctively knows the basic principles of his craft. Here again, however, Epictetus differs from Aristotle in that he seems to think that mature adults regularly engage in habit formation (for Aristotle, this mostly happens during one’s youth) and that habit formation is an agonistic process. In a characteristic moment of rhetorical flair, Epictetus points out how Hercules could not have become the hero he was, had Hera not burdened him with the labors;

What would have become of Hercules, do you think if there had been no lion, hydra, stag or boar – and no savage criminals to rid the world of? What would he have done in the absence of such challenges? Obviously he would have just rolled over in bed and gone back to sleep. So by snoring his life away in luxury and comfort he never would have developed into the mighty Hercules. And even if he had, what use would it have done him? What would have been the use of those arms, that physique, and that noble soul, without crises or conditions to stir him into action? (Discourses I.6.32-34 trans. Dobbin)

The struggle one faces when confronted with circumstances conventionally understood as difficulties or tragedies helps one to strengthen one’s capacity for choice. These agonistic occasions, in which one might find it difficult to act according to the norms established by one’s social roles, offer one an opportunity to develop the habit of using one’s representations
correctly. When we are susceptible to certain sorts of moral failings, conventional misfortunes provide us with the occasion to train our *prohairesis* so that it develops the habits of one who has a firm understanding of the proper nature of one’s relationship to externals. “What aid, then, can we find to combat a habit? The opposite habit. You hear laymen saying, ‘poor man, he is dead.’ ‘His father perished, his mother.’ ‘He was cut down in his prime, and in a foreign land.’ Give heed to the opposite words, distance yourself from these statements, check one habit with the contrary one” (*Discourses* I.27.4-6 trans. Dobbin). Anthony Long describes passages in the *Discourses* such as these as anticipations of “muscular Christianity,” but as we shall in the next chapter, for Origen the relationship with Epictetus on this point is likely not one of anticipation as much as one of direct dependency, and is one which will deeply influence his discussions of self-reflection.

1.2.5 Representation and Self-Awareness

In debates about the development of the Western conception of “the self,” Epictetus has been a controversial figure. As mentioned earlier, Foucault has perhaps been most responsible for the interpretation of Epictetus which characterizes him as one of the inventors of “technologies of the self,” exercises of self-mastery and self-creation that were later incorporated into Christian monastic practices. This general way of reading Epictetus is shared by many, including Taylor, who, in assessing the role of Stoicism in the development of Western concepts of the “self,” argues that the tradition’s emphasis on the power of assent introduces a sense of personal idiosyncrasy. Taylor maintains that such idiosyncrasy signals a difference from Platonist and Aristotelian ethics that became significant for the development of subjectivity. While the latter philosophical positions understand human morality as a matter of acting in
accordance with the rationality available to all human beings, he argues that the Stoic concept of assent provides a way of explaining how my actions are *mine*;

The [Stoics’] singling out of . . . assent is one source of the developing notion of the will, and there is already an important change in moral outlook in making this the central human faculty. What is morally crucial about us is not just the universal nature or rational principle which we share with others, as with Plato and Aristotle, but now also this power of assent, which is essentially in each case mine.65

Here, Taylor argues that the Stoic concept of assent marks a unique moment in the development of Western theories of volition and the “will,” in that it represents a newfound emphasis on the role of the personal in ethical philosophy. Long confirms this view, on the grounds that the “novelty of Stoic assent” contributes to “the notion of a strictly personal or individual identity and commitment.”66 Yet this particular claim relies on a distinction between the thought of Aristotle and the Stoics that seems without foundation. Given that the claim that it is necessary for an action to be *eph’hêmin* for us to be held morally accountable originates with Aristotle, it is not clear why the idea of assent provides a more “personal” account of moral responsibility than Aristotle’s concept of *prohairesis*. For both Aristotle and the Stoics, I myself must be the principle of my actions for moral responsibility to be ascribed to me. Moreover, the Stoics seem to share with Aristotle and Plato the position that the ideal rational agent conforms to an impersonal standard of rationality, insofar as they identify virtue as living in accordance with the *logos* that structures the cosmos. The claim that Epictetus departs significantly from Plato and Aristotle on this particular point seems at best overstated.

65 Taylor (1989) p. 137

Taylor’s reading of the distinctively personal aspect of Epictetus’s vision of human virtue has been followed, and pushed further, by Richard Sorabji, who argues that Epictetus has a version of the concept of an inner self that Taylor claims begins with Augustine. Sorabji is particularly concerned with the language of “turning inward” that he claims is found occasionally in Epictetus’s thought on prohairesis. Sorabji begins by pointing out that much of Augustine’s language on interiority does not represent his own invention, but is in fact taken from Plotinus. He goes on to argue that the Plotinian language of the inward turn originates from Epictetus, noting his use of terms like prosokhê (attention), epistrophê (reflection) and paratërêsis (watchfulness). There are, however, problems for Sorabji’s claims that the concept of interiority is present in the Discourses. Sorabji equates similar language with similar content, yet his apparent assumption that a common philosophical terminology necessarily entails a commitment to common philosophical positions is one that requires more argument than Sorabji provides. Moreover, he fails to recognize that the concept of interiority that Taylor attributes to Augustine is much more specific than simple self-reflection. While Epictetus and Augustine might both share a similar view that one finds, as Sorabji puts it, “the truth within,” this rather thin point of contact is not by itself enough to justify finding a concept of something like a private “self” in Epictetus’s writings. At least in the case of Taylor’s argument, what distinguishes Augustine from other authors is not that the “truth” is “within” (this much Taylor points out is present at least as far back as Plato) but that Augustine’s thought is the first time in Western letters one finds not just truth within one’s own mind, but a specifically


One major objection that might be made to this, which Sorabji does not consider adequately, is the question of translation. Sorabji claims that Augustine is using a similar vocabulary as Plotinus, but given that Augustine is writing (and reading) in Latin and Plotinus is writing in Greek, what exactly Sorabji means by this requires more elaboration than he gives.
incommunicable truth. From Sorabji’s remarks, it is not clear why the “truth” exercised by the properly functional *prohairesis* ought to be considered as private in any sense.

The general Foucauldian approach to Epictetus’s moral psychology is also reflected in the interpretation of Long, who claims that a concept of self-consciousness is implied in Epictetus’s descriptions of the “use of representations” as the proper activity of *prohairesis*; “It is in virtue of *prohairesis* that we are capable of conscious and self-consciousness – knowing ourselves, reflecting on who we are, and reasoning about how we should live and organize our lives.” Yet is this list of activities which *prohairesis* engages in enough to attribute to him a theory of self-consciousness, if such a concept involves having a particularly immediate, first-personal relationship to my mental contents? Certainly it seems as though “reflecting on who we are” and “reasoning about how we should live and organize our lives” do not, in themselves, require that we have private mental content. As discussed above, Epictetus understands the correct use of representations as the goal of the third *topos*. The one who has mastered this final area of study – the ideal sage – will never err, in either thought or action, for the sage will unfailingly judge the truth or falsity of his representations. Learning how to judge representations like the ideal sage requires the cultivation of a reluctance to accept appearances without rigorous inspection. This cultivation poses a challenge, however, because the mind cannot arbitrarily postulate its own truths for itself;

The cause of our assenting to the truth of something is that it appears to be fact. And it is impossible to assent to anything that does not appear to be fact. Why? It is the mind’s nature: it will assent to the truth, reject what is false and suspend judgment in doubtful cases. Here, I will prove it to you: feel, if you can, that it is night now. ‘Impossible.’ Don’t feel that it is now day. ‘Impossible.’ Feel, or don’t feel, that the number of stars is even. ‘Impossible.’ (*Discourses* I.28.1-3 trans. Dobbin)

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The mind is naturally inclined to assent to those things that appear to us to be true. Are we not, then, the prisoner of our own appearances?\textsuperscript{70} If so, one might reasonably question whether we truly have autonomy with respect to our assent not only to propositional truth-statements, but to the actions caused by the impulses associated with those statements as well. The relationship between the mastery of the \textit{topos} of assent and moral action is a strong one, for our actions are determined by the judgments we make about our \textit{phantasiai}. Recall how Stoicism’s monistic theory of mind precludes the possibility for forms of \textit{akrasia} that involve the usurping of the rational part of the \textit{psuchê} by one of the lower parts. We therefore not only judge, but also act in accordance with appearances as well, only “instead of true and false we react to representations of right and wrong, good and bad, honest and dishonest. And it is impossible to think that an action will do us good and not choose to do it” (\textit{Discourses} I.28.4-5 trans. Dobbin). When we experience a certain representation, either an impulsive one or one more properly theoretical, we are confronted with a particular assessment of a certain state of affairs, and we are naturally inclined to act accordingly. Here again, we find evidence of the influence of his understanding of the character of Socrates.\textsuperscript{71} Yet this approach seems to be susceptible to the charge that if it is true, we are incapable of acting in any other way than in accordance with how things seem to us.

At first glance, then, Epictetus might seem to be recommending an impossible task in his suggestion that we develop a skeptical attitude with regards to appearances; for how do we act, if

\textsuperscript{70} The sophist Gorgias, in his \textit{Encomium of Helen}, argued that Helen was, in fact, a slave to her representations, and as such could not be held accountable for her actions.

not in accordance with how things appear to us? Consider his comparison of the philosopher to the money-assayer, who also must test the truth and falsity of things;

Therefore, the first and most important duty of the philosopher is to test representations, choosing between them and only deploying those that have passed the test. You know how, with money – an area where we believe our interest to be much at stake – we have developed the art of assaying, and considerable ingenuity has gone into developing a way to test if coins are counterfeit, involving our senses of sight, smell, hearing and touch. The assayer will let the denarius drop and listen intently to its right; and he is not satisfied to listen just once: after repeated listenings he practically acquires a musician’s subtle ear. (Discourses I.20.7-10 trans. Dobbin)

To someone who is unversed in the craft of detecting counterfeit coins, a real denarius and a fake one might appear to be identical. Yet after carefully examining many, many coins, both true and false, one eventually becomes attuned to the subtler differences between them – differences that someone who has not devoted such care to the study of coins might not be sensitive to. To someone who spends considerable time and effort on this empirical examination of coins, a real and counterfeit coin will in fact not appear the same as they do to an apprentice; two coins that may seem identical to the latter will look different, sound different, feel different to the expert. In acquiring this ability, the apprentice assayer will no doubt make many errors in attempting to distinguish between true and false coins before eventually becoming sensitive to their finer characteristics. Eventually, however, these errors will cease as one masters the craft.

In the same way, the one who has mastered the third topos will become more sensitive to the differences between mental representations. Certain phantasiai that might seem to possess similar truth-value to a philosophical novice will appear different to someone who has advanced in the study of assent. To the former, the descriptions of a crowd as either a troubling mob or a joyous festival, or of being alone as being in a state of either isolation or peace, may appear like equally truthful descriptions. Someone who has mastered the examination of representations,
however, will perceive the former descriptions as false, as they erroneously imply that circumstances external to moral choice are misfortunes, while the latter descriptions express gratitude at what providence has arranged.

Unlike the assayer of coins, however, the philosopher who tests his representations does not examine something exterior to himself, but inquires into his own thoughts. This distinguishes philosophy from other crafts and areas of study, which normally have some other object. In the case of philosophy, however, we examine our representations with other representations. Philosophy is therefore a self-reflective discipline of study, in a way that other disciplines of study are not;

Now, for what purpose did nature arm us with reason? To make the correct use of representations. And what is reason if not a collection of individual representations? Hence, it naturally comes to turn its analysis on itself. And what does the virtue of wisdom profess to investigate? Things good, bad and indifferent. And what is wisdom itself? Good. And ignorance? Bad. It is natural for wisdom too, then, to investigate itself, as well as its opposite. (Discourses I.20.5-6 trans. Dobbin)

The goal of the examination of representations is to achieve a coherent notion of what the good consists of, so that we do not have conflicting ideas about its nature.72 The ideal sage will have a complete and consistent set of representations pertaining to what is morally praiseworthy and blameworthy, and what falls outside the sphere of moral evaluation. Someone who has not yet achieved the moral perfection of the ideal sage must sift through the representations he has, discovering inconsistencies and removing those that are contrary to his innate conceptions of the

72 Long (2002) Ch. 3, esp. p. 82, where Long notes, “I find Vlastos’ interpretation of the Socratic elenchus quite persuasive. But even if it is rejected as regards the Platonic Socrates, it closely matches Epictetus’ theory and practice. He too assumes that its qualified practitioner (ideally Socrates) has consistently true moral beliefs that he can draw on to correct the erring person, and Epictetus’s innate preconceptions play a role very similar to the role of latent but true moral beliefs in Vlastos’ account of Socrates.”
good. The philosopher is therefore an interpreter of his representations, in that he must learn how to determine which among them are true and which are false.

In defending his view that Epictetus’s treatment of the correct use of representations contains within it the view that we have a unique and different relationship to our own thought contents than the one we have to those of other people, Long points to this idea of the philosopher as a self-reflective interpreter of representations; “If my representations are up to me to interpret, accept or reject, there must be a ‘me’ to which they appear and an ‘I’ which reacts to them – a subject that is identifiable precisely by the representations that it receives and by what it does with them.”\(^{73}\) The interpretation of one’s representations is a repeated theme in the Discourses, and indeed one must admit that it would be difficult for modern readers not to read into these passages the sort of interest in self-construction common in so many modern and postmodern discussions of subjectivity. Yet one must ask whether Long’s description here is enough to attribute to Epictetus an interest not only in self-reflection and self-awareness, but in other kinds of phenomena that are usually associated with self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is itself a nebulous concept, and is often invoked in philosophical discussions of a wide range of concepts, from memory to intention to moral responsibility. Whatever phenomena the concept of self-consciousness is meant to identify or account for, however, it is usually understood to involve the existence of an irreducibly first-personal kind of perception; that is, it refers to one’s perception of oneself as different in kind from the way in which one perceives other people, or other people perceive oneself. By arguing that Epictetus has such a concept, Long suggests that Epictetus’s discussions of self-examination involve a concern with self-perception in way that is fundamentally different from how one perceives other people.

The problem with Long’s interpretation, however, is that Epictetus does not appear to treat our knowledge of either our representations, or the moral dispositions that shape how we respond to them, as in any way private. The possibility that we have immediate access to our values and beliefs, rather than perceive them through observing our actions, does not appear to be one he considers, and indeed appears to be belied by his own version of the role of dialectical discussion. Epictetus’s lack of interest in immediate self-perception seems evident in his treatment of the concept of *sunaisthêsis*. In Robert Dobbin’s more recent translation of Epictetus’s rejoinder to those who berate him for ridiculing students who fail to appreciate their moral weakness, he translates this term as “consciousness” “Why do you distract him from the consciousness of his own faults?” Or again, “The beginning of philosophy for those who enter by the front door is consciousness (*sunaisthêsis*) of one’s weakness and infirmity with regard to the important things.” If consciousness of one’s faults is meant to suggest self-consciousness, Dobbin’s way of translating the term seems to imply the presence of not only observed, but also immediate, perception. Yet in general, Epictetus does not limit his concept of *sunaisthêsis* strictly to a kind of self-perception. Rather, he seems to consider the term to refer to the perception of underlying dispositions, attitudes, abilities or inabilities, or other psychological

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74 LS 57C. Dobbin’s translation suggests similarity to Hierocles, though whether the concepts in the two authors are similar requires argument. See Inwood (1984).

75 Here, I refer to Dobbin’s translation in his Clarendon Press edition and commentary of *Discourses* I. In his Penguin Classics translation, Dobbin amends the rendering of *sunaisthêsis* to “awareness.”

76 “Well, how does the bull realize its own strength, rushing out to protect the whole herd when a lion attacks? The possession of a particular talent is sensed by its owner; so if any of you are so blessed you will be the first to know it (*echin sunaisthêsin*). It is true, however, that no bull reaches maturity in an instant, nor do men become heroes overnight. We must endure a winter training, and can’t be dashing into situations for which we aren’t yet prepared” (*Discourses* I.2.30-32 trans. Dobbin)
states not only in ourselves, but in other people as well. More specifically, he often (although not always) uses *sunaisthēsis* and its cognates as a term that describes the awareness of moral weaknesses. If one can acquire *sunaisthēsis* of the nature of another’s character in a mediated, empirical way, through observing another’s behavior, one should therefore also acquire *sunaisthēsis* of one’s character in the same way – that is, through observing how one reacts to certain situations, rather than through some kind of immediate, infallible knowledge. Given that he uses the term to describe one’s awareness of these weaknesses in either oneself or others, there does not seem to be anything irreducibly first-personal about *sunaisthēsis* of one’s own character. Rather, this awareness of our own personal moral weaknesses seems to be something we acquire by through our experience in the embedded social circumstances in which we find ourselves. Reflecting on the behavior of other people gives us an opportunity to reflect upon our own;

Surrounded as we are by such people – so confused, so ignorant of what they’re saying and of whatever faults they may or may not have, where those faults came from and how to get rid to them – I think we too should make a habit of asking ourselves, ‘Could it be that I’m one of them too? What illusion about myself do I entertain? How do I regard myself – as another wise man, as someone with perfect self-control? Do I, too, ever make that boast about being prepared for whatever may happen? If I don’t know something, am I properly aware (*echô sunaisthēsin*) that I don’t know it?’ (*Discourses* II.21.8-10 trans. Dobbin)

Of course, even in the absence of some kind of irreducibly first-person point of view, there are, in fact, no doubt important differences between the way we observe ourselves and the way we observe other people. Yet Epictetus does not appear to be concerned with this

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77 In arguing that Cynicism – a philosophical ancestor of Stoicism – provided training only for the philosophically advanced, Epictetus compares those capable and incapable of taking up its practices to Hector, who as a man was fit for war, and Andromache, who has a woman was not; “Now remember what Hector said to Andromache; ‘No, go inside, and see to your weaving instead. Men will see to war; men, and me in particular.’ He sensed (*sunesthai*)

his own endowment, you see, and his wife’s incapacity.” (*Discourses* III.22.108-109 trans. Dobbin) Observe also Epictetus’ comparison of those who mock philosophers to cattle; “Naturally, they [philosophers] are laughed at by the majority . . . And I suppose if cattle had *sunaisthēsin*, they would make fun of anyone interested in anything besides the grass!” (*Discourses* II.14.29 trans. Dobbin).
distinction.\textsuperscript{78} That the self-perception required for the examination of our *phantasia* is best understood as observed, rather than immediate, is further evident in the way in which Epictetus instructs his students. Consider again, for example, the story of the father who deserts his child (*Discourses* I.11), or the young man who claims he has a desire to pursue philosophy but is so concerned with his sartorial appearance that he lacks the ascetic character proper to a philosopher (*Discourses* III.1). By observing their behavior, Epictetus is able to perceive the content of the representations his two students have assented to, and the general dispositions that have led them to form these representations. What determines one’s authority to interpret representation is not that they are one’s own, but rather, that one has become a master of the art of assaying appearances. Indeed, it is only because Epictetus – by observing their behavior and asking them questions – is capable of correctly interpreting the representations of his students that he can demonstrate to them both their falsity and the dispositional moral weaknesses that produced them, and instruct them in assenting or denying representations as is appropriate according to their social roles. Because Epictetus can interpret not only his own representations, but those of others, perceptions and evaluations of *phantasiai* must that is public and communicable, insofar as they are not irreducibly first-personal.

As counterintuitive as this may seem to many modern readers, there is nothing in Arrian’s text that indicates that one cannot perceive the content of one’s own *phantasiai* by observing one’s actions. Even if one does maintain that, by virtue of being oneself, one has privileged access to one’s *phantasiai*, there is no indication that the kind of perception involved requires that the content of these perceptions be immediate and incommunicable in the way that

\textsuperscript{78} Gerson notes Plotinus’s discussion of how the Stoics cannot, in fact, accommodate this difference because they are committed to a materialist view of the soul; why a material soul could stand into a particular, sympathetic relationship with one material body, rather than another, is impossible for Plotinus; only an extensionless soul can have this sort of relationship. See Plotinus *Ennead* IV.7.7 and Gerson (1994) p. 133.
immediate perceptions are. While one can obviously only act on the interpretations one forms of one’s own representations, in neither these passages nor others does Epictetus entertain the idea that in the perception of one’s own representations and dispositions required for self-examination does the immediacy of this perception play a role. Perception of our own weaknesses and those of other people are described in the Discourses as going hand in hand, and acquired in the same way – by advancing in our study of the philosophical topoi, and by empirical reflection of the behavior of ourselves and others. Both require that we make progress with respect to our appreciation of the fact that human beings are rational animals, and that when we consider particular external circumstances as misfortunes, it is because we have failed to understand the sort of being we are. While awareness of our weaknesses, and of how they color our representations of the world, are necessary for us to learn how not to let ourselves be taken in by initial appearances, Epictetus’s exhortations to judge our character and representations in light of one another do not introduce the kind of specifically first-personal perception at stake in discussions of self-consciousness. He does not seem to consider anything particularly private involved in either moral reflection or the awareness that results from it, as discussions of his so-called theory of “self-consciousness” seem to suggest. Contra Taylor, we have no more reason to think that Epictetus’s sense of what is involved in prohairesis requires any more privatized content than Aristotle’s theory of prohairesis.

Consider the example provided by the discussion between Epictetus and the young dandy who claims to desire to philosophize in Discourses III.1. By asking the young man a series of questions about the nature of the beautiful, Epictetus convinces the young man that although he desires to be beautiful, he actually believes – although he is not aware of it – that beautiful person is the one who virtuously. Epictetus here uses philosophical dialogue in order to help the
young man reach an understanding of what he actually believes. Against the Foucauldian account, we do not here find Epictetus offering a clear distinction about the difference between self-reflective perceptions of oneself – perceptions that involve examining one’s occurrent states, such as the young man’s learned perception of what he believes beauty to consist in – and self-reflexive perceptions, those perceptions which cannot be acquired. Plotinus’s theory of *sumpatheia* will involve a self-reflexive awareness that when I observe myself in a particular state, it is *I* who am in a certain state; by contrast, we do not find, I think, in Epictetus concern with articulating a theory of self-reflexivity.

If Epictetus is not concerned with a distinctively first person point of view, then, why have so many of his readers understood otherwise? I would suggest that readers have been inclined to read Epictetus in this way because he *does* ask us to revise our point of view, even if it is not necessarily an exclusively first-personal point of view. In giving his account of how a person learns to act with an unhindered and unimpeded *prohairesis*, he is interested in how one transitions from viewing one’s circumstances from a pre-philosophical perspective to the perspective of Providence. The moral point of view is not characterized as a particularly first-personal point of view, but as the point of view of the cosmos – that perspective from which Zeus arranges the universe toward the best end.

1.2.6 Adopting a God’s-eye view

Stoicism distinguished itself from other philosophical traditions in its particularly strong version of providentialism. For Epictetus, this entails that the pursuit of *eudaimonia* requires that our understanding of what is good for us be informed by an appreciation of God’s perspective on human well-being. The exhortation for us to give up our natural, pre-reflective point of view

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79 See Annas (2003) Chapter 5, esp. p. 175. In this chapter Annas mostly focuses on how early Stoicism does not argue from cosmic perspective to the moral perspective, but rather uses the cosmic perspective to flesh out the
and exchange it for the moral point of view of providence requires us to develop different ideas about what is intrinsically good for us. Such an understanding, in turn, arises out of a reevaluation of human understanding of their creation and subsequent nature. When Zeus created the cosmos, he could not make human beings so that they were immortal and never subject to conventional hardship. He made up for this, however, by giving them the same capacity for reason as he himself has. Zeus cares for human beings by ensuring that whatever may happen to them, the freedom of their prohairesis from external circumstances guarantees that they are as free to achieve ataraxia as he. Because of the divine reason bestowed upon us by Zeus, virtuous action is to be understood as acting in a manner that befits the fact that we carry God within ourselves;

God is helpful. Whatever is good is also helpful. It is reasonable to suppose, then, that the divine nature and the nature of the good will correspond. So what is the divine nature? Is it flesh? Be serious. Do we associate it with real estate and status? Hardly. It is mind, intelligence, and correct reason. . . . You are a creature placed in charge, and a particle of God himself; there is a bit of God within you. Why don’t you know of this relation, and of your origins, when you eat, bear in mind who it is exactly you are feeding. When you have sex, reflect who you are during the act. In conversation, exercise, discourse – do you remember that it is God you are feeding, God you are exercising? You carry God around with you and don’t know it, poor fool. Don’t imagine I am talking about some external deity made of silver or gold. You carry the living God inside you and are blind to the fact that you desecrate him with your dirty words and dirty thoughts – none of which you would dare repeat if there were even a mere statue of a God nearby. God himself is there within, seeing and overhearing everything you do and say –

substance of the moral point of view. In briefly treating Roman Stoic passages about seeing oneself as part of a larger whole, however, Annas argues that this argument is based upon the idea that because one is “only” a part, one’s troubles are passing and insignificant. While this may be true for Marcus Aurelius, I do not think that is what is going on in Epictetus – for the latter, the “whole/part” passages are meant to further our understanding of what is in our power and what is not. Annas also discusses the relevance of moral perspective in Annas (2007). While she is concerned to show how the abstracted perspective helps one better understand what is demanded by one’s embedded social roles, I think she is a bit too quick to identify the point of view advocated here as the one of “universal reason,” which seems to me to be too thin (and strangely Kantian) of a description of the perspective Epictetus articulates as normative. Understanding the cosmic perspective not as a perspective indifferent to the welfare of human beings, but as one of providential concern, might help to consider more deeply how such a view is also eudaimonistic. For other treatments of the cosmic point of view see Boeri (2009), Inwood (2009), Cooper (1999) Ch. 20, Betegh (2003). For a study on the ethical implications of cosmology in Platonism, see Carone (2005).
As Long reads these passages, acting in a manner proper to the God within, or daimôn, is a matter of identifying with one’s “normative self.” Yet the description of the daimôn as a “normative self” might be called into question. To be sure, prohairesis must be informed by the logos of “God within” to make sound decisions. But why does this fact entail that the daimôn should be identified as “my” normative self? If this God within is identified with one’s logos, which is the same logos that governs the cosmos and which other human beings are also meant to act in accordance with, in what sense can it be said to be either “mine” or a “self”?

Rather than consider Epictetus’s language of the “God within” as a reference to a normative “self,” I suggest this language is meant as an exhortation to shift our point of view so that we consider our lives from the context of the larger cosmos. It is from this perspective that we are able to adequately appreciate the circumstances in which we find ourselves; “It is easy to praise providence for everything that happens in the world provided you have both the ability to see individual events in the context of the whole and a sense of gratitude. Without these, either you will not see the usefulness of what happens or, even supposing that you do see it, you will not be grateful for it” (Discourses I.6.1-2 trans. Dobbin). Annas has described the perspective articulated here as “the point of view of the universe,” and has argued that the basic thrust of the argument is that from the standpoint of the cosmos, one’s difficulties are miniscule and transient. Once one has adopted this perspective, one will adopt a similar attitude toward conventional misfortunes. I think Epictetus’s interest in the providential aspect of this perspective, however, justifies interpreting this and passages like it as exhortations to see the universe from a God’s-eye point of view, according to which we ought to interpret our relationship to the cosmos as one ordered by providential concern for human beings both collectively and as individuals. A better
appreciation of the significance of the providential point of view allows us to connect these passages with those regarding prohairesis as functioning correctly when it is informed by our daimôn. By adopting the God’s eye point of view, we acquire the correct understanding of the nature of our relationships to externals necessary for truly autonomous action. Interpreting our lives from the God’s-eye perspective helps us appreciate that things other than our prohairesis are not really ours, and so we should feel no real sense of loss when they are redistributed to others;

Make room for other people; it’s their turn to be born, just as you were born, and once born they need a place to live, along with the other necessities of life. If the first people won’t step aside, what’s going to happen? Don’t be so greedy. Aren’t you ever satisfied? Are you determined to make the world more crowded still? (Discourses IV.1.106 trans. Dobbin)

Because taking the God’s-eye view gives us deeper insight into the nature of our relationships with externals, we are able to form the right attitudes and to act appropriately with respect to our social roles. Reflecting on our lives from this perspective gives us the understanding of what is in our power and what is truly ours that is necessary for virtuous conduct within our embedded roles, even in instances that appear to be cases of conventional misfortune;

‘My father is laying waste to my inheritance.’ But not harming you. ‘My brother will claim more than his share.’ He’s welcome to take as much as he likes. Will he take a greater share of honesty, loyalty and brotherly love? No; even Zeus cannot deprive you of that fortune – because he chose not to be able to. He entrusted it to me and gave me a share equal to his own – free, clear, and unencumbered. (Discourses III.3.5-10 trans. Dobbin)

Recall how Epictetus considers the struggle provoked by conventional misfortune as an opportunity to reflect upon one’s moral progress. Part of this reflection requires us to ask ourselves what kind of beings we are, and what attitudes toward conventional misfortune we

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80 Here we find the central Stoic concept of oikesiosis or appropriation. The literature on this is large, but see Engberg-Pedersen (1986), Frede (1999), Engberg-Pedersen (1990), Annas (1993), McCabe (2005), Brown (forthcoming)
ought to develop in light of that reflection. Once we have formed an adequate appreciation for
our own divine rationality, we will not experience fear or distress at external events that have
nothing to do with our well-being. When our understanding of ourselves is informed by a grasp
of Zeus’s providential concern, we are in a position to appreciate that whatever the conduct of
others, they cannot harm us, for they cannot rob us of the virtue that manifests itself in both the
psychological experience of *ataraxia* and in our acting as our embedded social roles demand.
For Epictetus, the providential point of view does not (as Annas suggests) mean resigning
ourselves to the grim truth that the universe does not care about our happiness; the possibility for
human well-being is very much written into the fabric of the cosmos, and simply requires the
exercise of our rational capacities to grasp it. By adopting the God’s-eye view – that is, the point
of view of the God within - we come to recognize that many of the things we think of as our
possessions are really on loan from the gods, and that our irrational valuing of such externals not
only undermines our embedded relationships to others, but is the true source of our experience of
fear and distress. Epictetus’s discussions about the *daimôn* are not, on this reading, discussions
about identifying with an interior, normative self; rather, they are discussions about how we must
learn to attend to our well-being in the same way that providence does – by allowing ourselves to
be *eleutheroi* from external circumstances - and that doing so requires us to understand our well-
being through the reason given to us by providence.

In Long’s view, the faculty of assent “constitutes a person’s moral identity, and, as such
it is a character formed by experience, a disposition to make or decline to make specific
commitments and choices. The content of these is given in representations. It is representations
that provide selves with the viewpoints which they can select as appropriate to *who they are* [my
emphasis], or reject as inappropriate." As we have already discussed, the representations that are appropriate for us to choose are determined by the social roles we inhabit. These social roles, however, are not essential to who we are – Epictetus repeatedly states that because what roles we inhabit is a matter that falls outside our *prohairesis*, we ought *not* to view those roles as an interest for us, but only how we act within those roles. But how we act within those roles is defined by the *logos* that permeates the universe. What actions are *kathêkonta* for a particular role is necessitated by the nature of the role as defined by divine *logos*, not by own’s idiosyncratic choices. While Epictetus’s arguments for considering one’s *prohairesis* as one’s only true possession are developed in order to help his students learn to identify living in accordance with cosmic reason as their sole interest, reason itself is the same for every individual. As the discussions of the “God within” illustrate, Epictetus is not interested in cultivating in his students either an awareness or construction of an apotheosized “self”, but in altering the set of considerations his students take into account in responding to their representations.

In Epictetus, then, self-examination is fundamentally a matter of examining whether one’s beliefs about value are true or false from the standpoint of universal reason. In Origen and Evagrius, however, we find a substantially different understanding of self-examination; one in which we examine our mental contents not to determine their truth or falsity, but to determine how they direct our attention. In the chapters that remain, I will consider how this reflects a shift toward a psychology for which a concept of will becomes essential.

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82 Inwood (1985).
Chapter 2: Origen on Representation and Human Freedom

2.1: Introduction

We do not have any evidence that Evagrius would have been directly influenced by Epictetus’s thought, and indeed it seems unlikely this is the case; yet certain elements of Evagrius’s thinking appear to derive from Origen’s transmission of certain key elements of Stoicism. Yet the contours of Evagrius’s reception of Origen have been debated. He appears to have been exposed to Origen’s thought from a number of sources, including the Cappadocians, particularly Gregory Nazianzen, Rufinus and Melania the Younger, and the monks of the desert. These discussions have tended to focus on Evagrius’s relationship to two related aspects of Origen’s thought, his overall cosmology and his demonology. How Origen influences the details of Evagrius’s psychology, however, has been relatively underexplored. In the course of the next two chapters, I will suggest that Origen’s thought on our engagement with the demons as an opportunity for the examination of our mental representations is resonate enough to suggest the influence of Origen on Evagrius. The elements of Origen’s psychology which inform Evagrius’s thought were, it should be noted, present in Rufinus’s translations of De

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83 Samuel Rubenson has argued for Origen’s influence in the desert in part on the basis of his claims for the authenticity of Antony’s letters; see Rubenson (1990). Gould has questioned the extent to which Origen’s thought was present in the Egyptian desert, particularly in the accounts of Rubenson and Dechow (1988), in Gould (1995); see also Bright (1999). On the relationship between Antony and Evagrius, see Kannengiesser (1995), O’Laughlin (1999).

84 Bunge has attempted to defend Evagrius against Origenism by arguing that the influence of Origen on Evagrius has been overstated. While Bunge’s point that the influence of Clement has often been overlooked in Evagrian scholarship is well-taken, the notion that Evagrius’s thought is not influenced by Origen is unlikely. See Bunge (1986) pp. 25-27. Dechow, on the other hand, has argued that Evagrius’s Origenism most closely resembles that of the Cappadocians. See Dechow (1988) pp. 177-181. While this might be true of the Letter on Faith, the only extent work Evagrius wrote before going to the desert, as Konstantinovsky observes this seems unlikely to be true of works like the Kephalaia Gnostica. See Konstantinovsky (2009) p. 18. One might attribute this transition to the move to the desert; indeed, Evagrius’s development of the speculative aspects of Origen’s thought seem to resonate with the letters of Antony.
Principii; given that Evagrius was in contact with Rufinus, he may have receive these elements from him.

Origen’s thought on the significance of self-examination must be understood within the context of his relationship to the philosophical debates of his time. Origen’s relationship with philosophy is among the most contested issues in patristic scholarship, with a long disagreement about whether he is best understood as a Platonist in Christian clothing or a biblical exegete who only deployed philosophical tropes to interpret scripture. Here, I understand that both Origen’s interpretation of scripture and his use of philosophy were shaped by his defense of the view, against those who denied the providence of God such as Valentinus and his associates and the Middle Platonist Celsus, that God is both good and just. This debate led him to make a number of innovations in Christian cosmology and biblical hermeneutics. He also, however, developed what I will argue is a proto-theory of will.

85 Among the most influential interpreters responsible for the view that that Origen’s use of philosophy betrayed his Christianity are Adolph von Harnack (1957), Charles Bigg (1913), and Richard Hanson (1959). Despite his admiration for what he takes to be Origen’s advancement over Justin Martyr and the Epistle of Barnabas with respect to reception of the Hebrew Bible, Hanson declares that “in one important respect Origen’s thought remained outside the Bible and never penetrated within it. Of the great interpreters . . . it is always evident that their minds were soaked in biblical thought; they give the reader the impression of speaking to him from inside the Bible; at least for purposes of exposition, they have successfully put themselves into the minds of the biblical author whom they are interpreting. Origen never quite conveys this impression, and on countless occasions gives the opposite impression, that he is reading into the mind of the biblical author thoughts which are really his own” in Hanson (1959) pp. 363. Henri de Lubac, Henri Crouzel, and Joseph Trigg, on the other hand, have maintained that the biblical text remains paramount for Origen. Trigg maintains that for Origen, Hellenistic philosophy was primarily a means of interpreting scripture. “Origen’s interests were so inclusive as to make him practically a microcosm of the spiritual life of the third century. Central, of course, was the Christian tradition, which provided him with the Bible as interpreted according to the rule of faith, an ethic of heroic asceticism, and a disciplined community committed to its ideals. A Hellenistic literary education provided him with critical procedures for analyzing the Bible’s texts and contents” in Trigg (1992) p. 244. See also de Lubac (2002) and Crouzel (1989) pp. 61-84. In situating himself between these two camps, Dillon makes the following, rather sensible suggestion; “The truth may rather be that he is indeed a philosopher, but one who, rather than adopting Platonism or the doctrine of any other Hellenic school, has forged a system of his own out of the Christian scriptures and tradition, to which he lays Platonism in tribute for concepts and formulations which he finds useful, without surrendering to the Greeks any principle whatever” Dillon (1992) p. 8. For a more recent study on Origen’s relationship to Hellenistic philosophy, see Ramelli (2009). For views that Origen was, despite his opposition, positively influenced by Valentinus, see Quispel (2008) Ch. 19. Against this reading, see Scott (1992).

86 On Celsus, see Chadwick (1947) and Frede (1994) and (1999). For general studies of the competition between so-called “pagans” and Christians, see Lane Fox (1988) and MacMullen (1997).
Some contemporary scholars, Terence Irwin most especially, have argued for the idea of a concept of rational desire in Aristotle’s thought, a concept which, Irwin claims, gives us reason to attribute a theory of the will to Aristotle. Irwin argues that the prohairesis or choice formed by the rational part of the soul is a desiderative choice, and that Aristotle therefore has the concept of rational desire Aquinas attributes to him. Yet Aristotle seems to lack the notion that this rational desire belongs to a distinct part of the human soul. Moreover, Frede has argued that while Aristotle’s concept of boulêsis or wish is a concept of someone’s willing or wanting something, it is not a concept of a will because it lacks the idea that human beings can form second- or higher-order desires (desires about our desires – I may desire to desire brussell sprouts, because I know they are good for me, even if I don’t presently desire them). In the absence of such a concept in Aristotle’s thought, Albrecht Dihle has argued that Augustine is the first to have an inchoate sense of will as a distinct faculty. In this chapter, I will posit that we find a crude version of such a concept in the thought of Origen of Alexandria. Moreover, the fact that we find such a concept in Origen’s thought changes what self-examination consists in. We have seen how in Epictetus, self-examination consists in determining which of one’s beliefs are true or false. In Origen, however, we find that self-examination understood not as working out whether one’s mental contents accurately represent the world but in how one’s faculty of choice is directed. Despite the fact that Origen draws upon, and reinterprets, Stoic notions of volition as assent to phantasai, our examination of our phantasai is a matter not so much of whether we accurately represent the world to ourselves, but of whether we are inclined to pursue

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what is pleasurable for the body. This alternative construal of the role played by the examination of representations in moral development to that described by Epictetus gives us reason to consider Origen’s psychology as a modification of Gill’s objectivist account of ancient psychology.

2.2. The Role of Freedom in Origen’s Anthropology

Origen’s commitment to the ability of human beings to act otherwise than they do act was developed within the context of his disputes against Valentinus and his associates. Origen construed the Valentinian division of human beings into the fleshly, soul-like, and spiritual as requiring a commitment to a kind of fatalism, against which he asserted the human capacity to act otherwise. In denying the view, particularly as it was espoused by Heracleon, that at least some human natures were fixed, Origen claimed that moral good and evil are accidental features of every human being;

Consequently we say there is indeed no rational creature that is not as capable of good as of evil. But because we say that there is no nature which does not receive evil, we do not necessarily affirm that therefore every nature has received evil; that is, that it was made evil. But just as it is possible to say that every human nature receives the ability to navigate, and yet from this not every person will navigate; and again it is possible to say that the art of grammar or medicine is in every human being, yet nevertheless it is not shown that every human being is a doctor or a grammarian, so if we say that there is no nature which is not able to

90 The literature on so-called “Gnosticism” is enormous, but for some of the most important general studies, see Jonas (1963), Grant (196g), Pagels (1973), (1975), (1979), Rudolph (1987), Layton (1987), Marksches (1992), Pearson (1994), (2004) and (2007), Williams (1996), King (2003), Dunderberg (2008) and Brakke (2010). For studies on how so-called Gnosticism arose out of Judaism, see Fossum (1985) and Mastrocinque (2005). For more discussion on fixed natures, see Trumbower (1989).

91 Michael Kaler and Marie-Pierre Bussières have argued that Heracleon is best understood as an associate of Valentinus, rather than as a “Valentinian” if this appellation entails that his philosophy should be interpreted as heavily informed by Valentinus’s cosmological myth; “We can therefore bring together all the ancient references to Heracleon by assuming that he lived contemporaneously with Valentinus, knew him as an associate or a student, and that although he worked alongside or under the shadow of his more (in)famous colleague, he nonetheless developed his own theological and philosophical views, views which one might not consider Valentinian by modern scholarly standards. If this scenario proves correct, it would explain why Clement would see him as a Valentinian, why Origen would not, and why the other ancient authorities would tentatively present him as linked to Valentinus” in Kaler and Bussières (2006) p. 287.
receive evil, nevertheless it is not consequently indicated that every nature has received evil; and if we say that there is no nature which does not receive the good, again nevertheless every nature is not proved to receive what is good. (De Prin. I.8.3 trans. Gibbons)

Whether a rational creature is morally good or evil is an accidental feature of their character and a result of their own free choices. That goodness is essential to God, but accidental for created beings, accounts for the hierarchical diversity in the world. Where one stands in the hierarchy of beings depends upon how far from God one has chosen to fall, as discussed in the appendix. The fact that there is an ontological divide between God and created beings accounts for why these beings are free to fall away from their contemplation of the divine Monad. Nevertheless, the “cause of the diversity and variety among each and every creature is shown to follow not from any unfairness from the One managing them, but from their own movements, either ardent or lazy, according to their virtue or wickedness” (De Prin. I.8.2 trans. Butterworth).

The fact that human beings are responsible for their character is closely tied up with Origen’s theory of the fall of the souls into bodies. For Origen, our material bodies and the moral character we have while we reside in these bodies is a consequence of a primordial fall away from contemplation of the Trinity by preexistent souls. The fact that human beings find themselves subject to the trials of materiality is a paideutic punishment for errors made in the predescended state of contemplation. Yet while Origen’s interest in the pre-existence of souls is strongly informed by his commitment to human freedom to do otherwise, the details of his teaching on this point are obscured by the state of the evidence.

In this, it is clear that his reasons for adopting this theory were quite different from those of Plato. In the Phaedo, Plato introduces the idea of preexistence in order to explain why it is reasonable to be optimistic about the survival of the soul after death. That souls exist before they
become embodied, in a world in which they have direct apprehension of the Forms, helps explain how one has access to the unchanging necessary to cognize sense perceptions (*Phaedo* 76d-77a); that souls were preexistent gives us reason to believe that they are immortal as well. In the *Phaedrus*, Plato again invokes preexistence in explaining how human beings can have innate knowledge of justice, goodness, and other concepts. In this dialogue, however, he also suggests that one’s fall into the material world is a moral failure. Plato explains this by suggesting that the soul is like a charioteer in a chariot led by two horses, a good one inclined toward contemplation of what is, and a bad one inclined toward the pleasures experienced through the body. The *nous* is the charioteer who must steer the soul one way or the other.  

Souls that cannot control their bad horses leave the sphere of being or to on. As a result, they fall to the earth and are born into human bodies, taking on a character appropriate to their moral depravity, and in the very worst cases enter a body of one of the lower animals (*Phaedrus* 248a-e).

*Republic* X likewise considers the question of how earthly lives are influenced by choices made in previous lives in the Myth of Er (614c-624d). In the *Timaeus*, Plato explains that the primal God, having created both the lesser gods and human souls, assigns the immortal, rational part of the soul to lower *theoi* (42e-44c). These lower gods then attach the mortal parts, the spirited and appetitive parts, to the human being before putting it into its body (69c7-8).

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92 The *Phaedrus* discussion of tripartition is rather curious; if the chariot model of the soul is meant to describe souls before they have descended into bodies, why is the soul nevertheless subject to the appetites of the *epithumetikon*? Gerson has suggested one can avoid this interpretive conundrum by understanding the disembodied soul as it is described in this dialogue as a literary image of the disembodied soul as it truly is; see Gerson (2003) p. 139.

93 On the Myth of Er see Halliwell (2007).

94 The fact that there is existence outside the One is sometimes described by Plotinus as the consequence of emanation and sometimes as the consequence of a fall; as Blumenthal describes, we find a conflict “between judgments of value which Plotinus passes on one and the same being in a given situation. On the one hand all the constituents of his world are necessary and good. On the other any departure from the state of the One is undesirable, and is viewed as increasingly evil as we descend lower in the scale of being” in Blumenthal (1971) p. 1.
The variety of ways in which Plato articulates this theory of pre-existent souls should be kept in mind when we turn to the difficult task of interpreting the evidence for Origen’s thought on the subject, which was motivated less by the sorts of issues that drive the *Phaedo* – the rationality of indifference towards death, the belief that opposites come from one another, an explanation of epistemology – than by his views on original sin. According to the reports by sixth-century authors such as Cyril of Scythopolis, the fact that Origen maintained that souls were preexistent was among the reasons for which he was anathematized by the Fifth Ecumenical Council in 553. According to this interpretation of Origen’s thought, the difficulties human beings experience in their embodied lives are a result of errors committed by the disembodied intellect in the intelligible realm. Because these intellects, contemplating the

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In *Ennead* V.1, Plotinus offers a systematized account of these various passages in his description of the fall of the souls from the One. “The beginning of their wickedness was their audacity (*tolma*), their birth, the first “otherness” and the wish to belong to themselves. When they had appeared in this world, they took pleasure in their freedom and made much use of their movement. Thus, they were unaware that they too were from that world. Like children who have been dragged away from their fathers at birth and who have been brought up for a long time apart, they know neither themselves nor their fathers” (*Ennead* V.1.1 trans. Atkinson). Yet the sections on *tolma* also must be nuanced in light of Plotinus’s commitment to the assertion from the *Protagoras* that no one does wrong willingly and the claim that this is the ultimate source of evil. Gerson (1994) notes the significance of how Plotinus is committed to the claim that no one does wrong willingly; “In fact, Plotinus wants to hold that an action is within our power only if it is voluntary in a particular way, that is, if it originates in a rational desire alone, that is, a desire for the true good (VI.8.3.28–31). For this reason, he denies that the actions of bad people are voluntary or within their power (VI.8.3.17–19). Such a characterization is reserved only for those whose actions depend on Intellect and whose actions are unencumbered by affections of the body (i.e., the two types of desire other than *bouleusis* (VI.8.3.19–21))” Gerson (1994) p. 162. See also Eliasson (2005) for a nuanced discussion of the issues involved here. *Tolma* plays a significant role in Plotinus’s system, not only with respect to individual souls, but with respect to the emanation of the lower hypostases, Intellect and World-Soul, as well; at least, in VI.9.5, the Nous’s standing away from the One is attributed to its audacity; see Torchia (1993) p. 47. For passages where Plotinus considers this fall to operate in connection with cosmic law, see IV.8.5 and IV.3.13. Rist argues that the similarities between the emanation of the cosmic hypostases and the descend of the individual souls should not be overstated; “5.1.1 Plotinus is speaking of the origin of sin – which for individual souls co-exists with free-will; in 3.7.11 (where the word *tolma* does not occur) he is dealing with the purely cosmological activity of the World Soul to which no sinfulness need be attached per se” in Rist (1967) p. 247. On cosmological “otherness,” see Rist (1971).

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95 Guillaumont offers an account of the two different sets of anathemas against views that came to be understood as Origenian, those released by Justinian in 543 and those that are alleged to have been released at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553. As Guillaumont observes, the two documents are striking for both their similarities and differences; Guillaumont argues that the evidence for the 553 anathemas suggests that it was specifically Evagrius’s Christology which was targeted as heretical. Yet the 543 anathemas appear to reflect Origen’s own thought; while Evagrius may then have been informative for the way in which the 553 anathemas were articulated, yet whether Origen’s condemnation can be put on Evagrius’s shoulders is far from clear. See Guillaumont (1962) pp. 124-162.
divine Monad, lost their ardor for contemplation, they fell away from the presence of God. As a result, God created the material world in which these rational beings, through confronting and hopefully overcoming hardship, would have the opportunity to exercise their capacities for freedom for the better and prepare themselves for returning to the intelligible world. In his text of *De Principiis*, Koetschau cites testimony from Leontius of Byzantium that has often been read as evidence for the claim that Origen understood human souls to exist prior to their embodiment;

> Before the ages the minds were all pure, demons and souls and angels, doing service to God and performing his commandments. And one of them, the devil, since he had autonomy willingly resisted God, and God drove him away. And all the other powers revolted together with him, and those who had sinned exceedingly became demons, and those less, angels, and those still less, archangels. And thus each, one after another, received according to their own sin. And the souls were left remaining, some who had not sinned as much as to become demons, and yet not so lightly as to become angels. And so God made the present world, and bound the soul to the body for correction. (Fragment 15 trans. Gibbons)

> According to the most common reading of this evidence, the diversity in the cosmic order reported by Rufinus is the result of a primordial fall. That Origen held this view has been corroborated by a number of other sources. Jerome, for example, in his *Epistula ad Avitum* reports that Origen claims that “*nous*, that is mind, was made soul and again the soul, instructed in the virtues, became mind. Thus, investigating about matters of the soul, we are able to discover Esau, who, on account of ancient sins, was condemned in a later life” (*ad Avitum* 6.5 trans. Gibbons). The fact that Esau, as the book of Genesis reports, fails to receive the favor shown to Jacob is taken as evidence for the fact that one’s experiences in this life are punishments for preexistent errors. Yet the textual support for this reading of Origen is not without controversy. Complicating the testimony suggesting that Origen espoused a theory of preexistent souls is the fact that elsewhere Rufinus reports that he understood the body and soul as inseparable in fact;
But if it is impossible that this be affirmed in any way, that any nature other than the Father and Son and Holy Spirit be able to live apart from the a body, the necessity of logical consequence and reason brings it to be understood directly that while those created were rational beings, material substance is separated from them in thought and understanding alone, and it seems to be made for them or after them, yet they do not live nor have they ever lived without it. For it is rightly believed that incorporeal life never exists without a body. \((De\ Prin.\ II.2.2\) trans. Gibbons)

Insofar as the latter passage seems to preclude the possibility of a disembodied soul, ascribing to Origen a consistent view has proven to be an interpretative challenge. In attempting to reconcile these two views, Crouzel has argued that the ethereal bodies that are present at the time of the general resurrection also exist prior to the fall of the souls into the material realm.\(^\text{96}\)

Dawson has claimed that Origen does not, therefore, deny the significance of corporeality for personal identity, but of materiality.\(^\text{97}\) Bynum, in commenting on Origen’s theory of the body, writes that “it seemed to sacrifice integrity of bodily structure for the sake of transformation; it seemed to surrender material continuity for the sake of identity.”\(^\text{98}\) As bizarre as Crouzel’s

\(^{96}\) Crouzel (1989) p. 87.

\(^{97}\) Dawson here cites Methodius; “Yet the real Paul and Peter, so to speak, is always the same –[and] not merely in [the] soul, whose substance neither flows through us nor has anything ever added [to it] – even if the nature of the body is in a state of flux, because the form \((eidos)\) characterizing the body is the same, just as the features constituting the corporeal quality of Peter and Paul remain the same. According to this quality, not only scars from childhood remain on the bodies but also certain other peculiarities, [like] skin blemishes and similar things” \((Fragment\ on\ Psalm\ 1.5,\ preserved\ in\ Methodius’s\ De\ resurrection\ 1.22-1.23,\ trans.\ Dechow\ (1988)\ pp.\ 373-374,\ cited\ in\ Dawson\ (2002)\ p.\ 78)\). In discussing Boyarin’s reading of Origen as overly platonized (see Boyarin (1990) pg.154), Dawson claims that “Despite Origen’s insistence that the body is intrinsic to personal identity, his recourse to the category of “form” to distinguish the body from mere materiality-without-identity still leaves hanging the persistence of flesh or physicality to personal identity. Hence Boyarin’s complaint about Origen’s disembodifying hermeneutic is, in fact, an apt modern restatement of Methodius of Olympus’s defense of the essential role of physicality, materiality, or flesh in constituting human identity. What Boyarin and Origen have in common, however, amid their dispute about the importance of flesh for bodily identity, is a shared commitment to conceptions of identity that allow for identity’s persistence over time. That persistence is certified by flesh for Boyarin (and Methodius), but undermined by flesh for Origen. . . . Remember, if you will, someone who has died. Has the flesh of that person endured? Has his or her identity endured? And if you think that your memory bears witness to the endurance of his or her identity, has that identity endured \textit{from} the flesh, \\textit{because} of the flesh, \textit{or despite} the flesh? Boyarin’s opposition to Origen, like Origen’s opposition to Methodius, does not resolve such questions but only restates them more urgently” in Dawson (2002) p. 80.

\(^{98}\) Bynum (1995) p. 68. For more on the resurrection of the body see Grant (1948) and Levenson (2006).
reading of Origen might sound to modern readers, it does have some support from the ‘middle’ Platonic tradition; in the Hermetica, for instance, a text which may have influenced Origen’s division of the human person into pneuma, psuchê, and sôma, we find a discussion of how the mind, when it is free of the earthly body, puts on a body of fire (CH X.18). Crouzel’s suggestion that Origen views ethereal bodies as preexistent might account for his interest in the fact that bodies are subject to transformation by God (De Prin. II.1.4). This reading also might find implicit support in the passages in which Origen discusses the apokatastasis, where he speaks of the ethereal bodies associated with souls in the general resurrection. In describing these bodies, Origen repeatedly states that the end will be like the beginning (see, for example, De Prin. III.4.8). Precisely what Origen means by this is not made explicit, but if we take a strong reading of this assertion, it seems plausible, Crouzel argues, to understand it as a claim that the ethereal bodies always exist with the souls in the intelligible world, both prior to and after their time in matter.

This reading may also explain the confusion in antiquity about whether Origen espoused a view of transmigration of souls, such as Plato proposes in the Phaedrus. The defender of Origen, Pamphilus, in his apology observed a persistent belief by his detractors that Origen held such a view. Jerome in particular, in Epistola ad Avitum, is quite insistent that Origen had such a belief. Both Pamphilus and Rufinus’s Latin translation of De Principiis deny that Origen was committed to metempsychosis. Moreover, in several of the commentaries of Origen that survive in Greek, as well as in Contra Celsum, he himself denies transmigration. Of course, it may be possible that Origen changed his mind on this point, though Gilles Dorival has rather convincingly argued that Origen was consistent from De Principiis to Contra Celsum in the belief in the division between rational and non-rational beings that underlay his rejection of
transmigration in *Contra Celsum*. But if Origen maintained that the ethereal body existed prior to the fleshly body, the idea that sin could cause human bodies to change may have been either misunderstood or appropriated and twisted against him in later periods.

Yet the passages concerning the general resurrection being like the beginning also cannot be taken as unproblematic evidence for Crouzel’s theory of preexistent ethereal bodies, given that there seems to be some question about the permanence of the ethereal body. If we look at other passages in *De Principiis*, there is evidence that Origen entertained the idea that the resurrected body eventually ceases to exist (*De Prin. II.3.3*). In his *Commentary on the Gospel of John* he likewise suggests that the saints are without bodies, indicating that spiritual perfection does imply bodilessness (*ComJohn I.97*). Mark Edwards has argued for an alternative solution, which requires that we dispense with the reading that ascribes to Origen a theory of preexistence. In defending this interpretation, Edwards maintains that the patristic tradition misread Origen in understanding the “souls” in Fragment 15 as human souls, arguing that this passage may reflect an allusion on Origen’s part, not to human *psuchai*, but to the hierarchy of gods attested to in the *Chaldaean Oracles* and the following Platonic tradition. Edwards goes on to argue that relying on testimony other than that provided by Rufinus’s Latin translation of *De Principiis* for Origen’s view on this point means depending on various fragments by authors who either have not understood Origen’s writings or may have had reason to misrepresent his views. Yet Edwards’s disparagement of the fragmentary testimony on Origen’s thought in favor of that provided by Rufinus requires that we overlook a fairly large body of evidence, on the grounds

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that many of his ancient readers, both detractors and sympathizers alike, misconstrued his thinking on this point.¹⁰¹

The weaknesses of Edwards’ arguments against Origenian preexistence lie not only in the fact that he requires us to attribute such a poor reading of Origen to many of those who had far superior access to his writings than we do, but also in the fact that Rufinus does indeed include passages that suggest an Origenian doctrine of preexistence. In responding to Marcion and Valentinus, who view a Creator distinct from God the Father, Origen argues that cosmic history does in fact reflect the work of a God who is both just and good, insofar as the experience of rational beings, even if painful, is intended in order to remedy those wrong-doings that occurred in a previous time.

But according to our defense, by which from preceding causes we said that God makes one either a vessel of honor or a vessel of dishonor, the proof of the justice of God is in no way restricted. For it is possible that this vessel which, from previous causes (ex præcedentibus causis), was made for honor in this world will become, if it acts neglectfully, a vessel of dishonor on account of the merits of its conduct; just as again if one who from previous causes in this life is formed as a vessel for dishonor by the Creator, and repaired itself and purged oneself of all vices and sins, in this new world is able to become a vessel of honor, made holy and useful by the Lord, for the preparation of every good work. (De Prin. III.1.23 trans. Gibbons)¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Edwards is likely correct, however, to think that Koetschau’s text requires revision. Koetschau takes several of Gregory of Nyssa’s descriptions of the preexistent souls as references to Origen, such as that found in On the Soul and the Resurrection VIII. However, Nyssa himself does not explicitly identify these passages as Origen’s, and I think one might call into question they are meant to reflect Origen’s teaching. Given that Origen rejects metempsychosis in the Commentary on the Gospel of John 6.64-65, the fact that this passage ends in an adoption of this view suggests that it might refer to Plato. Whatever the weaknesses of his interpretation on Origen’s theory of the soul, Edwards does make a plausible case for the need to reconsider the critical edition of De Principiis.

¹⁰² The Greek text is likewise preserved in the Cappadocian Philocalia; “It is indeed possible, from the things proven above, for one, having become now a vessel of honor, and not doing or willing deeds appropriate to the vessel of honor, to become a vessel of dishonor in another age. And again such a one, who on account of things done before this life (dia presbutera toutou tou biou) has there become a vessel of dishonor, can become straight in the new judgment, become holy and useful to the master for the preparation of every good work.” (De Prin. III.1.23 trans. Gibbons)
The idea that human trials are pedagogical lessons sent by providence in accordance with the conduct of rational souls in a previous age seems to serve as relatively straightforward testimony that Origen understood human souls to exist in some way before they existed in their embodied state.\(^{103}\) Aside from such explicit assertions of the idea that experience in embodied life is a response to misdeeds committed in a prior age, Rufinus also reports considerable circumstantial evidence that Origen held a theory of preexistence. Consider the following passage from Rufinus’s Latin translation, which identifies embodiment as a reflection of the diversity of rational beings that arises from the various ways in which they exercise their freedom of choice:

Therefore such then was the variety of the world, and such was the diversity among its rational beings, on account of which still the subsequent variety and diversity should be thought to exist; it will have to be said by what other cause the world exists, especially if we consider that end through which, as it was established in the previous book, all the things will be restored to their initial position. Because if it seems to be as we have said, what other cause of the great diversity of this world will we consider, but the diversity and variety of movements and lapses of those who fell from that initial unity and harmony, in which they were first created by God? (De Prin. II.1.1 trans. Gibbons)

Edwards does not comment on these passages, though he might suggest that it ought to be read as an account of original sin, rather than preexistence. Yet other testimony in Rufinus’s version of the text render an interpretation of this passage as requiring Origenian commitment to some version of preexistence more plausible. For example, Rufinus reports Origen’s description of “all souls and all rational natures . . . either holy or not” as “incorporeal in respect of their

\(^{103}\) De Faye notes the similarities between Plutarch and Origen on this point, a similarity he attributes to the mutual influence of Plato’s Laws. “Chapter nine of the tenth book of the Laws certainly made a deep impression on him, for it is here that Plato expounds his conception of providence. According to him, providence is exclusively educational, an idea which Origen is constantly to produce. . . . The ideas [Plutarch] expressed in his De sera numinis vindicta are simply the development of those of Plato. The philosopher of Chaeroneia is imbued with the doctrine of an educational providence which seeks after the good and amelioration of human beings. On this point, there is no difference whatsoever between Plutarch and Origen” in de Faye (1929) pp. 61-62. De Faye’s reading of Origen as a Platonist on this point, however, may lead him to overlook the role played by the Judaic tradition in Origen’s thought.
proper nature” (De Prin. I.7.1 trans. Gibbons). If human persons are most properly considered as incorporeal, rather than as a compound of the body and soul, one might infer that human beings in their proper condition are disembodied, and are only embodied due to some misfortunate event in the cosmic ordering of things.

All things considered, despite the interpretive difficulties for working out what the details of his view might have been, it seems that the evidence rather overwhelming suggests that Origen was committed to some kind of theory of preexistence, and that this commitment of preexistence helped him to account for how human beings are responsible for their character. Without more explicit evidence in support of Crouzel’s interpretation of ethereal bodies as also preexistent, one is tempted to suggest that Origen may have found himself torn between alternative philosophical views about the relationship between body and soul. On the one hand, his commitment both to human freedom and the justice and goodness of God – against Marcion and Valentinus - required him to assert that the hardships experienced in this life are intended as therapeutic remedies for the corruption that stemmed from errors committed in the intelligible world, prior to embodiment in at least fleshly bodies – a position which drew him to adopt a Platonic theory of preexistence. On the other hand, because these two opponents, as well as Basilides, rejected the idea that God was also creator of the material world, the view that human bodies were inseparable from the soul may have had their attractions as well. As a result, the best explanation for the resulting evidence might be that Origen failed to reconcile his competing commitments as smoothly as he might have. Yet given the contradictory and fragmentary nature of the evidence, it is perhaps wisest to remain agnostic about the details of Origen’s thought on these subjects. What we can say with reasonable certainty, however, is that embodiment provided human beings with the occasions for temptation and struggle that led to moral progress.
2.3 Freedom and Origen’s Tripartite Division of the Human Person

Within the cosmological framework, Origen developed his moral psychology around the idea that God’s simultaneous justice and goodness require human freedom. Despite his rejection of Stoic determinism, Origen drew on Stoic theories of mental representation in order to explain how human beings make choices. As one finds in Stoic philosophy, human beings act when they have given their assent to a hormetic phantasia, a fact which distinguishes human beings from animals. Origen, however, considers the category of things that are “up to us” as things which we must have the freedom to do or not do, regardless of the nature of our characters. Stoic ideas about determinism in human action should, of course, not be overstated. While fate determines our actions, because fate is understood not as the sum of merely external causes, but all causes – including our own assent – we are active contributors to our actions. What distinguishes Origen from the Stoics, however, the fact that for the Stoics, this active contribution is determined by our character, which is something we do not change.\footnote{Long (1971), Cicero De Fato 41-44.} For Origen, however, human character was understood as malleable (De Prin. III.1.5). Despite this difference, Origen’s use of the Stoics on this point may be a consequence of his desire to distinguish himself from Valentinus and his associates; given that he understood the material body to play a role in moral error, his interest in establishing the ultimate cause of human sin squarely within the mind may reflect a polemical interest to distance himself from his Valentinian counterparts.

In developing his anthropology with an eye to defending human autonomy and thus the justice of human punishment, Origen offers a critique of the Valentinian view of the existence of multiple souls within the human person that borrowed from Plato’s ideas on the division between the corporeal and incorporeal parts of the human being. In developing the Pauline division of the
human person into the sôma, psuchê, and pneuma, Origen seems be following certain treatises of the Hermetica in their ways of drawing upon and departing from the Platonic corpus.

2.3.1 Pneuma in Greek Philosophy and in Origen

On a superficial level, this division bears some resemblance to the division of the human person between soma, psuchê, and nous that we find in the Timaeus 30b, in which Plato describes the ascent of the human minds into the body by the lower gods. This fact that the Pauline division and the division of the Timaeus share this similarity will have significance for Origen’s anthropology, for, as we shall see, there is some indication that the appropriation of the Timaeus in the Hermetica may have been used by Origen in his exegesis of Paul. (Where Paul’s division of the human person derives from is not my concern here.) Noticeably absent from Origen’s anthropological tripartition, however, is the nous or intellect. Jerome’s Epistola ad Avitum 6.5 records that Origen maintained the mind becomes transformed into soul when it descends. Given that this letter seems to ascribe falsely a view of transmigration to Origen, however, it must be used with caution as evidence for Origen’s views. If we can believe Jerome, the fact that Origen believes the moral corruption of the pre-existent nous is responsible for the fall of human minds, is itself reflected in the Phaedrus. Yet we do not find in the Platonic corpus the idea that the nous can become other than nous. If Jerome’s testimony on this point is accurate, the idea that nous can be transformed into a worse nature may well reflect a tendency in early Christian literature to deny the divinity of the human mind. The corruptibility of nous is something Evagrius will later consider, though in different terms.

Origen’s pneuma, however, operates somewhat like nous as it is articulated in the Timaeus and like the nous of Plotinus in at least a limited sense, as it is the part of the human

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105 It should be noted, however, that in Rufinus’s Latin translation of the Homilies on Genesis, mens is identified with spiritus rather than anima. Given that both have their own motivations, whether Jerome or Rufinus is more reliable on this point is difficult to say.
person which is responsible for contemplation of noetic reality. Even after the transformation of the *nous* into *psuchê*, the *pneuma* maintains its connection with the *pneuma hagion*, the Holy Spirit. The *pneuma* and *psuchê* combined make up the “inner anthropos,” the incorporeal and immaterial part of the human person. Origen’s concept of *pneuma* differs dramatically both from that of both Aristotle and the Stoics, where it is understood as material. According to Aristotle in his treatise *Peri pneumatos*, *pneuma* is the breath that pervades the entire body. In the windpipe, it engages in three movements, respiration, pulsation, and that which acts on food (482b15-17). It therefore has an important role in the nutrition of the animal. The *pneuma* also, however, plays a role in mediating role in locomotion, in serving as an intermediary between body and soul, moving the body according to the direction of the soul while itself remaining unaltered; as Aristotle says in *De motu animalium*,

> And this spirit appears to stand to the soul-origin in a relation analogous to that between the point in a joint which moves being moved and the unmoved. . . . At all events we see that it is well disposed to excite movement and to exert force. Now the functions of movement are thrusting and pulling. Accordingly, the organ of movement must be capable of expanding and contracting; and this is precisely the characteristic of spirit. (703a114-21 trans. Hett)

This idea of *pneuma* as a thin material substance mediating between body and soul is likely important in later Platonist ideas of the vehicle of the soul, a development of the chariot model in the *Phaedrus*.

Aristotle’s concept of *pneuma* is undoubtedly also influential for the Stoics, though for the Stoics the *pneuma* is the soul, rather than a substance between the soul and the body. Chrysippus divided the *pneuma* into eight parts; the *hêgemonikon*, the capacity for speech, the five senses, and reproduction. Even among the Stoics, however, there was considerable

disagreement about the role of the *pneuma* in human psychology. As Seneca reports, for instance, there was disagreement between Cleanthes and Chrysippus on what function the *pneuma* served in physical motion; “Cleanthes and his student Chrysippus did not agree on what walking is. Cleanthes says that it is the *pneuma* extended from the leading part of the soul all the way to the feet, while Chrysippus says that it is the leading part of the soul itself” (Letter 113.23, trans. Inwood). In Cleanthes’s view, the *pneuma simpliciter* is the source of locomotion; in Chrysippus, however, not the whole *pneuma*, but only the *hêgemonikon*, is responsible for producing motion. Later developments in Stoicism also went on to dispute the number of parts as well. Panaetius, for instance, denied Chrysippus’s assertion – one likely based upon his anthropocentrism – that the capacity for voice is a distinct feature of the *pneuma*. Unlike Chrysippus, who believed that the vocal capacities of human beings represented a distinct part of the soul, Panaetius maintained that the capacity for speech was not a faculty distinct in its own right, but like walking is a kind of voluntary activity, and thus controlled by the *hêgemonikon* (Nemesius, *De Natura Hominis* 15, 26). As Inwood observes, the way in which Panaetius departs from Chrysippus on this point reflects a simplification of Chrysippean psychology that was not necessarily one Chrysippus himself would have rejected.\(^{107}\)

Despite this diversity of views, we find a general consensus that *pneuma* is at any rate a material part of the human person. From the standpoint of the proceeding philosophical tradition, then, Origen’s understanding of *pneuma* is a significant revision, insofar as he takes it to be the incorporeal subject of noetic contemplation. In this respect, the function of *pneuma* is more like the *nous* of the *Timaeus*, though in a heavily qualified sense. The limits on the extent to which *pneuma* can be thought of as intellect mostly derive from significant differences

\(^{107}\) See Inwood (forthcoming).
between the way in which Plato and Origen understand noetic thought. For Plato, noêsis is knowledge of the Forms. As he explains in the Phaedo, the Forms explain how we have concepts to apply to our sense data. Not everyone, however, has knowledge of the Forms. Those who do not know that it is by means of the Forms that they have conceptual understanding at best have true belief. In the Timaeus 51d4-51e9, Plato explains how the nous is responsible for noêsis, while the lower parts are responsible for sense perception; “If understanding and true opinion are distinct, then these “by themselves” things [i.e., the Forms] definitely exist – these forms, the objects not of our sense perception, but of our understanding only. . . . And of true belief, it must be said, all men have a share, but of understanding, only the gods and a small group of people do” (trans. Zetyl).

For Origen, however, noetic reality does not provide the conceptual content we need to cognize our sensations of the material world, though how sensations are cognized is not a matter Origen is clear on. At times, the body seems to be capable of sense perception of material things on its own; at others Origen seems to deny that the body’s affects have conceptual content, as will be discussed below. Here, the fact that Origen is an apologist for a particular interpretation of the Christian faith, rather than a professional philosopher by trade or training, must be kept in mind – it seems unlikely Origen has a coherent epistemology. In any case, for Origen noetic contemplation is not conceptual knowledge, but knowledge of the Trinity and its economic work in human history. As Dillon notes, Origen often describes the pneuma’s contact with the noetic things as spiritual perception,\(^\text{108}\) thus contrasting it with perception of material things; in

\(^{108}\) See Dillon (1990) pp. 444-454. “For since everybody which God was to make would consist of spirit and body, for that reason heaven, that is, all spiritual substance upon which God rests as on a kind of throne or seat, is said to be made “in the beginning” and before everything. But this heaven, that is, the firmament, is corporeal. And, therefore, that first heaven indeed, which we said is spiritual, is our mind, which is also itself spirit, that is, our spiritual man which sees and perceives God. But that corporeal heaven, which is called the firmament, is our outer man which looks at things in a corporeal way” (HomGen 1 trans. Heine).
reference to the disciples, for instance, Origen claims that those who “stepped away from bodily things to pneumatic things, and from sensible things to noetic things, became the disciples of Christ.” (ComMatt 12.5.8 trans). That Origen considers noetic thought as a form of perception has an antecedent in Aristotle’s De anima 427a21-22, where he suggests that thinking is like perceiving, “for in both these things the soul judges and cognizes something of the things that are” (trans. Hett). Origen, however, is interested in the pneuma’s perception of incorporeal things as part of his theory of biblical hermeneutics. While the literal interpretation of scripture will provide information about historical events, the moral and spiritual interpretations give us information about God and incorporeal heaven behind these historical events. For instance, while the “fleshly” reading (sarkinôs) of Galatians refers to the physical city of Jerusalem, the noetic reading of Paul’s views on Jerusalem refer to the heavenly city (De Prin. IV.3.9). The idea that noetic perception is of incorporeal objects must owe something to Plato’s thought on the incorporeal Forms, though Origen’s biblical hermeneutics of course also ought to be understood within the context of the Second Sophistic, Stoic interpretation, and the exegetical methods of Philo of Alexandria. Perhaps, at least in part, because of these other influences, Origen’s develops his understanding of noetic contemplation of God as achieved through analogies of material objects in a manner has absolutely no parallel in Plato. What constitutes noetic contemplation has thus been entirely reconceived; if we are to read pneuma as intellect, then, we must do so keeping this difference in mind. 109

109 I argue this against Henri Crouzel, who has denied that Origen’s pneuma is analogous to Plato’s nous. Here, Crouzel is concerned to identify Origen’s anthropology as fundamentally scriptural; “Although Greek ideas are grafted onto Origen’s trichotomy . . . its origin is essentially biblical, for the dominant concept that gives it form is the pneuma, the spirit, which comes through Paul from the Hebrew ruach, expressing the action of God.” Crouzel (1989) p. 88. The terminology is undeniably Pauline; yet Crouzel’s case that this excludes the possibility of pneuma as functioning in the way the intellect functions for Plato is less persuasive. See also Stefaniw (2010).
2.3.2 Origen and the *Hermetica*

Despite the terminological similarity between Origen’s division of the human person into *pneuma*, *psuchê*, and *soma* and the *nous*, *psuchê*, and *soma* in the *Timaeus*, then, Origen goes on to consider anthropological tripartition quite differently than does Plato in this or any other of his dialogues. Origen’s way of dividing the human person perhaps is most similar to what we find in the *Hermetica*, a collection of Egyptian wisdom writings that contains material likely written as far back as the third century BCE, and which reflects the long history of cultural exchange between Egypt and Greece. Given that the various treatises collected as the *Corpus Hermeticorum* have been handed down anonymously, questions of dating and authorship are difficult. It should be noted that Clement, in *Stromateis* VI.4, testifies to the existence of “forty-two books of Hermes,” thus suggesting that Origen likely could have been at least aware of them as well, and may have had direct access to the texts of the *Hermetica* itself. Within the philosophical material preserved in this collection, we find, among other discussions, a reworking of the moral psychology given in *Timaeus*. In *Hermetica* X in particular, we find a treatment of the *Timaeus* discussion of the human person as an image of the cosmos.\(^1\)

Since the cosmos is a sphere – a head, that is – and since there is nothing material above the head (just as there is nothing of mind below the feet, where all is matter), and since the mind is a head which is moved spherically – in the manner of a head, that is – things joined to the membrane of this head (in which is the soul) are by nature immortal, as if they have more soul than body because body has been made in soul; things far away from the membrane, however, are mortal, because they have more body than soul; thus, every living being, and likewise the universe, has been constituted of the material and the noetic. (*CH* X.11 trans. Copenhaver with emendation)

Here, the human person is understood as divided between *nous*, *psuchê*, and *sôma* – a division which, while clearly inspired by the *Timaeus* 30b, is discussed in much greater detail.

\(^1\) On the *Hermetica* and the relationship between its Greek and Egyptian themes, see Festugière (1948), Fowden (1986), and Ebeling (2007).
than what is given there. The soul, however, has the option of aligning itself with either the
*nous*, by means of the *pneuma*, or the *sōma*. The soul endorses the desires of the body “when the
body gets its bulk and drags the soul down to the body’s grossness,” for then “the soul, having
separated from itself, gives birth to forgetting, and it no longer shares in the beautiful and the
good.” Other souls, however, leave the body behind; “When the soul rises up into itself, the
spirit is drawn into the blood, the soul into the spirit, but the mind, since it is itself divine by
nature, becomes purified of its garments and takes on a fiery body, ranging about everywhere,
leaving the soul to judgment and the justice it deserves” (*CH X.17 trans. Copenhaver*). The
*pneuma* here seems closer to Aristotle’s understanding of *pneuma* as an intermediary between
the body and the soul than it does to the Stoics, who, we will recall, understand *pneuma* as the
material which makes up the soul. When the soul aligns itself with the mind, it does so by
drawing itself into the spirit, which itself is drawn closer to that part of the body with which the
mind is associated. *Pneuma* therefore has a role to play in the *Hermetica*’s account of volition,
one which it does not appear to have in the *Timaeus* itself. Aristotle, of course, does not
explicitly link *pneuma* to choice, yet he links it to movement. The *Hermetica*’s non-Stoic way of
associating choice and *pneuma* may therefore have some Aristotelian influence in the
background, although this is beyond what I can defend here. Despite the fact that the *Hermetica*
considers the anthropology of the *Timaeus*, then, this idea that the soul’s moral choices depend
upon whether it identifies itself with the body or the mind is not something we find in Plato’s
writings. While it does bear some resemblance to both the *Phaedo* and to the discussion in the
*Phaedrus* about whether the charioteer aligns himself with either the good or bad horse, the
*Hermetica*’s way of developing the *Timaeus* is not exactly like anything we find in Plato.
While concrete evidence for a dependency of Origen on the *Hermetica* is perhaps somewhat thin, there are some resonances between the two that are rather striking.\(^{111}\) As Bostock has noted, for instance, one finds a parallel between Origen’s comments on the efficacy of translation and the *Hermetica*’s defense of Coptic as a religious language (a curious find to discover in a Greek text).\(^{112}\) So too do we find, in his psychology, some resonances with the *Hermetica* which seem to strengthen the case for direct dependence. In dividing the human person into its three parts, Origen identifies the body as the subject of lower, non-virtuous desires, and the spirit as the subject of the contemplation of God (*De Prin.* III.4.2-3). By identifying human character with the choices made by the soul, Origen explains why human beings, regardless of how their character has been shaped, are always free to act either for better or worse. Only because human beings have this freedom can they be praised or blamed for their actions. Because the soul (at least in embodiment) is always subject to the desires of both the spirit and the body, choosing to act on those desires is always a live option for anyone, regardless of what past education, circumstances, and choices may have been. While moral habits do exist, one’s character is always a matter of one’s free choice.

Origen does draw on certain aspects of Plato’s thought on the distinction between the corporeal and incorporeal part of the human being. Despite the fact that Origen does not share the metaphysical commitments of the *Phaedo*, in particular with respect to his commitment to

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\(^{111}\) Recently, Ramelli has argued that some of the similarities between Origen and Bardaisan might be accounted for if we consider Bardaisan as a source for Origen. This is problematic not only for dating reasons, but because the concepts of freedom employed by Origen and Bardaisan are so different; while Bardaisan understands human freedom to have a natural affinity for reason, Origen does not, as is discussed below. More likely, I think, is that these similarities are based on a mutual dependence on the *Hermetica*. See Ramelli (2009) pp. 135-168.

\(^{112}\) Bostock (2009). It is interesting that while the relationship between so-called “Gnosticism” and Hermeticism has been explored, the possibility of connection between the *CH* and Origen has been relatively untouched. On the relationship between Hermeticism and “Gnosticism,” see Broek (1996) Ch. 1, and Pearson (2007) pg.273-291.
the resurrection of the body and his division of the incorporeal part of the human person into soul and spirit, the view that the body poses an alternative set of desires to those provided by an incorporeal part of the body likely takes its motivation from the *Phaedo*. In explaining these two different natures which exist within human beings, Origen makes use the distinction made by Plato in the *Phaedo* between the two kinds of natures that make up a person.\(^{113}\)

The whole argument, then, comes to this, that God has created two universal natures, a visible, that is, a corporeal one, and an invisible one, which is incorporeal. These two natures each undergo their own different changes. The invisible, which is also the rational nature, is changed through the action of the mind and intention by reason of the fact that it has been endowed with freedom of choice; and as a result of this it is found existing sometimes in the good and sometimes in its opposite. The bodily nature, however, admits of a change in substance, so that God the Artificer of all things, in whatever work of design or construction or restoration he may wish to engage, has at hand the service of this material for all purposes, and can transform and transfer it into whatever forms and species he desires, as the merits of things demand. (*De Prin.* III.6.7 trans. Butterworth with emendation)

As Inwood has observed in the case of Seneca, the *Phaedo* was influential for authors who were not committed to all of its views.\(^{114}\) As in that dialogue, for Origen the courses of action suggested by the body seem always to have some kind of morally negative value; while bodily inclinations insofar as they express needs must be accommodated for at least some of the time, they interfere with expressions of discipleship such as asceticism and martyrdom. The presence of the body and its appetites, however, provides the occasion for the exercise of choice necessary for moral rehabilitation. Origen does not, however, express much interest in providing

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\(^{113}\) As Socrates says in the *Phaedo* 80d4-81e2, “Will the soul, the invisible part which makes its way to a region of the same kind, noble and pure and invisible, to Hades in fact, to the good and wise god whither, god willing, my soul must soon be going – will the soul, being of this kind and nature, be scattered and destroyed on leaving the body, as the majority of men say? Far from it, my dear Cebes and Simmias, but what happens is much more like this: if it is pure when it leaves the body and drags nothing bodily with it, as it had no willing association with the body in life, but avoided it and gathered itself together by itself and always practiced this, which is no other than practicing philosophy in the right way, in fact, training to die easily” (trans. Grube).

a detailed account of when and how it is permissible to satisfy the bodily inclinations, if ever. This is perhaps a reflection of the fact that in his disputes with Valentinus and other competitors he is more concerned to establish the fact of moral responsibility, rather than to provide a complete moral psychology. Still, it remains a weakness in his moral theory.

2.3.3 Origen Against Valentinus

That one is always subject to the inclinations of the body and spirit, even if one’s soul has not elected to pursue them, helps to explain why one can still reorient one’s desires either for the worse or the better. Other post-Hellenistic incompatibilists, such as Alexander, argued the same point against the Stoic view, claiming that people can, in fact, change their moral character, and that the fact that they can do so is in part why they can be said to have the freedom required for moral responsibility; in doing so, Alexander departed from Aristotle himself, who maintained that after a certain point of life people are no longer capable of changing their character; “So, too, to the unjust and to the self-indulgent man it was open at the beginning not to become men of this kind, and so they are such voluntarily; but now they have become so it is not possible for them not to be so” (1114a20-22 trans. Ross and Urmson). In his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Origen asserts explicitly that it is possible for the soul to expel untoward desires and convert to the good.

> Let us suppose there is a soul in which dwells ungodliness, unrighteousness, foolishness, excess, and the entire multitude of evils to which it has openly subjected itself as servant and slave. But suppose this soul comes back to itself and opens to the door of its mind once again to the piety and the virtues. Will not piety, when she has entered, immediately drive ungodliness out of there? (*ComRom* II.2 trans. Scheck)

Even if one has formerly been morally compromised, one can acquire a praiseworthy character by realigning one’s desires, after which one is no longer subject to blame; for “when

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115 Here, Origen offers a conflicting interpretation to that given by the Valentinus and his associates, which centered not around the concept of freedom, but the concept of election. See Pagels (1972).
the foreign occupants have been expelled from itself, the soul shall offer civil and proper hospitality to the virtues. How then shall it be able to convict a soul that is now filled with virtues, of the things it had committed when it was not yet a friend of the virtues?” (ComRom II.2 trans. Scheck) Contra the Stoics, it is only because human beings are free to alter their character that they can even be held morally accountable.

In refuting what he takes to be the Valentinian claim of internal competing agents, Origen claims that the psuchê is a single choice mechanism. In arguing for an undivided psuchê, he is closer to the Phaedo than to any of the other Platonic dialogues which adopt a divided anthropology in order to explain how human beings are pulled in opposite ways. As we saw above, in the Phaedo 85c-d, moral conflict is explained by contrasting the desires of the body for pleasures like sex, food, drink, and so forth to the soul’s proper desire for contemplation of the Forms. The soul in the Phaedo is not described as requiring a distinguishable, rational part in order to choose contemplation over the pursuit of bodily desires. While Origen likewise argues for an undivided soul in this passage, the soul requires the existence of both body and spirit to provide the content of its desires. Yet while the soul chooses to act in accordance with what presents itself as good either to the body or the spirit, those latter two parts themselves are not responsible for making choices. In his exegesis of Galatians 5:17, “If the flesh wars against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, then we do not do the things which we desire,” Origen denies that this can mean that there are two independent souls within the human person capable of making choices, for this would eliminate the possibility for moral responsibility. Clement’s testimony from Basilides offers insight as to the view he was rejecting in developing this psychology:

Basilides and his followers used to call the passions adventitious occurrences. They say that they are in essence spirits attached to the rational soul in some
primitive disturbance and confusion, and that there are other different, bastard spiritual natures which grow up in attachment to these – the natures of wolf, ape, lion, goat, for example. Their peculiar characteristics make their appearance in the region of the soul and bring the desires within the soul into a plausible likeness of animals. People then imitate the actions of the animals whose characteristic they hold within them, and not only grow familiar with the impulses and representations of animals without reason, but are keen to emulate the movement and beauty of plants because they carry attached to them the characteristics of plants.116 (Strom. II.20 trans. Ferguson)

If we can believe Clement’s testimony, according to Basilides the parts of the human soul which lead the person to act immorally are those parts which are of the same nature as the lower animals. Here, however, Basilides understands these parts as alien to the soul properly speaking; its desires are not the desires of the human person, but desires that overwhelm the human person to the point that person is no longer capable of acting like a rational being – they become non-rational, in the way that non-human animals are. Because these are not the desires of a rational being, they cannot be brought into compliance with the desires of rationality, as the desires of the appetitive part and the spirited part can; they can merely be escaped upon death.

For Origen, this sort of view undermines the possibility of moral responsibility, because it provides a vision of an actor who is no longer subject to the sort of evaluation to which a rational actor is subject. Were one to commit a moral wrong, one could excuse oneself by claiming that one had been overpowered by one of these other souls, on the grounds that this soul is in some way different from one’s true self (De Prin. III.4.1-2). As an alternative to the Valentinian view, Origen puts forward a theory of the soul as the only part of the human person capable of forming choices. Whether this is Origen’s view is rather difficult to tell from Rufinus’s Latin translation on its own, for here the idea of the soul as a single mechanism of choice is merely presented as the view of “some people,” though given that Origen expresses its

elsewhere, whether the distance expressed for the views given on this matter is Origen’s own, or Rufinus’s caution, would be difficult to say;

If this is so, it is plain that the choice (voluntas)\textsuperscript{117} of the soul is something intermediate between the flesh and the spirit, undoubtedly serving and obeying one of the two, whichever it has chosen to obey. If it gives itself up to the delights of the flesh, it makes men fleshly; if, however, it joins itself to the spirit, it causes a man to be ‘in the spirit’ and on this account to be called spiritual. It is this that the apostle seems to indicate when he says, ‘You are not in the flesh, but in the spirit.’ (De Prin. III.4.2 trans. Butterworth)\textsuperscript{118}

I think the dispute between Basilides and Origen can be understood as a disagreement about what human rationality consists in. For Origen, it appears to be the ability to act for better or worse; for Basilides, on the other hand, reason appears to be something closer to right reason; when one acts wrongly, one are not acting as a rational agent, but as one who has been overwhelmed by one’s non-rational nature.\textsuperscript{119}  Origen is careful to argue that the appetitive inclinations towards those things which give it pleasure are not the desires of a lower soul, but the desires of the body, a view which again is likely informed by Plato’s discussion of the desires of the body in the Phaedo.\textsuperscript{120}  The claim that the appetitive desires are the desires of the body

\textsuperscript{117} The notion of voluntas does not by itself require commitment to will as a distinct faculty, though Seneca’s use of the term has sometimes caused confusion on this score. See Inwood (2005) Ch. 5.

\textsuperscript{118} Compare with Augustine’s De libero arbitrio 2.1-3. The relationship between Augustine and these early debates requires more extensive exploration. Scott MacDonald argues that Augustine’s theory of the two wills is original, yet it has clear precedent in the thought of Basilides as it has been handed down by Clement. See MacDonald (2004).

\textsuperscript{119} Michael Frede has commented upon the emergence of the idea of rationality in the ancient period. See Frede (1996).

\textsuperscript{120} The connection between Origen’s views of the body, his biblical hermeneutics, and the views on the relationship between Christianity and Judaism has provoked much debate. In Boyarin (1993) p. 8 and (1994) p. 13, he argues that Origen’s understanding of the body adopts an overly metaphorical stance, so that the materiality of the body loses its significance; as discussed above, pace Boyarin, Dawson defends the claim that Origen’s sense of the corporeal interpretation of scripture reflects a commitment to the body, if not to materiality in Dawson (2002) pp. 65-82. For more on Origen’s allegorical reading, see Torjesen (1986), Kovacs (2002), and Mitchell (2007). On the thought of the relationship between biblical hermeneutics and the body in later patristic scholarship, see Clark (1999). For general studies on the allegorical interpretation of scripture, see Dawson (1992), Young (1997). On Origen’s view of the body within the larger context of Christianity’s views on the body in late antiquity, see Brown
properly speaking, and not of a lower soul, is argued for in refutation of the view held by the associates of Valentinus on the existence of two souls. “So, when we think of the flesh as provoking lust, while a better counsel opposes this sort of enticement, it must not be thought that there is some one life opposing another, but that the opposition is from the nature of the body, which is eager (gestit) to empty out and exhaust the places filled with seminal fluid” (De Prin. III.4.4 trans. Gibbons). In fleshing out the physiology of how bodily desires suggest certain courses of action to the soul, Origen makes use of a rather curious passage on human sexual desire, one that draws on the description of human reproduction at the end of the Timaeus.

At the time the gods fashioned the desire for sexual union, by constructing one ensouled living thing in us as well as another one in women. This is how they made them in each case: There is [in a man] a passage by which fluids exit from the body, where it receives the liquid that has passed through the lungs down to the kidneys and on into the bladder and expels it under pressure of air. From this passage they bored a connecting one into the compacted marrow that runs from the head along the neck through the spine. This is in fact the marrow that we have previously called ‘seed.’ Now because it has soul in it and had now found a vent [to the outside], this marrow instilled a life-giving desire for admission right at the place of venting, and so produced the love of procreation. (91a-b trans. Zeyl)

According to Plato, this “explains why, of course, the male genitals are unruly and self-willed, like an animal that will not be subject to reason and, driven crazy by its desires, seeks to overpower everything else” (91b trans. Zeyl). The text suggests that Plato considers this “living (empsychos) thing” responsible for reproduction as distinct from the appetitive part of the soul. Here, Origen takes this description as paradigmatic for the desires of the body. Likewise, in the feelings of thirst and hunger, drink and food are “desired and emptied through natural movements of the body” (De Prin. III.4.4 trans. Butterworth).

Origen’s differentiation between the desires of the body and the desires of the soul provides the basis for his distinction between rational – including irrational – desires from non-rational desires. Origen’s description of the desires of the body as non-rational is found in his discussion of how they are the consequence not of calculation or even intentional thought, but material necessity; “just as we are accustomed to say by a particular use of language that the ground is thirsty and wishes to drink water – where we certainly use the word, ‘wish’ not in a literal but in a peculiar sense, as if, again, we were to say that a house ‘wants’ rebuilding, and many other similar expressions – so, too, must we interpret the phrase ‘wisdom of the flesh,’ and the saying ‘the flesh lusts against the spirit’ (De Prin. III.4.4 trans. Butterworth) Given that the dryness of the ground – unlike the movements of the body - does not motivate any actual movement of the ground, it seems likely that Origen’s examples here are perhaps not the best; at least, they do not seem to entirely help him clarify the sorts of desires the body has. What we can take from this, I think, is that the body does not have the conceptual machinery necessary to pursue its desires; for this, the desires must be endorsed by the soul. While the body and the spirit can propose other alternative courses of action to the soul, ultimately it is the soul which will assume a particular course of action or the other and pursue it;

When drawn away by the necessity of the body, we are not permitted leisure for divine and beneficial things; just as on the other hand the soul at leisure in divine and spiritual things and joined to the spirit of God is said to make war on the flesh, as long as it does not allow itself to relax in pleasures and delights by which it is naturally pleased. (De Prin. III.4.4 trans. Butterworth)

When the soul adopts these non-rational desires as its own, it does so as a rational agent; the same desires as endorsed by the soul thus become irrational, rather than non-rational. On this model the soul can choose to acquiesce in the bodily sensations or not – that is, they can become the desires of the soul, who will then act on them. There is only one part of the human person
capable of forming choices – the soul. This way of understanding the non-rational desires as desires which the person cannot act on unless they become adopted by the rational self is the key difference between Origen and the way in which he understands the Valentinian view. Because, on the Valentinian view, the non-rational desires belong to a part of the person which has some kind of agentive status, but which is not itself rational, when moral wrongs are done they are done by a non-rational agent who cannot be held accountable for its desires. In Origen’s case, however, because the soul must adopt the body’s non-rational desires in order for those desires to be pursued, those desires, and the actions done in pursuit of them, become the desires of the rational agent. Only because of this can the person be held morally accountable for them. Even if the soul has here adopted the non-rational desires of the body as its own, the presence of the *pneuma* means that in some sense one continues to be subject to desires to contemplate God, and could make these the desires of the soul if the soul so chose. The view that it is the soul’s free choice, rather than the respective strength of the inclinations, is adopted in order to make the claim that moral conflict cannot be accounted for by competing internal homunculi. These inclinations therefore do not themselves achieve the level of agency, *contra* Origen’s reconstruction of Valentinianism (and perhaps as well, as discussed in the Introduction, Plato’s own theory of the divided soul, though that is not Origen’s target here). If I do something good or evil, it is not because I have been overwhelmed by a certain baser or loftier desire, but because I have myself endorsed such a desire; I have acted as a (non-normatively) rational agent.

In arguing that *pseuchê* must be innately indifferent toward virtue and vice in order for freedom and responsibility to be preserved, Origen is at odds with other incompatibilists of the period. In Alexander’s work *De Fato*, for instance, he argues that human virtue is the perfection of human nature; that is so say, human virtue is a kind of second nature. While human beings
are free to act against their nature, “Nature does not indeed make no contribution to the acquisition of virtue, but human beings have from her a capacity and fitness that admits of virtue, which none of the other living creatures has” (De Fato 198 trans. Robert Sharples). Alexander is arguing against the Stoics, who understand human behavior as determined by physis. Against this view, he argues that while physis is a necessary condition for the possibility of virtue, the exercise of human free choice is required to bring virtue into perfection. According to Alexander’s view, human choice is not, contra Origen, indifferent with respect to virtue. And it is in fact because human beings are naturally oriented toward the good that they can be faulted for not electing to cultivate their characters towards this end. For Alexander, we act according to our proper nature when we act virtuously.

Like Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics, Alexander understands the nature of some human beings as more conducive to virtue than others (Republic IX, EN I.5). His commitment to human autonomy, however, leads him to argue that one’s powers of choice can even overcome a natural inclination towards vice or virtue. Even this more moderate way of understanding only some human beings as naturally inclined toward virtue – though not in a way that is completely determined – is one which Origen rejects, possibly because of his need to distance himself from figures like Heracleon; in his discussion of Heracleon’s commentary on the Gospel of John, in his work on the same, he specifically denies that there are different human natures (ComJn 20.198-219). In his denial that the sufferings of embodied life can be attributed ultimately to the failings of God the Creator, and in his strenuous attempts to distance himself from the so-called Gnostics (to whom he is perhaps all too similar), Origen’s radical way of understanding human autonomy as completely undetermined by human nature is perhaps a reflection of his effort to

\[121\] Ilaria Ramelli suggests that Alexander may have been a source for Origen’s incompatibilism; yet incompatibilism was a widely adopted philosophical position by the third century, and Alexander’s and Origen’s concepts of freedom are too different to make this similarity seem likely. See Ramelli (2009).
distinguish his own thought from that of Heracleon on the soul-like people, individuals for whom there is at least some degree of freedom operative in whether they attain salvation or not (ComJn 20.213). It is worth noting that while the Commentary on John passages demonstrate that Origen knows of Heracleon’s views on the soul-like people, this class of individuals is conspicuously absent from his apparent discussion of Valentinian psychology in De Principiis III.1.8. Though this may be a product of carelessness, it may also be that Origen has deliberately avoided mentioning the soul-like people in this passage because the existence of that category compromises his efforts to establish his opponents as determinists with respect to human action. That Origen is led to disassociate nature and moral character in the way that he does should perhaps be understood as an apologetic reaction.122

2.3.4 Psuchê as Sheer Volition

Whether Origen’s tripartite division is really successful in defending human responsibility, even on its own terms, is doubtful. Many of the problems with Origen’s concept of the soul can perhaps be put into perspective if we consider them a reflection of the fact that he is developing a proto-theory of the will as a distinct faculty, and runs into the some of the problems that would require generations of philosophical reflection to resolve. In dividing the psuchê from the pneuma, Origen has tried to liberate the soul from determination by external forces, including other parts of the human person. This means, among other things, distinguishing the part of the soul responsible for making choices from the divine part of the human person chiefly responsible for contemplation. The psuchê requires the presence of

122 Dunderberg argues that the division of the natures is polemic on Origen’s part; it should be noted, however, that against the background of ancient moral psychology, Origen’s denial that human beings have natures which are more and less receptive of rehabilitation is the outlier. The urge to attribute unsavory views associated with “Gnosticism” to the deceptions of the smear campaigns waged against them by their opponents is understandable; but in antiquity, the view that different human beings had different moral natures was hardly unsavory. See Dunderberg (2008) pp. 142-144.
pneuma and sôma to provide the content of its choices, but ultimately Origen wants to maintain that whether the soul decides to act for the better or worse is not something that is conditioned by an affinity towards one or the other – psuchê is, to borrow Dihle’s phrase, “sheer volition.” One might also consider Origen’s thought in light of Frede’s analysis of the concept of will as it emerged in the medieval period. On Frede’s account, the rational part of the soul in Plato and Aristotle had both a cognitive and a desiderative or conative role to play in moral psychology. These two functions were divided into a cognitive part and the will in the thought of figures like Aquinas. A similar division seems to be operative in Origen’s thought, though we must make a distinction between the desires of the pneuma and the desires of the psuchê, only the latter of which constitute a willing in the sense that they are the desires which actually produce actions; yet to preserve God’s goodness and justice, the soul must be entirely free to choose between appetite or contemplation. If it were not the case that the soul was naturally unbiased, and only became biased towards one or the other by choice, according to Origen moral responsibility would be obliterated, and with it the justice and goodness of God, for there would be no way to account for God’s allotment of reward and punishment. As a result, one finds a kind of psychological externalization of the epithumiai or appetites of the spirit and the body – they belong to the soul only by virtue of the fact that the soul continues to endorse them. Yet the implication seems to be that the soul itself is only normatively rational if it chooses to be – if it chooses to reject the counsels of the spirit, it desires those irrational passions to which the body is subject.

Yet if the soul has so been distinguished from the rational part in this way, the coherency of Origen’s account should be called into question. In particular, one might ask whether it is

123 Frede (2011) Ch. 4.
even intelligible to talk about the choices of a *psuchê* that is not naturally inclined toward the truth-loving part of the human person, if choice involves deliberating among various reasons. According to ancient psychologies, and Origen himself, what distinguishes human action from the behavior of other animals is the fact that the latter do not make choices, properly speaking. Rather, the lower animals merely follow what their imaginations suggest to them. In order for the *psuchê* to be held responsible for endorsing either the desires of the *sôma* or the *pneuma*, there must be some grounds upon which to fault it. Yet if these grounds involve appealing to whether the *psuchê* has good or bad reasons for acting in the way that it does, this entails that the *psuchê* must in some sense be rational.\(^{124}\) In trying to maintain his claim that the *psuchê* is not determined in its choices, and can therefore be held responsible on account of being free from the *pneuma*, Origen separates it from the spirit in such a way that appears to deprive it of the rationality required for moral responsibility. But why the soul can be held any more accountable for its behavior than one of the lower animals is unclear.

In observing these weaknesses of Origen’s tripartite anthropology, it should be noted that these difficulties themselves are a marker of both his originality and the fact that he is writing at the beginning of a tradition which understood the faculty of the will as distinct from, but associated with, human reason. The fact that his thought on the matter occasionally leads to self-contradictions is perhaps then to be expected. How an independent volitional faculty could

\(^{124}\) Origen himself seems to be aware of the problem, leading him to postulate the possibility of a moral state between that of the spirit and the body; “Let us see, therefore, whether at this point we may not perhaps establish some such conclusion as the following; that as it is better for the soul to follow the spirit at the time when the spirit has obtained the victory over the flesh, so, too, even though it appears worse for it to follow the flesh when this is warring against the spirit and desiring to call the soul to its side, yet perhaps it may turn out to be more advantageous for the soul to be mastered by the flesh than to remain within the sphere of its own will. For so long as it continues to be its own will, then is the time when it is said to be ‘neither hot nor cold’ (Rev 3.15) but remaining in a sort of lukewarm condition it may find conversion a low and somewhat difficult process. . . . it appears to be neither in a state of goodness nor yet clearly in a state of wickedness, but to be, if I may say so, like an animal.” (*De prin.*III.4.3 trans. Butterworth).
nevertheless partake of reason was a question that would plague Augustine in *De trinitate*, where he expressed confusion over whether the soul could desire and deliberate about what it did not already know, and would become a subject which would provoke much debate in the medieval period.

**2.4 Temptation and Origen’s Reappropriation of Stoic Theories of Passion**

**2.4.1 Origen on Pre-passion**

In further developing his psychology of human freedom, Origen borrows from, and re-envisions, Stoic ideas of mental representation. Epictetus’s theory of *phantasiai* and Chrysippus’s *On passions* both influenced Origen’s theory of how assent and dissent are up to us. The concept of pre-passion, however, likely comes from another source; while Aulus Gellius testifies that the notion of the “jitters” that one experiences were discussed in the lost Book V of Epictetus’s *Discourses*, the term *propatheia* does not occur in the work that records his thought; certain affects we feel when we are presented with a representation to which we have not yet offered our assent or dissent, which do not yet arise to the level of a passion (Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 19.1.15-21). That this concept was important in some version of Stoicism is attested to by Seneca, who in *De ira* uses it to explain how human beings can be subject to certain affects that do not quite achieve the level of a passion. That human beings are subject to pre-passion explains how one can have some affective response to certain situations without being subject to full-blown passions, or the sort of affects for which one is morally culpable. Thus the sage can experience certain affects such as this, without actually incurring any blame.

None of these fortuitous mental impulses deserves to be called an ‘emotion.’ They are something suffered, so to speak, not something done by the mind. Emotion is not a matter of being moved by impressions received, but of surrendering oneself to them and following up the chance movement. If anyone thinks that pallor, falling tears, sexual excitement or deep sighing, a sudden glint in the eyes or something similar are an indication of emotion or evidence for a
mental state, he is wrong; he fails to see that these are just bodily agitations. Thus it is that even the bravest man often turns pale as he puts on his armour, that the knees of even the fiercest soldier tremble a little as the signal is given for battle, that a great general’s heart is in his mouth before the lines have charged one another, that the most eloquent orator goes numb at the fingers as he prepares to speak. (*De ira* II.3.1-3 trans. Procopé)

Here, these initial jolts are not understood as something for which human beings are responsible; they do not necessarily reflect the character of the person to whom they occur. Insofar as this is the case, these pre-passions reflect a level on which human sages can be subject to affects without violating the ideal of *apatheia*. This concept of pre-passion was used by Philo and a number of Christian philosophers after him in order to explain how exemplary biblical figures could be subject to certain kinds of affective content without incurring moral blame. Sorabji has suggested that Seneca’s concept of pre-passion may have been influential on the Alexandrian tradition that began with Philo, though this depends upon attributing to Seneca an influence in the Greek-speaking world he is unlikely to have had. \(^{125}\) Margaret Graver has more persuasively argued that Philo’s thought on the subject likely indicates some other, more ancient Stoic source, which has not survived. Philo introduces the notion of pre-passion to explain certain biblical passages in which the patriarchs appear to have experienced passion, something Philo denies the truly virtuous (*Questions on Genesis* 2.57). \(^{126}\) This use of pre-passion to account for how figures like Jesus and Job could be described as experiencing at least something like passion, and still be moral exemplars, was appropriated by Philo’s Christian followers, including Origen and Didymus, and later by Jerome and Augustine as well.


\(^{126}\) Graver (1999).
These biblical exegetes, like the Stoics, used pre-passion to explain how moral exemplars can be subject to affect without experiencing passion. In characterizing pre-passion, Richard Layton has described Origen’s version of the concept thus; “This preliminary affective event demarcated a significant frontier in the human self – between being involuntarily subject to external forces and being an agent who initiated self-directed actions – and designated the point at which an agent became a moral being. This frontier in the self, however, was neither securely guarded, nor permanently fixed. Alterations in the concept propatheia also created the possibility for a new cartography of the human psyche.”

Layton is, of course, right to identify the idea of pre-passion as significant for accounting for how human beings can have affective experiences which are not voluntary. Yet this notion of the “frontier of the self” requires clarification. In Origen’s case, the concept of pre-passions helps him to explain how we are given an opportunity to reflect on how certain representations seem choice-worthy to us only when we are under the influence of our bodily desires, without actually acting in such a way that is in accordance with those desires. Here, the fact that human beings are subject to pre-passion offers them the opportunity to discern their character in a way that provides them with an opportunity to act against the suggestion of their pre-passions.

Origen employs Stoic ideas about pre-passion within his larger discussion of assent to hormetic representations, which was itself designed to counter the claims of Valentinus and those who associated with him. In this, he is preceded by Clement, who likewise used Stoic philosophy to counter what he took to be Valentinian claims that the rational part of the human person was no in way responsible for moral weaknesses. In the Stromateis, in contrasting his

own view to that of Basilides, Clement describes our passions are provoked by certain assents to representations;

The power of reasoning is peculiar to the human soul. It does not make obligatory the sorts of impulses experienced by creatures without reason, but obliges us to discriminate between our representations and not just be carried along with them. The powers of which we have been speaking offer souls readily disposed to that sort of thing spectacles of beauty, fancies, adulterous acts, pleasures, and similar seductive appearances, rather as drovers wave branches in front of their animals. They trick those who cannot distinguish true pleasure from false, or a beauty that is perishable and insolent from beauty of holiness; they enslave them and lead them on. Each decision, continually impressed on the soul, leaves a representation stamped upon it. And the soul, without knowing, is carrying around the image of the passion. The cause lies in the act of seduction and our assent to it. (Strom II.111.2-3, trans. Ferguson with emendation)\(^{128}\)

The fact that human beings are capable of giving or withholding their assent to certain representations explains why their behavior their emotions are different than those of the other animals. Like the Stoics, Clement understands the passions to result from these mental assents, giving passion a sort of rational kind of content. Likewise, Origen develops his theory of assent to representations within his own peculiar anthropology. Recall how, as discussed in the previous chapter, Origen argues that the source of the irrational desires of the soul is the non-rational desires of our body, which our souls can freely endorse or not. In explaining how the human soul endorses the desires of the body or spirit, he, like Clement, draws upon Stoic theories of assent to representations. Origen’s selective borrowing of certain features of Stoic moral psychology became particularly important in his account of how temptation arises. In giving his analysis of moral action, he follows the Stoics in arguing that whether we merit praise or blame depends upon how we give or withhold our assent to representations that produce an

\(^{128}\) Note here that I depart from Ferguson’s translation of \textit{phantasia} as “perception.” Despite Ferguson’s commendable work, his rendition here is seriously problematic; \textit{phantasia} and \textit{aisthesis}, however they are understood by particular thinker, are clearly distinct philosophical terms.
impulse towards good or bad action. The impulses we are potentially subject to, if we grant our assent, are something we share in common with other animals;

And again in certain animals representations arise which call forth impulses, the imaginative nature setting the impulse in ordered motion; for instance, in the spider, a representation of weaving a web arises and the impulse to weave it follows, the insect’s imaginative nature inciting it to accomplish this task in an orderly manner, and beyond this imaginative nature the insect possesses nothing else. (De Prin. III.1.2 trans. Butterworth)

Yet while we, like the other animals, are subject to certain representations and act upon the impulses those representations move us toward, what distinguishes us from other animals is the fact that we only act in accordance with these impulses if we grant out assent to our representations; “The rational animal, however, has something besides its imaginative nature, namely reason, which judges the representations. Some it rejects, others it approves of, the object being that the creature may be guided in accordance with these latter images” (De Prin. III.1.2 trans. Butterworth). The fact that the ability to assent or dissent from certain representations is “up to us” is what separates human beings from the other animals;

To be subject, then, to a particular external impression which gives rise to such or such an representation is admittedly not one of the things lying within our power; but to decide to use what has happened either in this way or in that is the work of nothing else but the reason within us, which, as the alternatives appear, either influences us towards the impulses (hormas) that incite to what is good and seemly or else turns us aside to the reverse. But if anyone should say that the impression from without is of such a sort that it is impossible to resist it whatever it may be, let him turn his attention to his own passions and movements (pathesi kai kinemasin) and see whether it is not an approval, assent and inclination. (De Prin. III.1.3-4 trans. Butterworth)

Here, we find the same discussion of impulse – hormê – we have already seen to characterize Stoic theories of action. The fact that human beings are capable of denying their assent to representations that will provoke certain impulses, whereas the non-human animals are not, is borrowed from Stoic teaching. Yet, as Frede discusses, Origen distinguishes himself from
the Stoics in his view that human beings are free to alter their character. Frede argues that Origen’s conception of “free will” is therefore roughly the same as how he, Frede, construes Epictetus’s concept of freedom; Frede fails, I think, to adequately consider the anthropological innovations I discussed above. In any case, on Origen’s model, the claim that only human beings are subject to the sorts of impulsive representations to which one can assent or dissent has a different sense than it does in Stoicism, insofar as for Origen our assent or dissent to such representations becomes the mechanism through which we exercise this freedom to do otherwise. As a result, the mechanism of assent and dissent becomes the mechanism through which we alter our character. By using the concept of assent to representations in order to articulate how human beings are autonomous, Origen sets himself apart from the way the Stoics understood assent.

In reinterpreting the Stoic notion of assent and dissent as voluntary in this strong sense to entail that assent and dissent require the ability to act otherwise, he draws upon the notion of pre-passion in order to explain the difference between voluntary and involuntary affects. We find the concept of pre-passion considered in his discussion of how the errant ascetic who gives up his pursuit of chastity when confronted with the temptation of having sexual intercourse, versus that of the more resilient monk who is able to resist the desire that the woman incites. In these passages, Origen relies on the concept of impetuous action to explain how human beings come to set aside previous resolutions.

For instance, when a woman displays herself before a man who has determined to remain chaste and to abstain from sexual intercourse and invites himself to act contrary to his purpose, she does not become the absolute cause of the abandonment of that purpose. The truth is that he is first entirely delighted with the sensation and lure of the pleasure and has no wish to resist it (ou boulêmenos) or to strengthen his previous determination; and then he commits the licentious act. (De Prin. III.1.4 trans. Butterworth)

129 Frede (2011) Ch. 7.
Origen’s description of the acratic ascetic in the passage above is not one of someone experiencing the internal conflict that comes with being subject to two simultaneous and opposing inclinations, the strongest of which he pursues at the expense of the satisfaction of the lesser. The ascetic who follows the representation suggesting sexual intercourse, despite having previously committed himself to the chaste life, has no opposing wish to act in accordance with this earlier decision at the moment of giving in to his sexual desire. The errant ascetic engages in sexual misconduct because he too readily accepts the appearance of goodness put before him by the form of the woman, without subjecting that appearance to rational examination. Here, we find Origen making use of the concept of impetuous action developed by Stoicism to explain how an undivided ἰηγομενικον could be subject to moral conflict. Despite the fact that Origen has a very different anthropology than the Stoics, as well as a commitment to incompatibilism, Stoic psychology provides him with the language to explain the experience of mental conflict as the occurrence of different representations in the mind one after another. “It is in no way surprisingly, therefore, that if two images occur to a man in turn [my emphasis] and suggest contrary modes of action, they should drag the mind in different directions” (De Prin. III.4.4 trans. Butterworth). With the successive presence of different representations in the mind comes the successive reaction of the different inclinations provoked by those representations. Because the psychological instability of the impetuous actor produces more of those representations that incite the soul to temptation, that actor experiences him- or herself as perpetually drawn in different, conflicting ways.

Because we are able to deny our assent to the feeling of pleasure suggested the pre-passion, however, we are not doomed to follow our representations. Consider the other ascetic, who avoids committing the immoral action;
On the other hand the same experiences may happen to one who has undergone more instruction and discipline; that is, the sensations and enticements are there, but his reason, having been strengthened to a greater degree and trained by practice and confirmed towards the good right doctrines, or at any rate being near to such confirmation, repels the incitements and gradually weakens the desire. *(De Prin. III.1.4 trans. Butterworth)*

While the pre-passions themselves do not incur blame as they do not necessarily lead to wrong action, they do give some indication about the nature of our character. While, as the example of Christ discussed below shows, a certain base level of affection will always be experienced even by the most virtuous person on account of embodiment, these affections will be minimized the more we acquire virtue. The extent to which we are subject to pre-passion is therefore to some degree a reflection on our moral character, though whether we give assent or not determines whether we will be subject to an impulse or not. As Knuuttila observes, in the medieval period we find a view that pre-passions are indirectly voluntary and therefore blameworthy among a number of medieval theorists of emotion.¹³⁰

Avoiding the passions and the impetuous actions our pre-passions prompt us towards requires that we recognize ourselves as enticed by certain representations *because* our soul is inclined to align itself with the body. Origen’s understanding of temptation as purificatory therefore has a long heritage; for him, however, temptation’s therapy derives from the fact that it affords us an opportunity to reflect on our character. In explaining this, Origen draws upon in particular upon the metaphor from Epictetus of God as a gladiatorial game master discussed in Chapter 3. Recall Epictetus’s metaphor of God as a trainer of gymnasts, who puts his students in difficult situations so that they will learn to become stronger fighters; while Long suggests that Origen would have only known the *Enchiridion*, this particular metaphor of God as a game-

master is present only in the *Discourses* I.24.1 (though the *Enchiridion* does make substantial use of the idea of the sage as an Olympic athlete). Origen likewise explains the trials human beings experience as opportunities for moral growth, but describes them as distributed in a particular manner to ensure that human beings do not experience moral challenges beyond those they are capable of overcoming;

For just as those who preside over the games (*qui agonibus praesunt*) do not allow the competitors to oppose one another indiscriminately or by chance in the contests, but after a careful examination match them in equal pairs according to size and years, this one with that and this one with that . . . so also must we understand in regard to the divine providence, that it treats all who descend into the struggles of human life with the most impartial care, according to the nature of each individual’s virtue, which he alone knows who alone beholds the hearts of men. (*De Prin.* III.2.3 trans. Butterworth)

The temptations we are confronted with can derive from God directly, our natural bodies, angels, or the demons. Even temptations from the demons, however, are ultimately arranged by God. For Epictetus, what determines whether a particular difficulty provides an occasion for the morally therapeutic exercise of one’s *prohairesis* is a matter of the individual’s recognizing the difficulty to be such. Origen, however, takes the metaphor of God as a game-master rather more literally. He adds the additional element that God ensures that human beings experience the correct *level* of temptation. Origen’s way of understanding our temptations as calculated by God in respect to our degree of moral progress informs how we are to read his incompatibilism. There are, on a theoretical level (if not on the level of the providentially-ordered cosmos), limits to the extent to which human beings actually are free to act one way or the other, insofar as there are limits to which they are capable of acting against their character at a certain moment in time, before they have morally progressed to the right degree. Not every human being is capable of

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132 For a comparison between Origen and Plutarch on the subject of demonology, see Mikoda (1992).
overcoming every hypothetical moral test; there are some hypothetical instances in which the weaknesses of our character will guarantee that we will fail. On the other hand, if human beings do not experience difficult *enough* moral temptations, the process of overcoming these weaker temptations will not have any moral value. This idea that human beings might be incapable of overcoming certain struggles, and require God’s intervention to ensure that they are not meant with such temptations, reflects – to borrow a phrase from Martha Nussbaum - a sense of the fragility of human goodness that is perhaps not to found in Epictetus. Such a sense might help articulate why Origen’s providentialism might be characterized as one in which a concept of grace is operative; this version of grace, however, is one which simultaneously preserves free choice. Only because we are equally matched with our temptations can be guaranteed that we have the freedom to choose one way or another; “Unless the powers of the combatants are equal, the victor’s palm will not be justly won nor may the vanquished be justly blamed. For this reason God allows us to be tempted, yet not ‘above that we are able’; for we are tempted in proportion to our powers. Nor is it written that in temptation God will also make a way to escape from bearing it, but a way to escape that we may be able to bear it” (*De Prin.* III.3.3 trans. Butterworth).

Origen describes the assaults of the demons as a consequence of our initial experience of being assaulted by the demons. The original reaction begins with us as a consequence of our embodiment; the demons merely take advantage of this initial affective response.

The fact is therefore clear that, just as in regard to things that are good the mere human choice is by itself incapable of completing the good act, - for this is in all cases brought to perfection with divine help – so also in regard to things of the opposite kind we derive the beginnings and what we may call the seeds of sin from those desires which are given to us naturally for our use. But when we indulge these to excess and offer no resistance to the first movements towards intemperance, then the hostile power, seizing the opportunity of this first offence, incites and urges us on in every way, striving to extend the sins over a larger field;
so that while we men supply the occasions and beginnings of our sins, the hostile sowers spread them far and wide and if possible endlessly. It is thus that the fall into avarice takes at last its place, men longing first for a little money and then increasing in greed as the vice grows. (De Prin. III.2.2 trans. Butterworth)

Moral wrongdoing begins as a consequence of our overreaching the desires for what we naturally need. When these desires are for things beyond what we naturally require, the demons can take advantage of this offense. While pre-passions are the affective reactions that arise from our relationship to our bodies, the demons exploit this embodiment for the sake of drawing us further away from the influence of the pneuma. Such occasions, however, offer us the opportunity to reflect upon our moral character. Because every human being is embodied, every human being – even Christ – will experience some degree of affect in moments of trial. The example of Christ, however, serves to help us avoid impetuous action; for in reflecting upon how even Christ was prompted toward certain passions, we can be on our guard lest we be taken by surprise at our own affective reactions to our embodiment;

He ‘who has been tempted in every respect as we are, yet has not sinned’ is not saddened with the sadness of the passion itself, but it made in accordance with human nature only in respect to the very beginning of sadness and fear, do that to his disciples, who were present, and especially to Peter, who had a high opinion of himself, he should show in actual practice what he would also say to them afterwards, that the ‘spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.’ One should never be confident in the flesh, but should always fear for it. For incautious confidence leads to boasting, but fear of weakness encourages us to flee to God’s help, just as it encouraged the Lord himself to go forward a little, to fall on his face, and pray. And so he did indeed begin to be sad and troubled, in accordance with his human nature, which is subject to such passions, but not in accordance with his divine power, which is far removed from passion of this kind. (ComMatt 26)

Here, Origen describes Christ’s experience of being tempted as a reflection of his human nature, and of the fact that, in the embodied state, we are all subject to inclinations to give in to our non-rational desires. The description of Peter serves as an indication that those who fail to appreciate the ramifications of their embodiment will – as Peter did when asked about his
relationship with Christ—find themselves acting as they thought they would not. That these pre-passions have their origin in the body is something we find in Seneca as well, here again reflecting the role of the *Phaedo* in Seneca’s thought observed by Inwood; “So that our virtue should not seem to roam beyond the nature of things, [we admit that] the wise person will tremble and feel pain and grow pale. For these are all bodily feelings. So where is misfortune, where is the true badness? Obviously, it will be there if these feelings drag down the mind, if they bring it to an admission that it is enslaved, if they inflict on it regret for being what it is (*Letter* 71.29 trans. Inwood).” Having an adequate appreciation of the psychological and moral ramifications of embodiment is key to avoiding impetuous action; only by perceiving how, as embodied, we are inherently prone to certain weaknesses can we be on guard against certain representations which will appear to us as a result of those weaknesses. Observation of how the desires of our bodies prompt us to be inclined toward certain representations is necessary to prevent ourselves from giving our assent to these inclinations. Reflection on the affective experiences that result from embodiment plays an important role in this discernment. Even in the case of morally perfect people—that is, Christ - embodiment will have some influence on one’s psychological experiences; appreciation of this fact teaches one the humility required to adopt a certain degree of skepticism towards one’s representations, a skepticism necessary to avoid impetuous action. What reflecting on the character of Christ shows, however, is that not only are human beings weakened by this bodily condition to the point that they will experience pre-passions in certain circumstances, but that this bodily condition need not lead to stronger passions. Such reflection provides observes with an opportunity to alter their own attitudes towards the desires of their bodies.
2.4.2. Affect and Self-Examination

Note the difference in emphasis between what constitutes self-examination in Origen and Epictetus. While for Epictetus, self-examination is a matter of determining whether or not our propositional beliefs are true or false, for Origen it is a matter of determining whether our faculty of desire is aligned toward the body or the spirit. In these discussions, Origen has suggested that pre-passion – while not a sin – is a reflection on our embodiment. The more we are inclined to adopt the desires of the body, the stronger the pre-passions we will feel. The pre-passions we experience in temptation therefore give us some indication of the degree to which we have become enmeshed in our bodies. Like Epictetus, he argues that how we act in morally relevant circumstances reveals the nature of our character, not only to ourselves but to other rational beings (including demons and angels as well as human beings). As he says in De oratione 29.17,

The things which our soul has received, escaping the notice of all except God, even ourselves, become clear through temptations (peirasmôn), so that we might no longer avoid acknowledging what sort of persons we then are; and so that observing ourselves we might also become self-aware (sunaisthômetha), if we should choose, of our own evils; and so that, observing them, we might give thanks for the good things apparent to us through temptations. (trans. Gibbons)

Here, peirasmoi help us perceive our own vices. This requires, however, that we perceive temptation as temptation; that we experience the struggles we undergo as the chastising action of God;

But when the soul has been sufficiently restrained for morals and constrained to make its life more faultless, it has perceived the author of the blows and has now begun to confess that ‘it is the finger of God’ and it has acquired some understanding, then especially the soul sees the darkness of its own conduct, then it perceives the gloom of its own errors. And when the soul has reached this point, then it will deserve that the firstborn of the Egyptians in it be destroyed. (HomEx IV.8 trans. Heine)

Part of emerging victorious from the contest requires that we recognize that we are in fact being tested – that we undergo a certain experience as an occasion for us to alter the orientation of our soul, that part of us which engages in choice. As Gerson has noted, introspection is distinguishable from self-reflexive kinds of self-perception, insofar as introspection involves both perceptions that can be fallible and an interpretive attitude towards one’s occurrent states (be they emotional, epistemic, or the like).\(^{134}\) On this description, a certain kind of interpretation is required for moral therapy in our examination of our affective reactions - an interpretation of one’s affective reaction as temptations. Perceiving that certain things arouse our affects because our embodiment has compromised our moral judgment, and that God provides us with the opportunity to make a choice that will lead us to identify our souls more with our spirit than with our body, is a crucial step toward the human giving the assent or dissent to the representation in a way that leads the soul to become identified with spirit, rather than with body. On this picture, the moment of self-judgment precedes the realignment. Our pre-passions provide us with the occasion to interpret our character as aligned either for good or evil and, in so doing, to act against it, and therefore serve as part of Origen’s account of how human beings are endowed with the freedom to act one way or other.

In examining Origen’s use of the concept of pre-passion, Layton suggests that in “his treatment of Christ’s agony, Origen divorces the *propatheia* from the direct, proximate stimulus to which Seneca links it.”\(^ {135}\) Rather, Layton suggests that our own thoughts are the origin of these pre-passions. Given that Origen says in several places that *phantasia* are prompted by external circumstances, I think this cannot be what distinguishes Origen from those Stoics who


also made use of the concept of *propatheia*. Rather, what distinguishes Origen is the fact that these temptations, as a reflection of our relationship to our body – a relationship which is necessary for each individual, but which, in the tradition of the *Phaedo*, is also influenced by the degree to which our souls identify with the body, yet which do not themselves arise to the level of actual moral wrongdoing - afford us with the opportunity to change the degree to which we identify with that body. Here, Origen’s use of the concept of pre-passion within his broader commitment to incompatibilism is, I think, his real break with Stoicism.

2.5 Conclusion

In Origen’s thought, we begin to lose the sense that our choices must always follow on our conception of the good. While we do not have a blatant denial of the idea that we can will what we know to be evil, as we have in *Confessions* II.4.9, Origen is perhaps thinking through the origin of the mechanism through which Augustine could articulate such a view. Here, I have argued that Origen reflects an important transition in thought on the role played by *phantasiai* in moral life. In Plato and Aristotle, we saw how whether our images accurately reflect the world plays an important role in whether our feelings of pleasure, pain, and the passions reflect a virtuous character. In Epictetus, *phantasiai* have propositional content; whether we have the right affective state is a matter of whether we have the right beliefs about what is valuable to us. In Origen, while we have a reworking of the Stoic notion of assent to hormetic representations, we find this within a framework in which Origen does not talk much about whether our *phantasiai* accurately reflect the world as he does with what sorts of objects our imaginations lead us towards. The emphasis here is less on achieving an objective, accurate account of the world than it is with becoming aware of what we ourselves are inclined toward.
Evagrius does not pick up on the idea of a distinct volitional feature of the human person. Like Origen, however, Evagrius appears to have a veridically thin sense of our imaginations. Like Origen, self-examination is not so much a matter of coming to have right beliefs about the world, but a matter of becoming aware of our dispositional desires, so that we can alter those dispositional desires. How Evagrius’s theory of passion and vice leads him, like Origen, to develop a subjectivist psychology, in which examining our representations is not an exercise one engages in to ensure that one has right believes, but in order to determine one’s own, unperceived idiosyncratic weaknesses – and which elements of Evagrius’s thought have lead modern readers to think of Evagrius as “Freudian” in some sense – will be explored in the chapters that remain.
Chapter 3: Demonic Pleasure and the Brute Passions

As I noted in the previous chapter, Evagrius was exposed to Origen’s teaching from a variety of sources; the version of Origen’s thought which we find in Evagrius’s desert writings is likely not that of the Cappadocians, but may reflect the version of Origenism already found in the desert. Yet despite the fact that certain key themes from Evagrius are no doubt influenced by Origen, he does, as Konstantinovsky observes, develop his predecessor’s thinking in significant ways.\(^{136}\) In this chapter, I am particularly interested in how the theory of passion Evagrius develops is significantly different from that of Origen, in ways which have sometimes been overlooked.

While Evagrius, like Origen, has sometimes been attributed with a theory of passion that ultimately derives from the Stoics, here I will argue that he is actually much closer to the theory of passion that we find in the Platonic tradition, particularly in *Republic* X, the *Timaeus*, and the *Philebus*, insofar as images, rather than propositions, are responsible for the arousal of the passions. As we find in the *Timaeus*, the fact that the lower parts of the soul are non-rational entails that they require non-rational means of therapy. While *askēsis* for Plato involves physical exercise, for Evagrius it involves abstaining from those things which will give rise to passions, like food or sex. The avoidance of those experiences that give rise to passion was described in monastic literature as *xeniteia* or spiritual exile; here, the act of going out to the desert was merely a stage in the process of exiling oneself from the world of bodily sense perception.\(^{137}\)

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\(^{136}\) Konstantinovsky (2009) p. 18

\(^{137}\) While the idea of the solitary monk is a popular trope in monastic literature, recent scholarship has indicated that most monks were likely far more active in village life than a naïve reading of the texts would suggest. Goehring’s work has done much to illuminate the degree of economic activity found among monks in Goehring (1999). E.A. Judge’s work has also revealed the participation of so-called apotactic monks in civic and church life in Judge (1977). Ewa Wipszycka has suggested that such monks may have even predated Antony and Pachomius; see
There is, however, an important difference between Evagrius’s theory of the mental images that produce passion and that which we have seen in other authors. In Plato, certain mental images are problematic because they falsely depict what is morally relevant to us; in the *Philebus*, for instance, we imagine ourselves taking pleasure in false pleasures and therefore fail to be those people whom the gods love. For Evagrius, the problem is not that we take pleasure in imagining or perceiving images which misconstrue what is morally relevant, but that we imagine at all; the act of fantasizing is itself problematic, because it means that our attention is directed toward inferior objects of cognition, though these objects need only appear to us as pleasurable—Evagrius does not suggest that these objects appear to us as good—in order to divert our attention. The idea that certain images might be false is not an idea he entertains, nor does he offer an account of false pleasure as we find in the *Philebus*. The fact that the falsity of our mental representations is no longer what we are attempting to determine when we examine them has significant implications for how Evagrius understands moral psychology.

In this chapter and the next, I will argue that in Evagrius we find a version of imagination which is veridically thinner than what we find in other authors; that is to say, our imaginings is not treated as the sort of cognition which can be true or false. In the next chapter, I will consider how this changes the role of self-examination in moral progress. The fact that this emphasis on examining one’s mental contents changes from working out the truth-value of one’s beliefs to an awareness of dispositional desires reflects a shifting view about human psychology, one which is more concerned with awareness of dispositional desires formed from idiosyncratic experience than it is with false reasonings.

3.1 Anatomy of a Vice

3.1.1 The Eight Bad Thoughts

Evagrius’s theory of the eight bad thoughts would go on to have substantial influence in the medieval period in the form of the seven deadly sins. He developed the idea of the eight bad thoughts in part to explain how monks, deprived of the usual material circumstances (women, money, large quantities of food) which lead human beings to sin, can nevertheless fall prey to temptations.138 Demons tempt the monk differently than they do seculars; while seculars can be provoked with objects, those pursuing the monastic life have generally deprived themselves of access to such objects (*Praktikos* 48). As a result, the demons attack the monk through mental representations, or *noêmata*,139 and thoughts, or *logismoi*. According to Evagrius, there are eight main *logismoi*: gluttony (*gastrimargia*), lust (*porneia*),140 avarice (*philarguria*),141 anger (*orgê*),142 sadness (*lupê*),143 listlessness or acedia (*akêdia*),144 vainglory (*kenodoxia*), and pride (*huperiphania*). Gluttony, lust, and avarice are associated with the desiring part of the soul, anger and sadness with the spirited part of the soul, and vainglory and pride with the rational part of the soul. Demons associated with each of these “bad thoughts” are responsible for calling to

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139 Gerson discusses *noêmata* or concepts in Gerson (1998). In Evagrius, however, *noêmata* are not so much concepts as they are images.


142 Bunge (2009).

143 Driscoll (1994).

mind those representations that will elicit the corresponding passion. While possessing the representation itself is not sinful, it will trigger an emotional reaction that represents a corrupt desire;

Suppose the thought of avarice is sent by him; distinguish within this thought the mind that received it, the mental representation of gold, the gold itself, and the passion of avarice; then ask which of these elements is a sin. Is it the mind? But how? It is the image of God. But can it be the mental representation of gold? And who in his right mind would ever say this? Does the gold itself constitute sin? Then for what purpose was it created? It follows therefore that the fourth element is the cause of sin, namely, that which is not an object with substantial subsistence, but a pleasure hostile to humanity, born of free will, and compelling the mind to make improper use of the creatures of God: it is the law of God that has been entrusted with circumcising this pleasure. (On thoughts 19)

Because of Evagrius’s interest in mental representations, he has sometimes been classified as a Stoic. Refoulé, for instance, proposed a Stoic source in the vein of Posidonius as the major source behind Evagrius’s moral psychology. Refoulé made this argument on the basis that the language of passions formed through mental imprints onto the hêgemonikon is particularly evident in Stoicism. Yet the idea that some cognitions are mental imprints is too common in ancient discussions after the Theaetetus to justify understanding a Stoic source as its background; given that Evagrius also adopts a tripartite theory of the soul, it seems likely that the presence of the terminology of the hêgemonikon is vestigial and owes something to the influence of Stoicizing Christians like Clement and Origen. Paul Géhin, in his introduction to On thoughts, likewise identifies the use of representations as particularly Stoic, though he notes the fact that Evagrius prefers the Aristotelian term. Richard Sorabji, in his work on Christian

145 All translations of Evagrius are from Sinkewicz (2003) unless otherwise noted.

146 Refoulé (1961).

temptation, offers an alternative suggestion of Stoic influence in Evagrius, arguing that the
*logismoi* are Stoic first movements. As we saw in Chapter 2 Stoic ideas about first movements
play an important role in Origen’s thought on temptation. Sorabji argues that Evagrius takes this
idea over from Origen in his theory about the eight bad thoughts;

Evagrius’ eight thoughts have to do with emotions like lust, distress, anger, or
vain feeling. But they are not themselves emotions, as is shown in their being
called bad thoughts of these emotions. Not only does the ‘of’ distinguish them
from the emotions, but also the idea of bad thoughts is derived from Origen, who
so much influenced Evagrius, an influence which led to his later condemnation.
And Origen, in Rufinus’s version, treated the bad thoughts, we have seen, as first
movements. 148

Here, Sorabji emphasizes the fact that Stoic theory of emotion understands pre-passion as
distinct from full-blown passion, and suggests that this distinction helps clarify that in Evagrius
between the passions and the bad thoughts. While there may be some reason for believing that
the identification between bad thoughts and first movements is an accurate description of
Origen’s thought, whether this identification applies to Evagrius’s use of the term is another
matter. While it is the case that Evagrius borrows some terminology from Origen, Sorabji does
not offer a defense of how Evagrius adopts the larger Stoic theory of representation that the
interpretation of the *logismoi* as first movements would seem to require, and indeed I think
Evagrius does not. The biggest problem with Sorabji’s interpretation is that Evagrius claims that
passions can move thoughts, or thoughts can move passions – since pre-passions by definition
precede passions, Evagrius, unlike Origen, cannot understand thoughts as pre-passions (*Eulogios*
13.12). Here, I suggest a different way for considering Evagrius’s thought on emotion.

3.1.2 A Brief History of Virtues and Vices

Evagrius’s theory of emotion belongs to the Aristotelian and Hellenistic tradition of categorizing virtues and vices out of which his discussion of the *logismoi* grows. Evagrius follows a tradition in Greco-Roman texts on morality, both within Second-Temple Judaism and Hellenistic philosophy, which attempted to classify various moral dispositions and acts. As Frankfurter has noted, these lists indicate a preoccupation with diagnosing one’s moral weaknesses in order to contribute to “the pretense of certainty, control, and ritual tradition;” in the Judaic and Christian traditions; these lists were often concerned with the establishing the authority of the leaders capable of diagnosing such problems, as we find in the case of Evagrius’s *gnōstikos*.149

Aristotle’s discussion of the relationship between the different virtues begins in *EN* I.13, where he draws the distinction between virtues of character and the intellectual virtues. The intellectual virtues belong to the rational part of the soul, while the virtues of character belong to the non-rational part of the soul, that part of the soul which is subject to passions and which is capable of obeying reason like a father.150 All virtue aims at the *kalon*, a term which can mean noble, but also beautiful; acting for the sake of the noble involves acting for the right reason, toward the right individuals, at the right time (see, for example, *EN* 1115b 10-13 and 1120a 23-

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150 One does, of course, only possess virtue if one also possesses the intellectual virtue of *phronēsis*, according to the “unity of the virtues” thesis. On *phronēsis* or practical intelligence see Russell (2010) and Hursthouse (2011). Russell’s work in particular is offered in response to the person-situation debate, a debate about whether moral character or particular circumstance more determines human behaviour; Russell defends the view that one can adopt a situationist account of human action within the frame of virtue ethics. Hendrik Lorenz has also offered a defense of the view that Aristotle’s opinion on this matter changes from the *Eudemian Ethics* to the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and that by the time he writes the latter treatise, he takes virtues of character to belong to the rational part of the soul as well. See Lorenz (2010).
Attention to the role of proportionality perhaps allows us to make sense of Aristotle’s idea of virtue as the mean between two extremes, with respect to both passions and actions;\(^{152}\)

By virtue I mean virtue of character; for it is this that is concerned with passions and actions, and in these there is excess, defect, and the intermediate. For instance, both fear and confidence and appetite and anger and pity and in general pleasure and pain may be felt both too much and too little, and in both cases not well; but to feel them at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right aim, and in the right way, is what is both intermediate and best, and this is characteristic of virtue. Similarly with regards to actions also there is excess, defect, and the intermediate. (EN 1106b16-24 trans. Ross and Urmson)

Forming the right judgment in a certain circumstance is in some ways a matter of perception (1109b23); the virtuous person becomes virtuous by repeatedly performing right actions in his youth, thereby habituating the non-rational part of the soul to perceive and be affectively motivated by the appropriate action.

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\(^{151}\) For discussion see Broadie (1991) pp. 90-94. Gabriel Richardson Lear has argued that there are three central aspects to Aristotle’s notion of the noble, “effective teleological order, visibility, and pleasantness,” which justifies the central role of beauty in his thought. See Lear (2006).

\(^{152}\) Despite the fact that he is often a nuanced reader of ancient philosophical texts, I think on this point Bernard Williams has a view which is too crude. “Aristotle’s own views on [moral character] are bound up with one of the most celebrated and least useful parts of his system, the doctrine of the Mean, according to which every virtue of character lies between two correlative faults or vices (illustrated in the example of truth-telling), which consist respectively of the excess and the deficiency of something of which the virtue represents the right amount. The theory oscillates between an unhelpful analytical model (which Aristotle himself does not consistently follow) and a substantively depressing doctrine in favour of moderation. The doctrine of the Mean is better forgotten, but it does correctly imply that, since virtuous people are supposed to know what they are doing, they will see others’ failing and vices as such and will see those who have them, or at least those people’s actions, as variously bad or unpleasant or unhelpful or base.” Williams (1985) p. 36. Given Williams’s anti-theoretical arguments in this work, it is rather bizarre that he faults Aristotle here for not providing sufficient analytical detail. Moreover, rather than understanding the mean just as what is moderate, I think it makes more sense to think of it as proportionate – whatever the “mean” is isn’t so much an injunction to do everything in moderation, but an injunction to do what the occasion calls for. Aristotle’s account of the role that the mean plays in virtuous character is not so much to prescribe us to do what the situation calls for – an injunction which, indeed, is unhelpful. Rather, it is intended as a description of the role our perceptions and emotions play in helping us discern what the situation calls for; perceptions which cannot be prescribed as theoretical rules, for then they would be things that could be taught and therefore the virtues of thought. To deny Aristotle’s point here is to deny that the perceptions and quasi-perception emotions have such a role to play. For more on Aristotle’s doctrine of the mean, see Urmson (1980), Pears (1980), Hursthouse (1980), and Rapp (2006). Bostock suggests this in the context of an argument in which he maintains that Aristotle ought reject the idea of virtue as a means between extremes, on the grounds that “two different scales” is not adequate enough to explain the way in which people can go wrong; Aristotle himself, however, seems to accommodate this point (cf. 1107a10); see Bostock (2000) p. 44.
In both EE II and EN III-V Aristotle provides extensive enumerations of the various virtues, which likely contributed to the interest in the Hellenistic period in the taxonomy of virtue. These early attempts to categorize the various virtues and vices developed into much more elaborate, if not always as philosophically sophisticated, discussions by the Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic periods. In Arius Didymus’s *Epitome of Stoic Ethics*, for example, we find Arius beginning with a discussion of the unity of virtues, and then offering a catalogue of the various virtues as domains of knowledge; *phronesis*, for instance, is defined as knowledge of what is worth choosing, avoiding, and a matter of indifference, while justice is knowledge of giving each what is due. The vices are defined as domains of ignorance; cowardice is ignorance of what is terrible and what is not, and so forth (5b1). We likewise find a detailed discussion of the relationship of the various virtues and vices in a brief text by Pseudo-Aristotle, *On virtues and vices*, which divides the soul into the appetitive part, the spirited part, and the rational part, as we find in the *Republic*, and breaks down the various virtues and vices associated with each; “Folly is the vice of the rational, irascibility and cowardice of the passionate, intemperance and incontinence of the appetitive; and of the soul as a whole, injustice, illiberality, and small-mindedness” (*VV* 1249b27-1251a2 trans. Ross and Urmson).

In the Second Temple texts preserved that share a similar concern with the classification of vices and virtues, we do not find the same concern with the unity of virtue that we find in texts like Arius Didymus’s *Epitome*. Rather, classifications of virtues and vices tend to take place within texts concerned with illuminating the Two Ways, a literary trope in Jewish religious texts dating from at least the composition of Psalm 1, and which defined human morality in terms of the way of life versus the way of darkness. Consider, for example, the *Didache*, a first-century

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153 Corrigan suggests that Evagrius takes his theory of soul directly from Pseudo-Aristotle; identifying Evagrius’s sources is difficult, but the similarities between Pseudo-Aristotle’s way of assigning particular vices to particular parts of the soul, and Evagrius’s, cannot be denied. See Corrigan (2007).
text believed to have been produced from within the same community as the Gospel of Matthew.

In this text, which offers a version of the Two Ways, we are given a description of how one progresses further down the way of death.

My child, flee from evil of every kind and from everything resembling it. Do not become angry, for anger leads to murder. Do not be jealous or quarrelsome or hot-tempered, for all these things breed murders. My child, do not be lustful, for lust leads to sexual immorality. Do not be foulmouthed or let your eyes roam, for all these things breed adultery. My child, do not be an augur, since it leads to idolatry. Do not be an enchanter or an astrologer or a magician, or even desire to see them, for all these things breed idolatry. My child, do not be a liar, since lying leads to theft. Do not be avarice or conceited, for all these things breed thefts. (*Didache* 3 trans. Holmes)

In the *Didache*, we do not find the same degree of philosophical analysis that we find in Evagrius’s writings. There is, however, the same concern with the exacerbation of certain dispositions, an anxiety about which Evagrius will share. The *Didache* is not the first text within the Second Temple tradition to engage in this kind of classification of emotion. As Guillaumant has noted, one finds a similar discussion in the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, a second temple morality text concerned in particular with exhorting its readers to avoid sexual promiscuity. As Guillaumont notes, this text was known to Origen and reported by him in *Homilies on Joshua*, suggesting that it may have had at least an indirect influence on Evagrius himself. In the first testament, the Testament of Reuben, the author elaborates upon the two-ways tradition by making a distinction between those spirits which are given to human beings at creation with the spirits of error. The spirits created to assist human beings are not associated with virtues, as much as they are associated with basic requirements for human life. These consist of the spirits of life, seeing, hearing, smell, speech, taste, and procreation. These spirits “commingle” with the spirits of error;

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First, the spirit of promiscuity resides in the nature and the senses. A second spirit of insatiability, in the stomach; a third spirit of strife, in the liver and the gall; a fourth spirit of flattery and trickery, in order that through excessive effort one might appear to be at the height of his powers; a fifth spirit of arrogance, that one might be boastful and haughty; a sixth spirit of lying, which through destructiveness and rivalry, handles his affairs smoothly and secretively even with his relatives and household. A seventh spirit of injustice, with which are thefts and crooked dealings, that one might gain his heart’s desire. For injustice works together with the other spirits through acceptance of bribes. 

In between the lists of the seven spirits of life and the seven spirits of darkness, we find a rather curious description of an eighth spirit, “with which is created the ecstasy of nature and the image of death.” Given that this eighth spirit is listed after the “seven spirits” meant to be helpful for human beings, at first glance it seems that this spirit of sleep is likewise an assistant. The fact that this spirit is the “image of death,” however, suggests that it belongs with the evil spirits. It may be that this spirit is considered an outlier, and can be both of help and harm. In any case, the precise origin of the spirits of error is left rather mysterious.

3.1.3 Virtues and Vices in Evagrius

In considering how Evagrius relates to these earlier texts from both Hellenistic philosophy and Second Temple Judaism concerned with the classification and taxonomy of the vices and virtues, it is probably best to think of him as a member of a seemingly widespread literary tradition, within which various authors had different intellectual priorities. Evagrius himself developed his own classification scheme for the emotions. As in the Pseudo-Aristotelian \textit{VV}, Evagrius associates each of the bad thoughts with a particular part of the human soul or, in Evagrius’s case, mind. Gluttony, lust, and avarice are associated with the appetitive part, while anger and sadness are proper to the irascible part and vainglory and pride belong to the rational
part or mind. Akèdia is associated with each of the three parts. In spelling out the eight bad thoughts, their association with the different parts of the soul, and other vices they give rise to, Evagrius also goes into detail about the order in which the bad thoughts will attack the monk. In the beginning of the treatise On thoughts, for instance, Evagrius draws on the Gospel story of Jesus’s temptation by Satan in the desert in describing the initial sins as gluttony, avarice, and vainglory. Other sins arise from these;

For example, it is not possible to fall into the spirit of fornication, unless one has fallen under the influence of gluttony; nor is it possible to trouble the irascible part, unless one is fighting for food or wealth or esteem. And it is not possible to escape the demon of sadness, if one is deprived of these things, or is unable to attain them. Nor will one escape pride, the first offspring of the devil, if one has not banished avarice, the root of all evils, since, according to the wise Solomon, ‘poverty makes a person humble.’ (On thoughts 1)

While he identifies eight major logismoi, his discussions of how these bad thoughts, in furthering our moral corruption, the other vices are given less prominence. In describing how frustrated desires lead to lupê and anger, he identifies a number of more specific vices that result as well, using the language of the generation of sins one also finds in Didache 3; “wrath is born from lupê, and from these things inflammation is born.” Forgetfulness of the pursuit of apatheia, though not classified as one of the eight logismoi, receives considerable attention as well.

“Remember to watch over the heart with the understanding of ascetic labors, lest forgetfulness, having plundered it of its care for the superior goods, hand it over to the captivity of thoughts” (Eulogios 1113). Forgetfulness is closely associated with the demon called the “Wanderer.” This demon attempts to provoke the monk with logismoi that suggest to it that that he ought to leave his cenobium for one reason or another, and thus leads the monk to journey from place to place.

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155 See Harmless (2001) for a full discussion.
These wanderings lead the monk to become entangled in worldly affairs and to forget his ascetic practice (*On thoughts* 9).

It should be noted that *logismoi* are not limited to demonic thoughts alone, although the term is most often reserved for them. What Evagrius refers to as “angelic thoughts” in *On thoughts* 8 are “concerned with the investigation of natures of things and search out their spiritual principles. For example, the reason why gold was made and why it is sand-like and scattered through the lower regions of the earth, and is discovered with much labor and toil.” These kinds of thoughts, which are concerned with the principles of things, are described in the *Kephalalia Gnostica* as a form of spiritual *aisthēsis*. There are also human thoughts, those which seek neither its acquisition nor its investigation, but which introduce merely “the simple form of gold separate from any passion of greed.” In general, however, when Evagrius speaks of *logismoi* simpliciter, this term refers to the bad thoughts – those which provoke the monk to endeavor to possess the object whose representation they are confronted with. In addition to describing how the eight major *logismoi* give rise to other bad thoughts, Evagrius also contrasts them with various virtues. A short work that has frequently followed *Eulogios* in the manuscript tradition, entitled *On virtues and vices*, offers the most systematic treatment of the virtues. Here, in addition to adding a ninth vice, jealousy, Evagrius describes the virtue corresponding to each vice. Opposite gluttony, lust, avarice, sadness, anger, akēdia, vainglory, jealousy, and pride, we find abstinence, chastity, freedom from possessions, joy, patience, perseverance, freedom from vainglory, freedom from jealousy, and humility.

**3.2 Sense Perception and Imagination in the Arousal of the Passions**

**3.2.1 Sense Perception and the Passions**
Each of the bad thoughts in some way is a consequence of the fact that we take pleasure in things other than God. Because of this, the bad thoughts are closely related to sense perception; here, Evagrius’s theory of soul is similar to Moss’s reading of the Timaeus, in particular of passages like 69d, which associate the passions with sense perception. We find this association in later Platonic texts as well; consider Porphyry’s exhortation to abstain from meat;

So we must abstain from some foods as much as from other things: from all foods which by their nature arouse the affective element of our soul. Let us consider it this way too. Here two springs well up to bind the soul: filled with them, as if with lethal potions, it falls into oblivion of its own objects of contemplation. These springs are pleasure and pain. Perception provides them, and so does apprehension in accordance with perception, and the impressions and opinions and memories which accompany perceptions; the passions aroused by these, and unreason in its totality made gross by them, pull down the soul and divert it from its own love for that which is. So we should be detached from them, as far as we can. (De Abstinentia I.33, trans. Clark)

Evagrius, like Porphyry, justifies ascetic practice by maintaining that abstention from certain sensory experiences is necessary to prevent certain passions. Evagrius’s theory is articulated within the context of his theory of imageless prayer, where he is concerned with how images distract the monk from achieving the state of apatheia, in which one is no longer subject to mental representations. In addressing this problem, Evagrius puts forward a notion of the passions which requires different forms of moral therapy than we find in authors like Epictetus, who emphasized the rehabilitation of our rational content. As we will see below, this account of

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156 Moss (2011).
157 On apatheia in Clement and Evagrius, see Dysinger (2005) p. 28 and Guillaumont and Guillaumont (1991) pp. 101-102. For more on apatheia, see Driscoll (1999), Somos (1999), and Joest (2004). On imageless prayer, see Bunge (1984), Gendle (1985), and Guillaumont (1996). There is a standing debate about whether Evagrius’s theory of imageless prayer has room for a robust theory of the Trinity or not. Haussheir, von Balthasar, and Guillaumont have argued to the contrary; for a defense of Evagrius’s Trinitarianism, see Bunge (1989) and Dysinger (2005). On the anthropomorphite controversy, see Gould (1992), Clark (1992), Golitzin (1998), and DelCogliano (2003), Guillaumont (2004). Golitzin argues that the anthropomorphites, far from being illiterate monks, as they are sometimes portrayed (as by Cassian), were in fact inheriting an ancient Jewish tradition. The evidence for this, however, is likewise far from conclusive. For more on Judaism in the Egyptian desert, see Pearson (2007). Evagrius’s understanding of the goal of contemplation as being free from images represents an interestingly different take on mysticism than other figures in early Christianity, who focused on language. See Pelikan (1995).
the passions is connected to the fact that moral therapy requires ascetic practice, more than dialectic.

Consider Evagrius’s description of the relationship between the representational content of the material world and the tripartite soul:

The Lord has confided to the human person the mental representations of this age, like sheep to a good shepherd. For scripture says ‘This age he has placed in his heart.’ For assistance he has joined to him [the human person] this spirited part and the appetitive part so that through the spirited he may put to flight the mental representations (noëmata) that are the wolves and that through the appetitive he may love the sheep, even if he is often cast about by the rains and the winds. (On thoughts 17)

Here, the lower parts are described as temporary, auxiliary components of the soul, necessary only for the cognition of the world required by existence in this age; presumably, the period in which the human person is material. Specifically, the spirited part is meant to chase away those mental representations of things one ought not dwell on, while the appetitive part is meant to preserve representations which are necessary for practical life. In its ideal state, the mind, apart from the lower parts, engages in imageless contemplation, but when it is not engaged in imageless prayer it requires the lower parts to cognize the material world. This emphasis on imageless cognition is found in Plotinus’s work as well; in describing the rather paradoxical prescription for the inherently impassible soul to become impassible, Plotinus explains how the soul achieves apatheia by no longer being subject to these sorts of mental images; “The purification would be leaving it alone, and not with others, or not looking at something else or, again, having opinions which do not belong to it . . . and not seeing the images nor constructing affections out of them” (Ennead III.6.5.10-12). While the soul itself does not experience affects, its goal is to no longer even perceive the body’s affects.
The perceptual capacity of the lower parts, in addition to allowing us to operate in the material world, is meant to play an important role in spiritual progress to the person who is not yet able to engage in such imageless contemplation. As he argues in the *Kephalaia Gnostica* and the *Great Letter*, the proper role of perception is to perceive the *logoi*, the rational principles of God’s created order. There is a three-stage anagogic process to becoming reunited with God, consisting of *praktikê*, *phusikê*, and *theologia*, borrowing the ancient division of philosophy into ethics, physics, and logic.\(^{158}\) *Praktikê* is the process by which one purges oneself of one’s passions. *Phusikê*, or natural contemplation, the next step toward reunification with God, is the contemplation of bodies and incorporeal beings. *Theologia* is contemplation of God, the goal of pure prayer. The proper activity of perception is what we find in the first part of *phusikê*, the contemplation of the order behind the sensible world, or the *logoi*.\(^{159}\) Evagrius’s discussion of the contemplation of the *logoi* bears considerable resemblance to what we find in later Platonic writings, such as Plotinus. Contemplation of nature is treated systematically in particular in *Ennead* III.8, the first part of a long tractate against the Gnostics that includes V.8, V.5, and II.9.\(^{160}\) Despite Plotinus’s discussion of matter as evil (as we find in I.8), contemplation of the sensible world can have a therapeutic effect insofar as it provides us with an occasion to reflect on the intelligible world.\(^{161}\) The *logoi* are not, it should be noted, Forms; rather they are

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\(^{158}\) Von Balthasar suggests that Evagrius is the first person to speak of the division of ascetic life in exactly this way; see Balthasar (1939) p. 96.

\(^{159}\) Géhin discusses *Scholia on Ecclesiastes* as a work primarily concerned with *phusikê*; see Géhin (edition of this text) pp. 20-27.


\(^{161}\) Wildberg (2009) offers an account of how the *logoi* of the nature are the activity are nature contemplating Intellect; this is only possible because nature is the offspring of Intellect. How matter fits into this contemplation is a difficult issue; Plotinus’s treatment of matter has been, in the characterization of Wildberg, “vigorously” debated.
intelligible principles which exist on the level of the World Soul, rather than on the level of the Intellect (as the Forms do).\(^{162}\)

This later Platonic treatment of the contemplation of nature appears to influence Evagrius’s theory of the contemplative life. Such perception is meant to serve as a sign of the immaterial reality behind the material world, which initiates our ascent to God.

Now God in his love has fashioned creation as an intermediary. It exists like a letter: through his power and his wisdom (that is, by his Son and his Spirit), he made known abroad his love for them so that they might be aware of it and draw near. Through creation, they become aware not only of God the Father’s love for them, but also of his power and wisdom. In reading a letter, one becomes aware through its beauty of the power and intelligence of the hand and finger that wrote it, as well as of the intention of the writer; likewise, one who contemplates creation with understanding becomes aware of the Creator’s hand and finger, as well as of his intention— that is, his love. (\textit{The Great Letter} 12-13 trans. Casiday; \textit{cf. Timaeus} 48b9)\(^{162}\)

Contemplation of the material world permits us to discern the \textit{logoi} of God. As he says in the \textit{Kephalaia Gnostica}, “The book of God is the contemplation of bodies and incorporeal [beings] in which a purified \textit{nous} comes to be written through knowledge. For in this book are written the \textit{logoi} of providence and judgement, through which book God is known as creator, wise, provident, and judging” (\textit{KG} V.16.8 trans. Dysinger). Dysinger comments how in “this scholion Evagrius condenses the whole of \textit{theoria phusikê}, ‘the contemplation of bodies and incorporeal [beings]’, into a succinct formula: ‘the \textit{logoi} of providence and judgement.’”\(^{163}\) As one moves up the chain from the \textit{logoi} behind material things to the Trinity, one leaves behind


\(^{163}\) Dysinger (2005) p. 172. Von Balthasar argues that the idea of the \textit{logoi} of providence and judgment is particular to Evagrius; see Balthasar (1939) p. 104.
the mental representations we obtain through perception. Contemplation of the intelligible reality behind sensible nature leads to *theologia*, where we contemplate the Trinity alone apart from mental representations. As he says in the *Skemmata*,

> The mind cannot see the place of God within itself, unless it has transcended all the mental representations associated with objects. Nor will it transcend them, if it has not put off the passions that bind it to sensible objects through mental representations. And it will lay aside the passions through the virtues, and simple thoughts through spiritual contemplation; and this in turn it will lay aside when there appears to it the light. (*Skemmata* 23)

Lest one think that the person who has achieved contemplation no longer have responsibilities toward other human beings, however, the *Kephalai Gnostica* tells us otherwise;

“If He who has ascended above all the heavens has accomplished everything (Eph. 4:10), it is evident that each of the ranks of celestial powers has truly learned the *logoi* concerning providence, by which they rapidly impel towards virtue and the knowledge of God those who are beneath them” (*KG* VI.76 trans. Dysinger). Here again, we have parallels in Plotinus. Despite John Dillon’s assessment that the person who has surpassed mere civic virtue and has become like God will no longer be practically active, we find in the treatise *On the Descent of the Souls into Bodies, Ennead* IV.8, a description of how the soul who ascends back toward its *nous* participates in the activity of the governance of the World.

> The individual souls not only exercise an intellectual desire for their return to that from which they came, but also have a power directed to here below, like a light dependent on the sun above, which does not begrudge its bounty to what comes after it. But they are without pain if they remain with universal soul in the intelligible world, governing the heaven with that whole Soul, like those living with the king of

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164 Evagrius’s thought on contemplation has sparked debate over whether he believed in the resurrection of the body or not. Luke Dysinger (1997) argues that he does; Shaw, on the other hand, follows Clark in arguing that the “naked minds” (*cf. KG* I.26.58) refer to incorporeal minds free of even the luminous body. See Shaw (2008) p. 204 and Clark (1992) Ch. 2. One might draw a connection here between the fact that Evagrius’s views on the resurrection of the body are so difficult to discern with the fact that he, unlike many other patristic authors, does not appear to take too much interest in questions of gender; a lack of concern with the body as permanent appears to permeate his works, at any rate.
all, sharing in his rule but not themselves alighting from the royal thrones” (Ennead IV.8.4 trans. Gerson).165

Despite the resonances with later Platonism on the role of the contemplation of the logoi of the sensible world in the ascent back to the One, in Evagrius we do not find the insistence that the mind necessarily knows itself that preoccupies Plotinus (see, for instance, V.3). William Harmless characterizes the soul which has achieved the goal of theologia as one which has achieved knowledge of its “true self”; “During pure prayer, the purified mind sees itself, its truest self, its true state. The self it sees is luminous. The luminosity that permits it to see itself is the divine light. In seeing itself as luminosity, as light like sapphire or sky blue, the mind discovers its Godlikeness. It also sees and knows by seeing – indirectly, as in a mirror, the uncreated, immaterial light that God is.”166 Harmless offers a Foucauldian interpretation of Evagrius’s mysticism, in which selfhood consists in self-knowledge, here construed as self-intellection; “This is why for Evagrius prayer is both a moment of self-discovery and an encounter with ultimate mystery.” Yet while we find a version of this idea in Plotinus, where self-intellection constitutes personhood, this idea is not to be found in Evagrius; we do not find in Evagrius a parallel to what we find in the beginning of Ennead IV.6; “Often, when I awake to myself from the body and come to be outside all other things and inside myself, I have a vision of immeasurable beauty. I feel sure that, if ever, I then inhabit the better part of myself, bringing to life the best of all lives and being united with the divine life and firmly established therein. I am taking part in that supreme energy, raising myself above all the rest of the intelligible world” (Ennead IV.8.1.1-7). While Evagrius does identify the ideal self with the person who no longer


cognizes representations, but who cognizes God without the mediation of representation, that the cognition of God entails a *cognition* of the ideal self is not an idea he considers.

3.2.2 The Perversion of Perception

While the perception of the sensible world is meant to help us ascend back toward the Trinity, our perceptual capacities are easily perverted, and can give rise to the experiences of pleasure which can lead to the other vices. Examination of how Evagrius understands the passions of gluttony, lust, and so forth to result from the pleasure produced through the sense organs helps illuminate his distance from the Stoics to whom, as noted above, he has often been assimilated. According to the Stoic fourfold theory of emotion, the passion of pleasure arises not from perception, but from assent to propositions concerning the presence of something valued as “good.” In Evagrius, we do not find this kind of analysis of pleasure at all; the language of impulse and assent never occurs in the corpus of his writings. As he says in the *Praktikos*, in a passage that mirrors Aristotle’s analysis from the *De anima* 414a; “Whatever a person loves he desires above all; for what he desires he struggles to attain. Now desire is the source of every pleasure, and perception gives birth to desire (*epithumia*). For now that which has no part in perception is also free from passion” (*Praktikos* 4 trans. Sinkewicz with emendation). For Evagrius, perception gives rise to desire and pleasure, which in turn give rise to passions in both the body and the soul:

Indeed you cannot otherwise extinguish the passions until you mingle with the flesh ascetic labours to overcome it; nor indeed, the passions of the soul until you rain the fruits of charity down upon your heart. The passions of the body take their origin from the natural appetites of the flesh, against which abstinence is effective; the passions of the soul have their conception from the appetites of the soul, against which charity is effective. (*Eulogios* 23)

Evagrius does not, it should be noted, clearly specify the difference between the passions of the body and those of the soul, though it is reasonably easy to surmise that the passions of the
Body refer to gluttony, lust, and avarice, while the passions of the soul refer to *akèdia*, anger, sadness, vainglory, and pride. Evagrius explains this by reference to the story of the three temptations of Jesus in the wilderness, where the temptation to gluttony is a prelude to temptations of avarice and gluttony:

> Among the demons who set themselves in opposition to the practical life, those ranged first in battle are the ones entrusted with the appetites of gluttony, those who make to us suggestions of avarice, and those who entice us to seek human esteem. All the other demons march along behind these ones and in their turn take up with the people wounded by these. For example, it is not possible to fall into the hands of the spirit of fornication, unless one has fallen under the influence of gluttony; nor is it possible to trouble the irascible part, unless one is fighting for food or wealth or esteem. And it is not possible to escape the demon of sadness, if one is deprived of all these things, or is unable to attain them. Nor will one escape pride, the first offspring of the devil, if one has not banished avarice, the root of all evils, (1 Tim. 6: 10) since, according to the wise Solomon, ‘poverty makes a person humble’ (Prov. 10:4) To put it briefly, no one can fall into a demon’s power, unless he has first been wounded by those in the front line. For this reason the devil introduced these three thoughts to the Saviour: first, he exhorted him to turn stones into bread; then, he promised him the whole world if he would fall down and worship him; and thirdly, he said that if he would listen to him he would be glorified for having suffered no harm from such a fall (Luke 4:1-13). *(On thoughts 1)*

Bodily passions therefore give rise to the soul’s passions; “All the demons teach the soul to love pleasure; only the demon of grief refrains from doing this. Instead he corrupts the thoughts of those in the place by cutting off and drying up every pleasure of the soul by means of grief, if indeed ‘the bones of the person afflicted by sadness dry up’” *(On thoughts 12).*

Perception produces a desire, which produces pleasure when the desire is gratified, and sadness when it is not. “Frustrated desires produce plantings of sadness, but prayers and thanksgiving cause these things to wither away” *(Eulogios 7.7).*

Because the passion of sadness is a consequence of a disappointed desire, in its demonic forms it is always accompanied by one of the other passions. “Sadness has no strength unless the other passions are present, as a fetter is without strength unless there is someone to attach it”
One can only experience sadness if one is also subject to desire for esteem, money, revenge against one’s enemies, spiritual charisms, and other objects other than God. In particular, it bears a special relationship to anger, insofar as both are connected to the spirited part of the soul; “Sadness gets stirred up as an intermediary between angry persons. Therefore, if the first to regain sobriety recovers from the passion, he also gives his hand to the other in an apology, driving away the bitter grief” (Eulogios 7.7).

In order to prevent the demons from invading our souls through our senses, one must achieve apatheia. Like the Stoic sage, the person who has achieved apatheia is not totally without affect. The fact that the person who has achieved apatheia might be subject to some sort of affect is evident in Evagrius’s discussion of lupē and joy. While Plato and Aristotle consider lupē and pleasure as opposite affects, for Evagrius the opposite of lupē is not pleasure, but joy or chara, like the Stoic sage. Joy gives Evagrius room to carve out a positive affective state other than pleasure, which he has identified as at the cause of sin. Evagrius qualifies his opposition of joy and lupē, however, by identifying two forms of each of these affects. Godly sadness is the monastic ideal of penthos, the regret one feels at the failure of oneself and others to live up to one’s moral standards. The other form of sadness is demonic sadness, which may involve either excessive guilt or regret at being deprived of objects of desire other than God. The joy of peace he describes, in an Origenian exegetical moment, as “a sea of virtues, drowning by the cross the resistance of the devil.” This is opposed to the “demonic joy,” which “comes upon the heart when nothing stands in the way because it finds the guide to godly sadness distracted, and then it hands over the soul to the spirit of lupē because it has made it a captive of spiritual joy.” When the monk has given in to this sort of joy, he will later experience lupē, apparently of either the godly or demonic variety, depending upon whether or not he repents. If he does, the lupē he
experiences will be of the godly form. If not, the demonic _lupê_ he will experience will be that of disappointment when he cannot consistently acquire the object of his desire. While the morally corrupted agent will experience the demonic forms of these affects, the one who is achieved impassibility will experience these affects _kata theon_. Consider the passage from _Eulogios_, in which Evagrius describes the joy and _lupê_ of the _gnôstikos;_

> One of the brothers, having endured insult and injustice from a “pious” person, went away divided between joy and sadness: in the case of the former, because he experienced injustice and insult and returned not opposition; in the case of the latter, because the pious person was deceived and in causing his deceit he felt joy at his expense. But consider that the Deceiver also experienced the two feelings: because on the one hand he certainly troubled the one who was experiencing joy and because on the other hand he did not trouble also the one who was sorely grieved. ( _Eulogios_ 4)

While pleasure and demonic joy and _lupê_ are experienced by the one who is still subject to the passions, the one who is _apathes_ nevertheless continues to experience _hêsuchia_ and the godly affects.

The significance of Platonic theories of emotion for Evagrius has recently been highlighted by Kevin Corrigan. Corrigan denies that Evagrius’s idea of _apatheia_ can be thought of as Stoic on the grounds that the Stoic version of the term denotes the “pitiless impassibility of the Stoic sage.”¹⁶⁷ According to Corrigan, the role of divine love or _agapê_ for God is important for qualifying what _apatheia_ means for Evagrius. However, Corrigan’s account of Stoicism perhaps requires some refinement. As Margaret Graver as demonstrated, the description of the Stoic sage as impassive is a caricature that misrepresents the wide range of affects that Stoic theory of mind accommodated.¹⁶⁸ As I have discussed, what is evident in Stoicism which

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¹⁶⁸ Graver (1999).
Evagrius lacks is the idea of assent to false representations as the cause of passions. Yet
Evagrius also lacks the idea that the soul cannot itself be properly subject to passions. As
Plotinus argues in *Ennead* III.6, the soul is impassible by nature; but it can forget this by
unnecessarily attending to the affects it experiences in the body, or by producing bodily affects
through as the thoughts of the rational part of the soul produce images in the trace of the soul,
which in turn produce passions in the body (*Ennead* III.6.4.13-23; cf. Aristotle’s *De anima*
408b1-18). Evagrius therefore lacks certain key aspects of the thought of both Plotinus and the
Stoics; we might therefore place him closer to a certain reading of the *Timaeus* itself (one like
Moss’s) than to these later thinkers.

3.2.3 Exploitation of Perception by the Demons

The fact that all the passions – even those of the soul – are aroused by the perceptions of
the body is better illuminated by Evagrius’s description of how the demons provoke the
passions.\(^{169}\) By considering Evagrius’s theory of the passions as caused by sense perception
perceptions, we are better able to understand how his theory of passion is related to his
understanding of ascetic practice, which seeks to deny certain perceptual experiences to its
practitioners. Recently, Gregory Smith has noted the significance of the materiality of demons in
ancient thought. Smith argues that “the demons who roamed the late ancient world as a matter of
course could not in practice be reduced to pure mind, *res cogitantes.*”\(^{170}\) Rather, these demons
are often described as possessing material bodies. Noting the significance of *aisthèsis* for the

\(^{169}\) Brakke (2006) offers a discussion of the role of demons in religious experience different from that of Peter
Brown, whose early work on the role of the relationship between demons and the holy man focused on the position
of authority that the holy man adopted in combating these demons. Brown here describes the monk as a “patron” of
Ch. 4, Frankfurter (2010), and Martin (2010).

arousal of pleasure and desire helps explain why the materiality of the demons is significant; for it is sometimes the case that we experience pleasure and other affects through our bodily interactions with these material demons. As Nancy Caciola has noted, the fact that the demons influence human beings through physical interactions had particular significance for women in the Middle Ages, when the fact that women’s bodies were taken to be weaker than men’s entailed that they were more susceptible to demonic possession. The Inquisitor’s manual *Malleus Maleficarum (The Hammer of Witches)*, for instance, offers descriptions of how the demons physically assault witches’ bodies.\(^{171}\)

For Evagrius, however, the fact that the demons produce passion through physically interacting with the monks means that purely evaluative theories of emotion, such as that offered by Martha Nussbaum, are inadequate for analyzing his account of passion. In his depiction of the demon of anger, for instance, Evagrius describes how they “touch even the flesh, inducing within it an irrational burning.” This again perhaps reminds us of what we find in the *Timaeus*; “The gods foreknew that the pounding of the heart (which occurs when one expects what one fears or when one’s spirit is aroused) would, like all such swelling of the passions, be caused by fire” (70c1-3). Likewise, in the *Kephalaia Gnostica*, we find a discussion of the materiality of the demons. This text, which is lost in Greek but which survives in two Syriac versions, as well as Armenian, explores, among other topics, the ascetic practice that comprises the first stage of the monastic journey, *praktikê*. In the passages which discuss the materiality of the demons, we find that they are particularly associated with the sense of smell. This is a result of the fact that, of the four elements, demons are particularly associated with air;

In angels the greater part is of *nous* and fire, and in human beings it is of *epithumia* and earth, and in the demons it is of *thumos* and air. And the third

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\(^{171}\) Caciola (2003) esp. Ch. 3.
group comes near the middle one through the nostrils, as the fathers say. And the first come to the second through the mouth. (KG I.68 trans. Gibbons)

While the human sense of smell is particularly vulnerable to the demons, this is not the only sensory mechanism through which the demons attack their human targets; they can assault the monk in far more aggressive ways, by appearing as a viper or lion and biting the monk, as Evagrius discusses in his treatise On Prayer. In one of his more amusing anecdotes of a monk assaulted by very physical demons, Evagrius describes a holy man being tossed about in the desert for two weeks as a ball, as the demons throw him into the air and catch him on his prayer mat repeatedly. Yet never once is the monk distracted from his prayer. Demons assault us in this way in order to stir up our passions and thus distract us from prayer; “The bodies of demons neither grow nor diminish, and they have a harsh stench as a companion. And they also set the passions in motion, and are easily known to those who have received the power from the Lord to perceive this smell.” (KG V.78 trans. Gibbons).

Note, however, the way in which the demons associated with certain passions have their own ways of physically interacting with the monks. While the demon of anger touches with a burning, the demon of vainglory touches the monk in the back of the head;

There are certain impure demons who always sit in front of those engaged in reading and try to seize their mind, often taking pretexts from the divine scriptures themselves and ending in evil thoughts. It sometimes happens that they force them to yawn more than they are accustomed and they instil a very deep sleep quite different from usual sleep. Whereas some of the brothers have imagined that it is in accordance with an unintelligible natural reaction, I for my part have learned this by frequent observation: they touch the eyelids and the entire head, cooling it with their own body, for the bodies of the demons are very cold and like ice; and the head feels as if it is being sucked by a cupping glass with a rasping sound. They do this in order to draw to themselves the heat that lies within the cranium, and then the eyelids, relaxed by the moisture and cold, slip over the

172 Harvey points out that the instances in which Evagrius mentions scent are relatively few; while Harvey’s study on the subject is illuminating, the fact that she restricts herself to scent means that she perhaps does not quite see how Evagrius’s discussions of smell must be understood within his larger discussions of perception. Harvey (2006) p. 302.
pupils of the eyes. Often in touching myself I have found my eyelids fixed like ice and my entire face numb and shivering. Natural sleep however normally warms bodies and renders the faces of healthy people rosy, as one can learn from experience itself. But the demons provoke unnatural and prolonged yawning, and they make themselves small enough to touch the interior of the mouth. This phenomenon I have not understood to this day, though I have often experienced it, but I heard the holy Makarios speak to me about it and offer as proof the fact that those who yawn make the sign of the cross over the mouth according to an old and mysterious tradition. We experience all these things because we are not vigilantly attentive to the reading and we do not remember that we are reading the holy words of the living God. (On thoughts 33)

As non-philosophical as this description of the arousal of the passions appears on the face of it, it does provide a clue about the distinctively biological nature of how anger, fear, and so forth are aroused, as Evagrius understands them to be. As we have already discussed, ancient authors analyzed affects like fear and so forth by dividing them into their psychological and physiological components. The way Evagrius describes the arousal of affects like anger, however, the biological affect is experienced first, with the passion arising only should the soul of the person experiencing it fail to have achieved apatheia. Not only is pleasure described as beginning first with a sense perception, but also anger is analyzed as beginning with a burning on the skin; note here that it is not the demon of pain that produces this, but the demon of anger. Here, the initial biological factors are given a causal role in the passions of pleasure and pain and in the formation of the other passions as well. This attention to the biological causes (rather than mere manifestations) of fear, anger and so forth is one indication that Evagrius’s theory of the passions is not accommodated by approaches that attempt to analyze passion purely in terms of beliefs or other forms of evaluation, but as psychosomatic experiences which must be accounted for as covering a range of experiential phenomena. This is further evident in his discussion of the kinds of representational content that provokes the passions.

3.3 Passion and Imagination
Evagrius’s discussions of the perceptual content that gives rise to emotion seem to take this content as imagistic, a notion that recalls the *Timaeus*. The sense perception that produces desire and the emotions of lust, anger, and so forth does so through mental representations, or *noêmata*, a term we find in Aristotle and used by the later Platonists, and which appears to have meant something close to a concept. For Evagrius, however, *noêmata* seem to be associated more with images than with more abstract concepts; he frequently refers to a representation as an *eidôlon* or *eikôn*, for instance; “Whatever may be the form of the object, such is necessarily the image (*eikona*) that the mind receives, whence the mental representations of objects are called copies because they preserve the same form as them” (*On thoughts* 25). As Elizabeth Clark has noted, the idea that these images in our minds arouse the passions is part of what she understands to be Evagrius’s iconoclastic imagination.\(^{173}\)

The mental representation concerning a brother is said to be seized by wild beasts if it is pastured with hatred within us; similarly, that concerning a woman, if it is nurtured within us with shameful desire; similarly with that concerning silver and gold, if it is harboured with greed; the same is true with mental representations of holy charisms, if they are grazed in the intellect in the company of vainglory. (*On thoughts* 17)

For the Stoics (excepting possibly Posidonius) passions are judgments. For Evagrius, however, the psychological content that arouses passions is not propositional, but imagistic. The images produced by the sense organ’s perceptions of the sensible world provide the representational content which arouses lust, sadness, and so forth. The passions must, on some level, be understood still as evaluative; if nothing else they are reactions to the desirability of sex, food, and so forth. Yet unlike what we find in the *Timaeus* (or, say, Plotinus’s *Ennead* III.6) the rational part’s *judgments* are not here described as operative in the formation of these images. Nor do we find anything like Aristotle’s idea that the non-rational part of the soul is capable of

\(^{173}\) Clark (1992) Ch. 2.
perceiving what is kalon in a particular situation. To be sure, despite this absence of a concern with falsity, we do find Evagrius considering representational thought as an inferior form of cognition to noetic thinking, as we find in Plato and Plotinus. Yet the images which we are subject to are veridically thinner than we find in other authors concerned with the role of the imagination in the arousal of the passions, even for those authors who do not think of phantasia strictly in terms of judgments as we find in the Stoics.

The sort of rationality of the passions presumed by Stoic assent to impulsory representations does not appear in Evagrius’s treatment of the passions associated with the lower parts of the soul. That the lower parts of the soul produce passions from content that is imagistic, rather than propositional, is likely associated with his account of the division between the rational part and the lower parts of the soul in On thoughts 18 as one that divides the human being into human and animal. In analyzing the tripartition of the soul, Evagrius claims that the soul can be divided between that part of the soul which is distinctively human (the rational part), and that part of the soul which the human person has in common with the lower animals (the irascible and concupiscible part).

Among the impure demons some tempt the human being as a human being; others trouble the human person as a non-rational (alogon) animal. The first, when they visit us, instil within us mental representations of vainglory or pride or envy or censoriousness - these do not touch any non-rational beings. When the second class of demons approaches us, they move our irascibility or concupiscibility in a manner contrary to nature. These are the passions which we have in common with non-rational beings but which remain hidden by our rational nature. Wherfore the Holy Spirit says to those who succumb to human thoughts: ‘I have said: You are all gods and sons of the Most High; but you shall die as human beings and fall as one of the princes’ (Ps. 81: 6-7). And to those who are moved in the manner of a non-rational animal, what does he say? ‘Do not be as the horse and mule, which have no understanding [sunēsis; cf. Timaeus 71a]: with bit and bridle you must restrain their mouths else they will not approach you’(Ps. 31: 9). (On thoughts 18)

Despite a certain strand in ancient thought which denied passion to animals, Evagrius can
here explain the lower parts of the soul as common to the souls of non-rational animals perhaps because he understands emotion to arise from images, rather than beliefs; here, he describes those parts of the soul responsible for imagistic thinking as without reason (logos) or understanding, much in the same way that Plato described the appetitive part of the *Timaeus*. This should likely be understood in conjunction with his description of the lower parts as responsible for cognitions that appear to be of a particularly imagistic kind. Such an account would explain how animals, who lack beliefs on some models, are capable of the same sort of passionate content as human beings. Of course, Evagrius’s interest here is not to explain animal passion, but rather, to highlight what he takes to be the non-rationality of human passions. Here, his view of the lower parts is perhaps closest to the description of the appetitive part we find in the *Timaeus* as deprived of *sunēsis*, although even in the account of the *Timaeus* the rational part is attributed with the ability to influence the appetite indirectly. In his own descriptions of the animal-nature of human beings, Evagrius, in characterizing the appetitive and spirited parts of the part of the human person as common to the other animals, seems to take the fact that the lower parts of the human soul are of a common nature to the souls of animals to entail that these parts, which engage in imagistic reasoning, are devoid of the sorts of cognition that give rise to emotion in the theories of Chrysippus.\footnote{174 This analysis does not apply to the passions of the rational soul, vainglory and pride. I leave this issue aside for now, and return to it below.}

What, then, to make of the nature of the content of the *logismoi*, the “thoughts” which Sorabji identifies as Stoic pre-passion? If the lower parts cannot cognize propositional content, how can they be subject to these thoughts? The fact that they cannot be thought of as pre-passions is clear from *Eulogios* 13, where Evagrius considers how it is difficult to know whether a passion has led to a *logismos*, or a *logismos* has led to a passion. Given the way the term is
used in other philosophical discussions, one might think that the bad thoughts must refer, if not
to beliefs, at least to evaluative thoughts, as the term *logismos* is frequently meant as a kind of
calculation. In Plato’s *Philebus*, for example, it can refer to a calculation concerning one’s future
pleasures (*Phil 21c5*). Michael Frede has pointed out the curious use of the term by Evagrius,
describing it as “extremely puzzling,” as “these impressions have their origin in the nonrational
part of the soul or even the body, neither of which can reason.” Frede suggests that Evagrius’s
point might be that the *logismoi* persuade reason, “if reason believes that some pleasures are
good but it not clear if this pleasure is a good after all,” and suggests that we might find
something like this in Plotinus. I think, however, there is a simpler solution to why Evagrius
employs a term normally referring to reasoning to refer to something as unreasoning as the
*logismoi* appear to be; rather than taking his lead from the philosophical tradition, he takes it
from the tradition that sprung from Origen for referring to the thoughts the demons provoke in us
as *logismoi*. In Origen’s more Stoicizing psychology, the *logismoi* perhaps have more a sense of
reasoning; but as his thought went to influence later works, not only Evagrius’s but also texts
like the *Life of Antony*, this more technical sense of the term became lost. It seems likely that this
desert tradition, rather than a figure like Plotinus, informs Evagrius’s use in passages such as
this; “All the demonic thoughts introduce into the soul mental representations of sensible objects;
impressed by these, the mind carries about within itself the forms of those objects; and then,
from the object in question, the mind recognizes the demon which made its approach.” (*On
thoughts 2*) Here, thoughts are shown to introduce certain images into the soul. Certainly, some


176 Frede (2011) p. 62
forms of thoughts - namely, the angelic kind – are described as endowed with some sort of reasoning:

Firstly, angelic thoughts are concerned with the investigation of the natures of things and search out their spiritual principles. For example, the reason why gold was made and why it is sand-like and scattered through the lower regions of the earth, and is discovered with much labour and toil; how when it is discovered it is washed and delivered to the fire and then placed in the hands of artisans who make the lampstand of the tabernacle, the incense burner, the censers, and the vessels (cf. Exod. 25: 29, 31; 27: 1-3) from which by the grace of the Saviour the king of Babylon no longer drinks (cf. Dan. 5: 1-30), but it is Cleopas who brings a heart burning with these mysteries (Luke 24: 32). (On thoughts 8)

Given that the thoughts attributed with reasoning are those engaged in contemplation, it can be assumed that these are the thoughts to which the mind, rather than the lower parts of the soul, is subject. Demonic thoughts, on the other hand, cannot engage in such cognitions, but suggest to us experiences of pleasure; the thought of avarice, for instance, “neither knows nor understands these things, but without shame suggests only the acquisition of sensible gold and predicts the enjoyment and esteem that will come from this” (On thoughts 8). We can therefore perhaps reconcile Evagrius’s description of the parts of the soul which engage in imagistic reasoning as deprived of understanding, with his descriptions of the prediction of enjoyment and esteem by the thought of avarice, by understanding this prediction to involve not suggestions that appear in the form of propositional content, but as the image of us, happy and honored, with the gold, such as we find in the Philebus.

That the demons, in presenting certain pictures us to for the purpose of inciting our emotions, show us taking pleasure in certain circumstances is evident from a number of passages. “When in the fantasies that occur during sleep the demons attack the appetitive part and show us with our ready consent encounters with friends, banquets with relatives, groups of women, and other such things which offer pleasures, we become sick in this part and the passion
grows in strength” (Praktikos 54). Note also the way in which he uses the idea of thoughts and images synonymously in a number of passages. “It is necessary to pay attention to these thoughts and quickly snatch the mind away from such images lest by delaying with them it becomes during the time of prayer like ’a smoking fire-brand’ (cf. Isa. 7: 4).” In light of passages such as this, and despite the apparent notion of “reasoning” assumed by the term logismos, it seems reasonable to assume that these demonic thoughts are to be taken as a certain form of image.

Before concluding, it should be noted that in the case of the thoughts that plague the rational mind, reasoning has more of a role to play. In diagnosing the passions of the rational part of the soul, Evagrius describes a number of “diseases” which describe sorts of maladies which can plague only a specifically rational actor. In describing these various “sicknesses,” the rational mind acts against the learning it has received. For instance, “Leprosy is the unbelief of the rational soul in which it finds no assurance even after it has touched the reasons.” These failures of the rational mind to act in accordance with what it has been taught that emerge from the soul’s engagement with lower parts; either because, under the influence of the lower parts, it “wanders” by pursuing the objects the lower parts of the soul desire (On thoughts 26), or because it desires esteem for what it has accomplished or thinks that it has accomplished these things without the assistance of God (Eulogios 21). These passions do seem to be dependent upon more propositional kinds of content than what we find in the description of the lower parts as moved by images. Here, Evagrius offers a rather compelling way of characterizing the passions in general, whatever the specific problems with his argument; namely, that passions are psychological experiences which have both a bodily component and a representational component, which may or may not be propositional (or may be both at the same time).
3.4 Non-rational Passions and Ascetic Practice

I have argued here that the passions Evagrius takes to constitute the vices are aroused by images which can be characterized as veridically thinner than those we find in other authors concerned with the role of the imagination in the arousal of the passions. Evagrius does not describe these images as misrepresenting what is the *kalon*, as we find in Aristotle, or what will lead us to a state of *ousia*, as we find in the *Philebus*.

In considering how Evagrius understands ascetic practice not just as a strategy for overcoming “embodiment,” but as a way of transitioning from that version of ourselves which experiences imagistic cognition and passion to that which is only subject to contemplation of the Trinity, articulating this transition in terms of Gerson’s notion of the difference between the endowed and the ideal self is perhaps a more helpful distinction than the common distinction between body and soul. Yet the fact that the endowed self is subject to experiences which are not always reducible to judgments informs how we ought to understand moral therapy. The fact that the lower parts engage in imagistic, rather than propositional, cognition of sense perceptions of the material world appears to be connected to why ascetic practice, rather than an activity like philosophical discourse, functions in a way that other forms of therapy cannot. For figures like Epictetus, philosophical discussion and reflection play a key role in the novice philosopher’s advancement in moral progress, for through these activities one learns to examine the propositional content of one’s mental representations – the assent to which produces emotions - in order to learn how to reject those which are false. This is why, for instance, logic plays such an important role in Stoic moral education. For Evagrius, however, logic is not going to be of help in healing the lower parts of the soul. Because he understands at least those emotions associated with the lower parts as devoid of propositional content, on his analysis the
examination of one’s propositional beliefs will not help one to persuade the lower parts to act in accordance with the rational part of the soul.

In the case of the passions of the lower parts of our soul, instead of engaging in philosophical discussion with an eye to changing the beliefs that give rise to passions, we must deprive the lower parts of their perceptions of the physical causes of their arousal, through ascetic practice. By depriving himself of the material objects that are inclined to lead to the arousal of desire, pleasure, and the emotions, the monk takes the first step on a path toward eradicating his mind of the mental representations which provide the occasion for the emotions to become occurrent. The next stage, as we shall see in Chapter 4, is to prevent the misuse of mental representations experienced through memory and imagination. Before the monk can do so, however, he must prevent himself from experiencing fresh perceptions of the sorts of objects that provoke lust, anger, and so forth. “The human being cannot drive away impassioned memories unless he takes care for his appetitive part and his spirited part, exhausting the former with fasts, vigils, and sleeping on the ground, and calming the latter with patience, freedom from resentment, and almsgiving” (On thoughts 3). As one cannot reform one’s recalcitrant emotions by persuading them with reasons, one must avoid exposing oneself to those kinds of objects which will give rise to the imagistic content. The nature of the representational content that gives rise to passion is therefore closely connected to the sorts of strategies that are required to heal the passionate parts of the soul.

An appreciation for how sense-perceptions give rise to troubling attachments to the world helps us to reexamine Michel Foucault’s claim about the connections between Stoicism and early Christian asceticism. In examining these self-imposed sexual restraints, Foucault argues that in this period, we find a concern with attending to one’s psychological well-being growing out of
an “anxiety concerning all the disturbances of the body and the mind, which must be prevented by means of an austere regimen” and an accompanying “a self-respect that is exercised by depriving oneself of pleasure or by confining one’s indulgence to marriage or procreation.”\textsuperscript{177}

While self-mastery is an important ideal for both Stoic and Platonic philosophy, what exactly self-mastery entails is variable from author to author. For Stoics like Epictetus, the value of self-restraint lies in the fact that the avoidance of excess helps us to fulfill our social roles in a manner that is in agreement with the rationality of the universe. This self-restraint is achieved by proper recognition of what our good actually is – namely, virtue. Once we have adequately brought all of our beliefs into coherence with this view, we will no longer be subject to passions that lead us to act in a manner that contradicts those roles.

In Evagrius’s case, however, the very non-rationality of the passions that cannot be directly persuaded by reason requires that the moral therapy needed for self-restraint shifts focus on, not philosophical discussion, but avoidance of the material causes that lead to excited emotions. Foucault’s emphasis on the concept of self-mastery as such to explain Christian ascetic exercises is therefore overly broad, in the sense that it lacks the nuance to account for why authors like Evagrius understood fasts and sexual abstinence to have moral efficacy. Evagrius’s attention to the physical experiences that contribute to the arousal of imagistic thinking helps put these practices in context. While Epictetus improves his students through dialectical conversation, Evagrius’s spiritual father prescribes fasts and vigils. In speaking of Macarius, Evagrius writes.\textsuperscript{178}

\textsuperscript{177} Foucault (1988a) p. 41.

\textsuperscript{178} On the relationship between Evagrius and the two Macarii, see Bunge (1983). For more on the institution of spiritual paternity, see Guillaumont (1987), Hausherr (1990), Gould (1993), Bunge (1994), and Young (2001b) and (2007).
But he said: Be satisfied with the shade, for many are at this moment travelling or sailing and are without even this. Then as I was discoursing with him about abstinence he said: Take courage, my child! For all of twenty years I have not taken my fill either of bread or water or sleep. I ate my bread by weight, drank water by measure, and I have snatched some little portion of sleep by leaning against the wall. (*Praktikos* 94)

The spiritual father does not only impart teachings on matters concerning natural and divine contemplation (teachings which are presumably meant for the rational part of the soul). He also imposes regimes of sensory deprivation, regimes which will prevent the monk from being exposed to certain kinds of sensory content which will produce certain mental representations. The way in which the spiritual father goes about interacting with the novice monks is therefore connected to the ideas about emotion implied by Evagrius’s concern with perceptions of *eidôla*. While more propositional instruction goes hand-in-hand with such practices, these forms of propositional content cannot attend to the sickness of the lower parts. This requires the deprivation of sensory experiences that produce the imagistic content that elicit the passions. The passions can still, however, be aroused by mental representations we experience through dreams and memories. These forms of cognition play an important role in introspection, as we will see in the next chapter.
Chapter 4: Memory, Imagination, and Evagrius’s Hermeneutics of the Soul

In this chapter, we shall look at Evagrius’s views on the examination of our mental representations and our passions as they come to us. We do find here a kind of “hermeneutics” of the soul, in the sense that moral progress requires first that we discern what our desires are – desires which are not always obvious to us – and that we interpret these desires as vices which the demons exacerbate. Yet it is important to note that this interpretation of our soul is not the interpretation of the “ideal” self, that self which has achieved gnosis of God, but the interpretation of the endowed soul – the soul which is subject to sense perception, memory, and imagination, forms of cognition which the soul is not subject to when it is disassociated itself from the body.179 This activity of interpreting oneself therefore cannot be constitutive of normative selfhood, as Foucault suggests, for it is merely a step on the way to achieving the “ideal” self.

What we do find, however, is a shift in the concern with what we examine when we reflect upon our mental representations. For Plato and Epictetus, we examine our representations in order to determine whether they are true or false. In Evagrius, we find an emphasis on examining what mental representations come into our minds in order to discern not whether their content truly depicts what is morally relevant about certain circumstances, but what sorts of material objects we are inclined to dwell on – food, money, objects of lust, and the like. Because Evagrius does not have a sense of desire as definitionally for the good, what we desire is not determined by what we believe or know or perceive to be good, but is a consequence of what we find pleasurable. We ought to desire the good, of course, but desire as such does not require that we believe something to be good in order to desire it. As a result, the examination of our mental

179 Here, Evagrius’s thought on the nous may show some resonances with the dualist, rather than the functionalist, interpretation of Aristotle’s De anima III.5; see n 4 for more discussion.
representations is more oriented towards discerning what objects one is inclined to linger on, rather than whether one’s beliefs or perceptions about the good are correct. As a result, we find more of a concern with personality in Gill’s sense than we find in a figure like Epictetus.

4.1 Memory and Imagination as Occasions for Introspection

4.1.1 Memory in Ancient Philosophy

Examining one’s representations entails, in part, examining how certain mental representations linger in memory and imagination. The operations of memory and imagination serve as two of the major occasions for introspection in Evagrius’s thought. Yet memory could also be problematic, as it could be for other authors of antiquity.

Plato describes memory as a feature of our psychology which can store either sense impressions or pleasure and pain. Recall from the discussion in the Chapter 1 about how, in the Timaeus, Plato describes the psychological experiences that arise from embodiment as sense perception, love, pleasure and pain, and “others” like spiritedness, fear, and so forth. The preservation of both sense perception and the feelings of pleasure and pain that accompany them through memory are explored in other late dialogues. In the Theaetetus we find Plato treating cases in which memory is primarily responsible for storing sense perceptions. In this dialogue, Socrates proposes that one can think about cognition as an imprint on a wax block in the portion of the dialogue devoted to the defense of the second definition of knowledge considered, that knowledge is true belief or doxa (Tht 191a-196d), and in particular in the portion of the dialogue devoted to explaining how false judgment is possible. Upon receiving a certain sense impression, we make an imprint of it in our souls, which possess something like a wax block given as a gift from Memory, against which we can remember certain later impressions. In the Philebus, on the other hand, Plato considers how memory (here, anamnēsis rather than memory)
stores not only sense perceptions, but the feelings of pleasure and pain we experience at the time when we are subject to those sense perceptions. In describing pleasure and pain, Plato, as in the Gorgias and the Republic, again draws upon the model of pain as being in an empty state and pleasure as being in a filled state. Here, the neutral state of being between pleasure and pain or hēsuchia is described as “godlike” but which is not ideal for human beings. There is, however, a fourth state, in which we are in pain but have a memory of pleasure. “The impulse, then, that drives it towards the opposite of its own state signifies that it has memory of that opposite state” (35c trans. Frede). In addition to the states of being in pain, in pleasure, and in a neutral state between the two, one can also be subject both to pleasure and pain. Plato discussed the example of a person who is in pain with respect to his body but experiences pleasure in his soul, for in this state he “is pained by his condition and remembers the pleasant things that would put an end to the pain, but it is not yet being filled.” When we experience pain that results from being in a state of emptiness, we experience a simultaneous desire for the pleasant. Yet our ability to formulate this desire depends not only upon our having previously experienced pleasure from the object of this desire, but in our ability to remember that pleasure. Without memory, there can be no desire.

Despite the fact that the Socrates of the Theaetetus ostensibly rejects the wax-block model on the grounds that it could not account for errors of non-sensible objects, such as mathematical ones, the wax block model went on to have a rather long life, likely in part because Aristotle used it in his own theory of memory. Aristotle identified it as either a hexis or a pathos – a state or a passion. Memory belongs both to the perceptive part of the soul and to the sense organ which receives the imprint, although memory can store not only sense impressions, but also thoughts. When we remember, we preserve a sense impression or thought which we have
cognized in the past. Memory involves both the preservation of the previous perception or thought and a perception of the time that has elapsed.

The objects of memory are also objects of the *phantasia*, or imagination. Imagination is the form of cognition responsible for representation, and is neither sense perception nor among “those things which are always true,” like *epistêmê* or *nous* (428a18), but is somewhere in between. It is this part of the human soul that produces *phantasmata*, mental representations; that is, the mental pictures into which sensory data is stored, and which thought is able to reflect upon in forming opinions, which can be either true or false; “I mean that imagination is the blend of the perception of white with the opinion that it is white; not, surely, of the perception of white with the opinion that it is good. To imagine, then, is to form an opinion exactly corresponding to a direct perception” (428a28–428b1 trans. Hett).  

Memories have as their content those mental images which the imagination produces. One of the key differences between memory and imagination is the fact that while memory is of experiences one has had, imagination, while belonging to the same part of the soul as memory, is

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180 Whether Aristotle even has a coherent account of imagination is a subject that has been long debated. Malcolm Schofield, for instance, has noted the range of phenomena that imagination is supposed to describe, and has argued that this actually has the advantage of helping Aristotle account for a number of loosely-related human psychological experiences in Schofield (1995). Michael Wedin, on the other hand, has argued that the disparate notions of imagination can be accounted for if one understands imagination not as a faculty in itself, but as a general capacity to represent images to other faculties. Wedin’s approach depends upon a functionalist, rather than a dualist, account of Aristotle’s theory of intellect, a long-controversial subject. Aristotle’s functionalism has also been defended by Nussbaum and Putnum (1995). Alternatively, John Sisko and Lloyd Gerson have both argued for a dualist account of Aristotle’s theory of mind. Sisko, for instance, has argued against Wedin that the descriptions of the intellect as without an organ are best understood as taken at face-value as claims about an immaterial, separable intellect, a view he claims is at odds with contemporary views about the mind; see Sisko (2001). Gerson has claimed that *De anima* III.5 should be read, not as offering an account of two intellects, as Caston has argued although Caston’s view that certain aspects of the mind described in III.5 relate not to any particular human mind, (Caston (1999)) but as an account of the same intellect described elsewhere in Book III, but in the case in which it is not embodied. In arguing for a dualist, rather than functionalist, interpretation of Aristotle’s theory of the intellect, Gerson argues that the functionalist account is untenable, for if the soul is the form of the body and not a separate, extension-less substance it cannot engage in self-reflective thinking. Gerson’s view is that interpreting *De anima* III.5 in this way helps offer a more coherent account of Book III as a whole, for one need not understand the immortal intellect described in III.5 as different from the intellect described elsewhere in Book III. On this model, the images employed by the mind are those it uses to think only when it is embodied. See Gerson (2004). For further discussion see Gerson (2006) Ch. 5.
capable of forming images of things one has not necessarily seen. Because memory is an activity of the imagination, and imagination is involved in the formation of mental pictures, its contents are stored as such pictures. These pictures can be understood either as referring to objects in the external world or as objects of cognition in their own right.;

Just as the picture painted on the panel is at once a picture and a portrait, and though one and the same, is both, yet the essence of the two is not the same, and it is possible to think of it both as a picture and as a portrait, so in the same way we must regard the mental picture within us both as an object of contemplation in itself and as a mental picture of something else. Insofar as we consider it in itself, it is an object of contemplation or a mental picture, but insofar as we consider it in relation to something else, it is as a likeness, it is also an aid to memory. (De anima 450b21-27 trans. Hett)\(^{181}\)

The fact that imagination and memory are forms of cognition that belong to the same part of the soul also helps us explain how we come to form false memories. The fact that our imagination cognizes mental pictures of things we are presently experiencing through sense perception, things we have experienced through sense perception, and things which do not arise from sense perception but from some internal movement means that it is difficult to distinguish between imagination and memory (450b30-32).\(^{182}\)

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\(^{181}\) Caston argues that for Aristotle, the imagination is necessary as a way of accounting for intentionality. See Caston (1998). The passage above appears to indicate that while images can have intentional content, they do not need this intentional content. The fact that Evagrius can likewise separate images from objects in the world facilitates his non-cognitivist account of desire; one can desire simply to take pleasure in gazing upon the images, without worrying about whether they accurately represent anything in the world.

\(^{182}\) Sextus Empiricus preserves the idea that the Stoics were interested in the idea of memory as an imprint of experiences onto our souls is preserved in Against the Logicians. How literally the language of imprint is intended to invoke a mental picture it not entirely clear, though given that the Stoics understood the pneuma as a material entity, it is likely that this imprint was meant to track some physical affect (which is not necessarily the case for Plato and Aristotle, who seem to use it as an analogy rather than to describe a physical mechanism). As Sextus Empiricus reports, there appears to have been some disagreement among the Stoics about how literally the pneuma ought to be understood as imprinted (although it should be noted that Sextus, as a skeptic, has his own reasons to play up the disagreement between the Stoics). "For if appearance is an imprinting in the soul, either it is an imprinting in the form of hollows and projections, as Cleanthes thinks, or it occurs in the form of mere alteration, which was Chrysippus’ opinion. And if it subsists in the form of hollows and projections, the absurdities that Chrysippus speaks of will follow. For if the soul, when affected appearance-wise, is imprinted in the manner of wax, the last movement will always obscure the previous appearance, just as the print of the second seal is liable to
Plotinus rejected Aristotle’s idea that memory is a passion or involves the body, and instead argued for it as a capacity of the soul, like perception. Commentators have sometimes read Plotinus’s thought on memory as a commentary on Aristotle’s account in *De anima*, though as King has recently suggested, Plotinus’s priorities appear to be quite different. Plotinus returns to the idea from the *Philebus* that memory belongs to the soul acting by itself, although the body does, of course, participate in sense-perception; it is the subject of those imprints which the soul perceives, and which it recalls independently of the body. While the soul perceives these impressions, however, it is not itself properly speaking the subject.

For Plotinus, memory is a problem in large part not because one confuses its contents with those of imagination, but because of the problems inherent in its being a diachronic form of cognition, insofar as the temporality of embodied human existence is itself a limitation on self-determination. Such subjects are only self-determined in a somewhat derivative sense; who they are at a later time is determined not only by their choices, but by the effects that the passage of time, and the particular circumstances they have found themselves in, has had upon them; “But if [the soul] comes out from there [i.e., the intelligible world] and is not able to endure the One, but embraces its own individuality and wants to be different and so to speak puts its head outside, it thereupon acquires memory. Its memory of what is in the intelligible world still holds it back from falling, but its memory of the things here below carries it down here; its memory of what is in heaven keeps it there, and in general it is and becomes what it remembers” (*Ennead* IV.4.3.5-6).

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183 King (2009).
We are not subject to memory when we contemplate the Good. The souls who have achieved this level of contemplation are no longer subject to time, and are thus no longer subject to diachronic forms of cognition. In this state, one remembers neither previous sensory experiences nor previous contemplation of God; one’s memories are preserved only potentially (Ennead IV.4.4.21). “Well, then, will they not remember that they saw God? They always see him; and while they see him it is surely not possible for them to say that they have seen him: this would be something which would happen to those who have ceased to see” (Ennead IV.7.1-4).

Even in those instances when we, having re-descended back into our bodies, remember earlier states of noêsis, memories of God are at best a consolation prize; “Therefore memory, even when it is of the best, is not the best thing” (Ennead IV.4.5-6).

One does not always have to be aware of the force of memory in order for memory to have an impact. In a passage which Blumenthal has noted as having a particularly “modern” ring to it, Plotinus suggests that those memories we are aware of are not the only memories which distract us from contemplation of the Good.184 The difficulties provoked by sensory cognition have further ramifications in cognition from memory.

But one must understand memory not only in the sense of a kind of perception that one is remembering, but as existing when the soul is disposed according to what it has previously experienced or contemplated. For it could happen that, even when one is not conscious that one has something, one holds it to oneself more strongly than if one knew. For perhaps if one knew one would have it as something else, being different than oneself, but if one does not know that one has it one is liable to be what one has; and this is certainly the experience which makes the soul sink lower. (Ennead IV.4.7-17)

For Plotinus, “the soul is and becomes what it remembers” (Ennead IV.4.3.5-6). When the soul is not in a state of contemplation, the best thing it can remember is its prior

contemplation of the Good. As King observes, memories can give rise to desire; “One’s desires might be motivated by the concrete memory of something occurring in the past, or by a representation which is not attached to a concrete situation. Either one is a conceivable way in which desires can depend on memory or representation. They are distinct ways in which something can be seen as good when we are not thinking of the good itself.”\(^{185}\) One should note that it is possible for the soul to remember without affection; in IV.3.32, Plotinus discusses how the lower part of the soul, that part of the soul which produces the images that provoke bodily affections, can have memories of those affections, while the rational part of the soul can have memories without producing such affections.\(^{186}\) Yet Plotinus’s overall treatment of memory has led Gerson to observe that it puts Plotinus at some distance with modern major Western philosophers, perhaps most notably John Locke; “Philosophers have held that memory is essential to self-identity. To lose one’s memories irretrievably on this view is to become another person. For Plotinus, memories are not ideally constitutive of the self, even though one may regard them as a basis for the continuity of an endowed self.”\(^{187}\) The idea that at least idiosyncratic memories are not ideally constitutive of the self is one which Evagrius will share with Plotinus.

4.1.2 Evagrius on Memory

In Evagrius the concern with the lingering effects that memory has on us is perhaps more to the forefront than in Plotinus. Like perception, as a form of cognition it has a proper function - to preserve memories of sensible objects for the purpose of engaging in bodily life. Because

\(^{185}\) King (2009) p. 212.

\(^{186}\) Blumenthal (1971) p. 91.

memory stores sense impressions, however, it can also produce those passionate reactions in the way that sensory data does.  

In considering the proper function of memory, Evagrius points out that the fact that it does not necessarily involve the preservation of affective content is evident from reflecting on our own experience. “Just as it is possible to remember water with thirst and without thirst, so it is possible to remember gold with greed and without greed, and similarly in the case of other things” (Thoughts 4). In the most ideal state, we remember the Trinity (KG IV.73). However, because embodiment is such a precarious condition to be in, the faculty of memory, like the faculty of sense perception, is easily perverted. While one can remember sensible things without the arousal of the passions, one can also easily become attached to those things one remembers. In the case of the avaricious monk, memories of his possessions create feelings of pain; “He carries around the memories of possessions as a heavy burden and a useless weight; he is stung with sadness and is mightily pained in his thoughts” (On the eight thoughts 7). Just as the demons target the monk by attacking him with certain sensory experiences, even when the objects of that sensory experience are absent the memory of them assists the demons in continuing to elicit passionate reactions.

It is necessary to investigate in turn how they set the memory in motion. Is it perhaps through the passions? This is clear so from the fact that those who are pure and free from passion no longer experience such a thing. But there is also a simple movement of the memory, coming together from ourselves or from the holy powers, thanks to which we encounter holy people in our sleep and converse and eat with them. But it should be noted that the images the soul receives with the body, the memory sets in motion without the body; this is clear from the fact that we often experience this in sleep when the body is at rest. (On thoughts 4) 

For a recent study in Gregory of Nyssa on memory, see Susan Wessel, for instance has commented on Gregory’s use of memory in De anima et resurrectione; Wessel (2010).
While Evagrius understands memory as something which happens without the use of the body, because it preserves sense-impressions it carries with it the same psychological baggage that sense impression does. Yet Evagrius pays special attention to the preservation of passions (a category in which he includes pleasure and pain) as well; “When we have impassioned memories of certain things, it is because we previously entertained the objects with passion; and in turn, when we entertain objects with passion, we will have the impassioned memories associated with these” (Praktikos 4). Memory becomes a means through which perverted dispositions reinforce themselves. If we at some moment in our lives find ourselves particularly inclined toward gluttony or lust, say, or anger, and react passionately toward perceptions that incite those particular failings, the memory will perceive both the representation of what has been perceived and the passion provoked. Once that representation is stored by memory, it will linger in our minds, strengthening our inclination toward that specific vice.

All the impure thoughts that linger within us on account of the passions bring the mind down to ‘ruin and destruction.’ For just as the mental representation of bread lingers with the hungry person on account of the hunger, and the mental representation of water in the thirsty person because of thirst, so too the mental representations of wealth and possessions linger on account of greed and the mental representations of food and shameful thoughts begotten by food linger with us because of the passions. And the same will be appear to be the case with thoughts of vainglory and other mental representations. (On thoughts 22)

For Evagrius, such mental representations are problematic because they limit one’s ability to contemplate God in the time of pure prayer and provide the mechanism through which the passions are incited. The demons can therefore use the mental representations stored by memory to further inflame the passionate state of the monk.

It is necessary to investigate also how the demons leave an impress and a form on our ruling faculty in the fantasies that occur during sleep. Such things appear to occur in the mind either when it sees through the eyes, or hears through hearing, or through whatever sense faculty, or else they arise from the memory, which

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leaves its impress on the ruling faculty, not through the body, but by putting in
motion those things which it has acquired in body. (*On thoughts* 4)

Because memories can be put into motion by the demons, Evagrius urges us to pay
particularly close attention to how memories of past experiences arise. Attending to such
memories as they surface in the monk’s awareness is key to learning how to be on one’s guard
against particular demons, and therefore not to respond to them. As a result, while lingering,
impassioned memories exacerbate our moral weaknesses, by observing what representations rise
from memory, the monks are given an opportunity to discern what initial weakness provoked
that passionate reaction, and to take the steps necessary to eradicate it. “The soul possesses
impassibility, not by virtue of the fact it experiences no passion with respect to objects, but
because it remains untroubled even with regard to the memories of them” (*On the eight thoughts*
67). Reflecting on how memories appear in our mind can give us important information about
how far we have progressed toward achieving *apatheia*, information about our character which is
not immediately accessible to us.

When the memory of a woman arises without passion, then consider that you have
arrived at the boundaries of chastity; and when her image rouses you to consider it
and you are able to compare her members to the faculties of your soul, then you
can be convinced that you have the habit of virtue. But do not spend so much time
in such thoughts, nor hold converse with the form of a woman in your intellect for
a long while, for this passion loves to cause backsliding, and danger is close at
hand. (*On the eight thoughts* 2.19)

Observe how the monk is advised to use the activities of memory as an opportunity to
examine how he reacts when the form of a woman appears to him from memory. One will not
know whether one has achieved virtue – freedom from passions – unless one has the opportunity
to examine how one responds to the mental representations which will provoke those passions in
someone who has not achieved freedom from passion. The implication here is that we do not
always have access to our own desires and passions, but require the mediation of the imagistic
representations to discern these. Here, memory exacerbates a pre-existing compromised passionate state. In a broad sense, Evagrius shares with the later Platonic tradition a concern with the way in which memories of sense perceptions can have serious moral consequences. Memories of external things can be a vehicle through which the demons instigate or perpetuate our desires for what is remembered, and thus reflect and shape what we value.

Because memories both of sense impressions and of the passions we experience at the time of the initial sense impression can have the effect of strengthening our recalcitrant desires and the passions the desires produce, they contribute to character formation; one-time missteps can lead to the formation of dispositional vices. Under this analysis, who we are depends very much on what we remember; and what we remember depends upon who we are. Because passions as well as images of what we have received through sense perception linger, if we are the sort of person inclined to gluttony, we will remember past experiences of feasts and banquets; and if we dwell upon memories of feasts and banquets, our propensity to gluttony will perpetuate itself. When we are no longer subject to mental representations, but have disassociated ourselves from the body, the demons can no longer use the memory to incite us with mental representations of sensible things. “When your mind out of a great longing for God gradually withdraws, as it were, from the flesh and turns aside all mental representations deriving from the senses or from memory or from temperament, being filled with both reverence and joy, then consider yourself to be near the frontiers of prayer” (Chapters on Prayer 61). Through memory, our one-time occurrent passions establish and reinforce our dispositions. Precisely because they establish these dispositions, however, when these latent emotions rise up at the arousal of a memory we are able to use them to determine what particular vices we are prone
toward, and can respond with the appropriate ascetic remedies. Failure to do so will deepen the problematic disposition; this will be discussed further in the following chapter.

4.2 Imagination and Dreams

4.2.1 Dreams in Antiquity

Memories are not the only means by which the demons can provoke the monk in the absence of present sense perception; nor are they the only psychological occurrence we have to indirectly discern the state of the non-rational parts of our soul. Evagrius also describes how the monk is provoked through phantasai, or fantasies. These phantasai are mental images produced by the demons, either by working through memory or by creating movements in our bodies which have an affect on our souls. Fantasies are neither perceptions of actual physical objects (like gold or drink, or like the demons when they take on the form of a lion or woman); nor are they necessarily memories of objects we have perceived in the past, although they can be. The idea that phantasia has a role to play in the production of passion here resembles more the treatments of phantasia in the Philebus, On Rhetoric, and the Ennead III.6 than it does Stoic ideas of phantasia, insofar as, here again, it is specifically imagistic content, rather than propositional content. Dreams are frequently taken as Evagrius’s archetypal example of phantasia, although fantasies can be other than dreams. While our fantasies can be morally problematic, insofar as they incite passionate reactions from us and thus impede our efforts to achieve perfect apatheia, they also provide an indication of our passionate states. Dreams therefore have a diagnostic role to play in our moral development.

Miller has argued for the distinctively imagistic character of dreams;\(^1\) this at least appears to be true of Plato, who describes in the Timaeus how the rational part of the soul

\(^{1}\) Miller (1997). Artemidorus, of course, is one of the most significant authors on questions of dreams in late antiquity, having written the only “dream book” – a genre which appears to have been rather robust – that survives
provokes the soul with either calming or disturbing dreams in sleep (45d-46a, 71c-d). Plato understood dreams to have different kinds of meanings; while his discussion of dreams in the *Timaeus* concerns divination, in the beginning of *Republic* IX he suggests that dreams can indicate what desires we have. This may perhaps qualify the claim that Aristotle is the first to develop a naturalistic account of dreams; as William Harris has observed, this construal of Aristotle’s contribution has often been made, although this division between natural and supernatural is perhaps difficult to uphold in ancient texts, especially for Aristotle’s predecessors;

In so far as scholars have evaluated ancient writing on the subject of dreams, they seem to have given the palm of honour to Aristotle ("the dawn of the science of dreams"), for it was he, so it is widely thought, who first entirely denied the existence of prophetic dreams and tried to analyse dreaming by naturalistic methods. For once, the received doctrine may be more true than false, and it would be very easy to argue that Aristotle’s essays about dreams are in fact part of a much wider ‘paradigm shift’ that he almost single-handedly created (though not of course without help from forerunners). . . . How then, did naturalistic thinking about dreams begin? It is not generally understood that the early Greek philosophers, those of the sixth and fifth centuries, did not set out to discredit religion as such, but ‘to gain a correct apprehension of the divine’ in addition to investigating certain aspects of the natural world.190

from this period. Peter Struck has recently suggested that we read this text as offering a version of a divinatory self, with the idea that it is possible to substitute *psuchê* for "self." “If we allow ourselves to substitute the Greek idea of the “soul” (psuchē), Artemidorus makes “the self” the very instrument of communication between humans and the large forces that move the world around them. A few immediate observations suggest that *psuchê* and soul are plausible analogs. What we likely mean when we saw “self” and what Artemidorus and his contemporaries likely meant by *psuchê* each contain some reference to an entity at the core of each human being’s identity: everybody is thought to have one, and each one is unique. Both self and *psuchê* are thought to endure through change, and both are tied up with the idea of agency; Greek philosophers were rather consistent in assigning volition specifically to the soul. The self and the *psuchê* are also granted an equally broad range of additional functions having to do with intellect and emotion.” Struck (2005) p. 115. There are several problems with Struck’s analysis here. On the one hand, it neglects the thought of figures such as Plotinus, who identify the *nous*, rather than the soul, as the “self.” On the other hand, it also begs a question about what it means to attribute notions of “the self” to ancient authors. Given that plants and non-human animals also have souls, what distinguishes their souls from human souls, if we are to understand only human souls (as Struck seems to) as “selves”? If the basis for selfhood is not just that something has a soul, Struck has left it underexplored here.

190 Harris (2009), p. 233.
In his description of dreams, Aristotle considers that they, like memory, arise from the imaginative part of the human soul, the same part of the human soul which experiences sense perception. This is why dreams appear to us like sense data despite the fact that when we are asleep, our sense organs have shut down. As described above, in *De anima* Aristotle claims that the part of the soul that is responsible for sensory impression is also the part of the soul which is responsible for imagination. When we dream, we are subject to experiences that in many ways resemble sense-perceptions; even though our sense organs are not active, it appears to us that we are seeing and hearing and so forth. The reason for this illusion has to do with the fact that in sleep, certain physiological movements cause certain *phantasmata* in our imaginations, the same imagination which would experience *phantasmata* caused by sense-perceptions if the person were awake. Just as one cannot always be sure if a *phantasma* is something one remembers or something one has conjured up, the dreamer experiences his or her *phantasmata* as images of sense impressions. In dreams, however, our common sense\(^{191}\) has shut down, so that we are not able to form judgments about whether what appears to our imagination could conceivably correspond to reality; while our capacities for judgment can tell us that the sun cannot really be a small as it appears, when we dream these capacities for judgment are not operative (*On dreams* 460b).

The fact that dreams are caused by physiological movements was exploited by the physician-philosopher Galen, a devout Platonist whose reading of Plato was influenced by Aristotle, likely due to the latter’s interest in the relationship between physiological and psychological states. Galen’s thought on dreams is preserved in a text known as *On the Diagnosis of Dreams*. For Galen, as for Plato and Aristotle, dreams had a variety of sources.

\(^{191}\) Gregoric (2007).
Some were the product of divination. Others may be a consequence of things we have experienced during the day – while Galen is not concerned with memory in particular, he does suggest that we are inclined to dream of things we habitually do when we are awake, or about thoughts we have had while awake. Still other dreams reflect our health; that is, whether we have recently experienced disease, or whether our humoral condition is dysfunctional;

But since the soul in sleep does not form dream images simply on the basis of the dispositions of the body, but also out of our habitual day-time actions, while other dreams originate in thoughts we have had while awake, and yet in others, finally, the soul predicts future events – for this too is demonstrated by experience – the discernment (diagnosis) of dreams that emanate from the body is difficult. For if it were simply necessary to distinguish them from dreams derived from the things we do and think during the day, it would not be at all difficult to think that whatever dreams are not of our waking actions and thoughts have their source in the body. But since we concede that some dreams are prophetic, it is not easy to say how these dreams are to be distinguished from those which originate in the body. (*On the Diagnosis of Dreams* trans. Harris)\(^{192}\)

Because there are so many different sources of dreaming, the physician must take care in working out what the significance of the dream might be, and indeed Galen confesses to an instance in which he failed to discern the humoral condition indicated by a certain dream, and lost the patient. While Galen develops the understanding of the significance of dreams for interpreting the body in a further direction than did Aristotle, there seems to be some debt to Aristotle’s thought on dreams as produced by internal movements; there is not, however, discussion of the imaginative faculty of the human person in particular.

As Charles Stewart has noted, this diagnostic dimension of dreams did not only extend toward physical illnesses; as we saw in the case of Plato, the diagnostic element could extend to the diagnosis of our moral condition as well.\(^{193}\) We find such discussion in the Alexandrian

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\(^{192}\) Harris (2009) p. 272.

Herophilus, who understands dreams to arise from three causes; from a god, from ourselves, or from a mixed dream, in which they are the consequence of an external cause that arouses something because we have a certain desire; these dreams “arise spontaneously according to the impact of the images, whenever we see what we wish, as happens in the case of those who in their sleep make love to the women they love.”

4.2.2 Evagrius on Dreams

Stewart has suggested that this notion of mixed dreams might inform Evagrius’s theory of dreaming, which, as Refoulé notes, had a significant impact on the later monastic tradition. Evagrius understands dreams as indicative of our moral condition, and thus a potential occasion for introspection. In this sense, insofar as he has a diagnostic understanding of dreams, he is perhaps closer to Galen than Aristotle.

Like an experienced fighter, be prepared to avoid being shaken with confusion, even if you all at once see a fantasy; do not become troubled, even if you see a sword drawn against you or a light rushing at your eyes; should you see some unsightly and bloody figure, at all costs do not let your soul become downcast, but take your stand, making the good confession, and you will look upon your enemies with ease. (On Prayer 92)

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196 Refoulé (1961) p. 501. Brakke has also observed how Evagrius’s concern with dreams represents a shift away from Antony with respect to the moral problems involved in sleep. Antony’s primary concern is with nocturnal emissions, and how they reflect the degree to which the soul has allowed itself to be influenced by the body (a monastic application of the Phaedo’s anxiety of the influence of the body on the soul, perhaps); “In Antony’s treatment, not only does the nocturnal emission mark the boundary between the soul and the body and thus measure the monk’s progress in properly coordinating these two aspects of himself; it also points to a more elusive boundary, that between the monk’s present, earthly body and the transformed, spiritual body that belongs to the resurrection.” See Brakke (1995) p. 437. Evagrius, on the other hand, is less concerned with the emission than with the desire that causes it; “Unlike Antony, however, Evagrius’s primary interest was not with the emission itself, but with the images that accompanied it, particularly the degree to which these images were ‘bounded’.” Brakke (1995) p. 439. These dreams were the result of too much fluid and could only be resolved by fasting. See also Rouselle (1988)170-172. For a contrasting discussion on the subject in Cassian, see Leyser (1999) pp. 103-120.
However, their contents are not, strictly speaking, sense impressions, but rather appear to operate independently of the sense organs, like memory. This is why imagination can still be operative in sleep.

Therefore, it seems to me, the demons give impressions to the ruling faculty by moving the memory, for the organism is kept inactive by sleep. It is necessary to investigate in turn how they set the memory in motion. Is it perhaps through the passions? This is clearly so from the fact that those who are pure and free from passion no longer experience such a thing. But there is also a simple movement of the memory, coming either from ourselves or from the holy powers, thanks to which we encounter holy people in our sleep and converse and eat with them. But it should be noted that the images which the soul receives with the body, the memory sets in motion without the body; this is clear from the fact that often we experience this in sleep when the body is at rest. Just as it is possible to remember water with thirst and without thirst, so is it possible to remember gold with greed and without greed, and similarly in the case of other things. The fact that the mind discovers such or such differences in the fantasies is an indication of the evil cunning of those beings. (On thoughts 4)

While the sense organs themselves are shut down in sleep, those sensory impressions which have been stored in the memory can be activated. As in the case of sense perception and waking memories, the fantasies we are subject to in dreams are informed by whether we are dispositionally inclined to experience certain passions. Just as waking memories can be either impassioned or not, so too can memories that arise in dreams reflect the nature of these dispositions. Because these fantasies have been composed of those impassioned representations preserved by memory, the nature of the fantasies we as individuals experience is determined by the nature of our particular moral weaknesses; moreover, these dreams cause those parts of our soul which are already troubled to become more so.

When in the fantasies that occur during sleep the demons attack the concupiscible part and show us with our ready consent encounters with friends, banquets with relatives, groups of women, and other such things which offer pleasures, we become sick in this part and the passion grows in strength. But when in turn they trouble the irascible part, forcing us to travel on precipitous routes and leading forth armed men and poisonous, flesh-devouring beasts, and we are terrified by these roads and flee from the pursuit of the beasts and the men, then let us take
care for the irascible part and calling upon Christ in vigils let us make use of the aforementioned remedies. *(Praktikos 54)*

The representations that have been stored, with the accompanying passion, in the memory become redeployed by the demons to construct the hypothetical events that they put before the mind of the monk. Because, like memories, these fantasies not only reflect our moral weaknesses, but further exacerbate the lower parts of the soul, they pose a problem for moral progress in a way that imagination does not, necessarily, for Aristotle. For the latter, the content of what we conjure up in our imaginations can be arbitrary. Although imagination is capable of depicting a false state of affairs, and can as a result contribute to wrong action, it is not in itself morally problematic.

For Evagrius, however, these fantasies aggravate our moral weaknesses, not only by provoking the passionate parts of our soul as we are dreaming, but through the effects they have on us when we remember them after we have woken up. As we have already seen, memory of sense perception is a problem, because memory of these objects can cause our moral weaknesses to become persistent. Just as our imaginations can take their content from our memories, so too can memory take its content of our imaginations.

Giving you warmth in this way, they have you reckon that it is an effort to master the fire of one’s nature, and the time of perseverance is lengthy and the life of abstinence is burdensome; and they bring back to you memories of the shameful fantasies that they suggested during the night, forming before you burning images of error. Then, having ignited in your flesh an even more intense burning, they introduce within you by means of the law of sin the notion that so far as you do not have the strength to restrain the force of your nature, even if you sin today by necessity, tomorrow you will repent for the sake of the commandment (cf. Rom. 7: 23-5); for the law is humanitarian and forgives the iniquities of those who repent. *(Eulogios 22)*

The discouraging memory of one’s dreams and the passions they elicited at the time of the dream invites one to the listlessness of akèdia; perhaps because dreams so often seem to be
out of our control, the memory of these fantasies in particular makes the achievement of virtue seem too difficult, unattainable. Just as memory of sense perceptions, and the passionate reactions they provoke, can deepen our inclinations to value unduly certain perceptual objects, memory of fantasies can weaken our commitment to oppose these inclinations. If we recall how imaginations are of sensory objects, even if they are not sense perceptions themselves, we can see how cognitions associated with sensory content have a morally corrosive effect on the monk.

Note in the above passage how Evagrius describes the effect that fantasies have on our soul as a sickness. While fantasies can exacerbate already existing moral weaknesses, they can also serve a diagnostic role. Because the activities of the imagination reveal which of the bad thoughts to which we are inclined, careful attention to the workings of our phantasiai can be morally therapeutic, insofar as this attention allows us to guard against the demons associated with the particular bad thoughts we are inclined toward. Despite the fact that our phantasiai are morally problematic insofar as they strengthen our corrupt moral dispositions if left unattended, they do in fact play an important role in our perception of our own moral condition.

When the natural movements of the body during sleep are free of images, they reveal that the soul is healthy to a certain extent. The formulation of images is an indication of ill health. If it is a matter of indistinct faces, consider this a sign of an old passion; if the faces are distinct, it is a sign of a current wound. (Praktikos 55)

While for Galen, dreams could be used to determine the condition of the humors in the body, in Evagrius, we find a similarly diagnostic attitude towards dreams in his description of how they reveal to us, not the humoral condition of our bodies, but the moral condition of our souls. Depending on the presence and quality of our fantasies, we can, upon reflection, discern the presence of such problematic representations, and, having done so, combat those representations in the various ways Evagrius describes. The widespread use of medical language
to describe moral therapy had a long standing in ancient philosophy, as Martha Nussbaum has noted in the case of Hellenistic ethics: “a conception of philosophy’s task as medical, dedicated to the relief of human suffering, leads to a new conception of philosophical method and procedure; that choices of method and procedure are not, as some might suppose, content-neutral, but closely bound up with a diagnosis of human difficulties and an intuitive conception of human flourishing.”

Whether Nussbaum is right in suggesting that this distinguished Hellenistic authors from Plato or Aristotle is a different issue. In Evagrius’s case, the medical overtones may in part be connected to the fact that he understands the desires of the lower parts to arise from the movements of the body; as in the case with more mundane forms of sickness, attending the movements of the body, and the performance of the appropriate ascetic exercises, may be a necessary step toward discerning the psychological illness.

In these discussions of memory and imagination, the monk’s diachronic existence is taken to be a problem for his epistemic access to his own passions; because the particular passions he is prone to are only brought to his attention in certain circumstances, they are not always transparent to him. Not only those images we experience in the moment of sense perception, but memory and imagination as well, provide the occasions for indirectly discerning what our dispositional desires and passions are. But because these occasions are precisely that – occasional – our sense of our dispositional desires is often incomplete. This fact has serious consequences for the propensity of human beings to be subject to self-deception.

4.3 Self-Deception and Impetuous Action

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Nussbaum (1994) p. 485. Temkin notes how the tasks of curing the body and curing the soul could overlap, noting Galen’s argument in *De sanitate tuaenda*, no doubt influenced by the *Timaeus*, that while the philosopher cared for the souls of others for the sake of the soul, the physician cared for the soul for the sake of the body. See Temkin (1991) pp. 48-50.
While memory and imagination can be deleterious, they also make introspection possible; they permit us to observe our own desires and the passions which follow upon them, of which we may not have immediate perception. We are back in Epictetus’s territory here; the experience of *peirasmos* can help us get a sense of our character, in particular because it brings certain representations to our attention, and by taking note of our responses to them we can get a better sense of our character. One of the obstacles to observing one’s own desires is that one can only entertain a single representation at a given time. Observing how these different representations move is itself helpful for discerning one’s passions;

If because of its very great rapidity of movement the mind links thoughts to one another, one must not on this account think that they are all constituted within us at the same time. The potter's wheel does something similar in joining to one another two pebbles fixed at the diametrically opposite extremities of the wheel, and this because of the great rapidity of its motion. You can also form within yourself the face of your father and test whether another face arises while this one remains or whether when the first one disappears the second is constituted after it. *(On thoughts 24)*

How our thoughts move from image to image can help us discern what our particular vices are. This continual movement of the mind from image to image can also, however, give rise to impetuous actions. In the previous chapter, I suggested that attempts to read certain aspects of Stoicism into Evagrius were problematic. On the one hand, descriptions of mental representations leaving an imprint in the *hêgemonikon* lack the language of assent to impulsive propositions, suggesting that this language may best be understood as residually received from early Christian authors (or others in the late fourth century) who were significantly influenced by Stoicism. On the other hand, Sorabji’s recent attempt to read the *logismoi* as pre-passions is problematic, for passions can provoke thoughts. Here, however, Evagrius does retain the concept of impetuous action as the rapid following of different representations – possibly taken over from Origen - to explain moral wrongdoing;
Let no anchorite take up the anchoretic life with anger or pride or sadness, nor flee his brothers while troubled by such thoughts. For attacks of folly arise from such passions, when the heart moves from one mental representation to another and from this to another and from that to still another, falling little by little into a pit of forgetfulness. (*On thoughts* 23)

Recall how, in *On thoughts* 17, mental representations were necessary for cognizing the material world. In *On thoughts* 25, he understands mental representations as necessary for acting within the material world; for we must first represent ourselves as acting before we actually do act.

So just as the mind receives the mental representations (*noēmata*) of all sensible objects, in this way it receives also that of its own organism - for this too is sensible - but of course with the exception of one's face, for it is incapable of creating a form of this within itself since it has never seen itself. With this figure then our mind does everything interiorly - it sits and walks, gives and receives in its intellect. It does and says all that it wishes due to the quickness of its mental representations: sometimes it assumes the figure of its own body and extends its hand to receive something it is given, sometimes after casting off this figure it quickly puts on the form of its neighbour as if it were giving something with its own hands. Without such forms a mind could do nothing, for it is both incorporeal and deprived of any such movement. (*On thoughts* 25)

In order to actually perform an action, we must first imagine ourselves performing it. Moral wrongdoing in thought alone – that is, when we fantasize about certain things in our minds - is understood by Evagrius as blameworthy; here, however, he gives special treatment to the issue of actual (as opposed to imagined) action on the part of the monk, one whose consequences will be made clear below. Because of the quickness of the way the representations move, the mind can be caught off guard if it finds itself suddenly subject to a certain representation. While the demon, through the mechanisms discussed above, is (sometimes) responsible for the fact that the mind is confronted by a certain representation, in order for impetuous action to occur the monk must be disposed to be complicit. The obstacle to the monk’s ability to prevent himself from engaging in impetuous action is that he is not always able
to appreciate how his own mind lingers on certain representations. (The mechanics of how the mind lingers on representations “in secret,” when it is only subject to one representation at time, are left unexplained).

The anchorite must therefore keep watch over his own mind in the time of temptations, for he will seize the figure of his own body, as soon as the demon presents himself, and get involved interiorly in a fight with a brother or join with a woman. For Christ in the Gospels named such a person an adulterer for already having committed adultery in his heart with his neighbour's wife (cf. Matt. 5: 28). But without this form an intellect could never commit adultery, since it is incorporeal and incapable of approaching a sensible object without such mental representations: and this constitutes the transgression. So pay attention to yourself with regard to how the mind puts on the form of its own body, apart from the face, but in turn models in the intellect its neighbour whole and entire since it has previously grasped and seen such a person in his entirety. (On thoughts 25)

Corrigan reads this passage as describing a kind of “radical other-dependence” in the tradition of Bakhtin and Levinas; “Evagrius’s thought can hardly be situated, as von Balthasar wants to, at the level of pre-Christian thinking, for it forms, in fact, one of the major continuous pillars of all subsequent philosophical and theological thinking on this issue from Ps. Dionysius to Bernard of Clairvaux, Bonaventure, Aquinas, and beyond, and is a genuine forerunner to Bakhtin’s dialogical thought and of Levinas’ insistence upon the primordial face of the other.”198

Here, I think Corrigan is reading too much into the passage – Evagrius does not provide here an account of how other people, in their theological capacity as our “neighbour,” illuminate our own characters to us. Rather, Evagrius’s real interest is in how one will act impetuously if one does not attend to one’s own proclivity to linger on certain representations (of food, women, and so forth).

But it is impossible for these things to be observed during temptations as to how they occur and so quickly are completed in the intellect, unless the Lord rebuke the wind and the sea, creating a great calm and leading the voyager to the land to which he was hastening (cf. Matt. 8: 26). The anchorite must therefore attend to

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himself 'lest perhaps there may be a word of impiety hidden in his heart' (Deut. 15: 9), for in the time of temptations the mind will seize the figure of its own body when the demon presents himself. Motivated by this contemplation we have presented the rationale of impure thought. Demonic thought in fact is an incomplete image of the sensible person constituted in the intellect, wherewith the mind, motivated by passion, says or does something impious in secret with regard to the phantoms it forms in succession. (On thoughts 25)

Because of the quickness with which representations present themselves, we in fact cannot not follow these images at the moment at which they come to our attention, unless we have adequately guarded ourselves; as we have seen, in order to guard against the demons we must have an awareness of how our memories of past experiences have formed our idiosyncratic dispositions. This concern with how our particular personal histories give rise to dispositions which must be corrected is why modern readers like Foucault have detected a Freudian element to Evagrius’s thought; this point will be considered in greater detail in the next chapter. For our present purposes of understanding Evagrius’s psychology, however, it is important to note that this aspect of Evagrius’s analysis does not simply lack the machinery of Stoic moral philosophy – on this point, it is positively at odds with the Stoic view that assent to mental representations is always up to us. Because assent or dissent at the moment of a representation coming to us are not the mechanisms which determine whether we follow a representation, self-reflection operates quite differently for Evagrius than it does for Epictetus; we do not self-reflect in order to sift out our false beliefs, but to determine how our past, idiosyncratic historical experience produces the inclination to dwell on certain objects.

Note here that the mind (nous or to logistikon – Evagrius does not distinguish between the two) is understood as acting under the influence of passion when it acts impetuously. As I discussed previously, the mind’s own passions are a consequence of the passions of the lower parts of the soul, particularly gluttony; here, then, the lower parts, those parts which are primarily
responsible for the cognition of imagistic objects, are those parts which influence the mind when the mind secretly contemplates those images in the *dianoia*. When we act impetuously, we are not described as doing so because we form a certain belief, but because we are presented with a certain image. We find, then, a revision of what characterizes the impetuous actor, and therefore what characterizes the rational actor.

Is there a way, then, for us to understand Evagrius’s monk as morally responsible for his own actions? There does seem to be a sense in which for Evagrius, the monk who follows his images without preventing himself from doing so acts in away that an animal would, in the sense that he uncritically follows what appears to him to be the case. Evagrius’s monk does not do this because he has given his assent to false impulsory representations, but because he has failed to reflect adequately upon how his mind is lingering on certain representations. Here, the impetuous actor has not become confused about truth and falsity, but follows a representation of himself performing a certain action instantaneously – apparently, automatically. Whether these images might in some way misrepresent what is morally relevant (as we find in Aristotle) is not a question with which Evagrius appears to be concerned. In an animal, such behaviour would be non-rational, for the animal is not endowed with the sorts of reasoning capacities necessary for critical reflection, and therefore not subject to moral evaluation. In a human being, however, the rational mind is meant to prevent this action by reflecting on how its lower parts linger on certain images, prior to the moment when the specific image of one actually engaged in some sort of activity comes to the mind. Because the rational mind fails to do so, its acquiescence to its non-rational nature results in *irrational* action – that is, action or which it, unlike a non-rational animal, is morally culpable.
The fact that Evagrius does not discuss the desires of the lower parts of the soul as desires for what is good perhaps helps us make sense of why the question of the truth and falsity of the images the monk’s mind dwells upon is not something Evagrius considers. This reflects a notable shift from the discussion of images in *Republic* 10 (*Republic* 605c). The rational part, on this model, is first and foremost assigned the task of judging not its own character, but whether the images incited by the imitative poets accurately represent things like the big and the small. Evagrius draws out a particular element in the process of self-examination – that is, the examination of our imagistic and imaginative content – for the specific purpose not in the first place of evaluating the truth-content of those representations but in order to discern what the fact that we focus on particular circumstances says about how our idiosyncratic experiences and memories inform our character. We find a concern with how one’s own historical experiences influence one’s present dispositions in Evagrius’s discussion of self-examination that is not evident in the elenctic discussions of Plato, or in the philosophical conversations of Epictetus. This fact will have consequences for how we assess Foucault’s analysis of the development of the “subject” in ascetic thought, as I discuss in the conclusion.

The way in which the rational part of the human person is operative in this picture is different from what we have seen in Clement and Origen. For these latter two authors, self-reflection is necessary for us to give or withhold our assent to the right representations. Origen understands the self-reflection involved in introspection as a step along the way to forming correct assents; that is, self-reflection is necessary to recognize when one is inclined to assent to a representation because one’s character is depraved, and thus act against that inclination. For Evagrius, however, the soul does not assent to representations; what prevents impetuous action is

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199 See Moss (2008) and Ganson (2009).
not the ability to form correct judgments about the truth-value of propositional contents. Rather, the soul examines its dispositions to dwell on certain sorts of objects and then indirectly acts to reform the lower parts of the soul, through fast and vigils, or, alternatively, directing its anger against the particular demon attacking one. Under this picture, what appears to distinguish the rational actor from the mere animal is the mind’s complicit activity in self-deceptively lingering upon what appears via the imagistic representation of the lower parts. By not testing his own reactions to representations before the arrival of the demons, the monk has failed to exercise that part of himself which is, unlike that of the non-human animals, capable of self-reflection. Because self-reflection is the psychological activity that enables the monk to avoid those particular representations which he will, if he experiences them, pursue, this self-reflection – rather than assent - becomes the paradigmatic human psychological activity which makes our action different from that of the lower animals. In the absence of Stoic language of assent, the exercise of rationality takes the form of analyzing how one’s representations are informed by one’s character and engaging in those activities which are necessary to reform the lower parts of the soul, not on making a judgment about the propositional content contained in that representation.

Let us consider how we might apply this analysis to specific instances of self-deception, such as that Evagrius imagines when he considers the example of the monk who tells himself he is retreating from his brothers in order to seek further spiritual insight, but in fact is angry with them and wishes to be away from them on account of his anger. On the one hand, the monk has a certain belief about what he is doing – a belief which reflects his judgment about what he ought to be doing. On the other hand, the desire he is in fact acting upon is different and at moral odds with what he thinks is his purpose. In this instance, the monk does not observe himself acting
impetuously, for the belief he thinks he is acting under and the desire he is in fact acting out are both compatible with leaving the community.

Yet the mind, according to the description Evagrius gives of self-deception in *On Thoughts* 25 above, is doing two different things. On the one hand, it is telling itself that it is going to the desert to pursue some sort of spiritual benefit. Yet it also dwells on an image of something which arouses anger, although it does not do so with the image before the monk’s mind, but “in secret.” The mind/logistikon here appears to be actively involved in the movement of the image before it – it is not that the lower parts of the soul by themselves overpower the mind. In Evagrius’s description in *Thoughts* 25, however, the rational part of the soul appears to be able to endorse the desires of the lower part when they are not under the description of the good, and conflict with what the monk believes he desires. The mind is therefore capable of simultaneously endorsing certain morally corrupt desires and believing that it is acting rightly and therefore, implicitly, of forming a judgment about what is right, a belief which is at odds with the desire the mind endorses.

### 4.4 Evagrius and Varieties of Psychological Privacy

As we have discussed, the examination of our memory and imagination is the activity by which we discern our own desires; our desires are not something we perceive immediately. In this respect, Evagrius is like Epictetus and Origen; the difference here is that, in having us observe our memories and imaginations, rather than our behaviours (as we find in Epictetus and Origen) Evagrius is able to carve out a place for psychological interiority – for the way in which we observe ourselves is not like the way in which the demons observe us. In the previous chapter, I suggested how avoiding the sensory data that would provoke the lower parts is a necessary stage in the attainment of *apatheia*. Yet because we are nevertheless subject to certain
mental representations when we are not in the state of imageless prayer, we must cultivate an
attention to what sort of representations we are inclined to devote our attention to without acting
on them; for such actions reveal our thoughts to the demons;

The demons do not know our hearts, as some people think, for the Lord alone is a
'knower of hearts' (cf. Acts 1: 24; 15: 8), 'who knows the mind of human beings'
(Job 7: 20), and 'who alone fashioned their hearts' (Ps. 32: 15). Rather, they
recognize the many mental representations that are in the heart on the basis of a
word that is expressed and movements of the body such as this. (On thoughts 37)

While we examine our representations, the demons examine the movements of our body.
Yet not even we have immediate access to our desires; we must pay careful attention in order to
perceive these desires. When we observe our representations, without giving away our own
movements, we in effect construct a private point of view, even if such a point of view is not
immediately given. That is, while the novice who has not advanced far along in the procedures
of self-examination will not perceive what his dispositional desires are, the spiritual father who
has advanced further along will be able to perceive these desires by observing the novice’s
actions. In analyzing Evagrius’s theory of self, both Brakke and O’Laughlin focus on the
monk’s relationship to his spiritual father as a practice that anticipates Western traditions of
confession. Here again, we find another strategy designed to ward away the demons; like the
strategic use of anger, the recitation of scripture keeps the demons away. For a novice, however,
this can only be done with the assistance of a spiritual director. In commenting upon the
relationship between the spiritual director and the monk, O’Laughlin writes that “Evagrius does
not allow the inner conflicts and doubts of the monks to ferment within an introspective and
private enclosure; they are held up for analysis, classified, and remedied with sound counsel

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Brakke, on the other hand, suggests that what distinguishes Evagrius’s monk from that of Cassian is the fact that the thoughts come from the demons, rather than the monk himself.

It is not clear, however, that Evagrius’s self was an inner place like that of Cassian or Augustine. In an introductory treatise on the monastic life, *To Eulogios*, Evagrius spoke of the monk having “inner places” (*hoi entos*), but he called the thoughts “raindrops” that the monk should “shake off” from his “inner places” rather than seeing them as originating in those places. In *Talking Back*, Evagrius in contrast to Cassian’s and Foucualt’s model of the self-revealing monastic subject, claimed that the thoughts that the monk shared were not in fact his thoughts at all: they were the suggestions of demons, “arrows” that the demons hurled at the monk as they made war against him.

As I discussed in Chapter 5, however, the thoughts are simply certain kinds of mental images – the same sort of images that we receive from sense impression, memory and imagination without the help of the demons. What the demons bring are particular sorts of representations – representations which are designed to take advantage of our pre-existing passions and desires. The demon simply brings out certain aspects of our character for the sake of exacerbating them – the fault originates in us.

While O’Laughlin’s analysis might be true for the novice, it is not true for the *gnōstikos*. The master monk does not engage in third-personal dialectical reasoning, but examines cognitions which only he has access to. This is, again, not to say that Evagrius has a concept of an *immediate* first-person point of view; our dispositional desires are only known in our occurrent experiences of the passions associated with them. Moreover, what distinguishes this turn inward from that of Plotinus and Augustine is that it is not a turn to the ideal self, but a turn

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to the idiosyncratic self, an idiosyncrasy reflected by the very division of the bad thoughts themselves.

Consider this against the description of desire that we find in *Confessions* Book 1;

Little by little I began to notice where I was, and I would try to make my wishes known to those who might satisfy them; but I was frustrated in this, because my desires were inside me, while other people were outside and could by no effort of understanding enter my mind. So I tossed about and screamed, sending signals meant to indicate what I wanted, those few signs that were the best I could manage, though they did not really express my desires. (*Conf* I.8 trans. Boulding)

Note the disparity between Augustine’s own perception of his desires and the perception of other people. The baby is here described as having immediate access to his own perceptions. Under this model, while our desires must be communicated to others, they do not need to be communicated to ourselves; we know them immediately. While for Augustine signs mediate our relationships with other people, but not ourselves, for Evagrius, our mental representations help us to discern our desires.

This inward turn is even further removed from that of Plotinus’s discussion of *epistrophê*, in which one turns towards not the idiosyncratic, endowed self, but the ideal self, the *nous*.

Because the *nous* contemplates the Forms – which, for all the intellects, are identical – this inward turn is in fact a turn toward something public. Gerson notes this in the following way; “What it is that the discarnate intellect cognizes is actually identical with what it is that every other discarnate intellect cognizes. Thus, self-discovery is not the discovery of the private. Indeed, it is more accurately characterized as discovery of the universal. The difference between

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203 The passage I have offered here, as an analysis of desire, is far from being Augustine’s most robust account of the self-reflexive first-person point of view, a philosophical position he argues for in much greater, more revolutionary detail in *City of God* XI.26 but even more so in *De Trinitate X*. As Gareth Matthews has ably demonstrated, Augustine’s theory of the self-reflexive first-person point of view is designed to counter skepticism, likely the skepticism of Cicero, a skepticism based on Stoic representational theory of knowledge, which the *Confessions* describes as so influential on his early formative period before meeting Ambrose in Milan. See Matthews (1991). Philip Cary has also discussed Augustine’s views on the inner self in Cary (2002).
private and public breaks down for a community of eternal cognizers.”204 As the Wittgensteinian identification of privacy and self-reflexivity does not work for Plotinus, nor does this concept apply to the thought of Evagrius, though for different reasons. For Evagrius, privacy is something to be achieved – it does not exist in a self-reflexive, immediate way, but must be constructed through vigilant attention to one’s mental actions.

4.5 Evagrian Têrêsis and the Elenchus

In looking at Evagrius’s hermeneutics of the soul, we find that interpreting the mental representations that appear to us in memory and imagination plays a crucial role in our ability to act rightly. In the absence of a capacity for assent or dissent to mental representations, this act of introspection is what distinguishes us from the lower animals and permits us to engage in the sorts of therapies that will allow us to alter our characters. This interpretation, however, is of the soul endowed with occurrent states, not the ideal, resurrected self; this hermeneutics of the soul is therefore not constitutive of ideal selfhood, but a necessary step in the process of becoming the ideal self. Foucault’s understanding of this interpretive act as constitutive of ideal selfhood does not apply to Evagrius.

We should note, however, the significant difference in what is involved in the examination of representations from Epictetus to Evagrius, an examination Foucault overlooks. We are by now far away from the elenchus. In Epictetus’s discussions of the examination of representations, we are exhorted to work out whether our mental representations are true or false. In Evagrius, however, we are supposed to attend to how as a consequence of our our idiosyncratic, historical experiences, we are inclined to direct our mind to certain things. The activity of têrêsis presupposes that there is something morally relevant about the operation of our

imagination other than whether we correctly discern the large and the small (as in *Republic* X); while Evagrius does not articulate the notion of how we draw our mind to certain things through the use of a concept of will, as we find in medieval authors, it is apparent that the truth and falsity of our cognition, either rational or fantastic, is not the only morally relevant thing about us. Or, to put it in Gill’s terms, this concern with how our memories of past experiences give rise to certain dispositional desires reflects a concern with personality on a level we perhaps have not seen before.
Chapter 5: A Close Look at Anger

A certain brother while he was in the community was restless and frequently moved to wrath. And he said within himself, "I shall go and live in some place in solitude: and when I have no one to speak to or to hear, I shall be at peace and this passion of anger will be stilled." So he went forth and lived by himself in a cave. One day he filled a jug for himself with water and set it on the ground, but it happened that it suddenly overturned. He filled it a second time, and again it overturned: and he filled it a third time and set it down, and it overturned again. And in a rage he caught up the jug and broke it. Then when he had come to himself, he thought how he had been tricked by the spirit of anger and said, "Behold, here I am alone, and nevertheless he hath conquered me. I shall return to the community, for in all places there is need for struggle and patience and above all for the help of God." And he arose and returned to his place. (AP N 201 trans. Waddell)

Having given an account of how Evagrius construes self-examination, I would like to offer a close examination of anger in particular. The subject of anger received a great deal of attention in antiquity. In figures like Plato and Aristotle, thumos is associated with shame. This dimension of the treatment of anger is missing in Evagrius; for him, orgê and the other passions – wrath, jealousy, hatred, fear, resentment – ascribed to the thumoeidetic part of the soul are not here associated with shame. Recall, for instance, how the vices of vainglory and pride are attributed not to the thumoeidic part, but to the rational part of the soul. Vainglory in particular is a social vice; it is the desire for the praise of other people. Under the classical construal of virtue and vice, this would be a thumoeidic passion; Evagrius, however, characterizes it otherwise.

Yet anger in Evagrius’s system still is a social vice, not in the sense that it is a consequence of a failure to appreciate what is really shameful, but because, as a passion directed at other people, it has the ability to destroy social communities. As Harris has pointed out, anger was subject to a considerable degree of attention in the ancient period, both in the classical tradition and in Christianity. Harris observes how anger was recognized in ancient Greece to be detrimental to the social order; “The political and social dangers from excessive anger ebbed and flowed, for every Greek city-state had its share of violence, both political and non-political.”

This concern with the community-destroying effects of anger is one we find in monastic literature as well. In Evagrius, when a novice monk feels anger toward his spiritual advisor he creates a barrier between himself and his teacher, one which will prevent the novice from growing. Yet despite Evagrius’s emphasis on *apatheia* – an interest he takes from Clement, whom he cites on the subject – Evagrius still understands anger to have a proper role. Indeed, he takes us to have achieved *apatheia* not when we have completely eradicated anger, but when we have directed it at the demons and the representations they put before our mind. When we do not do so, anger becomes a passion. In articulating this theory of anger as one of the eight bad thoughts, we find Evagrius employing a version of the idea, discussed by Richard Wollheim, that emotions are not mental states – that is, transient mental events – but mental dispositions. By examining the idea of passions as dispositions, and putting this theory of passions within the larger context of post-Hellenistic theory of the passions, we can appreciate how Evagrius illustrates the range of views on the passions in antiquity.

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The ramifications of the dispositional nature of anger are evident in Evagrius’s discussions of the remedies he offers for this particular passion, most notably almsgiving. As Peter Brown has noted, the “care for the poor” emerges as a particularly distinctive feature of early Christian thought. In looking at this theme in Evagrius’s works, David Brakke has tried to link his concern with almsgiving to the vice of avarice or love of money. Brakke’s connection here, however, is undermined by the fact that anger is characterized as a deprivation of things other than money. Against Brakke’s view, I here suggest that almsgiving is meant to overcome the anti-social effects of anger; that is, by caring for those whose poverty is not chosen, the monk develops a concern with others that counters his desire to inflict pain on or to abandon other human beings. Because a one-time occurrent feeling of anger can form a disposition toward anger, directed not only at the person who instigated the initial passion but toward human beings in general, therapy of the thumoeidic part of our soul requires an activity which redirects our affective dispositions toward humanity at large. I conclude with a discussion about how a detailed understanding of Evagrius’s idea of passion as both occurrent and dispositional helps us to unpack the alleged Freudian element of Evagrius’s thought.

5.1 Ambivalence toward Anger in the Ancient Period

We find, in Evagrius, a certain ambivalence about anger; while it has a positive function, this positive function is easily perverted. This ambivalence about the role of thumos is evident throughout the ancient period. Plato, in Republic IV (440b), considers the spirited part as aligned with reason in a way that the appetitive part is not; in this, he is followed by Aristotle, who argues that qualified akrasia – that form of akrasia which results from anger – is less shameful.

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than unqualified or appetitive *akrasia*, because the former occurs partly under the influence of reason; “Anger seems to listen to reason to some extent, but to mishear it, as do hasty servants who run out before they have heard the whole of what one says, and then muddle the order, or as dogs bark if there is but a knock at the door, before looking to see if it is a friend; so anger by reason of the warmth and hastiness of its nature, though it hears, does not hear an order, and springs to take revenge” (1149a25-31 trans. Ross and Urmson). Later Peripatetics would argue that some moderate degree of passion is required for the ideal life. Others denied that the moderation of the passions was possible. The most extensive work we have on the Stoic discussion of anger is Seneca’s *De ira*.211 Plutarch, despite his well-documented antagonism against Stoicism elsewhere, cites Stoic authority (including Seneca and Panaetius) in his treatise *On the Avoidance of Anger* in arguing for the extirpation, rather than moderation of anger; this may indicate as much as anything that Plutarch was capable of recognizing when Stoics were in agreement with what he took to be the correct interpretation of Plato.

This ambivalence towards anger is found in Christian writings as well, and was informed by the biblical texts as much as it is informed by debates about the passions in ancient philosophy. As I noted in Chapter 2, some authors drew on the Stoic concept of pre-passion in order to account for instances in which a scriptural exemplar is portrayed being angry; Philo and Origen understand these protagonists not as subject to full-fledged anger, but to a mere pre-passion. This use of pre-passion was not, however, the only strategy early Christians employed

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210 On the influence of Stoicism for the development of Peripatetic philosophy, see Annas (1999b). The point that the Peripatetics take the moderation of the passions to be the *ideal* life is overlooked, or at least glossed over, by Marcia Colish in her study of the influence of Peripatetic theories of passion in the thought of Ambrose. By suggesting that the Peripatetic emphasis on *metriopatheia* is an ethics “for the common man,” she obfuscates the Peripatetic claim that the ideally virtuous person will have some degree of passion – *metriopatheia* is an ideal for the Peripatetics, not a concession. See Colish (2005).

211 Fillion-Lahille (1984)
to account for anger. In *De ira dei*, for instance, Lactantius defends the righteous anger of God while decrying the unmerciful anger of Aeneas in Virgil’s *Aeneid*.\(^{212}\) Here, Lactantius cites biblical authority in articulating a version of holy anger. Gregory of Nyssa, curiously, does not in *De anima et resurrectione* use Stoic notions of *propatheia*, but rather articulates a certain kind of anger using a model similar to Stoic ideas of *eupatheia*;\(^{213}\) his brother Basil, on the other hand, argued for the extirpation of anger altogether in *Against Those Who are Angry*.\(^{214}\)

Within monastic settings, however, there is a particular concern with the community-destroying effects of anger. In ancient discussions about whether the cenobitic or anchoretic life was the best, those in favor of the cenobitic life often argued that the impulse to live the solitary life of the anchorite could be motivated less by the desire to be with God and more by the desire to escape one’s fellow monks. As the above passage from the *Apophthegmata Patrum* makes clear, there was anxiety about whether a monk would retreat to be alone as a way of avoiding his own proclivity to anger, rather than confronting and overcoming it.\(^{215}\) This concern with the potential for anger to destroy a monastic community preoccupied a number of monastic writers, for it threatened to undermine the health of the community and the relationship between the monk and his spiritual father. As Columba Stewart has noted, it plays a particularly prominent role in Cassian’s *Conferences*.\(^{216}\) “The first foundation of true friendship, then, consists in

\(^{212}\) For comment on Lactantius’s portrayal of Aeneas, see Galinsky (1988) p. 337. On the reception of Lactantius, see Cain (2010).

\(^{213}\) On Gregory’s interpretation of the passions, see Smith (2001) and Roth (1992).

\(^{214}\) See Konstan (2010) p. 140.

\(^{215}\) Harmless (2004) pp. suggests that anger, rather than sex, was the major moral issue in monasticism, though this claim requires more defense than he provides.

\(^{216}\) Stewart (1999) p. 48. For more on friendship in monasticism, see White (1992), esp. p. 179.
contempt for worldly wealth and disdain for all the things that we possess. For it is unrighteous and blasphemous indeed if, after having renounced the vanity of the world and of everything in it, we should prefer the paltry household articles that remain to the most precious love of a brother” (*Conferences* VI.1 trans. Ramsey).

In Evagrius, we find both an awareness of anger’s potential to destroy the monastic community and his belief that the lower parts of the soul had a proper function. As Gould has noted, despite the emphasis on the solitary life we find in certain monastic texts, detailed attention to monastic writings reveals a simultaneous concern with the communal relationships of the cenobium. Within the context of these discussions we find considerable attention to the problem of anger. As we saw in Chapter 3, in Evagrius’s thought anger has a positive role to play when our irascible part is functioning as it ought; while *orgê* is classified as one of the eight bad thoughts, and various other forms of anger are treated as problematic as well, anger when properly oriented pushes certain mental representations from the monks’ mind. While fasting and other forms of ascetic practice can weaken one’s tendency to linger on appetitive representations, the strategic use of anger can also keep the monk from dwelling on the images that arouse his passions.

When you experience temptation, do not pray before you have directed some words of anger against the one causing the affliction. For when your soul is affected by thoughts, it follows that your prayer is not pure. But if you speak some angry word against them, you confound and dispel the mental representations coming from your adversaries. This is the natural function of anger, even in the case of good mental representations. (*Praktikos* 42)

Yet when anger is misused, it wreaks havoc on our relationships with other human beings. “And so the angels, on the one hand, suggest to us spiritual pleasure and the blessedness that will come from it, and they urge us to turn our irascibility against the demons. These latter,
on the other hand, drag us toward worldly desires and compel the irascible part, contrary to its nature, to fight with people, so that with the mind darkened and fallen from knowledge it may become the traitor of the virtues” (Praktikos 24). Bunge notes that the definition in the Commentary on the Psalms given to different forms of anger is taken from Clement of Alexandria; “Anger is an assault of the desire of the peaceful soul, [which] above all [plots] revenge” (In Ps. 6). As Bunge has noted in his monograph on the subject, anger has a way of turning us into beasts. “A wild desire for revenge spreads, which now seeks to reward evil for evil – something forbidden to the Christian. The exceedingly violent and ‘abrupt’ movement, which attack the soul like a wild animal, makes her ‘savage’ (literally, ‘bestial’, exagrio) as Evagrius often says, meaning it in no wise only figuratively.”

We experience anger, however, as a consequence of the fact that we have already given in to one of the other bad thoughts; for we can only be angry at a perceived injury if we believe that human beings are capable of injuring us. This requires that we already have some attachment to food, money, reputation, and so forth;

Thus it is necessary not to provoke it over either just or unjust things, nor to give an evil sword to the authors of suggestions. I know many people who often do so, and more than is necessary, when they get inflamed with anger over trivial pretexts. Over what, pray tell me, 'do you fall to fighting so quickly' (cf. Prov. 25: 8), if indeed you have scorned food, riches, and esteem? And why do you feed this dog, if you claim to own nothing? If it barks and attacks people, it is obvious that it has possessions inside and wants to guard them. But I am convinced that such a person is far from pure prayer, for I know that irascibility is the destroyer of such prayer. Furthermore, I am surprised that he has forgotten the saints, David who cries out, 'Cease from anger and abandon irascibility' (Ps. 36: 8); and Ecclesiastes who proclaims, 'Put away irascibility from your heart and drive wickedness from your flesh' (Eccles. 11: 10); and the Apostle who exhorts us, 'to

218 Bunge cites Strom. V.27.10’s reference to anger as plaguing an “otherwise meek soul.” Guillaumont suggests that Evagrius may have had Clement’s work memorized. Guillaumont (2004) p. 162. See Chapter 3 for the relationship between Clement and Evagrius as discussed by Bunge and Guillaumont.

219 Bunge (2009) p. 46
lift up hands in every place without anger and disputes' (1 Tim. 2: 8). And why can we not learn from the mysterious and ancient custom that people have of chasing the dogs out of houses during the time of prayer? This is a veiled allusion to the fact that there must be no irascibility present in those who practise prayer. And again, 'Their wine is the wrath of dragons' (Deut. 32: 33); and the Nazirites abstained from wine (Num. 6: 3). (On thoughts 5)

The fact that anger is directed at mental representations, however, may explain why it is so often misled. If the face of someone who we falsely perceive to have harmed us comes to our attention, our anger is properly directed at the representation appearing to our mind, not at the person represented. Directing our anger at a demonic representation as it arises requires that we have some perception of ourselves as susceptible to the particular vice associated with it. Our ability to deploy our capacity for anger as we ought to is therefore dependent upon our having perceived ourselves as subject to a representation because we are prone to a particular vice; we must have some previous understanding of our own vices in order to be on our guard against those problematic representations.

The anti-social aspect of anger is highlighted by Evagrius as a problem for the monk, both because it destroys relationships between monastic brothers and because it leads one to disregard the advice of one’s mentor. “Anger is a passion that leads to madness and easily drives those who possess it out of their senses; it makes the soul wild and moves it to shun all (human) encounter” (On the eight thoughts 4.1). The descriptions of anger as associated with the animalistic nature are common in Evagrius’s writing. Here again, he recalls not only Plato’s description of the irascible part of the soul as a dog or a lion, but also Basilides’s description of the passions as spirits associated with different kinds of animals. In bringing out this animalistic aspect of ourselves, anger drives us away from other human beings. Anger may lead the monk, for instance, to deceive himself into thinking that he is going into the desert to take up the life of the solitary anchorite for the sake of pursuing spiritual progress, when in truth he just desires to
be away from other human beings. “When, having seized on a pretext, the irascible part of our soul is troubled, then at the same moment the demons suggest to us that anachorêsis is a fine thing, lest we resolve the causes of our sadness and free ourselves from the disturbance” (Praktikos 21). When the cenobitic monk becomes angry with one of his fellow-monks, the anchoritic life, in which monks separated themselves from monastic communities to live in the desert, will appear particularly alluring. As the story from the Apophthegmata Patrum given in the beginning of the chapter narrates, such occurrences were matters of concern for the desert communities. Evagrius understands such instances to incur blame on both the person who has inflicted the perceived harm and the person who has felt the perceived harm; while the person who has left the monastic community will continue to suffer the consequences of anger, the person who has been the instigator of his fellow monk’s departure will be plagued by sadness. “Be attentive lest you ever provoke the departure of one of the brothers because you drove him to anger; as a result, you will not be able to escape in your lifetime the demon of sadness, which will always be an obstacle to you during the time of prayer” (Praktikos 25).

Anger is a particular problem for the advancement of the monk towards virtue because, as the vice which divides us from our other human beings, it is the vice that turns the monk against his spiritual father. For the monk who has not yet advanced far in religious practice, obedience to one’s spiritual father is essential; for someone who is not yet a gnōstikos requires the assistance of the spiritual master for advancement. Because the spiritual father plays such an important role in the development of the novice monk, the demons are prone to attack the monk by inciting anger against the father.

Formulating an accurate list of pretexts against them, they concoct violent disputes and they engrave the memory with the resulting anger; then, little by little, they will bring to a boil hatred towards the father, as if he were punishing unjustly and showing partiality, in order to cause the soul agitation on all sides.
and in different ways and so separate it from the paternal embrace. Therefore, let him who is in submission to a (spiritual) father not be defeated by insults, let him gain the victory by humility, let him be tempered by patience, and when the thoughts murmur surreptitiously let him not resist the austerity of his father and the burden of works and the insolence of the brothers. (Eulogios 26)

The fact that anger is an anti-social passion is a particular problem, if it undermines the relationship between the novice monk and his spiritual father. If this relationship is destroyed, it will prevent the monk from receiving the education he so badly needs. In this way, while anger is not the root of vice – gluttony is, as we have seen in Chapter 3 – it helps to perpetuate all other vices.

5.2 Anger as a One-Time Feeling and Anger as Dispositional

In describing how our anger, once aroused, can become directed at things other than the person who initially aroused it – even things which are fantasies of the mind – Evagrius offers an account of anger which brings his thought into dialogue with contemporary discussions of emotion. In articulating anger as a vice, Evagrius brings out a particular concept of passion as either a disposition or an occurrent, one-time feeling. In the previous chapter, we saw that human beings are not always aware of what their passionate dispositions are. The fact that we may be subject to experiences like anger not only as occurrent feelings, but as dispositions, entails that anger can be hard to detect, for we are not always feeling it. Appreciating this distinction helps us to understand why attending to our occurrent feelings when certain images arise in our minds helps us discern what these dispositions are.

The idea that the emotions are dispositions is one which has been proposed by Richard Wollheim. Wollheim contrasts his theory of the emotions to those philosophers who have taken emotions to be mental states. Wollheim defines mental states as “those transient events which make up the lived part of the life of the mind . . . They occur at a time, though the duration of a
mental state seldom admits of precise determination.” Wollheim offers perceptions, sensations, dreams, “moments of despair, boredom, or lust”, recollections, and thoughts as examples of states. Dispositions, on the other hand, “are those more or less persisting modifications of the mind which underlie this sequence of mental states. They have histories, and these histories can vary greatly in length and in complexity.”220 Wollheim suggests that a mental state can produce a mental disposition, so that my feeling angry at someone now will produce the disposition of my being angry at that person for a durative period, without necessarily feeling angry at every moment at which I am angry at this person.221 The idea of a dispositional passion is one we find among the Epicureans, who had an ambivalent attitude toward anger. Just as Evagrius and the Stoics admit of certain forms of affect while maintaining a commitment to ataraxia, the Epicureans take ataraxia to be a moral ideal while nevertheless preserving room for some forms of anger. According to Epicurean psychology, we can be subject to either natural anger or empty anger. In explicating this distinction, the Epicurean Philodemus drew a distinction between the pathos of anger and the disposition of anger. While the former was always bad, the disposition could be good. This distinction between disposition and pathos is laid out in Philodemus’s discussion of the division between the different kinds of desires in Epicurus’s letters; as Epicurus says, “We must reckon that some desires are natural and others empty, and of

220 Wollheim (1999) p. 1

221 Wollheim goes on to identify the various situations in which belief is formed; “we can identify four different occasions on which emotion can form: a desire has been satisfied or frustrated; a desire has been satisfied or frustrated, and the person has lived through the event that has caused the desire to be satisfied or frustrated; a desire has not been satisfied or frustrated, and its satisfaction or frustration has been fully anticipated. Is it really correct to think, in all these cases, that, as I have been suggesting, the relation in which the person stands to the satisfaction or frustration of his desire is best described as one of belief? I am prepared to think that standardly the relation is one of belief, but it also seems well within the character of emotion that it should tolerate non-standard cases. In saying this, I am thinking, not merely of the role of imagination, often insisted upon, in the formation of emotion, in the formation of emotion, but also of forms of conviction that fall short of, or are perhaps to one side of, that form of assent which is belief. We take it for granted that our desire has been satisfied: dreading the worst, we assume that our desire has been frustrated: we don’t want to know, and our natural optimism, or pessimism, takes over: we fall victim to suggestion.” Wollheim (1999) p. 67.
the natural some are necessary, some are natural only; and of the necessary some are necessary for happiness, others for the body’s freedom from pain, and others for life itself.” (Ep 3.127; tr. Long and Sedley). As Procopé discusses, Philodemus recognized the ambiguity of the appellation “natural” to certain forms of anger. In the first place, “natural” can refer to what is derived from our physical composition. In the second, “natural” can refer to the sense of being advantageous to us. And in the third place, “natural” can refer to what is according to the normative nature of things. In interpreting Epicurus’s distinction between natural and empty forms of anger, and the further distinction of natural anger into necessary and merely natural, Philodemus argues that Epicurus here draws a distinction between two different sorts of affect – the passion or pathos itself and the disposition or diathesis.

The passion itself (the pathos), taken separately, we declare to be an evil, since it is painful or analogous to explain; but taken in connection with the disposition, we consider that it could even be called good. For it arises from insight into the state for the nature of things and from avoiding false opinion in calculating the disadvantages and in punishing those who do harm. So, in the same way that we described empty anger as an evil, since it springs from an altogether vile disposition and brings innumerable vexations with it, we should describe natural anger as not an evil (its string is minimal in extent); and . . . we shall say that not to be susceptible to natural anger is an evil (for anyone “ill spoken of” or ill treated “who is not aroused to anger, carries the clearest mark of villainy.” (37.24-37 trans. Procopé)

In noting the distinction between the pathos and the diathesis – between the passion and the disposition – Procopé argues that [p]ain itself is bad. But not to feel pain may be worse, a sign that something is seriously wrong with you. . . . diathesis here is an intellectual factor, a tendency, much of it acquired, to see and respond to things in a certain manner. Epicurus can use the word to mean simply “way of thinking”. Thus the assertion that “empty anger springs from a bad disposition” implies not just that, if you are guilty of such anger, you must have a bad character, but that also your judgments have a way of being badly wrong, that you are given to dwelling on the enormity of the injury done to you and the attractions of getting even, exaggerating and intensifying them to the point where you overreact and create countless further vexations for yourself. Conversely, when Philodemus connects “natural” anger to
a “good” *diathesis*, he promptly specifies what he has in mind: it arises from “insight into the nature of things and freedom from false opinion” in making the punishment fit the crime.”

On Philodemus’s reading, then, we can experience the disposition of anger, in the sense that we can perceive that a wrong has been done to us and that the proper response is required, without actually experiencing the *pathos* of anger; we have, that is to say, a non-pathological way of understanding anger. In bringing up this fact about Epicurean moral psychology, I do not mean to suggest that the Epicureans were influential on Evagrius’s thought; as a school, they had long since ceased to exist, and despite the fact that they are still mentioned by Evagrius’s contemporaries, such instances are likely rhetorical jabs at “paganism” rather than critiques at a live philosophical contender. Rather, I mean to illustrate that Evagrius is not alone in understanding anger as dispositional. We find Evagrius characterizing anger as such, for instance, in the *Praktikos*, where we learn how anger begins as an instantaneous reaction to a perceived harm and then develops into a disposition that shapes how one perceives the world to be threatening beyond the original injury;

Anger is a passion that arises very quickly. Indeed, it is referred to as a boiling over of the irascible part and a movement directed against one who has done injury or is thought to have done so. It renders the soul furious all day long, but especially during prayers it seizes the mind and represents to it the face of the one who has hurt it. Sometimes when this goes on for awhile and turns into resentment, it provokes disturbances at night accompanied by wasting and pallor.

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223 We find, for instance, both Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory Nazianzen ridiculing the Epicureans in various places; see, for example, Nyssa’s *De anima et resurrectione* and Nazianzen’s *Peri pronoias*. In the absence of any known contemporary Epicureans, we might read these mentions of Epicureanism in light of the culture wars that resulted from the reign of Julian the apostate. As Peter Gilbert has noted, Julian’s reign, though brief, intensified the need for educated Christians to claim the best of classical culture for themselves while smearing classical culture as bereft of Christian revelation; given that elsewhere we find “Epicurean” likely used as an insult (derived from their purported hedonism) rather than as an actual descriptor. See, for instance, Origen’s description of the Platonist Celsus as an Epicurean in *Contra Celsum*, as discussed in Bergian (2001). On Philodemus in the New Testament world, see Fitzgerald (2004).
of the body, as well as the attacks of venomous wild beasts. One could find these four signs that follow upon resentment accompanying numerous thoughts. (*Praktikos* 11)

Here, Evagrius makes a distinction between anger as a flaring up and the sort of anger that seethes; this latter version, the seething version, is what I interpret as a disposition to anger. Because we do not necessarily *feel* this anger, we may not be aware we are subject to it. As I noted in the previous chapter, Evagrius argues that we must attend to our dreams in order to discern whether we are still angry at a person who has harmed us in the past; this is only necessary because such anger may escape our notice. Here, Wollheim’s analysis of the emotions as dispositions provides a helpful framework for thinking about how Evagrius understands the passions. Because we can experience anger either as an occurrent feeling (I am angry at the moment I perceive someone to have hurt me), or as a disposition (I am angry at that person even after I no longer am subject to a feeling of rage), we can fail to be aware of the fact that we remain angry at the person with whom we are angry. Only when that person’s image arises are we subject to the occurrent feeling, informing us that we are, in fact, still angry. The fact that Evagrius has these two ways of understanding passion perhaps, then, gives him an edge on Chrysippus, who struggled to understanding how we no longer feel a certain passion after it has lost its “freshness” despite the fact that the belief in what has aroused the passion – our belief that someone we loved is dead, for instance – remains as fixed as it was.

Where Evagrius pushes his analysis further than Wollheim is in his discussion of anger as something which extends towards objects other than the one who initially aroused our anger. We saw this above, in Evagrius’s discussion of how anger can drive a person to avoid all human contact. The experience of an occurrent feeling of anger does not only have consequences for the person who has initially aroused our anger; it produces a dispositional attitude toward
human beings in general. Moreover, anger can produce dispositional passions beyond feelings of anger – for instance, fear.\textsuperscript{224} A one-time occurring feeling of anger can therefore give rise to dispositional attitudes about our vulnerability and susceptibility to harm beyond those we feel for toward the person who originally harmed us.

The demons take on their particular significance within this understanding of passions as dispositional. In Evagrius’s descriptions of how one-time occurrences of anger become not only dispositional but global, these dispositional forms of passion, need objects – here, the apparitions the demons subject us to take the form of those dispositions. The fact that Evagrius belongs to a symbolic world populated by demons provides him with a set of concepts he uses to analyze in detail the range of emotions human beings are subject to. “‘Let the sun not go down upon our anger,’ (Eph. 4: 26) lest by night the demons come upon us to strike fear in our souls and render our minds more cowardly for the fight on the morrow. For frightful apparitions usually arise from the disturbance of the irascible part. Indeed nothing else so inclines the mind to desertion like a disturbance in the irascible part” (\textit{Praktikos} 21). Occurrent feelings of anger, in drawing our attention to our vulnerability, can produce fearful dispositions, sometimes at objects which do not even exist. As Greenspan and, following her, Taylor have both noted, there are two components to emotional content, the internal content of the passion itself, and the external content that is the particular state of affairs which make us angry.

Emotions have intentional content: they have an ‘internal object’, constitutive of the emotion, which is expressed in propositions stating the agent’s view of the given situation. To experience fearful suspicion, for example, is to feel anxious at the believed or imagined fact that some harm is about to befall one. Its intentional

\textsuperscript{224} Ewa Wipszycka has noted that the monks of this period were subject to a range of dangerous situations. Interestingly, Evagrius describes instances of fear as either brought on by animals, harm occurring to our loved ones back home, or else in very vague terms – what precisely these “fearful apparitions” are is often obscure. Here, we can understand Evagrius’s analysis of fear as a way of developing a way to respond to common monastic experiences. See Wipszycka (2009) pp. 613-650.
content makes an emotion the emotion that it is, and serves to distinguish one from the other. Emotions also have ‘external objects’ in the sense that they are directed toward a specific thing or a specific state of affairs. They have a focus, which may be actually in the world (the dog, the insulting remark) but may also be merely a piece of fantasy. (You may frighten yourself by telling yourself a ghost story.) Since ‘internal objects’ are, and ‘external objects’ are not, constitutive of the emotion itself it is clearly possible for an emotional state to have the former but lack the latter object.\textsuperscript{225}

Taylor argues that it is possible to have an internal object of anger without an external object of anger, as we find in the case of moods; “Thus a lost job may be that which a person is depressed about and a reference which explains her state. But as a mood depression is not ‘about’ any aspect of life in particular, and no particular event can be picked out as its explanation.” In Evagrius’s descriptions of resentment and fear aroused by anger, however, he uses the apparitions that arouse these passions as a way of providing for external content to the passions for the case of moods. Yet here Evagrius describes the demons as providing the external content to certain passionate states which, in the modern world, we might not think of as having intentional objects. The idea of a passion without external content does not seem to be one Evagrius considers a real possibility; dispositional passionate states like moods, however, are certainly ones he recognizes.

In suggesting that Evagrius understands certain manifestations of anger as dispositions, rather than as transient mental states, I offer a certain reading of an ancient theory of passion which differs from other discussions of the passions in antiquity. In commenting on Aristotle, for instance, Stephen Leighton observes that

\textit{our [emphasis mine] conception of emotion encompasses both emotion as a disposition and emotion as an occurrence. So, if I claim to be angry with you, I might be speaking of a disposition. Here it is unsurprising that though anger is accompanied by pain I still feel nothing. But the case is considerably different for Aristotle. When he speaks of \textit{ta pathē} he is speaking of an occurrent phenomenon}

\textsuperscript{225} Taylor (2006) p. 41.
as opposed to a disposition, state, etc. *Pathê* are not *pathê* unless they are
occurrent. In our terms Aristotle means to define the occurrence of fear and
anger, not the disposition of these.²²⁶

This is not, however, the case with Evagrius, and indeed this is why he is so concerned
with self-deception. Because we are quite capable of being angry without feeling angry, we may
not perceive that we are angry; we can expand this to the other bad thoughts as well. Moreover,
because this dispositional anger reflects a dispositional attitude about ourselves as in competition
with other human beings, therapy requires the cultivation of habits which inculcate a disposition
to help other people. Evagrius’s analysis of anger as a disposition helps us to see how his theory
of passion fits in with other monastic tropes.

5.3 Almsgiving and Hospitality

This dispositional nature of the anger – the tendency for anger to develop not just as a
reaction to a particular person over a particular wrong, but to develop into a larger worldview
populated by people, wild beasts, and demonic creatures – helps put into context Evagrius’s
prescriptions for healing the irascible part of the soul. We have already seen how Evagrius
characterizes anger as an anti-social passion. In modern thought, conciliation of anger is often
understood in terms of repentance and forgiveness, a change of heart on the part of both the
wrongdoer and the one wronged. Yet as David Konstan has noted, whether forgiveness existed
in the ancient period is debatable. In writings from the classical period, we find other ways of
understanding how one overcomes anger. In the philosophical tradition, for instance, we find the
fact that the wrongdoer often acts out of some kind of ignorance given as a justification for
exculpation. In the literary tradition Konstan traces, we find a tendency toward a conception of
conciliation as retribution or restoration of what has been taken. In looking at the Christian

tradition, he argues that “the difference between divine forgiveness, which purges sin in the way one cancels a debt, and the human decision to forsake vengeance because the offender has had a change of heart tended to inhibit the development of a fully formed notion of interpersonal forgiveness.”

Evagrius’s consideration of the conciliation of anger is interestingly different. While he does prescribe the shaking of hands between two people (Eulogios 7.7), he also argues that the extension of hospitality and almsgiving are activities that heal the thumoeidic part of the soul. As he says in On thoughts 3, for instance, “Here we should consider how the physician of souls heals the irascible part through almsgiving, purifies the mind through prayer, and in turn withers the concupiscible part through fasting.” The fact that Evagrius analyzes anger in terms of its eviscerating effects on how the monk interacts with all people, and not just a particular individual, accounts for why he understands the resolution of the disorder of the thumoeidic part of our soul to involve socially beneficial acts.

The healing of the thumoeidic part of our soul through works which benefit other human beings allows Evagrius to situate his understanding of monastic therapy within two common monastic tropes, hospitality and almsgiving. Monastic interest in these two economic activities is rather remarkable, given that being a monk allegedly meant embracing a life of poverty. As Wipszycka has noted, however, the monastic communities of the desert remained heavily

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228 In Chapter 3, I suggested that Evagrius’s prescriptions to engage in fasts and other forms of ascetic exercise were done for the purpose of teaching the appetitive part of the soul not to desire pleasure. Evagrius’s understanding of the passions as aroused by perceptions of pleasure and pain was therefore understood to be connected with why ascetic practice is efficacious. In the case of anger, however, we have a different sort of prescription; one which implies – despite Evagrius’s description of the irascible part of the soul as non-rational, like the concupiscible part – that reforming the irascible part seems to require some sort of change in attitude towards other human beings.
involved in economic activity. As a result, we find the monks engaging in more “worldly” activities than their rhetoric on poverty would perhaps admit. In her recent study of Benedictine monasticism in early England, Julie Kerr observes how, “Given that monks had, in theory, retreated from the world it may seem incongruous that hospitality should be accorded such importance, yet there were Biblical precedents, and the care of guests was closely associated with charity.” Evagrius recommends hospitality as a way of smoothing over disputes between one’s fellow monks, referring to the story of Esau and Jacob from Genesis 32:7; “Gifts extinguish resentment: let the example of Jacob convince you of this, for he beguiled Esau with gifts when he was coming out to meet him with four hundred men. But since we are poor, let us make up for our poverty by the hospitality of the table.” In the Eulogios 24.26, Evagrius also makes reference to the story of Abraham and the angels.

Care for other human beings was also expressed through almsgiving, which was understood by Evagrius as having a major role to play in the reformation of the thumoeidic part of the soul. As a number of scholars have recently argued, almsgiving was a major rhetorical trope in late antique Christian thought and writing about Christian identity. Peter Brown has argued for an interpretation in which the almsgiving became the Christian equivalent to the

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230 Kerr (2007) p. 3

231 It should be noted that Pontus, was known for its prôchotropheia, places for “nourishing the poor,” that served as some of Byzantine’s earliest hospitals. See Brown (2002) pp. 3. As Brown writes, “Monks were not to retreat into the wilderness as asocial hermits or as wandering charismatic groups. Rather, they were to take care of the poor and, by the example of their own poverty, to spur the rich to greater giving. No longer confined to the fringes of society, monasteries devoted to poor relief were to be set up in cities and in villages” Brown (2002) pp. 36.
patron-client relationship, though this view has been criticized.\textsuperscript{232} That almsgiving presented an important occasion for reflection on the emotions has recently been observed by Paul Blowers, who has traced the widespread discussion of pity in late antiquity, noting how Basil, Lactantius, John Chrysostom, Augustine, and others were concerned with almsgiving as an expression of pity.\textsuperscript{233} Given that monks have given up their worldly goods, the idea of monastic almsgiving may appear counterintuitive. As Finn notes, monks sometimes acted as middlemen by distributing goods to the poor, though this threatened the monks’ rejection of worldly affairs. As a result, the practice of distributing goods the monks had themselves produced was often preferable. Even this ostensibly selfless act, however, was fraught with political implications; because of the long-standing power struggles between many monks and bishops, the fact that both monk and bishops could gain support of the lower class could lead to some competition in the arena of almsgiving.\textsuperscript{234}

Evagrius’s account of the strategies through which anger is resolved does, however, give us a sense of the implications of his view that an occurrent feeling of anger at a particular individual over a particular event, if strong enough, can give rise to a disposition of resentment or fear directed at human beings in general. I feel angry at a perceived wound inflicted by another; I perceive myself therefore to be vulnerable; I perceive myself as inhabiting a threatening world, where danger lurks at every corner. Therapy therefore requires that we root out the general disposition to perceive all human beings as potentially threatening; we do this by

\textsuperscript{232} There have been a number of important studies in into early Christian attitudes toward poverty; see Leyerle (1994), Brown (2002), Holman (2001 and (2008), Dunn (2004), and Finn (2006). On class in the Roman empire, see Garnsey (1970).

\textsuperscript{233} Blowers (2010).

\textsuperscript{234} Finn (2006).
opening up our habitations and our possessions to those who have need of them. The fact that almsgiving is primary targeted at the anti-social tendencies in human behaviour is overlooked by Brakke, who understands it primarily as an activity meant to prevent the monk from avarice. Indeed, in other patristic writings, we find an association between avarice and almsgiving, as Leyerle notes in the case of Chrysostom.\textsuperscript{235} Interestingly, however, in Evagrius we do not find this connection between almsgiving and avarice. Rather, almsgiving, like hospitality, appears to be understood within a larger context of altering one’s dispositions toward human beings in general, a remedy which is affective only because anger is itself a disposition which has globalizing tendencies once it has transformed into resentment.\textsuperscript{236}

5.4 Anger, Prayer, and Immateriality

In Chapter 3, we saw how sadness is associated with the other vices, for the monk experiences this particular vice because his is subject to a desire for something else; the monk experiences sadness because he has fallen prey to gluttony, lust, vainglory, and so forth, and his desire for food, sex, adulthood, and so forth has been frustrated; “Just as a spring that purifies itself of the surrounding material elements flows with clear water, so too the mind that purifies itself of anger, resentment, and bodily concern discovers pure knowledge and produces a sweet longing in the one who has acquired it” (\textit{Exhortation to Monks.} 2.15). It is worth noting, then, that the vice of anger is dependent upon appetite in a way that it is not for Aristotle, who indeed distinguishes anger and appetite. As discussed, this has a negative impact on our relationships

\textsuperscript{235} Leyerle (1994).

\textsuperscript{236} Anderson’s argument that almsgiving is primarily directed at alleviating the debt of sin requires nuance; Evagrius illustrates that approaches to almsgiving are more diverse than Anderson’s argument allows for. See Anderson (2009) pp. 135-151.
with other people, whom we may perceive as competitors for things we want; but it also hinders our ability to achieve contemplative prayer.

Anger at the harm we perceive ourselves to have experienced because our desires for objects other than noetic contemplation reinforces our desire for those things; as a result, the intellect is distracted and so will not be able to achieve the disassociation with the body necessary for imageless prayer. This “thickening of the intellect” is described by Evagrius in vivid detail; throughout *On eight thoughts*, Evagrius describes anger as a kind of smoke over the mind. “The forming of a mist thickens the air; the movement of irascibility thickens the intellect of the angry person” (*On eight thoughts* 4.5; cf 4.6). By redirecting one’s attention away from God, anger inhibits prayer; “Remove thoughts of anger from your soul, and let not irascibility lodge in your heart, and you will not be troubled at the time of prayer. In the same way as the smoke from chaff irritates the eyes, so does resentment irritate the mind in the time of prayer” (*On eight thoughts* 4.16; cf. *On Prayer* 27 and 64, *KG* 6.63).

Here, we find Evagrius drawing upon the language of sense perception in order to describe noetic prayer and the obstacles to it. As we have already seen, the idea of spiritual perception to describe noetic contemplation is one which both pagan and Christian philosophers drew upon. The passion of anger is a consequence of the fact that the monk’s attention is drawn towards, rather than away, from material things; this accounts for why the monk who has not adequately disassociated himself from the body acts in arrogance in attempting to engage in contemplative prayer.

One still entangled in sins and occasions of anger, who shamelessly dares to aspire to the knowledge of more divine things or who even embarks on immaterial prayer, let him receive the rebuke of the Apostle, that it is dangerous for him to pray with head bare and uncovered (1 Cor. 11: 5): for he says, ‘Such a soul ought to have on its head a sign of authority because of the angels present’ (cf. 1 Cor. 11: 10), in being clothed with fitting modesty and humility. (*On Prayer* 145)
5.5 Conclusion

This examination of anger helps us identify the so-called Freudian element of Evagrius’s thought that Foucault has an awareness of, but does not quite correctly articulate. As we saw in the previous chapter, what passion we are subject to is information which is not immediately available to us; we must observe our reactions to our mental representations as they come into our mind. Considering how Evagrius has an obscurely articulated theory of the passions as dispositions, however, helps us to account for why we cannot just feel our passions. We might be angry without feeling angry at a particular instant; we might be lustful without feeling lustful at this moment in time. Only by observing how we react to representations of someone who has angered us, or a sexually desirable body, can we determine if we suffer from these dispositions.

This, however, means that the concepts of subjectivity that underlie Evagrius’s discussions about the significance of the examination of mental representations for moral progress is quite different from what we find in other such discussions. In Plato’s elenchus and in Epictetus’s thought, we examine our representations to see if they are true or false. Elsewhere, we do find treatments of how we direct our attention. In Stoicism, for instance, we find discussions of pre-rehearsal, where we practice imagining ourselves in certain situations so that we are mentally prepared for them; one might take this as an exercise in our ability to apply certain propositions to certain situations. In Epicureanism, on the other hand, we are exhorted to redirect our attention in such a manner as to prevent ourselves from dwelling on present pain. In the case of Evagrius, however, he is concerned not with where we ought to direct our attention, but with discerning where we do, in fact, direct our attention. In the previous chapter, we saw how Evagrius understands passions to persist through time when our mind dwells on certain memories. As we look at Evagrius’s discussion of anger more closely, we find that these
persisting memories result in globalized dispositions; a certain perceived wound will lead us to feel anger not only at the person who inflicted it, but to perceive ourselves as threatened by human beings and animals alike, such that we shun the company of human beings. Glenn Most, in contrasting the characterization of anger in Salmon Rushdie’s *Fury* to the characterization of anger in Greek literature, writes that “no one in antiquity ever even hinted that Achilles’ notoriously excessive anger might have been the result of his having had an unhappy childhood.” In commenting on Most’s assessment, Konstan concurs that “[i]n general this is how the ancients understood the process of character formation – marked not by ruptures but by continuity, in which traits visible in childhood persist or become accentuated over time.”

Evagrius does not, of course, give a kind of significance to specifically childhood experiences. He does, however, provide a theory of the passion according to which past experience, rather than innate character, gives rise to dispositional passions and attitudes, which can take as their subject more than the object responsible for them. While Evagrius, of course, does not have a technical concept of projection, this idea that moral therapy derives from the need to investigate to determine how past psychological wounds are formative for our present passionate state distinguishes Evagrius’s theory of self-examination from the self-examination before him.

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238 Konstan (2010) p. 167
Conclusion: A Technological Critique

I have here argued that the idea of self-examination as Evagrius articulated it within his theory of the vices reflects a concern with the moral implications of one’s past experience, rather with one’s false representational cognition. Rather than a treatment of whether our mental representations accurately represent morally relevant facts — that is, whether these representations correctly represent the large and the small (as we find in Republic X), or whether they contain propositions which will produce passions or not, depending on whether those representations are true or false (as we find in Stoicism) — we find Evagrius concerned with how memories of previous pleasures and pains direct the attention of our intellect by leading it to dwell on the sorts of things that caused the previous pleasure or pain. Only by observing our mental representations in order to discern how these previous experiences cause us to dwell on certain sorts of objects can we engage in the ascetic exercises appropriate to our particular moral weaknesses. By successfully doing so, we can engage in contemplative, imageless prayer. This concern with what we direct our attention toward is not distinctive to Evagrius — we find it both in Stoic discussions of pre-rehearsal, in which we prepare ourselves for events that convention teaches us are misfortunes by rehearsing them in our imaginations, and in Epicurean discussions of how we ought to direct our attention away from painful things. What distinguishes Evagrius’s discussions from these is that while the Stoic and Epicurean treatments are concerned with present and future events, Evagrius is concerned with working out how past memories of experiences we have had impacts our moral character. While this attention to idiosyncratic experiences should not be confused with the self-consciousness of a will, it does reflect a shift in thought on psychology from what we saw in the Socratic elenchus and the thought of Epictetus to one which is less concerned with vice as a kind of false cognition.
In characterizing the idea of “taking care of oneself” as he understood it to evolve from Plato’s *Alcibiades* to authors like Seneca and Epictetus, Foucault describes it as an ascent toward one’s “true self”;

Attending to oneself is therefore not just a momentary preparation for living; it is a form of living. Alcibiades realized that he must take care of himself if he meant to attend to others. Now it becomes a matter of attending to oneself, for oneself: one should be, for oneself and throughout one’s existence, one’s own object. Hence the idea of conversion to oneself (*ad se convertere*), the idea of an existential impulse by which one turns upon oneself (*eis heauto epistrephein*). Of course, the theme of the *epistrophê* is a typically Platonic one. But, as one may have already seen in the *Alcibiades*, the impulse by which the soul turns to itself is draw “aloft” — toward the divine element, toward the essences and the supracelestial world where they are visible. The turning that Seneca, Plutarch, and Epictetus urge people to accomplish is a kind of turning in place: it has no other end or outcome than to settle into oneself, to “take up residence in oneself” and to remain there.  

According to Foucault, this idea that taking care of oneself involved ascending back into one’s “divine self” continued into the tradition of Egyptian monasticism. Yet for Foucault, we find a significant difference here between the exhortation for one to take care of oneself — an exhortation that required one to know oneself — as it appeared in Stoicism and as it appeared in the Egyptian tradition of self-examination, which he claims manifested a particular concern with verbalizing one’s bad thoughts. In telling one’s spiritual father one’s bad thoughts,

you show that, in permanently verbalizing your thoughts and permanently obeying the master, you are renouncing your will and yourself. . . . This theme of self-renunciation is very important. Throughout Christianity there is a correlation between disclosure of the self, dramatic or verbalized, and the renunciation of the self. My hypothesis from looking at these two techniques is that it’s the second one, verbalization, which becomes the more important.  

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240 Foucault (1988b).
Foucault argues that Egyptian confession was the precursor to Freudian psychoanalysis. The alleged connection between psychoanalysis and confession has been cited and discussed by a number of scholars.\textsuperscript{241} Yet this reading of ancient thought has also been disputed. On the side of patristics scholarship, Elizabeth Clark has pointed out that this emphasis on the verbalization of bad thoughts simply does not appear in the writings of Evagrius. “I would gloss Athanasius' famous line that the popularity of asceticism had made ‘the desert a city’; the ‘city’ it became, I would argue, shares slightly more with ancient Athens, but perhaps somewhat less with \textit{fin de siècle} Vienna, than Foucault himself imagined.”\textsuperscript{242} On the side of Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic philosophy, Brad Inwood has offered a forceful critique against Foucault’s interpretation of Seneca in his denial that we have a distinction between a self which is subject to certain beliefs and experiences and a separate, true self.\textsuperscript{243} Alexander Nehamas, for his part, has challenged the particulars of Foucault’s reading of the \textit{Apology} and the \textit{Phaedo},\textsuperscript{244} while Christopher Gill has offered an account of ancient ethics which is closer to an “objective” rather that a “subjective” construal of psychology; that is to say,

Greek psychological thinking characterizes distinctively human action in ‘objective’ (non-subject-centered terms), for instance, as motivated by reasons (roughly, beliefs) and reasoning, rather than by conscious acts of will. Also, human beings are sometimes presented as functionally adapted to participate in interpersonal and communal relationships, and, in the process, to shape and transform the beliefs which inform desires, emotions, and actions. This process of development is conceived as yielding, ultimately, full human rationality (being fully ‘reason-rulled’), a state which is seen as amenable to objective determination. This process is sometimes presented in culminating in objective ethical

\textsuperscript{241} Brakke (2005), Tsakiridis (2010).
\textsuperscript{242} Clark (1988) p. 641.
\textsuperscript{243} Inwood (2005) Ch. 12.
\textsuperscript{244} Nehamas (2000) Ch. 6.
knowledge, of a kind that both contributes to the shaping of desires, emotions, and actions, and provides the only secure basis for determining what constitutes full human rationality.\textsuperscript{245}

Note the striking difference between Gill’s characterization of Greek psychology as concerned with acquiring objective ethical reasoning and Foucault’s characterization of the \textit{epimeleia heautou} tradition as a retreat to “the self.” Here, I have suggested here that what we find in Epictetus is a moral psychology which is closer to Gill’s description than to Foucault’s, insofar as the exhortation to examine one’s mental representations is an exhortation to determine whether one’s beliefs about what is good for one are true or false, rather than an exhortation to retreat to some sort of divine, true self; while this is an important theme for other authors, perhaps most forcefully (though certainly not exclusively) Plotinus, I have defended here the claim that it does not characterize Evagrius’s thought; while Evagrius is concerned with how ascetic practice helps us to become ideal knowers, he does not describe the ideal knower in terms of \textit{self}-intellection, as Plotinus does; the ideal knower knows God, but this knowledge is not characterized as self-reflexive.

Foucault is, I think, correct in identifying a concern to examine one’s own idiosyncratic dispositions in the discussions of self-examination as they are found in the monastic tradition exemplified by Evagrius. Yet he is wrong in his misidentification of what is historically significant about this transition. We do not find in Evagrius a particular emphasis on the \textit{verbalization} of one’s bad thoughts, despite Foucault’s claims. What seems to be the relevant shift, rather, is a concern with becoming aware of how one is affected by one’s idiosyncratic memories. Doing so requires that we examine our mental contents in order to determine how our idiosyncratic embodied experience has shaped our own dispositional desires. While earlier

authors were concerned with the role played by education in shaping one’s moral character, the concern to determine how one’s memories direct one’s attention toward certain things, rather than to determine whether our mental representations are true or false, reflects something of a departure from what Gill characterizes as the objectivist account of moral psychology; what we find here is not a concern with false reasoning, but a concern with cognitions which are inferior to noetic cognition but which are not veridically thick enough to count as such false reasoning.

Looking at how Evagrius treats the theme of examination has required that we look at how he reworks the way in which imagination gives rise to passion. While we find in Plato and Epictetus (and perhaps in Aristotle, it should be noted) discussions of how moral failure is, either in whole (for Epictetus) or in part (in Republic X, the Philebus, and the Timaeus), a failure of our capacities for phantasia to accurately represent the world, Evagrius is less concerned with whether our imaginations accurately depict what is good than he is with how our mental representations redirect our attention toward certain things, either pleasures or traumas which turn our attention away from the goal of imageless prayer. While Evagrius has an understanding of imagination which is cognitively thinner than the concepts of imagination employed by earlier authors, such as Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, this fact allows him to develop a concept of vice that was at hand when later authors began considering how what is relevant to moral psychology is not our true-or-false cognitions alone.

In looking at how Evagrius’s theory of asceticism fits into such a psychology, I consider this project part of an ongoing discussion about how to understand ascetic practices in late antiquity as morally therapeutic. One of the discussions which has shaped studies on late antique asceticism is the issue of whether ascetic practice overturns or reaffirms social norms. The former is a view whose roots lie in the thought of Frederick Nietzsche, who argued in Genealogy
of Morals and other works that Christian ascetic practice was a way of overturning Greco-Roman aristocratic values. Foucault, on the other hand, claimed in his History of Sexuality that ascetic practices reinforce the dominant ideology. These two poles have shaped substantially the way in which late antique practice is framed.  

Against the approach that understands Christian ascetic practices almost exclusively in terms of social power relations, Caroline Walker Bynum has argued that studies of asceticism need to incorporate the full range of human experience which ascetic practice is intended to make sense of; she argues this in the context of her work on the role of religious feasting and fasting for medieval Christian women’s attempts to take control of their bodies by taking control of their food intake. Amy Hollywood has in some ways departed from and expanded upon Bynum’s approach by considering medieval Christian ascetic discourse (particularly in the writings of Margueritte Porete, Mechtild of Magdeburg, and Meister Eckhart) as concerned with the annihilation of the will; here again, ascetic discourse is not strictly about social power relations (though culture obviously influences the way one understands concepts like “self-will”). This opposition between considering asceticism as concerned with the body, or as concerned with psychological experience, perhaps reflects the tendency to consider soul and body as the dualism many of our authors are concerned with; this is perhaps the product of the fact that scholars continue to work in the body/soul dualism Dale Martin has so famously problematized. One of the problems with Martin’s work on this subject, however, is that in arguing against the tendency to take a facile approach to the body/soul relationship in ancient

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texts, he overemphasizes the distance between ancient and modern authors.\textsuperscript{249} In arguing, for instance, against what he takes to be the view that the “dualism” which informs the thought of scholars of the ancient period is a Cartesian, and therefore modern, notion, Martin fails to appreciate the fact that Descartes would have been heavily influenced by Platonism and Plotinus.\textsuperscript{250} While Martin correctly diagnoses a problem, his understanding of what he identifies as “Cartesian dualism” as distinctively modern fails to capture the relevant distinctions between ancient and modern thought.

I propose that in the case of authors who have been significantly influenced by Platonism, such as Evagrius,\textsuperscript{251} we can understand the aspects of “selfhood” that concern at least some authors of late antique monastic and ascetic writings by employing Gerson’s distinction between the “endowed self” and the “ideal self.” As I have observed considering the beleaguered question of the “dualism” of Platonism, Gerson has suggested that the relevant distinction for Plato is not the difference between the body and the soul, but the difference between the incarnate and the disincarnate soul.\textsuperscript{252} In considering Plotinus’s thought on selfhood, Gerson has argued that we find in Plotinus a juxtaposition between an “ideal” self, the disincarnate soul, and the endowed self, the soul that, while embodied, subject to embodiment and the various occurrent states that go with it, pleasures and pains, emotions, beliefs, and so forth.\textsuperscript{253} \textit{Mutatis mutandis}, I believe a similar distinction can be applied in the thought of late antique authors, at

\textsuperscript{249} Martin (1995) Ch. 1; for studies that have been influenced by Martin’s work, see Shaw (1998) and Smith (2008).

\textsuperscript{250} On the relationship between Plotinus and Descartes, see Rappe (2006).

\textsuperscript{251} Syrian asceticism is the product of a significantly different intellectual environment, and I do not here take up the issue of whether this distinction between the endowed and the ideal self can meaningfully be applied to that corpus of literature without serious emendations. See Murray (1975) and Harvey and Brock (1987).

\textsuperscript{252} Gerson (2006) p. 35.

\textsuperscript{253} Gerson (1994) pp. 146-151.
least those operating within a cultural heritage similar to the later Platonists (I leave out here Syrian asceticism, which is closer to a Semitic than a Greek worldview). While many early Christians were committed to the view that the resurrected soul is incarnate in a luminous body (though whether Evagrius is one of them remains to be seen), the resurrected individual is nevertheless not subject to the sorts of occurrent experiences the soul is subject to when it is in its present, fleshly state. More work, however, is required in order to substantiate my suggestion that this difference is helpful for thinking about late antique asceticism more broadly.

The work I have done here has left many other issues unexplored. My suggestion that Origen’s theory of soul anticipates the concept of the will invites us to look at whether Origen may have had some direct influence on Augustine. The extent to which the psychologies of both Origen and Evagrius impacted authors in the medieval period also requires further study. And one interesting issue which I have had to leave aside for my current study has been the question of how mystical texts like the Kephalia Gnostica are constructed in ways that are analogous to the construction of works like the various treatises of the Enneads, or Clement’s Stromateis. These questions I leave for other occasions.
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