Hermeneutical *Cosmotheoria* & the Experience of God in Origen of Alexandria

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of St. Michael’s College and the Graduate Centre for Theological Studies of the Toronto School of Theology. In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology awarded by the University of St. Michael's College

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Doctor of Philosophy in Theology

University of St. Michael’s College

2017

Abstract

The impetus of this study is grounded in the fundamental question: *What is it that Origen is doing in his works?* Knowledge of the Trinity and knowledge of creation are ranked first and second by Origen as “supreme functions of knowledge,” while “knowledge and understanding of oneself” is set beside this as the “height of spiritual knowledge and blessedness.” Any attempt to get to the heart of Origen’s thought must bear these foundational premises in mind. Knowledge stands between the Trinity and creation – a centre of consciousness in human being. A narrative of meaning is expressed from out of this centre, as Origen looks to either side and reveals himself to be a profoundly hermeneutical thinker. Stating explicitly that Scripture serves as “elementary rudiments of and very brief introductions to all knowledge,” Origen begins with these rudiments, and applies them to history in the experience of divinity in divine-human relations encountered in matrices of being, reason, and grace.

The relation between God and the subject, operative in the threefold dynamic of being, reason, and grace, constitutes the foundational strata and conceptual nexus through which

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1 Origen, *CSong* 2.5.
Origen’s thought is best explored. Approaching his thought in this light enables the reader to grasp the conceptual wholism, the parsing of the disparity of the world into a unified vision, which is so unique and so characteristic of Origen’s thought.

The experience of being, reason, and grace points beyond to the Persons who are those qualities in essence, and who express the possibility of being, knowing, and grace. A hermeneutical circle is set in motion as one garners knowledge of the Trinity, creation, and self. Divine-human relations and all experience of the world are parsed by means of a Trinitarian hermeneutic – a *cosmotheoria* – through which the world is revealed to be a dynamic and cosmos of possibility in which one experiences a reification of divine will.
For my sister, Trudy Gibson
1965 - 1999

βλέπομεν γὰρ ἃρτι δι’ ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίματι, τότε δὲ πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον· ἃρτι γινώσκω ἐκ μέρους, τότε δὲ ἐπιγνώσομαι καθὼς καὶ ἐπεγνώσθην
Acknowledgements

I extend particular thanks to the thesis supervisor, Dr. Jaroslav Skira of Regis College. Dr. Skira was trusting and respectful enough to keep me on a frightfully long leash, and wise and vigilant enough to quickly and decisively shorten it when he saw that disaster was imminent. I also kindly thank each of the advisors who were involved in the stages and processes of course work, comprehensive examinations, and thesis proposal and defence: Rev. Dr. T. Allan Smith of the University of St. Michael’s College and the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, Rev. Dr. Scott Lewis of Regis College, Rev. Dr. Gordon Rixon of Regis College, and Dr. Peter Martens of Saint Louis University, who served as External Examiner at the thesis defence, and Dr. James Ginther, who acted as Chair. Special thanks to Dr. Gary D. Badcock of Huron University College who was first in fostering my fascination for theology. I thank also Emil Iruhlayathas, Student Services Officer at my home college of Saint Michael’s, and Dr. David Wagschal, Administrator and Assistant Registrar at the Graduate Centre for Theological Studies at the Toronto School of Theology. The patience and insight of Emil and David have been for me an unceasing source of amazement and wonder. If this thesis possesses any merit, it is due to the diligent and critical oversight of all of the fine persons listed here – all remaining questionable material is attributable only to myself.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>Against Celsus</td>
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<tr>
<td>CJn</td>
<td>Commentary on John</td>
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<td>CLam</td>
<td>Commentary on Lamentations</td>
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<td>CProv</td>
<td>Commentary on Proverbs</td>
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<td>CRom</td>
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<td>CSong</td>
<td>Commentary on the Song of Songs</td>
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<td>DH</td>
<td>Dialogue with Heracleides</td>
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<td>On Prayer</td>
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<td>PA</td>
<td>On First Principles</td>
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<td>PP</td>
<td>Treatise on the Passover</td>
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## Works of Philo

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<td>On the Eternity of the World</td>
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<td>On Husbandry</td>
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<td>Cher</td>
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<td>Fug</td>
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.i) General Introduction

A great deal of scholarship on Origen has been concerned with his style of exegesis. While this is certainly an important topic, the scholar runs a risk of overlooking the expansive grandeur of Origen’s works, of never arriving at a fuller understanding of the heart of the Alexandrian’s thought, until sufficient attention has been given to certain more fundamental strata of his works. These strata are the grounds upon which and out of which Origen’s thought proceeds toward the elaborate yet cohesive whole of his vision. I do not believe these strata can be sufficiently revealed solely through examination of Origen’s methods of exegesis, but must instead turn to hermeneutics. By way of provisional definition, I will say that where exegesis is critical, proceeding by way of methodical explanation of texts, hermeneutics is poetic, in the sense of the Greek root – ποιεῖν – to create. Hermeneutics creates for its reader. Exegesis works to draw out (ἐκ + ἑγεσθαι). It draws out from form and structure, from what an author and/or redactor does with words, and from consideration of social, cultural, and historical contexts. Exegesis is directed outward; hermeneutics, inward. Hermeneutics works to interpret, it works with the text in a bid to arrive at a possible meaning for the reader. Exegesis is methodical, systematic reading; hermeneutics is dynamic, relational encounter. Reading as exegetical enterprise is only the beginning in Origen’s thought. The grandeur of Origen’s thought comes to form through divine-human relations which are revealed through a dialectical, hermeneutical encounter between the world of the text and that of the reader, in which the text is brought to a world, and a world brought to the text.

The three fundamental strata with which Origen sets out to parse the experience of the world are: being-itself, reason, and grace. These are the aspects which both constitute and mediate the experiential nature of divine-human relations. In Origen’s thought, the dynamic
relationship between God and human being is parsed at every turn, at every expression. It is
Origen’s unrelenting focus and emphasis on this experiential relationship that imbues it with
such passion. The essence of divine-human relations is one of deep possibility and giftedness,
from the primary level of being-itself, to the higher levels of the experience of transformative
grace.

In Origen’s thought, this relationship is a thoroughly experiential, hermeneutical,
Trinitarian relation. The relation touches every facet of being and experience, through the
foundational premise that all of being is a cosmic reification of the divine will. All of being
speaks of the relation between divine will and being-itself. The threefold parameters of divine-
human relation consist of: 1) the foundation of being-itself; 2) the dynamism of knowing and
reason; 3) the transformative fusion of grace and will. This model is found in texts as early as
First Principles and as late as Contra Celsum, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, and
the later extant chapters of the Commentary on the Gospel of John. It is a model at which Origen
arrived early in his literary career, and to which he held throughout, including his final extant
works.

There is operative in this stratum a dynamic of divine-human engagement in experience
over and above a theology or exegesis which is detached from this immersive foundation – and
over and above a philosophy which is detached from the world and turns instead to the purely
abstract and remote, to forms or ideas. What is at odds here can be illustrated though the senses
of the adjectives “abstract” and “immersive.” In the abstract, one draws away from (ab = away,
away from, out of + trahere = to draw, to drag). With the immersive, one steps (and hence is
steeped) into (in = in + mergere = to dip, to merge). The former is excursive – it is, at best,
digressive – strictly speaking, it is deviant. The latter is convergent – it is unitive, it draws
together. Origen turns immersively to the world and history; others turn away.
The dynamic of divine-human relation – and its corollary engagement in experience – is deeply hermeneutical in Origen’s thought. In Origen’s thought, hermeneutics isn’t reduced to a mere method or discipline. Hermeneutics involves the illustrative and constitutive engagement of historical experience in matrices of creation, reason, and grace, through which logos becomes participatory in the conscious subject. The sort of engagement that Origen proposes throughout all of his work is a presentiment of the engagement which governs contemporary philosophical hermeneutics. Many parallels can be found between the former and latter, but for the present work, three touchpoints can be noted. First, there is throughout Origen’s works a deep reflection on the nature of being itself. Sometimes this reflection is quite explicit, at other times it is present as an undercurrent just below the surface of any given focus for reflection. Second, there is an operative dialogue between horizons, some of which are borrowed quite directly, some are appropriated after some adjustment, while others are soundly and robustly rejected. Third, there is a very deep and robust emphasis on the necessity of appropriation, of living what one has come to believe, of a poetic/metanoietic encounter with creation. While the first two

3 In his exegetical pursuits, on the other hand, Origen was an exemplary methodological and disciplined thinker. The system of his Hexapla, his attention to lexical analysis, and his attention to the role of genre continue to inform exegesis in contemporary scholarship.


5 The notion of the fusing of horizons is associated with the philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer. Horizons are essential tools which govern and inform understanding. They are historical and contextual in essence. The “horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. There is no more an isolated horizon of the present in itself than there are historical horizons which have to be acquired. Rather, understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves.” Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 1993) 306-7. Italics Gadamer’s.

6 The dynamic of appropriation is most closely associated with the philosophy of Paul Ricoeur. In Ricoeur’s thought, appropriation functions as a counterpart to distanciation – the notion that a text becomes autonomous once it has been expressed. This autonomy is productive, or poetic. It is responsorial. A newness emerges for the reader/hearer via the dialectic between distanciation and appropriation. See Paul Ricoeur, “Appropriation” in Hermeneutics & the Human Sciences (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 182-193. See also Christophe Potworowski, “Origen’s Hermeneutics in Light of Paul Ricoeur,” Origeniana Quinta: Historica - Text and Method - Biblica - Philosophica - Theologica - Origenism and Later Developments (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992) 161-66.
points are for Origen somewhat ancillary, this latter point is for Origen the *sine qua non* of Biblical experience.

The theological relation between God and the subject, operative in the threefold dynamic of being, reason, and grace, constitutes the foundational strata and conceptual nexus through which divine-human relations in Origen’s thought are best explored. The power of the wholism and the unified vision which issues out of Origen’s reflections on these relations sets Origen apart from his contemporaries, and from those who came after. It is the *je ne sais quoi* which the vigilant reader senses when taking up Origen’s texts. Origen’s vision of the world cannot be grasped apart from this foundation. If a reader of Origen does not see that the Alexandrian is interpreting the world, there might arise suspicion of his notion of history. Over against such myopic readings, I see Origen’s thought as an epistemological inversion of the sort of thought which leads inevitably to a misreading; a correct reading of Origen will see that it isn’t the world (*sc.* ‘history’) which gives the Christian mystery its meaning; instead, the Christian mystery, articulated in the intersection of being, reason, and grace, gives history its meaning.

1.ii) Survey of Secondary Literature

The secondary literature dedicated to the study of Origen is unmanageably immense, and therefore some limitation must be made on the material to be considered here. I will confine my survey of secondary literature to those works of the 20th (and 21st) century which deal specifically with the core object of hermeneutics, which I define here provisionally as the concern for meaning. In other words, I will here concern myself primarily with those works which focus on the engaged history of the reader in which there is a seeking after the “usefulness” of the Scriptures.7

7 In Origen’s notion of the “usefulness” of Scripture, one gets a glimpse of the wholism that issues from such an understanding. In the superabundance of divine grace, the usefulness is ubiquitous. “We cannot say of the Holy Spirit’s writings,” as Origen puts it, “that there is anything useless [*otiosum*] or superfluous [*superfluum*] in them.”
The work of Henri de Lubac marks a significant turning point in scholarship on Origen, in a number of important ways. De Lubac reads Origen on his own terms, rather than those of modernity. De Lubac anticipates an important theme which Hans-Georg Gadamer would develop a decade later, namely, the necessity of judging as false any claim and presumption to objectivity on the part of a reader – a central notion in contemporary philosophical hermeneutics – which must give way to the reality and risk involved in interpretation. “Thought” particularly that of authors removed from readers in time, place, and circumstance, “has an interior that historicism is obliged to disregard.”

De Lubac also anticipates the participatory dynamic of reading which has been emphasized by Paul Ricoeur. De Lubac emphasizes the dialogical dynamic of Scripture as essentially a sacramental call which awaits a response. For Origen,

[Scripture] is a word, which is to say, the start of a dialogue. It is addressed to someone from whom it awaits a response. More precisely, it is God who offers himself through it, and he awaits more than a response: a return movement.

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8 History and Spirit: The Understanding of Scripture According to Origen (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007).

9 Unlike Charles Bigg (The Christian Platonists of Alexandria: The 1886 Bampton Lectures. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913) who proposed: “If we measure him by the best modern commentators, we may be struck by his deficiencies” (Bigg, 132).

10 “To reach the heart of a vigorous thought, nothing is as inadequate as a certain pretension to pure objectivity. If we want to have any chance of understanding it, even as a mere historian, it is necessary, whether we like it or not, to explain to ourselves what we read; it is necessary to translate, to interpret. . . . Truly illuminating analysis is neither a photograph nor a material summary. . . . Thought is not rediscovered in the same way as a fact is reconstructed.” De Lubac, History and Spirit, 13.

11 De Lubac, History and Spirit, 13. This is in contrast to Eugene De Faye (Origen and His Work. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2011 – originally published in 1929), who on one hand says that Origen “never troubled himself to discover and emphasize the thought of the sacred author, his real feelings or particular opinions,” (37), but on the other hand voices skepticism of the integrity of Rufinus’ translations of Origen since “To understand his author, the translator would have had to transfer himself to a time more than a century and a half gone by” (36). De Faye proposes that Origen sought to justify his own theology, discovering in the Bible only “his own teaching on God and providence, his Christological doctrine . . . [etc]; in short, an entire system of ‘dogmas’ of which the sacred authors never dreamt” (37-8).

12 De Lubac, History and Spirit, 347.
De Lubac’s definition of Scripture here highlights his close reading of Origen’s emphasis on the relation between the incarnate Word and the scriptural word. This is a “word” who “offers himself through it,” awaiting not merely a response, but an engagement, a “return movement.” One does not merely read the histories contained within its pages, but shapes one’s own history through response in the form of return movement. The pages of Scripture are only the “start of a dialogue,” and the reader is to continue the same in one’s own history spoken in the semantics of action and decision. In fact, de Lubac contends:

He alone understands it, who, in the unity of its divine intention, carries out the movement of conversion to which God was inviting him through these words.\(^{13}\)

De Lubac’s reading of Origen’s notions of history and his use of allegory are given treatment which is in accord with some developments in philosophical hermeneutics which were coming to the fore in the \textit{ressourcement} of the \textit{nouvelle théologie} to which the term “sacramental ontology” has recently been aptly applied.\(^{14}\) A sacramental nature informs all of creation. Speaking of the necessity of interpreting the soul itself, de Lubac adds:

But it is not only the soul, it is also the entire universe that must be the subject of a spiritual interpretation. For there is also a certain kind of fundamental unity between the universe and Scripture.”\(^{15}\)

The fundamental unity is the common and sacramental bond of createdness, and of the divine will which is contained within and revealed throughout the same.

\(^{13}\) De Lubac, \textit{History and Spirit}, 347.

\(^{14}\) With words that could serve also as an apt description of Origen’s thought in general, Hans Boersma defines nouvelle théologie in this way: “Nouvelle théologie was, more than anything else, a return to mystery: created realities were sacraments (sacramenta) that pointed to and participated in spiritual mysteries or sacramental realities (res). . . all of existence – nature and the supernatural – was connected by way of an overall sacramental ontology.” Boersma, “Analogy of Truth: The Sacramental Epistemology of \textit{Nouvelle Théologie},” in \textit{Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth – Century Catholic Theology}, Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 160-61. Origen himself refers to the Gospel as a “sacramentum” in \textit{HLk} 21.1.

\(^{15}\) De Lubac, \textit{History and Spirit}, 401.
As indicated by his book’s title, de Lubac focuses his intention on Origen’s reading of Scripture, the heart and spirit of which is found not in solving the riddle of the relation of allegory to history, but in the Alexandrian’s “world view,” which has emerged from out of his understanding of Scripture. De Lubac rightly discerns that in Origen’s thought there was a coming-to-be of reflective self-awareness. The fruits of this reflective turn are precisely where history and spirit come together in a syncretism toward meaning.

A riposte to de Lubac came 9 years after the publication of History and Spirit, in the counterthrust of R. P. C. Hanson’s Allegory & Event. In his introduction, Hanson begins with the question:

Has the interpretation of the Bible as it is practiced today anything seriously in common with the interpretation of the Bible as Origen, and indeed as the early Church generally, practiced it?

Hanson does not reveal precisely what he means by Biblical interpretation “as it is practiced today,” and the diversity of approaches to biblical interpretation in Hanson’s time renders his question incoherent. Despite not having explained what he intends by “interpretation as it is practiced today,” Hanson is nonetheless certain that Origen has nothing in common with it. In his final chapter, Hanson concludes: we cannot call Origen a “great interpreter” of the Bible as we can Augustine, Luther, Westcott, and “perhaps” Barth, because “Origen’s thought remained outside the Bible.” This is in contradistinction to the former interpreters, who “have

16 As de Lubac says: “the subject I had at first envisioned assumed a broader scope in my eyes. It was no longer a matter of measuring, in any given exegesis, the part allotted to the “letter” or to history. It was no longer even a matter solely of exegesis. It was a whole manner of thinking, a whole world view that loomed before me. A whole interpretation of Christianity of which Origen, furthermore, despite many of his personal and at times questionable traits, was less the author than the witness.” De Lubac, History and Spirit, 11.


18 Allegory & Event, 7.

19 Allegory & Event, 363.
successfully put themselves into the minds of the biblical author whom they are interpreting.”

Hanson in effect reverts to the psychologising and divining of authorial intention which characterised Romantic exegesis, and which was present also in Bigg and De Faye.21

Hanson proposes that in addition to Origen’s thought remaining outside the world of the Bible and the minds of the biblical authors, the Alexandrian also remains outside a proper understanding of history:

The critical subject upon which Origen never accepted the biblical viewpoint was the significance of history.22

Hanson contends that for Origen history is nothing but “an acted parable, a charade for showing forth eternal truths about God.”23 It is puzzling that while he acknowledges that Origen defends the historicity of most of the events in Scripture, and says that for the Alexandrian these events “show forth eternal truths about God,” yet Hanson still believes that for Origen these actual historical events are nothing but “charades.” Origen’s strong affirmation of the historicity and of the truth quality of the same leave Hanson unconvinced, and he feels these affirmations speak “not [of] the final and unique event, contemporary to all men and women, whereby God speaks to them for salvation or ruin.”24

The key notion for Hanson seems to be “significance.” For Hanson, something is amiss between the actual historical event that Origen defends, and the truth the Alexandrian discerns

20 Allegory & Event, 363.
21 See above, p. 5, n. 11. For example, Schleiermacher proposed the task of interpretation is “to understand the text first as well and then better than its author did.” This was accomplished by means of divining the intentions of the author. Quoted in Werner G. Jeanrond, Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance (London: Macmillan, 1991) 47.
22 Allegory & Event, 364.
23 Allegory & Event, 364.
24 Allegory & Event, 364.
in the same. The “presupposition” which Hanson proposes Origen brings to Scripture\textsuperscript{25} had the result that “history could never be of significance.”\textsuperscript{26} In other words, the “non-Christian” tool with which Origen unpacks the Christian meaning contained in history has somehow compromised its significance. This assertion is problematic for two reasons. If Hellenism can be reasonably characterized, it will have to do with the very word “significance” itself: Hellenic thought brings the question of significance to each of its foci. “Significance” refers to the sign quality of things, to the work of indication, of the significare with which things and events are qualified, and judged worthy of attention or importance – an otherness of meaning to which any given expression or event indicates or portends. But for Hanson, history seems to comprise an unequivocal and closed system. Meaning cannot extend from out of the confines of its container – i.e., history as the progression of moments which combine to forge a chronological chain in time. History in effect has no significance. For Hanson, history does not point beyond itself – it is not amenable to hermeneutics. There is no assignment: history simply is. There is an untraversable ditch between an exegesis of texts and a hermeneutics of history. One may possibly learn of history and from history; but somehow this precludes the notion of meaning. Hanson sacrifices the καιρός of the magnanimous and boundless mystery of Christian meaning on the altar of the punctiliar χρόνος of Christian event.\textsuperscript{27} The “big-picture” thinking of de Lubac is stifled through a myopic focus on Origen’s exegesis, which is read in light of Hanson’s own undisclosed notion of history.\textsuperscript{28} Not unlike the disappointment a theologian might feel in

\textsuperscript{25} “That Origen’s interpretation of Scripture should have been deeply influenced by important presuppositions derived from contemporary non-Christian philosophy is, after all, only what we should expect, and is one of those circumstances for which allowance must be made in judging any ancient author.” Hanson, \textit{Allegory & Event}, 369.

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Allegory & Event}, 365.

\textsuperscript{27} I see the distinction as being between the quantitative (χρόνος) and qualitative (καιρός).

\textsuperscript{28} Mark Julian Edwards notes: “There is no definition of history in Hanson’s claim, no rumour of the theological warfare that has raged about this term in the twentieth century. From his silence here and his arguments elsewhere, it is reasonable to infer that he shares the plain man’s view of history as a veridical, sequential and discriminating record of events.” Edwards, \textit{Origen Against Plato} (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2002) 150.
thumbing through Herodotus in search of a theologian, Hanson is disappointed as he thumbs through Origen in search of a (mid 20th century) historian and exegete.

Karen Jo Torjesen states that her PhD dissertation “has attempted to identify the exegetical procedure which Origen employs and to correlate it with his theological understanding of exegesis.” Torjesen traces and relates Origen’s underlying theological assumptions and foundations through to his method of interpretation, and ultimately to its application in the life of the reader where it is utilized as a pedagogical tool. This approach recalls that of de Lubac, who had proposed “Origen’s doctrine of the meaning of Scripture is a theology more than an exegesis in the modern sense,” hence it tended rightly toward comprising a vision and world view, and most importantly toward an invitation to response on the part of the reader.

In a published revision of her thesis, Torjesen is explicit about what she believes to be the importance of the turn to the reader in Origen’s exegesis: “the essential task of exegesis in Origen has been decisively organized around the figure of the hearer/reader.” This turn to the reader seems often to unsettle Origen’s detractors, negatively affecting their perceptions of the Alexandrian’s treatment of history. Torjesen notes that for some of his critics, “history in Origen’s method of exegesis is treated in such a way that it no longer has any real soteriological function.” One must therefore show a tenable relation between Origen’s theology and exegesis, and the historicity of Christianity. While my work has many points of agreement with that of

29 Karen Jo Torjesen, “Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Structure in Origen’s Exegesis.” PhD diss., (Claremont Graduate School, 1982). This reference is from the dissertation abstract, the pages of which are not numbered.
30 De Lubac, History and Spirit, 279.
31 See above, pp. 5-6.
Torjesen, my efforts will not be limited to Origen’s thoughts on Scripture. My turning to Origen’s worldview provides the means to get a better sense of Origen’s treatment of the historicity of Christianity, and of the deep engagement in historicity and act upon which soteriology is contingent for Origen.

*Origen’s Doctrine of Subordination: A Study in Origen’s Christology*[^34] by J. Nigel Rowe, is an unusual book, given that the author believes that Christology and Trinitarian theology have forced Origen’s thought into a conceptual corner. Rowe proposes that Origen:

> develops to their logical conclusions various lines of thought deriving from the traditional view of Jesus Christ as both Divine and human, and thus shows that those conclusions cannot be reconciled with each other.[^35]

Perhaps the most bizarre proposal of Rowe comes at the conclusion of the work, when he says:

> The Incarnation . . . becomes an awkward episode in the activity of the Divine Word – an episode which has to be taken account of because Christian tradition emphasizes it.[^36]

> It is not clear if Rowe’s concerns are with “Christian tradition” or with the “traditional view of Jesus Christ as both Divine and human,” yet, this ambiguity notwithstanding, Rowe – who expresses his gratitude to Hanson for “encouragement previously given to the author in his attempts to unravel the thought of Origen”[^37] – somehow feels confident in proposing that it “appears ludicrous to regard Origen as a devotee of Scripture.”[^38] Rowe, alternately – if with this charge one may presume him to be a devotee of Scripture – ultimately proposes in the final sentence of his book:

> It is the contention of the present writer that Origen elevates the human Christ to a far higher position than the evidence [does Scripture comprise this “evidence” for Rowe?]

[^34]: Bern: Peter Lang, 1987.
[^35]: Rowe, *Origen’s Doctrine of Subordination*, xix.
[^36]: Rowe, 288.
[^37]: Rowe, iii.
[^38]: Rowe, xix.
really warrants, and that it is sufficient to regard the human Christ as the supreme embodiment of the universal Spirit of God.\textsuperscript{39}

It remains unclear how Rowe can speak of Origen’s “elevation,” yet somehow also maintain that the Alexandrian’s doctrine is, as his book’s title puts it, a “Doctrine of Subordination.”

The first scholar to offer a reading of Origen in explicit light of contemporary philosophical hermeneutics is Christophe Potworowski.\textsuperscript{40} In the first of two very short papers, Potworowski notes the similarities between what Origen believes to be the purpose of reading Scripture, and the act of reading in the understanding of Ricœur. Potworowski, perhaps influenced by de Lubac, proposes that for Origen the reading of Scripture is a “reading in response to a divine initiative . . . within the parameters of a dramatic encounter for the purposes of salvation.”\textsuperscript{41} Here again is the notion of encounter, response, and action.\textsuperscript{42} There are noted a number of parallels between this purposive reading and Ricœur’s notion of “appropriation,” as well as the role of the reader in the act of interpretation as both authors understand the same.\textsuperscript{43}

The second of Potworowski’s papers is concerned with what he calls “stability” in the relation between multiplicity in meaning and unicity in truth in the act of interpretation.\textsuperscript{44} Potworowski proposes that for Ricœur, truth is a “dwelling in the correlation between text and life,” where \textit{life} refers to a “world proposed by the text.”\textsuperscript{45} The world of the text suffuses the life of the reader and through the engagement truth emerges in a new, living dialectic. Potworowski notes that for Origen, truth is a Christological title, an \textit{epinoia} of Christ – who \textit{is} indeed ‘truth

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{39} Rowe, 293.
\textsuperscript{41} Potworowski, “Origen’s Hermeneutics,” 161.
\textsuperscript{42} Noted above in de Lubac (pp. 5-7) and Torjesen (pp. 10-11).
\textsuperscript{43} Potworowski, “Origen’s Hermeneutics,” 162.
\textsuperscript{44} Potworowski, “Question of Truth,” 308.
\textsuperscript{45} Potworowski, “Question of Truth,” 309.
\end{flushleft}
itself” (αὐτοαλήθεια).46 For the Christian, then, the experience of truth centres around participation in the reified αὐτοαλήθεια of the Person of Christ, “the constant horizon against which the various meanings are multiplied.”47

Unfortunately, Potworowski’s works have not generated much – if any – further efforts in the multidisciplinary approach to reading patristic theology. In a paper presented three years after Potworowski’s first article, Frances Young noted that little had changed:

Most patristic scholarship has not yet noticed that it resides in an intellectual backwater. For some decades now, biblical studies has been struggling with so-called ‘new methods,’ but in patristic studies only a few have noticed. Still less have most of us realized how profound are the recent philosophical challenges to our methods.”48

While I will not engage in extended comparison of Origen with contemporary hermeneutics, I hope that my reading him in light of some of its conceptual tools will generate further possibilities for reading the Alexandrian and others of the early Church in their light.

Rebecca J. Lyman’s Christology and Cosmology: Models of Divine Activity in Origen, Eusebius, and Athanasius explores the intersection of Greek cosmology and Christian theology, with a view towards the religious sentiment that emerged from out of this intersection.49 Lyman emphasizes a point which is too often lost in critiques of Origen, namely, the newness of the ideas which in his own time were coming to take form.50 Some facets of Origen’s thought certainly look suspect when viewed from a post-Nicene perspective. No doubt these are suspect from such a perspective – but this perspective has privileged recourse to orthodox answers to

46 Origen, CJn 6.38.
50 “Logos Christology was not a passive product of cosmological categories, but a creative, passionate model of an emerging worldview.” Origen, Lyman goes on to say, “borrowed and modified common formulas of Late Antiquity to express particular theological concerns.” Lyman, Christology and Cosmology, 160.
questions which Origen had never asked. Lyman rightly proposes that it is in his perception of the robust state of relation between the operative wills of the divine and human that the decisive movement away from Greek thought into the Christian worldview was effected by Origen. I take Lyman’s work further in my application of philosophical hermeneutics, making further strides toward Origen’s exploration of the being out of which this will proceeds, and the new being which is formed in its engagement. “To understand early theological reflection as not merely parasitic on philosophy or as embryonic orthodoxy,” Lyman writes, we must “investigate the particular religious perspective which gave common language a new context, and hence a new meaning.” Origen drew on philosophical language, yet he made it serve distinctively Christian ends – grounding the abstract in the experiential and historical. Lyman finds the key to understanding Origen in neither Greek influences, nor in the construction of a ‘system.’ The point of contact between Lyman’s work and my own is the central role of the dynamic of will – both divine and human – in Origen’s thought.

Mark Julian Edwards’ *Origen Against Plato,* stands as a tipping point for supporters of Origen, making a case that not only was Origen not a Platonist, but that he was in fact the opposite: Origen deconstructed and refuted Platonism. As Edwards comments in his very brief conclusion, “Origen’s is an autonomous philosophy designed to answer, not to flatter, the teaching of the schools,” and if Platonism was an epidemic in Alexandria, “far from exhibiting the symptoms of contagion, Origen’s work contains the antibodies to Platonism as proof that he

51 In the introduction to his *Westminster Handbook to Origen,* John Anthony McGuckin quotes Thomas Merton’s poem “Origen,” wherein Merton had written: “His sin was to speak first among mutes.” Merton goes on to describe Origen’s effect on later ages as akin to that of a “mad lighthouse,” which McGuckin likens to “emitting incessant pulses of illumination, setting a compass point for the whole of Christian thought.” *Westminster Handbook to Origen* (Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 2004) preface, x.

52 “Origen may best be described not as systematic, but as ordering his theology and exegesis on the basis of certain axiomatic principles from philosophy and theology.” Lyman, *Christology and Cosmology,* 44.

has suffered and resisted its attacks.”

Edwards opened a door for scholars who after him moved from defensive to offensive positions: scholars were emboldened to speak of Origen as an “anti-Platonist,” and to posit and trace the “Christianisation of Hellenism.”

In Edwards’ estimate, the final answer to Platonism is Origen’s robust and deep notion of history, which itself is indicative of divine will, and which constitutes and answers to the contingent essence of divine-human relations. “The signature of God, in Origen’s thought, is history” as Edwards puts it. Though God does indeed transcend mind, “he volunteers a knowledge of himself through revelation.”

A book by P. Tzamalikos on Origen’s philosophy of history and eschatology is indispensable for the treatment it gives to many topics which are important for this thesis, including the dynamic of will in divine-human relations, the relations between philosophy as conceptual precursor and religion as lived experience, and, of course, the Alexandrian’s understanding and treatment of time. Tzamalikos presents a thorough case that a robust and dynamic understanding of history stands at the heart of the matter in relations divine-human and philosophical-religious in Origen’s thought. It is quite simply not possible to grasp Origen apart from an understanding of his view of history. Tzamalikos offers the thesis that Origen is an “anti-Platonist,” over against the branding of him as a “Platonist,” which remains for many to

54 Origen Against Plato, 161.
55 Tzamalikos, Origen: Philosophy of History, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae (Leiden, Brill, 2007). preface, xii.
57 Origen Against Plato, 152.
58 Origen Against Plato, 160.
this day quite simply “a matter of course.” Tzamalikos begins his work by noting an essential distinction in early Christian thought: in answer to the Hellenic philosophic distinction between *being and becoming*, the teasing of essence or φύσις from out of its phenomena, the Christian worldview strikes deeper roots into history than its precursors: “It was now clear that Being is God, whereas Becoming is a meaningful *process* in time, in which divine and creaturely will encounter each other.” Origen’s notion of history is one of *deep* history. The overall thrust of Tzamalikos’ study is that for Origen, history – even that which occurred in the past – remains and always *is* opportunity. The opportunity which divine grace extends to creation is neither delimited nor circumscribed by time: “each moment of history is a kairos.”

Mihai Vlad Niculescu’s *The Spell of the Logos: Origen’s Exegetical Pedagogy in the Contemporary Debate over Logocentrism*, is a deeply challenging work, demanding of the reader an acquaintance with authors such as Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Marion, Jean-François Lyotard, Emmanuel Levinas, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Niculescu contrasts “logocentrism” with “non-” and “anti-logocentrism” in light of the work of (among others) Ferdinand de Saussure – who represents the former – and Postmodern thinkers such as Derrida, Levinas, Lyotard, and Marion (among others) – who represent the latter. Niculescu defines logocentrism as maintaining: “The idea of a primacy of thought over spoken language” and of “spoken language over writing,” which leads ultimately to the conviction that understanding involves the “resolution of the difference between the addressee and the addresser in a trans-linguistic

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60 Tzamalikos, *Origen: Philosophy of History*, preface, xii.
61 Tzamalikos, *Origen: Philosophy of History*, preface, 1. Origen says: “God does not even participate in being. For He is participated in, rather than participates.” Origen, CC 6.64; and again: “Since we affirm that the God of the universe is mind, or that *he transcends mind and being*, and is simple and invisible and incorporeal, we would maintain that God is not comprehended by any being other than him made in the image of that mind.” Origen, in CC 7.38 (italics mine).
community of mind or thought.” Logocentrism is “a form of reductionism,” the effect of which “is invariably a more or less subtle destruction of the transcendence of language as an event that surpasses determination.” At the other end of the issue,

For the anti-logocentrist language is first and foremost an event which undermines communication, reception-traditions, or the rules of informational exchange by playing out discourses otherwise than intended, expected, authored, received, interpreted, or transmitted. In this sense anti-logocentrism’s main task consists in attesting to language’s transcendence by attending to the discourse of the parties that a logocentrical construal of language mutes or reduces, while looking for alternative ways of phrasing that would be more mindful of the alterity of these muted discourses.

Niculescu paves the ground of a foundational definition of “non-logocentrism” by proposing that for non-logocentrists:

the λόγος as a legic event is a non-phraseable report that saturates the phrased announcement with an excess of signification, thus indefinitely deferring the seizure of its sense, the manifestation of a truth in a perfectly apposite expression and the pertinent communication of the expressed sense/truth.

Non-logocentrism places the “reason” of speech in the quality of the speaking – in the case of the Gospel, its inherent “beneficence”:

A non-logocentric reading of the so-called reason of speech would insist on this eventful beneficence; in a non-logocentric approach, the gospel happens as a legic reporting-announcing, as a beneficence, which is its own reason.

Given the Christian notion of Christ as Λόγος – which certainly entails his beneficence as his own reason in his speaking and announcing in and as Gospel – the question of logocentrism seems well-suited to enquiry into any Christian exegesis and hermeneutics. Niculescu’s work provides an important development in the questions a reader may take to Origen’s exegesis,

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64 Spell of the Logos, 5.
65 Spell of the Logos, 6.
66 Spell of the Logos, 6.
67 I.e., from λέγειν, “to speak”; perhaps Niculescu has in mind the event of speaking, or talk/talking – acts which entail an “excess” above and beyond the semantic data.
68 Spell of the Logos, 32-3.
69 Spell of the Logos, 33.
particularly the relation between Christ as Λόγος and the λόγοι with which his message is imparted, set down, and transmitted. Niculescu’s work centres around the relation between addressee and addressee:

    The “from-to” orientation of speech, which was first disclosed by the event of news-giving, cannot be reduced to a contingent relation between the addressee and the addressee as two extra-linguistic pre-existing beings. If anything, the reverse should be the case: in its double determination as news-from (report) and news-to (annunciation), the discourse’s wording or happening as a speech event (an alternative reading of the term λόγος) inscribes the addressee in a speech situation from which she could only reflect post-factum on the nature and stakes of the beneficent briefing and on the possibility of finding herself in agreement with what she metalinguistically construes as the addressee’s communicative intention.

The addressee and reader of Scripture experiences a new event in the reading, rather than an overcoming of distance between minds in a homogenizing construal or coalescence which would render history little more than an encumbrance.

    It is surprising that Niculescu does not engage Paul Ricoeur, given that one of the former’s central conceptual premises – that of text as addressee/speaker, and reader as addressee/hearer – parallels a central premise of Ricoeur which seems to be saying essentially the same thing, though in far more accessible terms: “languages do not speak, people do,” and: “Discourse consists of the fact that someone says something to someone about something.”

    While Niculescu perceives and outlines a very accurate estimate of Origen’s notion of Scriptural dynamics, it must be remembered that Origen himself said:

    Now I think that all of the Scriptures, even when perceived very accurately, are only very elementary rudiments of and very brief introductions to all knowledge.

    As Niculescu’s work indicates, logocentrism does not make room for the notion of the

70 Spell of the Logos, 31-2.
72 Ricoeur, “Naming God,” in Figuring the Sacred, 220.
73 Origen, CJn 13.30.
particularity of encounter, of the irreducibility of addressor and addressee in the same. But for Origen, encounter and historicity pick up from where Scripture’s “elementary rudiments” and “very brief introductions” leave off. This is something which de Lubac had expressed in fairly more accessible language, speaking of Scripture as “the start of a dialogue,” which is “addressed to someone from whom it awaits a response.” Niculescu expresses very well the event of this dialogue, particularly how it issues in engagement and application:

> the application to the Word can be described as a form of allowing oneself to be spelled by the biblically coming Word as an actor in the biblical event of His coming.

A recent book by Peter Martens seeks to present the way of life of the scriptural exegete as Origen understood the same. Martens’ work in his estimate is “largely complementary” to that of Karen Jo Torjesen, though where Torjesen is concerned with Origen’s “audience,” Martens’ focus is on that of the exegete her/himself. In many ways Martens’ work is a summation and contextualization of many of the important themes which have been highlighted in the survey above. The participatory notions of dialogue, of hearer, of response, encounter, application, appropriation, and engagement come together in Martens’ work as he presents to the reader his findings for the question regarding the life of the interpreter of Scripture: “What did this life, as Origen understood it, look like?” Because this work is focused essentially on the life of the exegete, there is no extended treatment of the meaning which the exegete

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74 De Lubac, *History and Spirit*, 347. Also quoted above, p. 5.
75 *Spell of the Logos*, 31-2.
77 “Whereas she attends primarily to the object of Origen’s biblical scholarship – his audience – my focus is on the subject of this biblical scholarship – the interpreter.” Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, 10.
78 Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, 1.
encounters in the task, but rather on the tools which precede the encounter, through which the encounter is made.\textsuperscript{79}

The subtitle of Martens’ book – \textit{The Contours of the Exegetical Life} – indicates a certain exteriority; i.e., in the sense that a \textit{contour} quite literally outlines something underlying. However, \textit{contour} can also indicate a system. My efforts here are complementary to those of Martens, since I will present in the dissertation some observations of what precisely in Origen’s thought comes to give it the contours it has, both in its underlying and foundational conceptual horizons as well as its apparent – though only apparent – systematicity. I will turn from the exteriority of Martens’ fine study, to the interiority of meaning both in the world of the Scriptural texts, and in the world and life of the exegete. Mine is a turn from the \textit{world of the reader} to the \textit{cosmos of the reader}, as it were.\textsuperscript{80}

A 2015 monograph by Danish scholar Anders-Christian Jacobsen deals primarily with Origen’s Christology and soteriology.\textsuperscript{81} Jacobsen does touch somewhat on matters which are relevant to my own research, namely, his statement that he discerns a “theological system” in Origen’s thought (a point with which I disagree).\textsuperscript{82} To the extent that Jacobsen deals with the discernment of a system in Origen’s \textit{oeuvre}, this work, as its title states, is primarily concerned with the Christological and soteriological elements within that system. It need not be said, of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{79} Martens does address meaning in his 9\textsuperscript{th} chapter (“Message: Saving Knowledge”), in which providence and authorial intent in Scripture combine to express “salvific intent” (199), hence the message is itself the meaning, a “multifaceted one in which distinct voices blended harmoniously to sound one ‘saving melody’” (205).
\item \textsuperscript{80} My intentions with the word \textit{kόσμος} is made clearer on pp. 24-5; 201-2 below.
\item \textsuperscript{81} Anders-Christian Jacobsen, \textit{Christ – the Teacher of Salvation: A Study on Origen’s Christology and Soteriology}. Adamantiana 6 (Münster: Aschenforß Verlag, 2015).
\item \textsuperscript{82} “I consider Origen a systematic thinker whose theology develops on the basis of a systematic idea which is never clearly described in his works but which underlies all that he writes and even all that he preaches in his sermons.” Jacobsen, \textit{Christ – the Teacher of Salvation}, 23. One can of course make a distinction between a “systematic thinker” and a “theological system.” My departure from Jacobsen pertains to the latter. Jacobson is explicit about his belief that Origen has constructed a theological system, devoting an entire chapter to his position: “Origen’s Theological System” (ch. 18, pp. 260-72). My disagreement with Jacobsen in no way undermines my regarding his study to be a very fine and valuable one.
\end{itemize}
course, that Christology and soteriology are very important aspects – indeed central aspects – of Origen’s thought. But while the importance of the study of these isolated elements of Origen’s thought cannot be understated, such isolated focus is made at the expense of undermining the expansive grandeur of the Alexandrian’s larger and comprehensive cosmic vision. I will address both Christology and soteriology within the broader context of Origen’s comprehensive vision.

1.iii) Thesis

The thesis will show that in presenting his understanding of the relation between God and creation, that Origen is: 1) constructing a vision of being – a *cosmotheoria*; 2) by utilizing a Trinitarian hermeneutic; 3) in which he sees the person her/himself as ordered to a Trinitarian hermeneutic of the world in seeking to know experience of God.

I will show how in Origen’s thought, the experience of God takes the form of participation in the threefold economy of creation, reason, and grace. In the Alexandrian’s thought, these three facets are tantamount to experiences of the three Persons. Knowledge of the three reifications points beyond the experience of the same to the Persons who are these qualities in essence. These three conceptual strands combine to relate Origen’s vision as a dynamic κόσμος of possibility in hermeneutic relations between God and the world. The *cosmotheoria* is ultimately a vision in which experience of God and the coming-to-be of the self in freedom are engaged in reciprocal, constructive dialectic.

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83 I much prefer to use the term *vision* rather than *system* in qualifying Origen’s thought. The seeking of divinity in all things – which is what I perceive Origen to be doing in his thought – cannot, in my opinion, be justly conflated into a system. For a detailed summary of the question of ‘system’ in Origen’s extant writings, see Gale Heide, *Timeless Truth in the Hands of History: A Short History of System in Theology* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2012), chapter 2, “Is Origen the Archetypal Systematician?”

84 See below, pp. 24; 201-2 for an explanation of this word.
1.iv) Terminology

It is helpful to explain some key terms which are utilized in the thesis. I here clarify what I intend with the words a) hermeneutic; b) cosmotheoria; and c) experience.

1.iv.a) Hermeneutic

The relation of contemporary philosophical hermeneutics to the thought of Origen is a better fit than might at first be suspected. My applying the term is by no means an *eisegesis* effected by making a leap from contemporary philosophical hermeneutics back to early Alexandria, shedding light on Origen’s thought by means of sending back Edison’s light bulb. Common to both hermeneutics and the thought of Origen is an awareness that understanding and meaning involve and demand a degree of entanglement (and risk). Common here is a notion that reason and meaning abide in a relation which is embodied, not discarnate. Not only nature, but also meaning, abhors a vacuum.

In my applying the word to Origen’s thought, I have in mind my view of his work as essentially the pursuit of understanding toward a construction of meaning. Origen does not, as many of his detractors would have him do, reach back into history, and seize and uproot the object of meaning which is contained there, and then present it, cleansed of its roots, to his reader. The construction of meaning that I discern in Origen happens 1) in a world garnered by divine-human relation, 2) by means of the productive receiving and taking which occurs in the meeting of the world of the text and that of the reader.

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85 “I freely confess the maxim spoken by a wise and faithful man, which I often invoke: ‘It is dangerous even to speak truly about God.’ For not only are the false things said about him dangerous, but likewise things that are true and that are brought forth at the wrong time give rise to danger to the one who speaks them. . . . Would that we could only fulfil what we desire.” Origen, *H*Ezek 1:11.

86 My reading of a constructive dynamic within Origen’s thought is influenced by the philosophical hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur, though the productive/constructive manner of reading is well-attested in Origen as well. Turning to the thought of Ricoeur helps to bring this dynamism to a more acute light. Briefly stated, Ricoeur’s hermeneutics marks a decisive break with psychologizing approaches to the same, often – perhaps unfairly – associated with Schleiermacher and Dilthey. “The most decisive break with Romantic hermeneutics,” Ricoeur writes, “is [to assert
In my mentioning “world of text and reader,” I wish to emphasize here the word “world.” The world of the text in past scholarship on Origen has been concerned primarily with his allegorical approach to the same. The turn to the reader in the scholarship after de Lubac has brought to the surface the notion of the reader’s world in dialogue with the text, and I follow similar lines, but with an emphasis on world in order to preclude the attenuation which follows an excised or dislocated emphasis on either “text” or “reader.” An attenuating emphasis on the former has been the central focus of many of Origen’s detractors, while emphasis on the latter runs the risk of blinding the postmodern mind to the foundation which sets the ground for Origen’s thought, and the wholism toward which it results. The createdness of worlds is the foundation and crux of this wholism, from the foundation of the creation of the cosmos, to the crux of freedom in Origen’s microcosmic anthropology – a view of human being as microcosm. This view provides the grounds by which Origen sees the human being as oriented toward meaning in the world in light of both the intimacy enjoyed with divinity, and the participatory immanence within human being of the essential order and reason of that divinity. Taken in abstraction, neither “text” nor “reader” is sufficient to garner a sense of Origen’s thought.

87 The idea of human being as “microcosm” is perhaps first found in Plato’s Timaeus 30b-c. Philo of Alexandria also offers a microcosmic anthropology, referring to human being as a “miniature heaven” (βραχύν οὐρανὸν) at Opif 82.
88 “Understand that you are another world in miniature and that there is within you the sun, the moon, and the stars.” Origen, in HLev 5.2. Origen also says in a homily on Genesis when speaking of the tabernacle: “Each one of us, however, can also build a tabernacle for God in himself. For if, as some before us have said, this tabernacle represents the whole world, and each individual also can contain an image of the world, why can not each one also complete a form of the tabernacle in himself?” Origen, HEx 19.4.
1.iv.b) Cosmotheoria

The word is constructed from κόσμος and θεωρία (and its verbal correlate θεωρέω). The word κόσμος – above and beyond the mundane sense of the word as mundus – is significant to my reading of Origen in multiple senses of the word’s meaning as: “order; that which serves to beautify; condition of orderliness; sum total of everything here and now; the system of human existence.” Θεωρία is applicable to my thesis as “that which one looks at,” while the verb θεωρέω completes the sense in which I use it, as the object of interpretation, i.e., in the transition from the initial “looking at” to the arrival at meaning indicated in the definition: “to come to the understanding of something.” Origen looked deeply into this word, dedicating several extended passages to his understanding of it, and he finds in it a kind of conceptual matrix through which the fabric of his vision is threaded. I believe this word is a better fit than the more mundane term “worldview.” I believe κόσμος relates more clearly the notions of order and wholism that I discern in Origen’s thought. In short, κόσμος speaks in ways and of things which γῆ does not. Origen’s ‘worldview’ runs deeper into the structures of the world – what in antiquity was referred to in part as ἀρχή and στοιχεῖα. The distinction here lies between the mundane – strictly speaking – i.e., the cultural, political tenor of a ‘worldview’ as opposed to the bigger picture toward which I intend in my use of the word cosmotheoria. Origen’s cosmotheoria is both a transformative looking at the world, and a sacramental re-definition of

91 For Origen’s several treatments of the word κόσμος, see PA 2.3.6; CJn 6.301-303, 19.147; CRom 1.14. Extended consideration of Origen’s use of the word is found below, in chapter 3.
92 ἀρχή and στοιχεία are two important words for Origen which are treated in chapter 3.
the same. More dynamic than a worldview, it is a vision in which experience of God and the coming-to-be of the self in freedom are engaged in reciprocal, constructive dialectic.

1.iv.c) Experience

My working definition of ‘experience’ is: an event of interpreted being. Experience is interpreting and interpreted being. It is not a passive exposure to an object (or person). As Australian theologian Dennis Edwards has put it, the event of experience invariably involves interpretation, or a “reflective awareness.” If Rahner was correct in proposing that “all beings are by their nature symbolic, because they necessarily ‘express’ themselves in order to attain their own nature,” and Ricœur too in proposing that “the symbol gives rise to thought,” then as readers we stand before possible worlds and possible persons as a means to glimpse an interpreted world with which we dialogue in interpreting experience.

Experience issues invariably in a ‘turn to language,’ to use the catchphrase that describes the transition which affected the steering of contemporary philosophy toward hermeneutics away from the apparent certainty and objectivity of the Cartesian tabula rasa and the scientific method on one hand, and the radical subjectivity and psychologizing of the Romantic response

93 John E. Smith, an American philosopher who dedicated much of his scholarship to the notion of experience, uses the word “encounter” as central to describing the essence of experience. In addition, he notes that experience as encounter is productive over and above the notion that it is an objective state or object ‘out there,’ as it were, i.e., the raw data of the experience of phenomena: experience is, in Smith’s words, “a product of the intersection of something encountered and a being capable of interpreting the results.” Smith, Experience and God (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968) 24, 31.

94 In the estimate of Edwards, encounter/experience in some ways is interpretation per se: “Experience is best seen as encounter with something or person which has become available to consciousness through reflective awareness. It refers to an encounter that is interpreted within human consciousness. This second element, interpretation, has always already occurred whenever we know that we have experienced something.” Edwards, Human Experience of God (New York: Paulist Press, 1983) 7.

95 The full quote is as follows: “Our first statement, which we put forward as the basic principle of an ontology of symbolism, is as follows: all beings are by their nature symbolic, because they necessarily ‘express’ themselves in order to attain their own nature.” Rahner, Theological Investigations (New York: Crossroad, 1982) 4: 224.

to the same. Experience is by nature hermeneutical. As Martin Heidegger has said, “language is the house of being.” In Origen’s thought, there is a robust sensitivity to the reciprocal nature of the dialectic of experience which occurs between God, being, and meaning, and its parsing and expression as language. Experience is Dasein’s mode of being in the world. Because the human being (sein) is always somewhere, always there (Da), the experience of there-being demands a parsing of sorts. One takes note of where one is. Where one is, is always already a relational locus. In Origen’s thought, such parsing of experience is always centred around the Λόγος, the Person from out of whom the means and ends of reflective awareness coalesce in the experience of divinity.

Experience is the intersection of being and the subject. It is neither a remote, objective, state of things, nor a purely subjective reduction of such to the emotive. There is no sense in which some state of things exists independently of a being-toward-meaning, a subject who looks down upon it in detachment. Being-itself marks the intentionality of the divine will which is sought and encountered in experience. Being is spoken by Someone to someone about something, as Ricœur’s description of the intentionality of the essence of discourse puts it. In Origen, being is the speaking of the divine – an historical discourse which is heard in


99 Origen proposes that those who do not know or accept God do not participate in being (CIn 2.92-99).

100 “Dasein” is a term made popular by Martin Heidegger. It is a compound of “da” (there) and “Sein” (being). I use it in a sense quite similar to Heidegger’s. Heidegger defines Dasein as “the horizon in which something like being in general becomes intelligible.” Heidegger, in Being and Time, trans. John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 274.

101 “[D]iscourse consists of the fact that someone says something to someone about something.” Ricœur, “Naming God,” in Figuring the Sacred (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995) 220.
experience, and which opens to a hermeneutics of experience. Origen’s *cosmotheoria* is the hermeneutical experience of God’s speaking.

1.v) Approach of Study

1.v.a) Methodology

Research methodologies in the humanities can only be approximate. There is simply no way of following any sort of objective trail when one seeks to enquire into the lived history – particularly the intellectual history – of another. The objective fail-safes that might be effected in a laboratory are not at hand in the humanities.\(^{102}\) However rigidly a writer in the humanities seeks to be true to the paradigm of a methodology, the work always progresses from out of the author’s ‘prejudice’ as Hans-Georg Gadamer has remarked.\(^{103}\) This need not issue in scepticism or pessimism for the researcher and reader, provided there exists a willingness and openness for the possibility of genuine dialogue in her research and reading – an openness which in some ways is Gadamer’s counterpart response to the abiding influence of the reader’s prejudice.\(^{104}\) I have sought throughout the writing of this thesis to have this effective awareness functioning at the point of tension between my own prejudice and my intention toward openness.

The topic I am proposing is not something which Origen set out to articulate and write, strictly speaking. My presentation of his worldview commences from a reading of some of the works which have contributed to the formation of his own conceptual prejudices, works which

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\(^{102}\) The objectivity of science has of course been challenged in the 20\(^{th}\) century. Thinkers such as Michael Polanyi and Thomas Kuhn have somewhat popularized this challenge of the scientific paradigm. The paradigm itself is the lens through which the scientist peers into the world with particular questions which are addressed out of any number of presuppositions which govern her theoretical axioms, methodological principles, etc. This is the challenging heart of the assertion that observations are always already theory-laden.

\(^{103}\) For Gadamer’s thoughts on the matter of prejudice as the “conditions of understanding,” see *Truth and Method*, 269-307.

\(^{104}\) To relate this idea again to the sciences, Polanyi articulates well the necessity of this opening and challenging toward growth both in the sciences and humanities: “Traditions are transmitted to us from the past, but they are our own interpretations of the past, at which we have arrived within the context of our own immediate problems.” Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2005), 170.
have laid their roots into the soil of the same. A broad reading of his works is then undertaken, a breadth which is necessary due to his never having set out to present such in a systematic way. Such a broad reading, spanning from the earliest works such as *On First Principles* through to the later works such as the *Contra Celsum*, the *Commentaries on the Epistle to the Romans*, and *Song of Songs*, and the later chapters of the *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, will bring to light the consistency of Origen’s thought on the matter at hand.\(^{105}\)

I will undertake this thesis with a historical-critical method\(^{106}\) in combination with a number of concepts borrowed from contemporary philosophical hermeneutics. As noted above,\(^ {107}\) there are some foundational touch-points between the thought of Origen and hermeneuticists such as Heidegger and Gadamer, but in this thesis there is particular emphasis on the thought of Paul Ricœur. Ricœur is particularly suited to this research due to the many parallels between his own thought and that of Origen. As an articulation of worldview, the thought of Origen is presented in this thesis as a theological anthropology. Ricœur regarded the project of his life’s work, in his own words, to be principally and ultimately a “philosophical anthropology.”\(^ {108}\) Philosophical and theological anthropologies share a central concern in the issue of meaning and the role of will. As Ricœur puts it: “the meaning of man reveals itself step

\(^{105}\) For a recent survey of the dating of Origen’s works, see Jacobson, *Christ – the Teacher of Salvation*, 34-41.

\(^{106}\) It will be helpful to say exactly what I mean by “history” in “historical-critical.” In my own use of the word, I do not intend a recounting of the world as it was/is, as in the human sciences, but a view of the world in which the part of the viewer is affirmed. History is interpreted being. This is why I often present a close consideration of the author’s understanding of particular words, and that of my own. On the interplay between text, reader, and meaning, and the unsuitability of approaching the humanities with the methodological strategies and convictions of the human sciences, see Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, “The Foundations and Approaches of Exegesis Today,” in *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: The Ratzinger Conference on Bible and Church*, ed. John Richard Neuhaus (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989) 6-7.

\(^{107}\) Above, pp. 3-4, n. 4-7.

by step but it does not engender itself.” Ricœur’s first substantial work was a three volume philosophy of the will. Origen is emphatic on the role of the will in divine-human relations.

For both Origen and Ricœur, texts and meaning stand in a relation to history which is deeply organic and dynamic. Ricœur has defined hermeneutics as:

some general mistrust concerning the claim of any philosophy to re-establish the primacy of intuition, immediacy, as though we could have before us the pure presence of what is. In negative terms, hermeneutics is a kind of mourning of the immediate, and the recognition that we have only an indirect relationship to what is.

While he lacks the subtlety with which Ricœur works out his notion of hermeneutics, Origen seems to have sensed the same. The “pure presence of what is” is to be worked out via means other than the psychologising transference of meaning from out of the mind of an author into his own mind. In this respect Origen has more in common with Ricœur than Gadamer. As one recent commentator put it:

Gadamer’s notion of the fusion of horizons mistakenly claims the availability of an underlying commonality, while Ricœur correctly emphasizes the notion of understanding as metaphoric – the creation of similarity across difference.

For Origen, while history is often affirmed in his exegesis, the meaning held by the original author or the characters within the narrative does not exhaust that of the reader. Ricœur speaks of “distanciation” and “appropriation.” The experience of the author and first reader is irretrievable in the autonomy of the text – yet it does not in its autonomy become meaningless,

110 Consisting of Freedom and Nature (1950); Fallible Man (1960); The Symbolism of Evil (1960).
113 The former, against Gadamer’s essentially negative estimate of the same as something to be overcome before meaning can be shared between author and reader, is viewed by Ricœur as “positive and productive,” in “The Hemeneutical Function of Distanciation,” Hermeneutics & the Human Sciences, 131.
since the text’s context permits only certain possibilities. Appropriation takes the form not of a seizure of meaning from out of the author’s mind, but, as one recent commentator on Ricœur puts it, appropriation occurs:

by exposing ourselves to the text and getting from it new possibilities. The text takes us away from ourselves, puts us on distance in regard to ourselves, in order to bring us back to ourselves.

While Origen does not speak of distanciation, his use of allegory effects a similar distanciation from the irretrievable historical experience of the original author, and brings the reader back to a new history of her own, in the appropriation of a new possible world by means of engagement with the text and Christian tradition. While the authorial intention of the text “does not engender itself,” the text remains always inexhaustibly “useful” in Origen’s estimate.

My use of hermeneutics does not indicate any intention to engage in any extended comparative analysis of Origen with the thinkers from whom I have borrowed the conceptual tools. The limits of this paper will not permit a fuller comparison. My intention is simply to borrow some of those tools, and to read Origen in their light. My borrowing serves a methodological function, not a comparative one. Furthermore, hermeneutics has helped to foster and increase an awareness of my own conceptual prejudices throughout the tasks of reading and writing the thesis. I believe that such awareness works to effect an openness which otherwise might not have been called into being.

114 For Ricœur this autonomy does not demand the opposite notion of an “‘absolute text’ in which ‘authorial meaning’ has lost all significance. . . . the fallacy of hyostatizing the text as an authorless entity. If the intentional fallacy overlooks the semantic autonomy of the text, the opposite fallacy forgets that a text remains a discourse told by somebody, said by someone to someone else about something.” Ricœur, Interpretation Theory, 30. Reading demands a dialectical approach: “The authorial meaning is the dialectical conterpart of the verbal meaning, and they have to be construed in terms of each other” (ibid).


116 See above, pp. 28-9, where Ricœur is quoted as saying: “the meaning of man reveals itself step by step but it does not engender itself.”

117 See above, p. 4., n. 7.
In my application of it, the historical-critical approach is by nature both relational and mediatory, hence it is consistent with the operative theme of the thesis as hermeneutical. The approach permits consideration of Origen’s thought as relational, which is a fundamental principle of hermeneutics in its emphasis on mindfulness of the world of the reader in distinction to that of reader’s texts. The mediatory dynamic is also important in gathering together a picture of how the author responded to their world – the response itself being both illustrative and constitutive of that world. The author’s response both articulates and creates a world – it is *poetic* in the truest sense of the word as both a telling and a creating. The historical-critical method facilitates the presentation of both what has been told and what has been created; the historical elucidating the former, the critical, the latter.

There exist limits to the application of hermeneutics to patristics. To first speak negatively and particularly, Origen is more inclined to accept foundations and presuppositions where Rieœur explicitly disavows the same. This is particularly the case in Rieœur’s understanding of revelation. Rieœur perceives dangers in applying an “opaque concept” to revelation. Rieœur’s approach here and elsewhere is in some ways like trying to thread a floating needle.

This stands in contrast to Origen, who begins by getting hold of the needle in order to facilitate its threading. Origen speaks of a number of “conflicting opinions,” which compel him to outline a series of dogmatic precepts at the outset of his *First Principles*. Rieœur, on the

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118 “By opaque concept, I mean that amalgamation of three levels of language familiar to a certain traditional teaching about revelation: the level of the confession of faith, where the *lex credendi* is not separated from the *lex orandi*; the level of ecclesial dogma, where a historic community interprets for itself and for others the understanding of faith specific to its tradition; and, finally, the body of doctrines imposed by the magisterium as the rule of orthodoxy.” Rieœur, “Hermeneutics of the Idea of Revelation,” in *Hermeneutics & the Human Sciences*, 112.

119 *PA* 1.2-10.
other hand, is content to note that some interpretations are more compelling than others\(^\text{120}\) – an assertion held in tension with his saying also that a “poem means all that it can mean.”\(^\text{121}\) One is left wanting a control mechanism in Ricœur’s robust assertion of the “semantic autonomy” and the “career of the text.”\(^\text{122}\)

On the positive side, my approach combines the re-presentative and descriptive nature of the historical-critical approach with that of the interpretive of the hermeneutical. This is not an approach taken explicitly in patristics. At heart here are a number of fundamental questions concerning the nature and task of theology: *What is it? What does it do? How does it do it?*

The fundamental issue of the nature of understanding and meaning are operative here. In my estimate, the historical-critical approach involves essentially a re-presentation of information which had been presented in the past. This is achieved largely by means of word substitution and a shuffling of the historical conceptual deck. Hermeneutics alerts to the reality that both of these processes necessarily and inextricably bring in tow the histories and presuppositions of the understander. Neither one’s reading history nor one’s presuppositions can be shed, nor can one achieve understanding in the absence of either; both are present and at play in one’s re-presentation. This is why even a text as simple as an instruction manual for a domestic appliance can be misunderstood. When it comes to texts as complex as those of theology – particularly texts of theologians who utilize a robust degree of allegorical reading – then the notion of achieving objectivity in one’s understanding seems dubious. The task of mindful re-presentation

\(^{120}\) See *Interpretation Theory*, 71-88, where Ricœur speaks of a number of means by which to establish such interpretations, in the movement from “guess” to “validation,” and from “explanation” to “comprehension.”

\(^{121}\) Ricœur, “Metaphor and the Problem of Hermeneutics,” in *Hermeneutics & the Human Sciences*, 176.

\(^{122}\) “Inscription becomes synonymous with the semantic autonomy of the text, which results from the disconnection of the mental intention of the author from the verbal meaning of the text, of what the author meant and what the text means. The text’s career escapes the finite horizon lived by its author.” Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*, 29-30. See also above, p. 30, n. 114 where Ricœur tempers this notion with his rejection of viewing the text as an “authorless entity.”
of the historical-critical approach, and the processes of the dynamic nature of understanding are ancilla toward hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is not merely explicit that it is working in interpretive modalities, but maintains that all reading demands interpretation.

While I recognize the historical-critical approach is essential to the process of understanding, I do not believe it is understanding’s final stop. And, of course, eschatology teaches us that no such final stop exists. Or, at the very least, Origen’s reading and understanding of the “πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν” as it appears in his eschatological propositions, will have to be better understood, particularly as such pertains to notions of time, ultimacy, and terminus. Origen often reminds the reader that what he proposes is tentative – his stock-in-trade is possibility. Such is my approach and offering as well.

My intended audience includes both those interested in patristics and those interested in hermeneutics. To speak more broadly, my ideal audience consists of those who are open to approaching Origen with a view towards the pragmatic and adoptive possibilities his thought contains, and who see the merit of combining the descriptive work of the historical-critical with the interpretive and appropriative – even pastoral – approach of hermeneutics. My work seeks to mediate between the historical, interpretative, and pastoral.

1.v.b) The Primary Texts of Origen

Relatively few of Origen’s texts have survived, and those which are extant survive mostly in the form of translations, some of which bear traces of their translators’ own doctrinal interests. The texts have suffered as a result of both Origen’s prolificacy – many of the surviving translations have been abbreviated – and also as a result of the “Origenist controversies” which

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123 1 Cor 15.28.
125 Much of the material in this section is drawn from the detailed presentation of the transmission and integrity of Origen’s writings in Jacobsen, Christ – the Teacher of Salvation, pp. 56-74.
extend from 393 to the conclusion of the 5\textsuperscript{th} Ecumenical Council at Constantinople in 553.\textsuperscript{126} The fifteen \textit{anathemata} which Justinian pronounced against Origen – or more correctly, “Origenism”– likely “occasioned destruction or at least prevented scribes from making further copies of these works.”\textsuperscript{127}

Only a few of Origen’s writings survive in Greek. They are: sections of \textit{Commentary on John}, \textit{Commentary on Matthew}, \textit{Homilies on Jeremiah}, and the entire \textit{Against Celsus}. There also survives Greek fragments of varying size of other of Origen’s works, and these are helpful in determining the quality of the extant Latin translations of the same text. While the fragments may provide for the reader some sense of the gist of Origen’s ideas, there cannot be any certainty if his own words are being read, or where these have been paraphrased, shortened, or otherwise edited.\textsuperscript{128}

The vast majority of surviving translations are in the Latin of Rufinus and Jerome. The career of Jerome as a translator of Origen can be divided between a period of robust enthusiasm for the Alexandrian, and a period of disavowal and rejection which began sometime after 393, when Epiphanius of Salamis launched a campaign against a number of Origen’s teachings. At the instigation of Epiphanius, a line was drawn in the sand, and opposite to Jerome stood Rufinus, who remained a supporter and defender of Origen. The loyalties of Jerome and Rufinus must therefore be held in mind when reading those translations which date after 393, due to the possibility that their translations may bear editorial traces of their loyalties. Jerome perhaps


\textsuperscript{128} These fragments sometimes come from the thematic \textit{catenae} – the linking together of assorted and decontextualized passages into a chain – which comprised biblical commentary of the Middle Byzantine period. In his introduction to his translation of Origen’s \textit{Homilies on Luke}, Joseph T. Lienhard proposes that “the Greek fragments are not always trustworthy,” adding that the compilers of the \textit{catenae} have “often shortened, condensed, or rearranged the passages from the Fathers they used.” Lienhard, \textit{Homilies on Luke}, xxxvi.
chose his words in a manner which emphasized Origen’s controversial teachings, while Rufinus has perhaps chosen words which rendered the texts more acceptable. But Lienhard notes in his introduction that when Rufinus sought to criticize Jerome’s translation of the *Homilies on Luke* (which were undertaken just before the Origenist controversy), he could find very little apart from the fact that Jerome had added the words “and nature” to Origen’s term “substance.” As Lienhard puts it:

> If that was the worst inaccuracy that Rufinus could find – and he had every reason to want to find more – then Jerome’s translation is remarkably faithful.¹²⁹

It is important for the reader of Origen to be aware whether they are reading a translation of Rufinus or Jerome, and in the case of Jerome, the reader must learn when the translation was undertaken relative to the Origenist controversy. Particular attention should be paid to passages in the texts which contain material that was subject to controversy in the middle to late 5th century – particularly the Trinity, and resurrection. Rufinus states that he has detected the scribal hand of heretics and opponents of Origen in the Greek text, and admits to having excised these and replaced them with supplementary material drawn from other of Origen’s writings. Alternately, in his own translations, Jerome admits to simply omitting material with which he disagrees rather than “correcting” or supplementing them as Rufinus had done.

The conclusion to Jacobsen’s helpful survey of the question of Origen’s primary texts is on the whole positive. Though the transmission of the texts is a complicated affair, Jacobsen proposes:

> It is nonetheless possible to make use of the vast majority of the transmitted texts for research purposes, provided that we are aware of the factors that affect the transmission.

This is precisely the approach that I have taken in this study. The vast majority of quotations in this thesis are drawn from the *Commentary on the Gospel of John* – one of the few

of Origen’s works which survives in Greek\textsuperscript{130} – though others of the works are drawn from as well.\textsuperscript{131}

1.vi) Outline of Study

Origen’s fondness for presenting ideas in hierarchical form has been appropriated in the chapter titles of the main section of the thesis: chapter 3) The Horizon of Being; 4) The Horizon of Reason; 5) The Horizon of Grace. Such an arrangement marks the progress of \textit{wherefrom} to \textit{whereto} horizons in a titular hierarchy of being, knowing, and grace.

Having provided the necessary definitions of several key conceptual terms, chapter 2, \textit{Conceptual & Textual Horizons in Early Alexandria}, provides a summary of the thought horizons in which Origen stood in early Alexandria. Attention is given to both non-Christian and Christian thought, particularly where these are relevant to the topics in the main section on Origen. In particular, I deal with thinkers whose general outlook and approach is hermeneutical, and who use the word \textit{logos} in their parsing of the world. It is shown that each of the authors in this chapter – to at least some degree – presents a line of reasoning which seeks to articulate a view of the world as meaning-full. Each of these thinkers struggle to exegete meaning from out of the \textit{κόσμος}; they do not \textit{eisegete} meaning into it by approaching the world with a preconceived system of truth. In the case of those working from out of the scriptural, Abrahamic tradition, i.e., of Philo and the early Christian thinkers considered in this chapter, I will show that a new ontology of the scriptural texts begins to take shape.

Chapter 3, \textit{The Horizon of Being}, marks the turn to the main section of the thesis, and the thought of Origen. The chapter deals with several of the Alexandrian’s notions of the

\textsuperscript{130} Though regrettably only 9 of the 32 books of the \textit{Commentary} survive. Also extant in Greek are books X to XVII of the \textit{Commentary on Matthew}, 20 of the \textit{Homilies on Jeremiah}, and the entire text of \textit{Contra Celsum}.

\textsuperscript{131} As noted above (35), Jacobsen advises readers to exercise due vigilence when reading the Latin translations. This is particularly the case with passages which are concerned with Trinitarian theology. There are two texts from \textit{PA} below which the reader should read with this awareness. See below pp. 104, n. 378 and 116, n. 442.
foundations of experience. I outline the foundational principles of relation between the divine and human, as such are explicated through the foundation of being-itself, through to Trinitarian relations, and finally cosmology (in a broadened sense of the word). In Origen’s treatment of the notion of the beginning and elements of being, the dynamic shifts from an accounting for evil, to that of grace. From even before its creation, being-itself and the world are very different notions for Origen than those held by ‘the Greeks.’ I illustrate the dynamism which follows from these foundations, by outlining what I call the hierarchy of Trinitarian onto-relational contingency. Where the end point of the emanation was for Plotinus the potentiality of evil, for Origen there is no end point; there is instead a turning point in a dynamic of exitus-reditus, turning the trajectory of being back to divinity in the salvific transformation within a matrix of grace. The quality of divine presence operative in Origen’s thought is not only emanationist; it is also immanentist. I show that in his use of the words ἀρχή and στοιχεῖα, Origen grounds the being of the source and dynamic of redemption and grace in the historical being of the Church.

In chapter 4, The Horizon of Reason, I show how for Origen the divine nature permeates all of creation, broadly as λόγοι, and particularly as Λόγος. I show how this permeation constitutes a particular quality of touchpoint of divine/human relations as conceived by Origen. I illustrate that where λόγος was understood by earlier Greek thought essentially as “reason,” Origen maintains this understanding, but presents it in a matrix of experiential relationality above and beyond the abstract, remote, and purely conceptual. Continuing some lines of thought presented in chapter 2, I show that the transformation of the purely abstract notion of λόγος which had begun with the Stoics and Philo, comes to full expression in Origen. The earlier movement toward a somewhat more reified and more immanent form takes a decisive turn in the immanence of relational encounter in Origen. This chapter is in some sense a presentation of Origen’s metaphysics of meaning, but I show how for Origen reason and meaning are not
equated; meaning emerges from reason only where a purely ratiocinative detachment is co-operative with engaged reason, i.e., only when \( \lambda\delta\gamma\omicron \zeta\) becomes participatory in the subject.

While reason permeates all of creation, only in the conscious discernment and appropriation of this presence can there be a participation which effects the experience of reason as meaning.\(^{132}\)

In chapter 5, *The Horizon of Grace*, I utilize a much more expansive notion of grace than is typical of much modern theology. Since the time of Augustine, to speak of grace has come often to mean little more than speaking on the issue of justification.\(^{133}\) In my use of the word here, in emphasizing another fundamental tenet of Origen’s thought and vision, grace is the reflection of the divine will speaking in history. It is due to grace that there is something rather than nothing; grace makes possible what otherwise would not be. By means of grace, being comes to be from God who transcends being.\(^{134}\) Grace is the cipher between being-itsel and the “nichts” – as Jakob Boehme has put it – that God ‘is’.'\(^{135}\) This chapter shows how for Origen, the idea is often invoked when he finds himself confronted with the givenness of things which ultimately are ineffable; these are the things which push the limits of any attempt to articulate systematically the relations between God and creation. I illustrate how Origen’s notion of God

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\(^{132}\) This is a point which Kevin Vanhoozer incorporates in his critique of deconstructionist hermeneutics. Deconstructionism rejects the presence of a stable core of meaning in texts which dwells outside or above language – a manner of reading that Jacques Derrida terms “logocentrism.” Vanhoozer proposes a general rule for the relation between meaning and metaphysics: “textual meaning will only be as determinate and decidable as the conception of reality that it presupposes” [italics Vanhoozer’s]. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1998) 59, 99, 122.

\(^{133}\) A more expansive notion of grace in Origen’s thought is seen also by Joseph S. O’Leary, who writes: “though he does not formulate strong theses about grace, Origen’s writings are, in fact, suffused with a multifaceted sense of divine grace, which might even serve to correct a certain narrowness of focus in the Augustinian tradition on the issue.” O’Leary, *Westminster Handbook to Origen* (Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 2004), s.v. “grace,” 115.

\(^{134}\) There are realities that are so great that they find a rank superior to humanity and our mortal nature; they are impossible for our rational and mortal race to understand. Yet by the grace of God poured forth with measureless abundance from Him to men through that minister of unsurpassed grace to us, Jesus Christ, these realities have become possible for us.” Origen, *OP* preface, 1.1.

as beyond being\textsuperscript{136} is at the heart of the dynamic of grace as understood by Origen, permitting him to view the radical nature of grace in its otherness and givenness. The chapter traces the movement of grace from the general through to the particular; from Origen’s notions of will through to that of \textit{oikonomia}, and finally to that of \textit{thēosis}.

Chapter 6 comprises the thesis conclusion, and draws together a cohesive presentation of the hermeneutic \textit{cosmotheoria} of Origen.

\textsuperscript{136} “Moreover, God does not even participate in being. For He is participated in, rather than participates.” Origen, \textit{CC} 6.64.
Part 1: Precursors
Chapter 2: Conceptual & Textual Horizons in Early Alexandria

2.1) Early Hellenic Sketches of *Logos*

Introduction

In contemporary philosophical hermeneutics, understanding necessarily and inextricably involves entanglement in history. Understanding emerges from a ‘historically effected consciousness’ as Hans-Georg Gadamer put it.\(^\text{137}\) Both authors and readers *belong* to history, and both are formed from the “sediments of history.”\(^\text{138}\) This belongingness constitutes the shifting and relative point from out of which understanding unfolds. A bridge unfolds outward, between and across contexts toward understanding. While such reasoning constitutes the essence of postmodern thought, it is also operative in that of Origen. This dynamic model of understanding has caused many of his readers to see in his work too strong an emphasis on the reader *per se*. The subjectivity of Origen’s reading, it is thought, compromises the historical nature of the narrative texts of Scripture. Yet, on the other hand, Origen’s dynamic reading and understanding does not fit the mould of postmodern thought as readily as one might suspect, given this subjective emphasis. The fit is made less comfortable because all of his thought is firmly rooted in a *theo-foundationalism*, which, from out of his seeing God as the foundation or wellspring of all being and knowledge, all understanding must answer. No mode of experience – particularly as knowledge and meaning – is severed from its moorings in the divine in Whom all of being participates.

Dan Stiver notes how Richard Rorty’s understanding of the postmodern approach is “more like building causeways between islands than like attempting to bring everyone to the

\(^{137}\) “Our historical consciousness is always filled with a variety of voices in which the echo of the past is heard. Only in the multifariousness of such voices does it exist.” Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 284.

same island.” Origen confronts the reader with a challenge to make no assumptions about the ‘island’ from out of which one gathers up understanding and history to achieve meaning (and too many of Origen’s detractors have transfixed their gaze on the tools with which he constructs his bridges, losing sight both of his foundational understanding of the island, and of his bridge’s destination). For Origen, the paradigmatic conceptual islands which his precursors have constructed and handed down to him are for the most part left behind in the construction of the worldview, the cosmotheoria, which emerges from out of his engagement in the worlds of creation, Incarnation, and the Scriptural text. As the means to make his new vision intelligible to his contemporaries, Origen employed some of the tools of his precursors, yet his vision comes ultimately to rest on utterly different places, upon very distinct islands.

The present chapter provides a summary of a number of the thought horizons in which Origen stood in early Alexandria. Attention is given to both early non-Christian and early Christian thought, particularly where such pertains to the topics in the main section on Origen. As such, the thought of Origen’s precursors will centre around three main foci: being/creation; reason/meaning; and providence/grace. I will impose here a further limit, and will focus on those authors for whom the word λόγος was an important conceptual tool. Narrowing the parameters of engagement effects a manageable approach with which to gain a sense of the emphases of Origen.

140 On the too facile reduction of Origen to a Platonism, Mark Julian Edwards writes: “On many points it is harder for contemporaries to differ than to say the same thing, and when two intellectual systems are built upon the same terrain, we are likely to learn more about the builders from the differences in masonry than from the quarry which supplied them both with stone.” Edwards, Origen Against Plato (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2002) 5.
2.1.i) Heraclitus\textsuperscript{141}

2.1.i.a) The Root of Being

If one can fairly speak of an Alexandrian tradition, I believe it should be spoken of as essentially hermeneutical in nature. Here I am speaking of its gist, rather than its method. In this tradition of thought, things and experiences are plumbed in an effort to isolate the meaning brought to bear on those things and experiences. Things are never neutral in this stance, nor are their observers passive. Things and experiences don’t merely skim along the surface of experience, affecting nothing apart from the space they occupy and the time through which they pass. Things and experiences have roots. Being is purposeful. Being is parsed. Things and events are viewed as illustrative of an intrinsic significance which transcends the thing or the event itself. The movement is from the illustrative – things and events – to the constitutive – the meanings which come to be constructed in and as experience.\textsuperscript{142}

An important concept for hermeneutical engagement which certainly pertains very much to Origen has its first great proponent in Heraclitus, in the Ephesian’s use of the word \textit{λόγος}. The dearth of Heraclitus’ use of the term\textsuperscript{143} might surprise one who takes a cursory glance at the literature devoted to the study of his thought. Indices in scholarly works on Heraclitus usually contain a wealth of references to the word, and there was even a journal article published in 1981 which took stock of the various lines of development which scholars have drawn in their

\textsuperscript{141} Fl. c. 500 BC.

\textsuperscript{142} Right from the start there is a confrontation with the spectre of ‘Hellenic’ modes of thought which sours some contemporary readings of early Christian discourse. There is often seen here a concomitant, fatal charge of dualism, in which history is wrongly believed to be subordinated under symbol. The impulse to make this quick association arises from out of an inadequate understanding of the nature of ‘symbol’ and its relation to meaning – a clarification which will occupy much of this thesis. For now, I will say preliminarily that for Origen, and for many thinkers in the early Church, the truth contained and detailed in the symbol/\textit{signum} of both history and the text of scripture is not to be grasped in a merely abstract way, nor is the reader’s being in history cast aside as irrelevant for the confluence of the text’s possible stream of meaning.

\textsuperscript{143} Heraclitus utilized the word only 9 times in the extant works. This fact does not preclude the importance of the term, however, yet such paucity of use further complicates the attempt to get behind his intentions.
interpretation of Heraclitus’ use of the word. While there is no consensus among scholars – neither those of the distant past nor those of the present – regarding Heraclitus’ use of the term, there can be no doubt that his use of the word would have caught the attention of Origen.

To begin to speak generally on his use of the word, I believe it plays a fundamental conceptual role in Heraclitus – a role which is indicative of depth. Logos is applied as a semantic probe, piercing the surface of experience, and plumbing into its depths. One is confronted with a meaning below the surface of encounter. One commentator on Heraclitus believes the term to be paradigmatic in the Ephesian’s use, proposing that “the hundred-and-thirty-odd Fragments of Heraclitus provide evidence of the earliest extant ‘philosophical system,’” in which “the Logos idea, if not the word itself, pervades the whole.” If there is a system at work here, Heraclitus centres it around the multiplicity of meaning which this word bears.

On more than one occasion, Heraclitus makes something of a play on the word, putting to work the polysemy of the word within single passages, particularly as reason per se; inward thought per se; and the spoken word per se. He makes a distinction between his own λόγοι and The λόγος, proposing that “It is wise, listening not to me but to the λόγος, to agree that all things are one.” The oneness of the all to which he refers plays an important part in Heraclitus’ ‘system.’ In several of the fragments a number of things which are typically viewed as opposites are equated. By way of example, Heraclitus proposes that “the way up and the way down is one

145 Miller, “Logos of Heraclitus,” 166.
and the same;\textsuperscript{147} that “The teacher of most is Hesiod. It is him they know as knowing most, who did not recognize day and night: they are one;”\textsuperscript{148} he applies this contrariety also in his theology: “The god: day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, satiety and hunger.”\textsuperscript{149} The \textit{λόγος}, then, to which Heraclitus advises one to listen, points to a depth which underlies the immediate and superficial aspect of all things, and which draws all things together.\textsuperscript{150} The senses perceive the surface limits of phenomena, but little more. Their objects constitute a point of departure for the observer to uncover the deeper strata of meaning. This uncovering somehow denudes all of being of its apparent dichotomies – the spatial, the temporal, the qualitative, and quantitative – laying bare its essence, and revealing the unicity inherent.

\textbf{2.1.i.b) Reason \& the Experience of \textit{Λόγος}}

While many of Heraclitus’ words detail the oneness of things, yet, as above, he exhorts one to listen not to him for an understanding of this oneness, but to the \textit{λόγος} itself – to hear of the oneness to which the \textit{λόγος} points – first hand, as it were. Bearing in mind the general sense or root meaning of \textit{λόγος}, namely, “that by which the inner thought is expressed,” or “the inward thought itself,” it could be inferred that Heraclitus was proposing that knowledge of the \textit{λόγος} was to be gotten experientially, through a kind of \textit{deep living}, in which one is present not merely to the extrinsic phenomena of nature, but to its own intrinsic \textit{λόγος}, i.e., the “inward thought itself,” by which it is known as \textit{κόσμος}, through which it expresses its depth to the conscious subject. Nature, viewed as an ordered \textit{κόσμος}, possesses its own operative \textit{λόγος} which it holds

\textsuperscript{147} Heraclitus, \textit{D}60.
\textsuperscript{148} Heraclitus, \textit{D}57.
\textsuperscript{149} Heraclitus, \textit{D}67.
\textsuperscript{150} We do not read in the extant fragments how such a drawing together occurs, nor of how a hearing of the \textit{λόγος} dismantles any apparent or perceived dichotomy. Yet it must be remembered how those closer to him in time and place didn’t seem to fare much better than modern commentators. Perhaps Heraclitus has purposely left this open, sensing that this sort of truth must be felt/heard in being, rather than in his provisional words quoted above (p. 44): “It is wise, listening not to me but to the \textit{λόγος}, to agree that all things are one.” Heraclitus, \textit{D}50.
as *inner thought*, and which Heraclitus maintains it expresses with a *λόγος* which speaks of a unicity of and within nature *qua κόσμος*.\(^{151}\) That which is spoken speaks itself as *κόσμος*.

Heraclitus expresses frustration that the *λόγος* which he has in mind has been lost on his audience: “Although this *λόγος* holds forever (*ἐόντος αἰεὶ*), men ever fail to comprehend, both before hearing it and once they have heard.”\(^{152}\) The *λόγος* which holds forever has forever been there to hear, yet it has not been comprehended, and Heraclitus’ own *λόγος* on this *λόγος* has not shed any light on the matter. Though it is ubiquitous, though it is *The One* which all things are, the *λόγος* remains unperceived and/or misconceived: “both before hearing it and once they have heard.” The assertion that it is possible for the *λόγος* to go unheard even though it has been spoken proposes that a hearing of its voice must be consciously sought. Hearing will here not suffice; this hearing must be an engaged listening. Toward that end, Heraclitus’ most succinct fragment says simply “I went in search of myself.”\(^{153}\) As Diels has put it, Heraclitus found internalized within himself a ‘microcosm’ with attendant inherent principles of reason and nomos; and having once made this discovery, “he discovered it for a second time in the external world.”\(^{154}\) It is not possible to determine if the *turn to the self* had preceded the *turn to the world*, and Heraclitus would likely have sought to overcome this distinction and disparity, and instead would have viewed the insight as dialogic or dialectical in nature. The *λόγος* that was reciprocally spoken between the *κόσμος* and the self draws the two together – this is the heart of the discovery. In short, the situatedness of the reasoning self within a reasonable *κόσμος* marked

\(^{151}\) Hans-Georg Gadamer does not perceive this interiority in Heraclitus, proposing that such a reading of Heraclitus began later, with Plotinus: “This Platonist of the era of the Caesars is one for whom the new dimensions of inwardness have opened up. In this way, it is obvious that his understanding of the book of Heraclitus with which he is still familiar strikes out in directions that are completely different from the ones that we may assume for Heraclitus himself.” Gadamer, “Heraclitus Studies,” in *The Presocratics After Heidegger*, David C. Jacobs, ed., (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999) 215.

\(^{152}\) Heraclitus, *D1*.

\(^{153}\) Heraclitus, *D101*

an existential accord of the conscious subject, who, in searching, comes to awareness of living and being within a milieu of reason, of *like calling unto like*. The κόσμος is completed in the knowing subject.

2.1.i.c) Being Toward Providence

Steering all things toward a kind of essential unity, then, Heraclitus perceived a hegemony of λόγος operative in the κόσμος, both intrinsic and extrinsic to the conscious subject, in which the free self could participate after having heard, listened to, and acknowledged the same. The circumspect *listener* who is attentive to the cosmic λόγος will find accord in being, while those who do not listen, who might or might not *hear*, are lead astray. In this light, the λόγος functions as a key which unlocks the understanding and experience of the dynamism of nature, whereby one possesses a sense of groundedness – a sense which is not accessible to those who do not hold this key. As a result of a lack of this key, such an individual dwells in a parsimonious, diminished state of being – in nature, yet without participating in its inherent principle of reason, merely scratching upon the husk of nature, not breaking into its inner fruit as κόσμος. Such an individual stands mute, neither hearing the cosmic Λόγος, nor speaking her own λόγος in participatory act.

Oxford scholar Edward Hussey has proposed that at the heart of Heraclitus’ thought is a “remarkable and characteristic epistemology.” The experience of being itself requires interpretation, for which interpretation Heraclitus found a helpful tool in language as analogy – i.e., in the speaking, listening, hearing of λόγοι, and in the reason and inherent principles of order as a κόσμος of λόγος, which λόγοι strive to articulate. Hussey proposes a number of points in Heraclitus’ epistemology which he maintains “would be agreed upon by many scholars.”

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Among these points is the difficulty of interpreting experience, an interpretation which centres around the analogy of language.\textsuperscript{156}

The upshot of this analogical work of interpretation which effects knowledge of the cosmic nature of being, is the nascence of a notion or theory of self. This notion is, again, indicative of depth. Heraclitus attributes \( \lambda\bar{o}g\circs \) to the human soul: “You will not find out the limits (\( \pi\varepsilon\iota\rho\alpha\tau\alpha \)) of the soul (\( \upsilon\rho\gamma\eta\)) by going, even if you travel over every way, so deep is its \( \lambda\bar{o}g\circs \).”\textsuperscript{157} This is a remarkable development in the early Greek idea of the soul, particularly as such had been depicted in Homer and Hesiod. In the Greek literature before Heraclitus the character of the soul was comparatively flat, little more than a marked diminution of the character of the person in whom it once dwelt.\textsuperscript{158} As Charles Kahn has noted,\textsuperscript{159} in this fragment a reader acquainted with Milesian philosophy would hear an echo of the various notions of The Limitless (\( \acute{\alpha}p\varepsilon\iota\rho\circs \)) as constitutive ‘First Principle’ (\( \acute{\alpha}r\chi\eta \)) which had been utilized by these early thinkers; for Anaximenes it was limitless Air; for Anaximander it was simply The Limitless. Heraclitus now proposes that a limit to the soul cannot be found, that it is \( \acute{\alpha}p\varepsilon\iota\rho\circs \). This anthropology grounds human being in nature, in opposition to a view in which nature and human being are at odds, as one stands superior over the other. G.S. Kirk puts it this way: “Heraclitus made it far clearer than his immediate predecessors that man himself is a part of his

\textsuperscript{156} Charles Kahn supports this understanding as well, noting how “The world order speaks to men as a kind of language they must learn to comprehend. Just as the meaning of what is said is actually ‘given’ in the sounds which the foreigner hears, but cannot understand, so the direct experience of the nature of things will be like the babbling of an unknown tongue for the soul that does not know how to listen.” Kahn, \textit{Art and Thought of Heraclitus}, 107.

\textsuperscript{157} Heraclitus, D45.

\textsuperscript{158} See for instance \textit{The Oxford Classical Dictionary}, 3rd ed., s.v. “soul.” It is proposed in the \textit{OCD} that the notion of \( \theta\mu\omicron\omicron\varsigma \) was a late addition to that of \( \upsilon\rho\gamma\eta\), occurring only after Plato. The character of Achilles was certainly a pathetic one in his encounter with Odysseus in Hades (\textit{Odyssey} 11.489-491). See also Jan Bremmer, \textit{The Early Greek Concept of the Soul} (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987).

\textsuperscript{159} Kahn, \textit{Art and Thought}, 128.
surroundings; in him, too, the Logos is operative, and his effective functioning depends upon action in accordance with it – and so upon his understanding of it.”

These observations on the thought of Heraclitus stand at the head of a conceptual orientation or style – a worldview, in short. The orientation is thoroughly hermeneutical in nature, and is marked by a wholism or unity which underlies the structures of being, including – and most importantly – the sentient human being. The oneness of Heraclitus’ “speaking all” demands a listening by which one approaches the depth underlying the immediate and superficial aspect of all of being. To break through the superficial into the fruit of being demands the will to listen to the speaking. Hearing alone will not suffice; there must be a sought and engaged listening. The one λόγος speaks providentially through the κόσμος and the reflective self, constituting the means by which disparity and duality is revealed to be nothing more than a construction or conditioning which divides the κόσμος of the situated self away from the Κόσμος as a whole. The λόγος that is reciprocally spoken between the κόσμος and the self draws the two together – this is the heart of the discovery. The reasoning self overcomes disparity by means of listening to a reasonable and λόγος-speaking κόσμος.

2.1.ii) Plato: From the Cave to the Abyss

Moving chronologically through the thought horizons which comprise Origen’s intellectual world, the question of the influence of Plato must of course be addressed. A number of the reservations which Origen held against Plato are held in common with some concerns of contemporary philosophical hermeneutics, and hence it is helpful at this point to commence some degree of dialogue between the former and latter.

161 “Listening not to me but to the logos, it is wise to concur that all is one.” Heraclitus, D50.
162 C. 429-347 BC.
In the time which separates Heraclitus from the emergence of Stoic philosophy – Zeno of Citium was born some 200 years after Heraclitus – there wasn’t much reflection given to the notion of λόγος. Perhaps surprisingly, Plato hadn’t shown much interest in picking up any strands of thought on λόγος which Heraclitus had left for subsequent thinkers. Plato’s use of the term is principally straightforward and literal, indicating either “reason” or “expressed reason” (i.e., language/discourse) by which knowledge is acquired. The Heraclitean quality of λόγος as an absolute seems to have some parallels with Plato’s theory of forms, but Plato chose instead the words εἶδος and ἴδεα in his exploration of the notion. The movement was from the linguistic to the psychological – from word to idea. One of the upshots of this shift in vocabulary was a retraction of the immediacy of language (λόγος as word/speaking) into the purely abstract realm of the mind (λόγος as reason, the rational). The words of Heraclitus speak of presence, of experience, of the immediacy of the tangible and tactile world of the senses from which begins the dialectical experience of knowledge in the seeking after stability amidst the instability of cosmic flux. Plato, on the other hand, commences by tracing the epistemological line drawn from the conceptual objects of the construing mind – labouring as it does under the conditions and constraints of anamnesis – to the phenomena of the world. It is written in the Republic how the work of the philosopher is to know The Beautiful or Beauty-Itself – while the

163 See Jessica Moss, “Right Reason in Plato and Aristotle: On the Meaning of Logos” Phronesis 59, Issue 3, 2014, 181-230. While Plato’s use of λόγος is by all appearances straightforward, Lloyd P. Gerson has commented: “The gap between what Plato says or, more accurately, what Plato’s characters say, and what Plato means, is potentially an abyss. It is possible to leap into that abyss and never be heard from again.” Gerson emphasizes that Plato must be interpreted: “The gap between the paraphrasing of the literal and the construction of the doctrinal is the gap between what Plato wrote and Platonism.” Gerson, “What is Platonism?” Journal of the History of Philosophy, vol. 43, no. 3 (2005) 255-56. Above and beyond these observations, there is little to either paraphrase or interpret of Plato’s use of the word λόγος.

164 W. K. C. Guthrie’s definition of Plato’s forms captures the disclosive and immanent dynamic common to both Heraclitus’ λόγος and Plato’s forms: “By the theory of Forms I mean the idea that what we call universals are not simply concepts in the mind, but objective realities displaying their character to perfection and eternally, invisible to the senses but grasped after intensive preparation by a sort of intellectual vision, with an existence independent of their mutable and imperfect instances or copies which are all that we experience in this life.” Guthrie, A History of Greek Philosophy, vol. 5: The Later Plato and the Academy (Cambridge: The University Press, 1978) 378.
The intellectual activity of the majority is content to know beautiful things *per se*. The philosopher leaves behind the world, ascending up into the ivory tower of the forms via the rope of *anamnesis*, while the majority must make do with the crumbs tumbling down into experience, collecting under the table of that remote and abstract realm.

In short, the thought of Plato follows a radically abstract path. Plato’s path is not grounded in, nor does it commence principally from, history. To speak more particularly – Plato’s path is not grounded in the *experience of history*. There is in Plato’s thought a bid to excise the objective from out of the realm of experience. This excision planted the seeds of the sort of thinking against which contemporary philosophical hermeneutics would eventually arise and contest. But this characterization of Plato’s thought is not a novel thing, it did not only emerge in modernity in the thought of existential thinkers ranging from Kierkegaard through Nietzsche and Heidegger, in thinkers who emphasized embodiment and historicity. Even in Aristophanes one reads how Socrates enters the play by means of being lowered into the action in a *hot air balloon* (ταρτός) – a *philosophicus ex machina* – a curious take on the *deus ex machina* by which ancient dramatists would involve the gods in the action, lowering them by means of a system of pulleys. Socrates had taken to the air to facilitate his search, since celestial matters cannot be discerned on the ground.

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165 *Republic* 5.476D-480A.
166 Plato’s thought commences from otherwise than experience. Gerson notes this Platonic methodology in his definition of Platonism: “we should understand Platonism historically as consisting in fidelity to the principles of ‘top-downism.’” Gerson, “What is Platonism?” 276.
167 This is the dualism which will come to much fuller expression in Enlightenment thought, in the formation of the scientific method for which there was a seeking of a parallel method to formulate a *mathesis universalis* – a catch-all probe for all human experience, including the humanities. For a fine treatment of the disparity effected by Enlightenment thought, see Andrew Louth, *Discerning the Mystery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) *passim*, but particularly chapter 2, “The Legacy of the Enlightenment,” pp. 17-44.
And here lies one of the operative points of contact between Origen and the turn in contemporary philosophical hermeneutics toward routes of knowledge other than those which Plato emphasizes. For Origen, such non-historical idealising held, at best, only limited appeal. The disparity of such dualism is simply too great to be of much use for him. The Platonic model is one which might satisfy a philosopher and a Gnostic, but its bracketing out of the world undermines the goodness and bounteouness of creation, particularly the freedom of the historical agency of persons in their poetic recourse to an historical experience of truth. Origen’s thought continually strives at articulating a usefulness toward which this desire might be lived out in the freedom emerging from the narrativity of engaged Biblical experience – the essence of his operative notion of the ὡφέλεια of Scripture. Apart from such inclinations as will be shown to be at heart in Origen’s thought, the κόσμος and history collapse into an insuperable redundancy.

That Origen is concerned essentially with act and event puts his thought soundly within the ethos of contemporary philosophical hermeneutics. Martin Heidegger has proposed that the “step into philosophy” taken by Socrates and Plato was on one hand a remarkable achievement, but on the other hand, a symptom of decline. Heidegger regards the decline to be the loss of the sense of “astonishment” which had gripped the Pre-Socratic thinkers, and which

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170 Typically translated as “usefulness,” but also indicates bounteouness and depth: “Who would dare to say that what is written by the Word of God is of no use and makes no contribution to our salvation, but merely narrates an event that happened, and which, to be sure, passed on by back then, but now pertains in no way to us when it is related?” Origen, HNum 27.2.1. See also above, p. 4, n. 7.

171 As Tzamalikos has noted, “Origen did not believe (as Platonists did) that ‘knowledge’ is a means to attain to ‘virtue.’ On the contrary, virtue is realized as praxis, which is the indispensable means for attaining to knowledge.” Tzamalikos, Origen: Philosophy of History, 168. In other words, the epistemological top-downism of Plato undergoes inversion, from action to virtue to knowledge rather than vice versa.

172 Martin Heidegger, What is Philosophy? (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003) 53. Heidegger was not the first to note this departure. The character of Varro in Cicero’s Academica says: “It is my view, and it is universally agreed, that Socrates was the first person who summoned philosophy away from mysteries veiled in concealment by nature herself, upon which all philosophers before him had been engaged,” and that this summoning lead Socrates “to realize that heavenly matters are either remote from our knowledge or else, however fully known, have nothing to do with the good life.” Cicero, Academica, 1.15, in Cicero: De Natura Deorum [&] Academica (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951).
was the impetus for their reflections. The establishment of philosophy, in this reading, effected a form of dualism, or more precisely, a line of demarcation which stood between the Presocratics and Socrates. The Presocratics were “caught in the radical astonishment of being,” in the estimate of Heidegger, and “belonged to a primal, therefore ‘more authentic’ dimension or experience of thinking, in which beingness was immediately present to language, to the *logos*.” Articulating the precise nature of such “authentic” experience is the heart of Heidegger’s project, which he labours to explain, to illustrate and above all, to “act out” – as Steiner expresses it – in his late writings. Similarly, the astonishment is with and within the κόσμος in Origen’s thought. One does not have to effect a noetic ascent into an abstract realm of forms, but instead strives to understand the kenotic divestment of Λόγος in the act and event of the Incarnation, and, more importantly, one strives to participate in the same in one’s own historical action.

As the thesis proceeds, there will be a number of points at which I note how Origen stands in stark contrast to Plato. To speak cursorily and generally on the crux of the matter, I see a distinction in aesthetic between Plato and Origen which results in either thinker following divergent conceptual paths. Plato follows an abstract path, while Origen follows one which is grounded in history – in act, in event. These thinkers are working at cross purposes. Plato wants to discern how being might participate in Being; Origen wants to understand how Being has

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173 Heidegger acknowledges that Aristotle had spoken of astonishment (θαυμάζειν) as the impetus for philosophy (*Metaphysics* A 2, 982 b12), but proposes that “As soon as philosophy was in progress, astonishment became superfluous as a propelling force so that it disappeared. It could disappear since it was only an impetus.” Heidegger, *What is Philosophy?*, 83.

174 George Steiner, *Martin Heidegger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 27. In speaking of the “primal” or “more authentic dimension or experience of thinking.” Steiner is referring to Heidegger’s penchant for keeping his thought within the realm of immediate experience, in contradistinction to that of metaphysics. Italics Steiner’s.

175 Steiner, *Martin Heidegger*, 28.
come down into being – a radically astonishing occurrence – and to grasp the implications that such is fully participable within the realm of history.\(^{176}\)

2.1.iii) Stoic Philosophy\(^{177}\)

2.1.iii.a) The Coherence of Being

In contradistinction to the top-downism of Platonic thought, the Stoic philosophers propose an understanding of the world which at heart is coherent – in the strict sense of the word. Where Plato’s divine craftsman (δημιουργός) works, as it were, from above and outside, the Stoic λόγος operates within. The system of the κόσμος is a monistic system of coherence. Natural phenomena and human movement in history and thought are manifestations of an inherent principle of λόγος which renders the κόσμος coherent. Nature, broadly speaking, and human nature itself, share a common property of λόγος – a sharing which means that “the human individual is a part of the world in a precise and integral sense.”\(^{178}\) This integration began in the thought of Heraclitus, as noted above, and now comes to fuller expression in the Stoics.\(^{179}\)

A.A. Long has noted “clear links” between Plato’s δημιουργός, particularly its work in the creation of the world’s soul, and the Stoic teaching surrounding λόγος.\(^{180}\) Long also notes that Stoic philosophy reaches back yet further, back to Heraclitus’ central exhortation of living in

\(^{176}\) By way of a provisional reference to the contrast in thought, a passage of First Principles will serve. Here Origen makes an explicit rejection of Platonic forms. Speaking of Jesus’ words of his having come from another world (John 17:14,16) in the context of his explication of the word κόσμος, Origen precludes the “the existence of certain imaginary forms which the Greeks call ‘ideas.’ For it is certainly foreign to our mode of reasoning to speak of an incorporeal world that exists solely in the mind’s fancy or the unsubstantial region of thought.” Origen, PA 2.3.6.

\(^{177}\) Zeno of Citium (335-263 BC) is usually regarded as the founder of Stoicism, which is divided into three phases: Early Stoicism (Zeno), the Middle Stoicism of Panaetius (c. 185-109 BC) and Posidonius (c. 135-51 BC), and the Late/Roman Stoicism of Seneca (c. 2 BC-65 AD), Epictetus (c. AD 50-130), and Marcus Aurelius (AD 121-180).


\(^{179}\) Pp. 46-9.

\(^{180}\) Long notes in particular Zeno’s cosmic principle of “creative reason” and Plato’s demiurge, and proposes that the elaborate defence of the notion of providence in Plato’s Laws was influential to the Stoics. See Hellenistic Philosophy, 112.
accordance with λόγος. In the notion of λόγος, the Stoic tradition finds its abiding principle. Λόγος abides in and suffuses all of being – even that of god – hence it is by means of this common property that Stoic philosophy is radically monistic. Λόγος for the Stoics functions somewhat in the manner of a cosmic gene which passes on a universal principal of reason which is present in all of being.

If in fact the Stoics had conflated the Platonic Forms and demiurge with their own thoughts on λόγος, they found both his demiurge and his forms too remote, and brought both of these down onto the level of, and into the stuff of – creation. The order which can be discerned within nature was the voice of reason, of λόγος speaking to sentient creation from within. One did not have to emerge from out of the shadow play of the subterranean cave and ascend up into reason per se. Λόγος speaks from within the terra of creation. The dissatisfaction with the imprecision of Heraclitus and the incorporeality of Plato’s forms, necessitated an attempt at precision and corporeality for the Stoics. There was a desire to anchor their practicable ethics into the κόσμος itself, and to thereby overcome the dualism that had been brought to bear by Plato. If some degree of the astonishment of being as historical being has been lost in Plato, here the Stoics resuscitate it. The κόσμος – both its system as a whole, and the world within it –

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181 Long, Hellenistic Philosophy, 145.

182 In the act of creation there is a suffusion of divinity into the substance or matter of the κόσμος, unlike the modus operandi of Plato’s demiurge, who does not mingle with creation, but works extrinsically upon matter. Diogenes Laertius writes: “In the beginning (κατ’ ἀρχὰς) he [God] was by himself; he transformed (τρέπει) the whole of substance (οὐσία) through air into water, and just as in animal generation the seed (σπέρμα) has a moist vehicle (γονῇ), so in cosmic moisture God, who is the seminal reason (σπερματικὸν λόγον) of the universe, remains behind (ὑπολείπεσθαι) in the moisture as such an agent, adapting (εὐεργὸν) matter to himself.” Diogenes, Lives of Eminent Philosophers, trans. R.D. Hicks (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931) 7.136.

183 The Stoics took the thought of Heraclitus to its (apparently) logical conclusion: λόγος, κόσμος, and god are conflated. In Stoic theology “the existence of god involves the fact that he governs, or rather is the κόσμος, which explains why some of the proofs for the existence of god simply amount to proofs that the κόσμος itself is a rationally ordered living being.” Keimpe Algra, “Stoic Theology,” Cambridge Companion to the Stoics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 160.
is alive, is charged with an energy and vitality which is both revelatory of its object (λόγος) and is also participatory within its subject (human being).

2.1.iii.b) The Vestigial Logos

The suffusion of creative divinity into the substance or matter of the κόσμος marks a robust departure from the remote nature of Plato’s demiurge. Here is the distinction between a God who pours himself into creation, using it as a sort of matrix through which creation unfolds, and an utterly and insuperably transcendent demiurge, on the other hand, who works upon matter from without, wholly absent in his echoing transcendence. By means of this infusion of λόγος into material being, the Stoics transformed the life of reason from out of its remote character as such had been estranged in the Platonic dualistic universe. The turn toward monism away from dualism has implications for Stoic epistemology. This wholistic thrust of Stoic thought effected a turn to a more worldly epistemology. Yet the extent to which the epistemology can be said to be ‘worldly’ is far from clear.184 Knowledge is sometimes kataleptic or sense-based – at other times, it is ‘inspired’ or proleptic – derived from some means other than perception of phenomena.

In both the Platonic and Stoic views, knowledge and reason are for all intents and purposes at hand. But there is a disconnect in the Platonic relation between knowledge per se and knowledge garnered, and there is a further disconnect in the spectre of scepticism which arises out of this disconnect. For the Stoics, on the other hand, λόγος was held to be operative in

184 Consideration of Stoic epistemology often centres around the tug-of-war between kataleptic (sense-based) and proleptic (intuitive/noetic) modes of knowledge. The issue is complicated by the Stoic borrowing of Epicurus’ term “prolepsis” – understood by him to be a knowledge arising out of “general concepts or mental pictures produced by repeated sense-impressions [katalepsis?] which are both clear and similar in kind.” A. A. Long, Hellenistic Philosophy, 23. This marks a departure from Platonic anamnesis, yet Diogenes Laertius opens the door again to the same by making a distinction between katalepsis and prolepsis, in which the latter comprises a dalliance between anamnesis and what would come to be called ‘natural law,’ when he defines it (πρόληψις) as “a general notion which comes by the gift of nature (an innate conception of universals or general concepts).” Diogenes adds that others of the Stoics simply “make Right Reason (τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον) the standard.” Diogenes Laertius, Lives, 7.54.
the material world, reaching up and into human being through passive and active principles of materiality and λόγος, as detailed by Cicero’s account of a teaching of Zeno:

If flutes playing musical tunes grew on an olive-tree, surely you would not question that the olive-tree possessed some knowledge of the art of flute-playing; or if plane-trees bore well-tuned lutes, doubtless you would likewise infer that the plane-trees possessed the art of music; why then should we not judge the world to be animate and endowed with wisdom, when it produces animate and wise offspring?185

The knowledge of flute playing doesn’t pre-exist the flute player, lying in wait to be retrieved from an independent realm of forms. Instead, as part of its essential nature, the playing is continuous with the knowledge, and passes on unencumbered as a fundamental music of λόγος in which all of creation is an instrument.

2.1.iii.c) Providence, Interrupted (?)

The notion of providence is the essential question that Origen would have had in mind as he considered the Stoics. Providence is the limen at which creation encounters the divine. Two of the thoughts of the Stoics on providence gave Origen pause. These are: the equating of god with the κόσμος, and the notion of cosmic conflagration.

In Origen’s reading of the Stoics, the manner in which they propose an investing of λόγος/god into creation was incompatible with the notion of creation which emerged from the monotheism of the Abrahamic traditions.186 The materiality which the Stoics invested in their return to the Heraclitean notion of the unicity of all things brought in tow the corollary notion of the dynamic and persistent state of flux of all of the κόσμος, including the material λόγος who inheres in the same.187 The mutability of the Stoic gods/λόγος is entangled in the absolute

186 Origen states his reservations in HGen 14.3 and CC 6.71.
187 Marc Julian Edwards notes Origen’s concern of the implications of materiality on divine providence: “No true doctrine of providence, he [Origen] urges, could accommodate such a deity, who shares not only the mutability but the passibility of all bodies, since (according to the Stoics) he is embroiled in the birth and perishing of each successive world.” Edwards, Origen Against Plato, 57.
mutability which some Stoics posited in their notion of conflagration. The conflagration of the world is described by Cicero as occurring when the nutritive and generative power of moisture is “used up,” resulting in the cycle of life coming to a halt. Cicero attempts to ameliorate the idea in a manner which foreshadows the theodicy of Leibniz, who posited the theory of a best possible world despite all appearances. The evil is only apparent – it is an interruption which functions as the means to a greater end qua good. The evil experience of being awoken by a bedbug serves the better end of not oversleeping, and the presence of mice encourages tidiness, as Chrysippus irrepressibly puts it. The conflagration sets in motion the restoration of the life cycle, as the exhaustion of God in the moist is interrupted by God as fire, who resets the cycle anew. But for some Stoics, the unitive principle of λόγος – the active ‘agent’ within the κόσμος, the cause of a drawing together all principles of the κόσμος – was itself not immune to the universal conflagration.

Both the conflagration and the equation of god with κόσμος does not offer much for Christian reflection in its own conception of providence. The incompatibility comes to light with

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188 “Neither can the earth be nourished nor will the air continue to flow, being unable to rise upward after it has drunk up all the water; thus nothing will remain but fire, by which, as a living being and a god, once again a new world may be created and the ordered universe be restored as before.” Cicero, Nature 2.118.

189 In his Essais de Théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l’homme et l’origine du mal, published in 1710.

189 As one scholar has put it: “particular evils are functional for greater ends” and “imperfections among the parts subserve perfection of the whole.” Joseph M. Bryant, Moral Codes and Social Structure in Ancient Greece: A Sociology of Greek Ethics From Homer to the Epicureans and Stoics (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996) 444.

191 See Plutarch’s Against the Stoics On Common Conceptions, 1044D.

192 It should be noted that the conflagration was not a consensus position among the Stoics, Cicero notes that Panaetius had “questioned” it. Cicero, Nature 2.118.

193 Cleanthes and Chrysippus, however, propose a distinction between the one god and his myriad parts and manifestations; the latter is destroyed in the conflagration, while the former is preserved. Chrysippus softens the notion of conflagration as the death of the κόσμος by positing that the κόσμος does not actually die, but is regurgitated by god, consumed by god in order to effect a rebirth of the same. See Against the Stoics On Common Conceptions 1067a. This denial of the divine suffering in the conflagration opens the door to a Stoic theology of transcendence: “During the phase of conflagration or ekpurōsis within a cosmic cycle, god may be regarded as completely existing ‘in himself,’ so to speak.” Michael J. White, “Stoic Natural Philosophy (Physics and Cosmology,” Cambridge Companion to the Stoics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 137.
close consideration of the word “providence” itself. The word indicates *an attending to*, or, literally, a *seeing to something* (*pro + videre*). Yet for the Stoics, the world toward which providence is turned is ultimately disposable in the conflagration, and for some Stoics, so too is the material god who turns.\(^{194}\) If the coherence of \(\lambda\rho\gamma\omicron\zeta\) in Stoic thought constitutes one pathway for the logical conclusion of early Hellenic thought, then just as it becomes more clearly articulated in these conclusions, it removes itself as a decisive sphere of influence in early Christian thought.

**2.2) Philo of Alexandria\(^{195}\)**

**2.2.a) From Limen to Liminality of Being**

> Now these are no mythical fictions, such as poets and sophists delight in, but modes of making ideas visible, bidding us resort to allegorical interpretation guided in our renderings by what lies beneath the surface.\(^{196}\)

Philo of Alexandria here and elsewhere addresses the issue that confronts philosophy at every turn – the question of language. W. T. Stace wrote that:

> All philosophy labours under the difficulty of having to express non-sensuous thought in language which has been evolved for the purpose of expressing sensuous ideas.\(^{197}\)

As Marshall McLuhan’s maxim has expressed it, “the medium is the message”\(^{198}\); in the work of Philo, the notion of \(\lambda\rho\gamma\omicron\zeta\) is now explicated through the medium of narrative. As a result, the

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\(^{194}\) See for example the dramatic account of the conflagration in Seneca’s letter to Marcia. In the letter penned in consolation of Marcia’s recent loss of both her daughter and son, Seneca writes: “It (time/conflagration) will swallow up cities in yawning chasm, will shatter them with earthquakes . . . will send forth a pestilential vapor . . . will kill every living creature . . . will scorch and burn all mortal things.” Seneca, *To Marcia on Consolation*, in *Moral Essays*, vol. 3 (Loeb Classical Library 254), trans. John W. Basore (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979) 26.5-7.

\(^{195}\) Philo’s birth is usually placed between 20-10 BC. He died sometime after the accession of Claudius to the throne (41 AD).

\(^{196}\) Philo, *Opif* 157.


message it contains has demanded a new ontology of its medium as text.\textsuperscript{199} The new ontology takes a form in which \textit{λόγος} is hierophantically revealed through the narrative medium of the \textit{Torah}. In short, where formerly \textit{λόγος} stood as \textit{limen}, it is now revealed as liminal. This is a very subtle distinction, but an appropriate one. “Limen” is defined by Oxford as “a threshold below which a stimulus is not perceived.”\textsuperscript{200} In the thought which precedes Philo, \textit{λόγος} is participated in, but it is not yet attributed a source – beyond the vague notion of its being an attribute of nature \textit{per se}. In Philo’s thought, the source is revealed, and one thereby obtains a better grasp of the participatory dynamic. The potentiality can pass more readily into actuality once it is revealed in its particularity, and when it can be read in its narrative expression. In this manner of viewing this issue, \textit{λόγος} becomes liminal, as that word is defined as “relating to a transitional stage or process; occupying a position at, or on both sides of, a boundary or threshold.”\textsuperscript{201} This \textit{λόγος} suffers no destruction, neither is it a destructive force of its own \textit{kόσμος}.\textsuperscript{202} The \textit{λόγος} suffuses all of being, and shores it up, safeguarding it from destruction:

He it is, who extending Himself from the midst to its utmost bounds and from its extremities to its midst again, keeps up through all its length Nature’s unvanquished course, combining and compacting all its parts. For the Father who begat Him constituted His Word such a Bond (\textit{δεσμὸν}) for the Universe as nothing can break.\textsuperscript{203}

\textsuperscript{199} It should be noted that in early Hellenic philosophy there was a tradition of strong emphasis on orality over against textuality. The question remains whether Heraclitus set out his teaching in ‘book’ form. Kirk seems to reject the idea (\textit{Cosmic Fragments}, 13), while Kahn accepts it (\textit{Art and Thought of Heraclitus}, 3). Nonetheless, Heraclitus had advised his listeners to listen not to him, but to the \textit{λόγος} (see above, p. 41). Plato’s \textit{Phaedrus} espouses a strong emphasis on orality. In his presentation of the myth of the creation of writing by the Egyptian god Theuth, the king and god Thamus rejects the same, on the grounds that “it will introduce forgetfulness into the soul of those who learn it; they will not practice using their memory because they will put their trust in writing, which is external and depends on signs that belong to others, instead of trying to remember from the inside . . . You provide your students with the appearance of wisdom, not with its reality.” \textit{Phaedrus} 275a. Translation by Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997) 551-52.

\textsuperscript{200} \url{https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/limen}.

\textsuperscript{201} \url{https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/liminal}.

\textsuperscript{202} “And indeed those who propound the doctrines of conflagration and rebirth . . . fail to observe that in their innocent philosophizing they are imposing destruction on providence also.” Philo, \textit{Aet} 47.

\textsuperscript{203} Philo, \textit{Plant} 9.
The heaven (οὐρανός) in Philo is the liminal cipher of infinite potentiality. The boundlessness in potentiality of the heaven has a parallel in the potentiality and freedom of the human person. At the centre of these potencies and potentialities stands the marshalling dynamic of the archetype λόγος, and its realization and expression as νόμος. From out of this centre and junction emerges both the new ontology of the text of the Torah, and a phenomenology of νόμος and human freedom.

In his exploration of the creation accounts of Genesis, Philo posits a two-stage creation in which an intelligible world precedes a sensuous – the former functioning as a model upon which the latter is built. At the heart of both the model (the intelligible), and its building (the sensual) is Philo’s notion of λόγος. The λόγος is characterized as God’s dynamism towards the world, in aspects both immanent and transcendent. In Philo’s view the act of creation is akin to a biography of the divine; the act is an expression which Philo views as a sharing out of God’s inherent or essential reason. Because in Philo’s view God’s being and act are one, the divine planning and desire are reflected in the κόσμος in the act and being of creation. What was

204 οὐρανός is described by Philo as: “the treasury of divine blessings . . . from which the bountiful Giver rains down continually His most perfect joys” (Her 76). The defining of the infinite potentiality is caught in a struggle with its liminal relation to the heaven. Philo notes how “the fleetest things under the sky would be seen to be standing still, if their motion were compared with that of the sun and moon and the other heavenly bodies,” and yet: “All heaven is God’s handiwork, and that which makes is ever ahead of the thing made,” a paradox which comes to a head when Philo adds: “but the strangest thing of all is, that whereas the heavenly bodies as they go past moving objects [which] are themselves in motion, God who outstrips them all is motionless” (Post 19-20). The upshot of this theme is that the mind “whose movement surpasses [all things] in swiftness,” is yet not swift enough to capture the motionless stasis of God’s essential being.

205 “Just as the city that was marked out beforehand in the architect had no location outside, but had been engraved in the soul of the craftsman, in the same way the cosmos composed of the ideas (ὁ ἐκ τῶν ἱδεῶν κόσμος) would have no other place than the divine Logos who gives these ideas their ordered disposition (διακοσμήσαντα).” Philo, Opif 20. Translation by David T. Runia, On the Creation of the Cosmos According to Moses (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

206 Runia questions whether Philo’s Logos is separable even from God himself, noting that Philo vacillates on the issue, but that “most often”, he posits a God who is “conceptually separate.” Runia, Philo in Early Christian Literature (Van Gorcum, Assen: Fortress Press, 1993), 41.

207 “If you would wish to use a formulation that has been stripped down to essentials, you might say that the intelligible cosmos is nothing else than the Logos of God as he is actually engaged in making the cosmos. For the intelligible city is nothing else than the reasoning of the architect as he is actually engaged in the planning of the foundation of the city.” Philo, Opif 24.
principally a wholly intrinsic plan within God – *esoteric* in the truest sense of the word, is now brought to *exoteric* expression in creation. Where formerly it was limited to being intrinsically operative in God, now it is so in the κόσμος, steering it as a helmsman steers his ship by means of its rudder.\(^{208}\)

The hierophantic dynamism of the act of creation extends to and is present also in Philo’s conception of *Torah*. The word *Torah* was translated as *νόμος* in the Septuagint, which for those who had received a Hellenic education as Philo had,\(^{209}\) would evoke a number of associations with earlier Greek philosophy.\(^{210}\) In such philosophies, while *νόμος* takes expression in proscriptive form, it invariably reaches back further, back into the order which is reflected in the phenomena of the world, out of which early thought attempted to tease an articulation of the essence of λόγος around which *νόμος* is centred. The word had a number of cosmic and divine associations since at least the time of Heraclitus, and such associations would eventually provide the basis for theories of natural law.\(^{211}\)

In Philo’s view, the *Torah* is tantamount to a ‘hard copy’ of natural law. This is explicated through a movement in the form λόγος → κόσμος → νόμος. The λόγος which is inherent in God is shared out in the act and being of the creation of the κόσμος, and is reified in

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\(^{208}\) Philo details this notion when discussing the dream of Jacob in which the latter saw angels ascending and descending upon a ladder, and who had referred to the place at which he had the dream – Haran – as “the House of God” (Gen 28.17): Philo contends that this House is not a place, but proposes “who, then, can that House be, save the Word who is antecedent to all that has come into existence? The Word, which the Helmsman of the Universe grasps as a rudder to guide all things on their course?” Philo, *Migr* 6.


\(^{210}\) For example, Heraclitus finds the source of all legislation in the divine law: “the laws of men are nourished by one law, the divine law” (D114). Plato, in *Laws* 700b-d, writes of a class of song called “νόμοι,” lamenting how musical composers began to break (παρανομεῖα) the “rules” (νόμινον) laid down by the muse, resulting in a calamitous confusion within the musical canon, which by extension gave “the ordinary man not only a taste for breaking the laws of music but the arrogance to set himself up as a capable judge.” Plato, *Laws*, trans. Trevor J. Saunders, *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997) 700e. Plato likens this “θεατροκρατία” to the hubris of the Titans, who had attempted to overthrow the gods of the Olympian pantheon (*Laws* 701a). And for Aristotle, law precludes the relativism of desire: “ἄνευ ὀρέξεως νοῦς ὁ νόμος ἀπτίν” (*Politics*, 1287a).

the form of νόμος/Torah. The dynamic inter-relation shared among the three elements effects a cosmic hermeneutical circle. In Philo’s view they constitute a reciprocal and reciprocating epistemology. The νόμος of the Torah is a cipher and conduit which provides the κόσμος a glimpse into the λόγος which is inherent within God. In presenting the matter in this way, Philo is saying that there is an unbroken link from the λόγος to the νόμος/Torah of Moses. The intermediate link between the two is the κόσμος, while Moses stands in it and functions as intermediary between the two. There exists an unbroken link between the λόγος and νόμος in its expression as κόσμος. The κόσμος is the material expression of the dialectic between λόγος and νόμος – a centrifugal being which speaks out to the “unbreakable bond (δεσµὸν)” of λόγος and νόμος by which it is bookmarked.

The accuracy and integrity of Moses’ Torah are safeguarded by his having been granted by God a peering into the essence of Being-itself; in an experience of direct, unmediated knowledge in his encounter with God on Mount Sinai. Just as an architect commences a project by means of planning, “carrying around an image (τύπος) in his head,” so too creation commences from out of the will and intentionality of divinity, and the model and archetype of this will and intentionality. Moses is the hierophantic architect who reveals without

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212 “Moses . . . made a splendid and awe-inspiring start to his laws. He did not immediately state what should be done and what not . . . [The start to his laws] contains an account of the making of the cosmos, the reasoning for this being that the cosmos is in harmony with the law and the law with the cosmos, and the man who observes the law is at once a citizen of the cosmos, directing his actions in relation to the rational purpose of nature, in accordance with which the entire cosmos also is administered.” Philo, Opif 1.1-3. (Runia’s translation).

213 Philo, Plant 9 (quoted above, p. 60). This intimate relation between λόγος, κόσμος, and νόμος emphasizes the seriousness and depth of vice; vice effects a three-fold effrontery which violates well beyond the parameters set down in the text of the Torah. As Peder Borgen puts it: “those who follow injustice and vices are enemies not of men, but of the whole of heaven and the universe.” Borgen, Philo of Alexandria: An Exegete for His Time (Leiden: Brill, 1997) 147.

214 Moses “entered, we are told, into the darkness where God was, that is into the unseen, invisible, incorporeal and archetypal essence of existing things (τῶν ἄνων παράδειγματικῶν υστίας).” Philo, Mos 1.158. And in QE 2.90, the object of the “appearance” shown to Moses on the mountain was “τὰς παράδειγματικὰς υστίας τὰς τῶν ἰδεῶν.”

215 “If this entire sense-perceptible cosmos . . . is a representation (μὴμα) of the divine image (εἰκόνος), it is plain that the archetypal seal (ἀρχέτυπος σφραγίς), which we affirm to be the intelligible cosmos, would itself be the model (παράδειγμα) and archetypal idea of the ideas (ἀρχέτυπος ἢδε τῶν ἰδεῶν), the Logos of God.” Philo, Opif 20.
attenuation the “paradigmatic essences (τῶν ὀντῶν παραδειγματικῆν οὐσίαν)” revealed to him in the divine/human tête-à-tête in which he was participant in “the darkness where God was.”

The created image of the λόγος expressed as the intelligible world is in some sense God intrinsic in creation – though not extrinsic to himself216 – since act and being in God are one; God is actus purus.217 Philo ‘locates’ the premundane intelligible world ‘within’ the mind of God, here synonymous with λόγος: “the world consisting of the ideas could have no other place than the divine Logos which ordered them.”218 As Wolfson points out, the one difference in the analogy between the architect and his idea of a city which he intends to build, and the idea of creation within God, is that the ideal city of the architect, the intelligible world, does not come to have existence per se outside of his mind, as does the intelligible world/λόγος in God’s mind.219 There is a marked diminution resulting from the passage of the intelligible to the sensible in the case of human creation. In the case of the architect, the interior, prescient will cannot be said to be present in the completed project in the same way that Philo proposes the completion of the project of the κόσμος contains the will inherent in the divine – which in this case is an essential property of the divine. An architect’s will is preceded by both necessity and convention, and proceeds through any number of material, spatial, and economic constraints. The architect’s will is mingled with any number of contributing factors; it is a hybrid or conglomerate will, not a pure one. Divine creation as Being-itself is the reification of the inner essence/willing of God opened to participation.

216 For Philo’s theological definition of “place (τόπος),” see Somn 1.62-64; Leg 1.44.
217 “For God, while he spoke the Logos did at the same moment create; nor did he allow anything to come between the Logos and the deed; and if one may advance a doctrine which is more true, his Logos is his deed.” Philo, Sacr 65; “The world was made in six days, not because the Creator stood in need of a length of time (for it is natural that God should do everything at once, not merely by uttering a command, but by even thinking of it)” Philo, Opif, 13 (Colson’s translation).
218 Philo, Opif 20 (Colson).
2.2.b) The Experience of Reason: Logos as Μεθόριος

To His Word, His chief, highest messenger in age and honour, the Father of all things has given the special prerogative, to stand on the border (μεθόριος) and separate the creature from the Creator.220

In Philo’s view of creation, the account which Moses provides in Genesis sees Torah so closely associated with the event of creation that the account can be read as both a cosmogony as well as a nomogony, and these serve to reveal the hiding of nature of which Heraclitus speaks.221 Philo effects a shift which affects both a view of the κόσμος as a whole, and of human being within the same – from a view of nature as hiding, to λόγος as revealing.222

Philo compares Moses’ creation account not with other creation accounts, but with the work of “other lawgivers” in their formation of societal laws.223 This of course emphasizes the theme of creation out of chaos, a theme popular in the cosmogony of many world myths.224 The governing dynamic of the order which untangles reason from out of the primordial chaos is shared out into creation in a facsimile of its essence in the form of Torah. One catches a glimpse into the λόγος which has both its essential and archetypal being in the core of divinity.

220 Philo, Her 5.
221 “φύσις κακὺς σώμα σαὶς φιλεῖ” (D123). No doubt influenced by Heraclitus, Philo speaks of “those who are unversed in allegory and the nature-truth which loves to conceal its meaning (φύσεως τῆς κρύπτεσθαι φιλούσης).” (Fug 179).
222 Philo uses the word μεθόριος as a means to illustrate and to bridge the relation between divinity and the freedom and potentiality of creation. On the duality of human being’s nature, Philo says: “But the man of worth has few wants, standing midway (μεθόριος) between mortality and immortality.” Philo, Virt 9. See also Somn 2, 231. For the high priest (ἀρχιερεὺς) as μεθόριος, see Somn 2.188-189; Spec 2, 116. Philo states holy cities stand μεθόριος between holy ground and profane ground (Spec 3, 130); The Decalogue is divided by a μεθόριος of 5 laws pertaining to piety toward God, and five pertaining to good toward fellow beings (Her 172); the fifth, dividing law, pertains to the honouring of parents, who themselves are μεθόριος between perishable and generative principles (Decal 107). Μεθόριος opens the door to the notion of deification – about which, see M. David Litwa, “The Deification of Moses in Philo of Alexandria,” Studia Philonica Annual 26 (2014) 1–27.
223 See above, p. 63, n. 212.
224 On creation, chaos and ordering, Philo writes: “This was shown both in the creation and in the ordering of the world. He called the non–existent into existence and produced order from disorder (τὰξίν ἐς ἀταξίας). . . For He and His beneficent powers ever make it their business to transmute the faultiness of the worse wherever it exists and convert it to the better.” (Spec 4, 187). For the role of chaos in other creation accounts, see: David Leeming. A Dictionary of Creation Myths. Oxford University Press, 1999.
The question remains, however, of the relation of the Torah to natural law as the preliterate presence of λόγος immanent in the world. There is also the question of those who precede Moses, the patriarchs who are an inextricable element in the formation both of the Jewish ethnos, and the Torah. In his treatise on Moses, Philo writes:

If, then, the law is a Divine word, and the man of true worth "does (ποιεῖ)" the law, he assuredly "does" the word: so that, as I said, the words of God are the wise man’s "doings (πράξεις)." 

It can here be averred that the words of Moses (i.e., the Torah) are the actions of God (as actus purus), given the nature of the experience of Moses, of his having experienced an unmitigated, non-attenuated, immediate experience of the archetypal/paradigmatic essences of Being. Just as the archetypal "actions" of God become Moses’ words, now the archetypal words of God become the actions of the Patriarchs. Here is a reversal of Rahner’s economy of symbol.

Rather than the usual course in which a symbol expresses forward toward a nature, here is a symbol which is rewound backward, traced back into its nature. There is operative a reciprocity or symbiosis in essences between act and being in God and the Jews as his chosen people, expressed in the historical action of the Patriarchs in the narrative of the Torah. For Philo, again, God is actus purus: “his Logos is his deed” – hence the words of Moses are the actions and λόγοι of God. The Patriarchs, on the other hand, in Philo’s presentation of the matter, take the form of actus legis purus, that is, pure acts of law. Philo is explicit about this in the case of

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225 Philo, Migr 130.
226 Quoted above, p. 25, n. 95: “Our first statement, which we put forward as the basic principle of an ontology of symbolism, is as follows: all beings are by their nature symbolic, because they necessarily ‘express’ themselves in order to attain their own nature.” Rahner, Theological Investigations, 4: 224.
227 See above, p. 64, n. 217.
228 On the personification of divine law, see Peder Borgen, Philo of Alexandria: An Exegete, 204. In short, Moses as law invites mimesis of the archetypal λόγος/νόμος into which he had been granted participatory vision, while Gaius invites mimesis into his own spurious autonomy which he expresses as a new and arbitrary law.
Abraham, summing up his estimate of that man in the final sentence of his work *On Abraham* in this manner: “[Abraham is] the unwritten law and justice of God.”

For the simple reason that the patriarchs had lived before the time of Moses, when the natural law had not yet taken form in written expression, Philo proposes that the patriarchs had followed an “unwritten law.” But much more than that, Philo presents a coherent order from creation, to law, to particular laws. The particular written laws are simply models of the general, unwritten laws. In a fascinating statement, Philo says that the general laws are the Patriarchs:

We will for the present postpone [examination of] the particular laws which are copies as it were; and first of all examine the more general laws which are, as it were, the models of the others. Now these are those men who have lived irreproachably and admirably.

In Philo’s presentation of the matter, the patriarchs are themselves “the general laws” and “living and rational laws.” In the narrative flow of the *Pentateuch*, the patriarchs themselves function as an additional facet of creation, or a continuation of the process of creation, namely, as particular historical embodiments of the “general” law, serving to disambiguate what could otherwise become fairly more relativistic. They are the κόσμος which serves as a hinge point between λόγος and νόμος, and which connects and bonds the two together. The lives of the patriarchs are in a sense dramatizations of the laws of Moses before the fact. This is possible since both the lives and the laws are embodiments of the law which is itself a facsimile or reification of Moses’ non-attenuated glimpse into the “paradigmatic essences” within the

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229 Philo, *Abr* 276.
230 See *Abr* 2.3-4.
231 Philo, *Abr* 2-5, Yonge’s translation.
Likewise, the lives of the patriarchs are reifications of these same essences, though in their case not yet in legible, but in dramatic form.

2.2.c) Grace, Providence & Liminality

What can it be [the house (οἶκος) of God] except the Word, which is more ancient than all the things which were the objects of creation, and by means of which it is the Ruler of the universe, governing all things, taking hold of it as a rudder.\textsuperscript{234}

In Philo’s thought, human being stands on the cusp of experience of λόγος, and the dynamic ground never ceases to shift. Philo struggles to articulate a proper location at which to situate this experiential cusp in its proximity to logos. The λόγος is the ontological catena linking God to creation. The “standing on the border” of the λόγος as μεθόριος serves a mediatorial function:

To His Word, His chief, highest messenger in age and honour, the Father of all things has given the special prerogative, to stand on the border (μεθόριος) and separate the creature from the Creator. This same Word both pleads with the immortal as suppliant for afflicted mortality and acts as ambassador of the ruler to the subject. . . neither uncreated as God, nor created as you, but midway (μέσος) between the two extremes, a surety to both sides.\textsuperscript{235}

Philo enlivens the Stoic notion of λόγος with the dynamic of divine will, freeing it from the mechanistic chain of being which guides creation in the notion of λόγος in many of the thinkers who precede Philo. Now it is seen as the will and mind of God in motion, as it were, in the sharing out or expressing of this archetypal λόγος into creation. For Philo, the λόγος primordially ‘locates’ the oikonomia of creation within God as creator, and then expresses the same outward to a participatory dynamic within creation. The worldview which this inspires is one in which creation is tantamount to a glimpse into the divine will and essence as it plans and

\textsuperscript{233} See above, p. 63, n. 214 & 215; p. 66.

\textsuperscript{234} Philo, Migr 6. Yonge’s translation.

\textsuperscript{235} Philo, Her 205-206.
expresses the *oikonomia*,\(^{236}\) extending throughout all of creation and even before it. This speaking of the divine λόγος toward creation speaks a prescience which sounds across the cusp of intentionality and into the ear which hears and receives the speaking.

The λόγος is therefore not the only element within Philo’s conceptual world which is spoken of as μεθόριος. For Philo, human being is also regarded as μεθόριος. The word functions as the constitutive linkage by which divine and human essences open out to one another. The finest expression of this principle comes in Philo’s reflections on the intimacy of the second story of the creation of human being in Genesis 2.7, in which he takes the composite nature consisting of clay and divine breath to indicate that human being is μεθόριος.\(^{237}\) The interplay of the dynamic relation between clay and breath is itself another μεθόριος, comprising as it does a form of relation between constitutive and illustrative principles operative within creation. On one side of the equation there is the constitutive creator God, on the other side is human being as illustrative creation. God’s act of creation is a constitutive insufflation of all contingent being, and functions in a sense as God’s pointing out from Himself in speaking the λόγος. The human being is illustrative of God, as the ear which can hear this speaking and identify it and orient itself to it via its own free participation in λόγος, and hence points back into God. An ancillary illustrative guide has been given in the *Torah*, which stands alongside human being in the κόσμος as God’s pointing back into himself. At the heart of the constitutive element lies the λόγος as inherent principle of reason and law which is reified and exemplified *par excellence* in the illustrative lives of the patriarchs, whose lives are bookended, as it were, by their illustration in the books of scripture in the primary, secondary, and tertiary acts of creation.

\(^{236}\) See above, p. 61, n. 207: “the intelligible cosmos is nothing else than the Logos of God as he is actually engaged in making the cosmos.” Philo, *Opif* 24 (Runia).

\(^{237}\) “what he breathed in was nothing else than the divine spirit which has emigrated (φύσεως) here from that blessed and flourishing nature,” and “for this reason it would be correct to say that the human being stands on the borderline (μεθόριον) between mortal and immortal nature.” Philo, *Opif* 135. (Runia).
For Philo, the dynamic of relation between God and creation is one defined also as the liminal tension between active and passive natures. By nature, God is actus purus, and all of creation, passivus purus. Owing to having been made in God’s image, human nature can transcend its sensible, material portion by means of the parallel noetic, or rational, portion. In exploring the words of Genesis 1-3, the text on the image in which the human being is made, Philo infers such likeness to be toward both God and λόγος. On one hand, it is a likeness toward God, owing to the “sovereign element of the soul,” yet on the other hand, the likeness is toward a very close parallel between the λόγος and human creation – both being seen as liminal beings which border the material and spiritual domains. By means of a dynamic reason, the essential Good of the divine actus purus effects an outpouring of Good via the willing subject of a passivus purus. When the free subject acts in accord with God, such Good is a manifestation of divinity. Experiences of Good and of reason are experiences of God, a movement which has its point of origin in God’s essential goodness, brought to fruition through a willing – though also passive – subject who serves as a conduit of this goodness.

238 See above, pp. 64; 66.

239 “For we are the instruments, wielded in varying degrees of force (ἐπιτεινόμενα καὶ ἀνιέμενα – ‘tensed and slackened’), through which each particular form of action is produced; the Craftsman (τεχνίτης) it is who brings to bear on the material the impact of our forces, whether of soul or body, even He by whom all things are moved.” Philo, Cher 128. “God is the cause, not the instrument, and that which comes into being is brought into being through an instrument, but by a cause.” God is “the by which (τὸ ὑφ’ οὗ),” while the human being is “the through which (τὸ δι’ οὗ).” Philo, Cher 125-129. Philo even goes so far as to speak of puppetry (νευροσπαστῶν) in considering the compulsion of human action: “know yourself and the parts of which you are constituted, what each one is, and for what it was made, and how it is its nature to function, and who is it, invisible, who invisibly sets the puppets in motion and pulls their strings, whether it be the mind within you or the Mind of the Universe.” Philo, Fug 46, translation by David Winston, Philo of Alexandria: The Contemplative Life, the Giants, and Selections (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1981).

240 “霅λκὸν λέλεκτα κατὰ τὸν τῆς ψυχῆς ἡγεσόνα νοῦν.” Philo, Opif 69 – Philo notes that this is akin to God’s mastery and providence over creation: “for the human mind evidently occupies a position in men precisely answering to that which the great Ruler occupies in all the world.” Philo, Opif 69.

241 Philo says: “the treasuries of evil things are in ourselves; with God are those of good things only.” Philo, Fug 79. On Philo’s treatment of free will, see David Winston, who proposes the human freedom is “relative”: “in so far as man shares in God’s Logos, he shares to some extent in God’s freedom.” Winston, Two Treatises of Philo of Alexandria (Brown Judaic Studies 25. Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1983) 184. Winston notes too that words such as αὐτεξούσιος and αὐτοκράτωρ are “never used by Philo to designate man’s freedom, but refer only to God’s sovereign power.” Winston, Two Treatises, 188.
The mind is spoken of allegorically as heaven, since it is the faculty by which one participates in the same. The potentiality that is heaven bookmarks, as it were, the κόσμος. It stands on either side of the knower, as the source of its knowing, and also as the infinite ‘object’ toward which it strives to know in order to draw from and participate in its infinite potentiality. Here is a coming together of two elements, a close coalescence of which it is truer to speak of distinction rather than disjunction. As David Runia has proposed, “for Philo, we might conclude, grace is more ontological, for Paul more soteriological.” The heart of the matter is the location of the divine will in either thinker – i.e., as explicated in the archetypal construction in Philo’s understanding of the relation between creation and the Law, in contradistinction to its apocalyptic immanence in the theologia crucis of Paul. Grace has ontological moorings in creation for Philo, standing μεθόριος between experience of creation as either tumult or delight. For Paul, it is essentially irruptive. It interrupts the κόσμος in particular acts.

2.3) Clement of Alexandria

2.3.a) The Incarnation Gives Rise to Symbol (I)

What precisely is indicated by the words ‘knowledge’ and ‘meaning’ changed decisively in the event of the Incarnation of God’s Λόγος. The event gave rise to a re-imaging and rearticulation of what it means to know and understand – i.e., what it means to be λογικός. The

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242 “In fact, I regard the soul as being in human being what the heaven is in the universe.” Philo, Her 233. And in his exegesis of the line “And the heaven and the earth and all their world were completed” (Gen 2.1), Philo says: “using symbolical language he [Moses] calls the mind (νοῦς) heaven, since it is the abode of natures discerned only by mind” Philo, Leg 1 1.


245 Philo defines and contrasts “Nod” as “tumult (σάλος)” and “Eden” as “delight (τρυφή)” (Cher 12). The former is a “symbol of vice” the latter, “of virtue.”

246 C. 150-215.

247 This is, of course, a reworking of Paul Ricoeur’s well-known phrase, quoted above (p. 25): “the symbol gives rise to thought.”
Platonic world of forms suffered an implosion which rendered redundant any decisive borrowing of it for Christian thinkers in a post-Incarnational world. Plato is left languishing by the *litus/limen* of the Pool of Bethzatha, having no Λόγος to carry him to the water, while Christian being simply steps down into it.248 The Λόγος which was ἐν ἀρχῇ has now been “looked at and touched with our hands.”249 Λόγος becomes scandalously particular in his stepping down into creation. Where formerly early thought attempted an ascent up into meaning, now meaning has descended into history, lifting it up into the intentionality of meaning. Being-itself now means. Creation – both as being and act, i.e., as life – is no longer bracketed out in a bid to arrive at meaning. Being becomes ζωή in the *thelamic* revelation of immanent transcendence: “καί ἡ ζωή,” Saint John writes, “ἐφανερώθη.”250 What it means to be, to act, to know, and to arrive at meaning, has been revealed through the expressing of the divine intention.

While the symbols or forms of Plato gave rise to thought from something of a remove from history, the Incarnation arises in history and makes possible an attainment of nature. From the potentiality of Ricœur’s *symbol giving rise to thought*, history passes on to the actuality of Rahner’s *expressing to attain nature*.251 Rahner’s idea finds parallels in the early Christian notion of symbol, in the creative/productive economy of relation which stands between God and creation. The thought of Clement of Alexandria stands as an early and decisive articulation of symbol.252 Here is a notion of symbol which is a participatory, productive aesthetic.253 Here is

248 “When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, ‘Do you want to be made well?’ The sick man answered him, ‘Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me.’” Jn 5.6-7.
249 Jn 1.1; 1 Jn 1.2.
250 1 Jn 1.1 derive “*thelamic*” from θέλημα “will, intention.”
251 See above, p. 25, for the symbolic formulations of Ricœur and Rahner.
252 Eric Osborne proposes that Clement “is the first person to give a theory of symbolism and to attempt to justify it rationally.” Osborne, *The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957) 10.
the birth of poetry as poetic experience.\textsuperscript{254} Here is the \textit{New Song of the Λόγος}, to use a favourite expression of Clement.\textsuperscript{255}

We are the rational images formed by God’s Word, or Reason, and we date from the beginning on account of our connexion with Him, because “the Word was in the beginning.” Well, because the Word was from the first, He was and is the divine beginning of all things; but because He lately took a name, – the name consecrated of old and worthy of power, the Christ – I have called him a New Song.\textsuperscript{256}

Clement’s foundational work, the \textit{Exhortation to the Greeks}, can be read as a treatise on the true nature of symbol.\textsuperscript{257} More particularly, it can be read as a treatise on hermeneutics, on the relation between \textit{signum} and \textit{res}, and the meaning that emerges from their relation. Clement censures the Greeks for the slavish and uncritical reception of tradition which has resulted in leading them to celebrate worthless legends and even to “praise reptiles.”\textsuperscript{258} Yet on the other hand, he maintains that the rejection of philosophy by some Christians – as a convention of the Greeks – is a rejection of both providence and the image of God in creation.\textsuperscript{259} Clement is here

\textsuperscript{253} A recent commentator notes how the Alexandrian’s \textit{Exhortation} combines “artistic, cosmological, existential and theological dimensions, in the light of which the universe appears as theologically meaningful and as endowed with pedagogical significance,” presenting the same “within a clearly outlined soteriological perspective.” Doru Costache, “Worldview and Melodic Imagery,” in \textit{Alexandrian Legacy: A Critical Appraisal} (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015) 297.

\textsuperscript{254} I am here referring to the original sense of the word \textit{ποιεῖν}: “to do; to make; to create.”

\textsuperscript{255} Speaking particularly about the Λόγος theology of Justin, Johannes Quasten says that Clement “has advanced far beyond him,” proposing that “Clement’s idea of the Logos is more concrete and fertile.” In the estimate of Quasten, “he [Clement] made it into the highest principle for the religious explanation of the world.” Quasten, \textit{Patrology}: Vol. II: \textit{The Ante-Nicene Literature After Irenaeus} (Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, 1983), 21.

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\textsuperscript{256} Clement, \textit{Exhort} 1.6.

\textsuperscript{257} The extant corpus of Clement can be divided into three stages which mark progress in the spiritual life, from enquirer to advanced participant. As Eric Osborn states it: “Movement marks the play on Clement’s writing. He follows the logos who exhorts pagans to desert their falsehood for the truth of God, instructs them in the ethics of Christian practice, then goes on to teach the true knowledge of the mysteries of Christ. Following this plan, Clement’s major works form a trilogy: \textit{Protrepticus}, \textit{Paedagogus}, \textit{Stromateis}.” Osborn, \textit{Clement of Alexandria} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 5. The present section will focus primarily on the \textit{Protrepticus} (\textit{Exhortation to the Greeks}), since this work, by nature, illustrates why – and how – one is to move from Hellenic to Christian being.

\textsuperscript{258} Clement, \textit{Exhort} 1.2.

\textsuperscript{259} Clement, \textit{Str} 1.170.4
poised between the Greeks with their idols, and those who reject philosophy as a threat to Christian being. The twin idols of unreality and of pious disassociation are targeted by Clement. To both errors Clement posits that the *signum* of creation is indicative of the *res* of the divine will, which means that one must always seek the *res* and not halt at its given *signum*. There is here a parallel with Crouzel’s notion of Christianity as not being a *religion of the book*.\(^{260}\) Clement refers to God as “the supreme artist Father (ἀριστοτέχνας πατήρ).”\(^{261}\) In other words, the art of the κόσμος is the *signum* of the *res* of the supreme artist which cannot be sufficiently contained or bounded by the words of the book of Scripture.

In Clement’s estimate, traditions and religions draw their origins from two principle sources: from history and hermeneutics. In the case of the Greeks, this takes the form of a violent history and idolatrous hermeneutics. History is parsed and interpreted toward a foundation for both tradition and religion. The violence which informs the Greek religion issues ultimately in idolatry. The guide to the passage from the primordial violence to the final idolatry is spoken with the beguiling inflection of deceit.\(^{262}\) Here is a spurious conceptual world which can only give rise to a spurious view.

Clement provides frightful accounts of the Greek myths, and of the rites which are founded upon them. First, on the historical level, there are myriad unspeakable acts of violence. The Dionysian cult has its foundation in the tearing apart of the infant Dionysus by the Titans, whose severed limbs are held over Hephaestus (as fire).\(^{263}\) The Corybantic ὄργια are established

\(^{260}\) Crouzel wrote that “[i]n the strict sense of the term Christianity is not a religion of the Book, the book is secondary.” Crouzel, 69.

\(^{261}\) Clement, *Exhort* 1.78.

\(^{262}\) “Now custom, in having given you a taste of slavery and of irrational attention to trifles, has been fostered by idle opinion. But lawless rites and deceptive ceremonies have for their cause ignorance; for it is ignorance that brought to mankind the apparatus of fateful destruction and detestable idolatry, when it devised many forms for the daemons, and stamped the mark of a lasting death upon those who followed its guidance.” Clement, *Exhort* 10.79.

\(^{263}\) Clement, *Exhort* 1.15. Clement proposes that the Thracian [Dionysus], and Orpheus and other characters of Greek religion "are not worthy of the name of man, since they were deceivers (ἀπατηλοὶ). By commemorating
in fratricide: “Here we see what the mysteries are, in one word, murders and burials.” The Bacchic ὀργία are “sacred frenzy (ἱερομανία).” “Your mysteries have received the glory of funeral honours.” The hermeneutics of the Old Song effects a violent reading. It does violence to the text of the world. Violence has here come full circle, from violent history to violent exegesis. To borrow from René Girard, we see here a realization of “mimetic contagion” playing out on the stage of history as its actors read their lines from a hermeneutically violent script.

2.3.b) The Symbol of Reason

This pure song, the stay of the universe and the harmony of all things, stretching from the centre to the circumference and from the extremities to the centre, reduced this whole to harmony. . . . He arranged in harmonious order this great world, yes, and the little world (σμικρὸν κόσμον) of man too, body and soul together.

The New Song of the Λόγος stands in stark contrast to the old songs of murders, rapes and incest, that are “celebrated in hymns” and “worked up into tragedy” as “records of evils

deeds of violence in their religious rights, and by bringing stories of sorrow into worship, they were the first to lead men by the hand to idolatry (tà εἴδωλα).” Clement, Exhort 1.4.

264 Clement, Exhort 1.16.
265 Clement, Exhort 1.11. Here Clement plays on the word typically used for religious festivals: ἱερομανία, from ἱερός (holy, sacred) + μανίας (monthly). Clement’s word “ἱερομανία,” from ἱερός + μανίας (frenzied, madness, mad), alludes perhaps to μῆνις = wrath/anger, and μανία = to disclose what is secret (as in “the mysteries”—a name given to many of the forms of Greek cult). Read in this light, Clement is saying that these cults reveal nothing but madness and wrath.

266 Clement, Exhort 1.12.
267 David Dawson proposes that Clement “reads allegorically when he wishes, but he is also a shrewd literal reader when it serves his polemical purposes.” Dawson, Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992) 203. Yet it is difficult to imagine to what other ends the present material could reasonably have been read by Clement.

268 Girard’s foundational premise is that violent acts form the foundation of many human institutions, particularly the political and religious. The foundational violence is diabolical; it is the primordial lie. “The devil’s quintessential being,’ the source from which he draws his lies, is the violent contagion that has no substance to it. The devil does not have a stable foundation; he has no being at all. To clothe himself in the semblance of being, he must act as a parasite on God’s creatures. He is totally mimetic, which amounts to saying non-existent as an individual self.” René Girard, I See Satan Fall Like Lightning, trans. by James G. Williams (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2001) 42. Italics Girard’s.

269 Clement, Exhort 1.5. The stretching of the “pure song” is clearly borrowed from Philo. See above, p. 57.
become dramas,” of which “the actors of the dramas are a sight that gladdens your heart.”

In contradistinction to this history of violence and deceit, Clement states the mightiness of the New Song, indicating how it effects a new understanding of the true life for those who formerly dwelled only in the lies and illusions of myth. These who heard the Old Song, are called “those who have no share in the real life (οἱ τῆς ὀντως ὀδης ἀμέτοχοι ζωῆς).” Here is a fall into the utterly spurious, into non-being. But understanding can now be gotten as it proceeds from out of the New Song which sings creation into a melodious order of truth-become-meaning, issuing even in the microcosm of order in the σμικρὸν κόσμον which is human being. The movement is away from a history of violence which issues in a dubious hermeneutics of the world, toward an understanding of the same as a harmonious whole, in which destruction and violence play no part (apart from that which is given expression through the free will of individuals). The ocean is bounded by the harmony and reason of the Λόγος, and therefore does not encroach upon the land. The Λόγος tempers fire with air, and the cold with fire, “as one might blend the Dorian mode with the Lydian,” so that neither heat nor cold encroach upon being, but instead cohere in “melodiously mingling these extreme notes of the

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270 Clement, Exhort 1.2-3

271 To borrow again from Girard: “Not long ago in our society the word ‘myth’ was a synonym of ‘lie.’ Our intelligentsia has done everything it could since then to rehabilitate the myths at the expense of the Bible, but in ordinary speech ‘myth’ continues to mean lie. Ordinary speech is right.” Girard, I See Satan Fall, 115.

272 Clement, Exhort 1.5. The barbaric violence and the nihility of Greek mythical religion is expressed a little later in the Exhortation: “These are the mysteries of the atheists. And I am right in branding as atheists men who are ignorant of the true God, but shamelessly worship a child being torn to pieces by Titans . . . . It is a twofold atheism in which they are entangled; first, the atheism of being ignorant of God (since they do not recognize the true God); and then this second error, of believing in the existence of beings that have no existence, and calling by name of gods those who are not really gods, – nay, more, who do not even exist, but have only got the name.” (Exhort 2.19-20).

273 “σμικρός” is Ionic and Old Attic for “μικρός.”

274 See above, p. 23, n. 88-8 for other examples of the anthropic allegory of microcosm.

275 Clement, Exhort 1.5. It is important to note here that Clement does not suppress the Hellenic modes, i.e., the Dorian and Lydian. It is not their Hellenic constitution and exposition which is the matter here. The harmony they express is voracious harmony, a harmony analogous to that of the cosmic harmony effected and affected by the Λόγος.
In contradistinction to the violence of Greek myth and religion, the true God “does no harm to anything in the world, but takes delight only in the salvation of men. You have then God’s promise; you have His love to man: partake of His grace.”

Clement speaks of how Christ “to outward seeming is despised [an allusion to Isaiah 53.3], but in very deed is adored” as “truly most manifest (φανερώτατος) God.” In other words, the expression, the symbol as act of Christ, manifests God in historical action. But the symbol constitutes a stumbling block for some, and remains only an occasion for despising. Eric Osborn notes that in Clement’s thought “symbolism both hides and reveals the truth.” The expression of the symbol as *New Song* opens up the κόσμος to a revelation of the Λόγος with a dynamism which is considerably more limited when confined strictly to the written word. This parallels the concerns of Thamus in Plato’s *Phaedrus*. Writing, in the estimate of Thamus, “introduces forgetfulness into the soul of those who use it,” and “depends on signs that belong to others,” which ultimately provides “the appearance of wisdom, not its reality.” The *New Song* sings of a majesty of wisdom which cannot be reduced merely to words, but instead effects a two-way dynamic of the symbol: to the dynamic of Rahner’s understanding of symbolic expression is added another structural reversal of the symbolic economy.

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276 Clement, *Exhort* 1.5.


280 Dawson raises an interesting point on this matter: “Philo was also a Middle Platonic logos theologian, yet we have already seen that he stressed the priority and authority of the scriptural text itself. But in his major treatises . . . Clement consistently valorizes voice over writing, as he records the results of his Christian revisionary readings of Hebrew scripture, classical literature, the New Testament, and other ancient texts.” Dawson, *Allegorical Readers*, 199.

281 See above, p. 60, n. 199. Dawson does not mention the emphasis on orality found in Plato’s *Phaedrus*. Philo turns away from this emphasis, while Clement turns toward it.

282 *Phaedrus* 275a

283 I had noted another reversal of Rahner’s symbolic economy above, p. 66.
schema of Rahner, the movement is from expression out to nature/character. But here, in Clement, the reality of God which has been expressed in the New Song is retraced backward into the roots of its symbol. Clement traces the ‘enfleshment’ of the character/nature operative in the New Song back into its primordial or nascent expression within divinity. The upshot of Clement’s criticisms of Greek religion and its mythic foundation are the revealing of its act as violence, and its essence as non-being. Over above this is revealed the veracious New Song which resounds upward and back up into its source within the primordial Being.

2.3.c) The Symbol of Grace

On this many-voiced instrument of the universe He makes music to God, and sings to the human instrument. ‘For thou are my harp and my pipe and my temple’ – my harp by reason of the music, my pipe by reason of the breath of the Spirit, my temple by reason of the Word – God’s purpose being that the music should resound, the Spirit inspire, and the temple receive its Lord.

Because adherents of the myth and religion of the Greeks do not hear the harmonious New Song resounding in the κόσμος, sounding through the Λόγος and through creation and human being, they disharmoniously worship creation and subordinate and persecute human being. In the New Music of which Clement speaks, the Music that sounds through the divine instrument, the Λόγος, opens and inspires all of creation to take part in the ensemble through which divine harmony circles from Creator to creation and back again.

Clement says that “faith is the ear of the soul,” which speaks to Heraclitus’ frustration that some still do not understand λόγος even after hearing it. The Λόγος music which Clement

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284 See above, p. 25, n. 95: “all beings are by their nature symbolic, because they necessarily ‘express’ themselves in order to attain their own nature.”

285 Clement, Exhort 1.5.

286 “For indeed the timid and wretched among men believe that God cries out through a raven or jackdaw, but is silent through man; and they have given honour to the raven as a messenger of God, while they persecute the man of God, who neither caws, nor croaks, but speaks.” Clement, Exhort 10.82.

287 Clement, Stromateis, 5.1.
hears beckons more than understanding, calling for nothing less than harmonic participation of all in the creation of its cosmic and eternal melody – a music to which God himself gives ear.

The Lord fashioned man a beautiful, breathing instrument, after His own image; and assuredly He Himself is an all-harmonious instrument of God, melodious and holy, the wisdom that is above the world, the heavenly Word.  

Human being is called to full participation in the *New Song*. This is because “the Lord fashioned man a beautiful, breathing instrument, after His own image.” The *New Song* stands in contrast to the *Old*, and the argument from antiquity popular among early Greek thinkers, is dismantled by close consideration and comparison of the fruits of either. “Error is old, and truth appears to be a new thing.” The antiquity of the Phrygians and the Arcadians has led only to violence, lies, and evil. The human being, as “rational image (τὰ λογικὰ πλάσματα)” of the Λόγος Who was from the beginning is graced with and participates in the *New Song*: “the Word, then, that is the Christ, is the cause both of our being long ago (for He was in God) and of our well-being.” Here is the mechanism by which symbol functions, the attaining and expressing of one’s own nature of which Rahner speaks: the “well-being” arises out of the expression of persons from out of the “being long ago” of the “λογικὰ πλάσματα.” The foundation of this relation is not mimetic – it is not mimicry. It does not involve the “putting out” of the act of scapegoating, and the tainting notion of “contagion” and its myriad forms of

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288 Clement, *Exhort* 1.5.
290 The argument from antiquity has a long tradition in early Hellenic thought, dating back to Herodotus, who venerates the Egyptians for their antiquity. Herodotus proposes that the Greeks took their names for their gods from the Egyptians – a venerability by association. See *Histories* 2.4; 50; 51; 145, etc.
291 Clement, *Exhort* 1.6
292 Clement refers to a story of Herodotus (*Histories*, 2.2) in which the historian proposes the Phrygians to be the most ancient people based on a kind of social isolation experiment in which two children were cut off from contact with society, and were therefore without language. The first sound which they were heard to utter resembled the Phrygian word for bread. The Egyptian king Psammetichus, who had called for the test, determined this to be sufficient proof of the antiquity of the Phrygians. Regarding the antiquity of the Arcadians, Clement refers to the poets, who describe them as “older than the moon.” Clement, *Exhort* 1.6.
293 Clement, *Exhort* 1.7.
cultic taboo. The expression of the New Song is one which expresses a sharing of grace. It expresses and sounds from out of a foundation which effects ontological participation in its very foundation qua the essence of Good which is the very nature of Godself. True existence begins only now, as participation in “He who exists in Him who exists (ὁ ἐν τῷ ὄντι ὄν).”

Precursors: Conclusion

A particular manner of looking at the world is beginning to take form. Heraclitus speaks of the ἀπειρος of the soul – limitless in its great depth of λόγος. The Stoics turn to λόγος as the principle which marshals up all of being into a coherence, rendering it reasonable for reasoning creation. In these early lines of thinking, the λόγος with which the κόσμος is inspired takes form as the discursive faculty of sentient creation. There comes to take form a philosophical anthropology which reaches out toward a clearer, more nuanced articulation of what it means to be a human being in the world – present in the world in a particular way, set apart from it on one hand, yet deeply intimate with it on the other. The setting apart is due to the holding of a unique role in the κόσμος as the sole creature who is aware of its surroundings. The intimacy is effected by the holding in common a participation in λόγος. Both the setting apart and the intimate dwelling within exist only in potentiality, and constitute a reciprocal dynamism similar to the modern notion of the hermeneutical circle via the discursive nature of experience.

294 Clement, Exhort 1.7.
295 “You will not find out the limits (πείρατα) of the soul (ψυχή) by going, even if you travel over every way, so deep is its λόγος” (D45).
296 Dumitru Stâniloae states this idea well: “As the only being in the world conscience of itself, we are, at the same time, the consciousness of the world.” Stâniloae, Orthodox Dogmatic Theology: The Experience of God, Vol. 1: Revelation and Knowledge of the Triune God (Brookline, Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press), 3.
297 A helpful explanation of what is meant by ‘hermeneutical circle’ can be found in Andrew Louth’s Discerning the Mystery. Speaking of Wilhelm Dilthey’s (1833-1911) method of interpretation, Louth writes: “The method involves both linguistic and historical skills: one must know both the language and the historical context of the writer one is seeking to understand. But here emerges a circle – the so-called ‘hermeneutical circle’ – which is characteristic of this sort of interpretation at every level. We must understand the historical context of a work in order to understand it: but the work itself is evidence for the historical context in the light of which it is to be understood. And most of the other evidence for the historical context of any particular work are other works, which
In Philo, then, the turn from the thought that preceded him isn’t so much a turn, as the continuation of the arc which Heraclitus had begun to draw. Though it suffered a little diminution as it passed through the Stoics, in Philo the arc now arches toward a fuller notion of the subject – i.e., the self. Philo steers the arc toward a people as the means to bring the subject to the surface of the stream of entanglement amid narrativity and history. The λόγος now speaks to a people through and to whom a more sentient λόγος now sounds. Formerly the λόγος – particularly for the Stoics – was merely reason, not yet word. That λόγος stood in the form only of reason as object; it didn’t itself engage in its own reason. It was not a discursive λόγος, but a mute one. If the Stoic anthropology was a stolid portrait of human being, Philo’s was highly animated and dynamic. This is no doubt due to Philo’s main conceptual referent being the principally narrative form of the Pentateuch. Where the Stoics turned inward, to the inner principles of reason to gird their speculative constructions, Philo turned to the drama and action of the Torah. This drama and action is the ἀρχή of reason and meaning. For the Stoics, reason was its own ἀρχή. This constituted an insular, solipsistic hermeneutic circle caught spinning in a hermetically-sealed conceptual vacuum – an apologetics of mechanistic reason with a foothold in neither the vicissitudes of collective history, nor the passion of hearts and souls of particular lives lived. Philo’s hermeneutic circle breaks the bonds and constrictions of the vacuum, and opens out to all. Philo’s understanding of the world commences from out of a particular people and particular lives lived, yet it is an ethos which transcends its nascent ethnos, reaching out to all lives participant in history.

Louth, Discerning the Mystery, 23-4.
Thus for Clement a system of harmonic foundations – a musical theoretic or canon – had been set out for the realization of forms of music which had quite simply not been audible until the *New Music* sounded, its harmony drowned below the myths and the lies, amid the hubris and effrontery of the cacophony of the relativistic “θεατροκρατία” which Plato laments.²⁹⁸

Part 2: Origen of Alexandria
Chapter 3: The Horizon of Being

Introduction

*The only-begotten Son of God is His wisdom hypostatically existing.*\(^{299}\)

The relation between the material and immaterial dimensions of the \( \kappa\omicron\sigma\mu\omicron\) is the ground upon which early thought struggles to articulate an understanding of nature, and from out of this struggle an early form of the notion of “person” emerges. Notions of being-itself, \( \lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\omicron\)ς, and person are the constituent elements of the struggle. But much of the ground upon which these speculations were first constructed, and upon which its first desultory steps were taken, was too abstract to hold much appeal for Origen. The earliest reflections present a \( \lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\omicron\)ς which speaks without horizons – its pointing is a pointing in no particular direction – and hence Heraclitus could only propose that the way up and down are the same. In their development of the conceptual seeds planted by Heraclitus, the indifference of the Stoic \( \lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\omicron\)ς delimited their thinking to a worldview which was essentially mechanistic. Of mechanistic systems one may speak only of utility, not of meaning. The \( \kappa\omicron\sigma\mu\omicron\)ς was dispensable and persons were ultimately disposable as each were swallowed up in the meaningless utility of the mechanism, even to the point of conflagration.\(^{300}\)

The turn to personal encounter within the *ecclesia* of Biblical experience afforded a worldview which commenced the deconstruction and demythologization of the meaninglessness and arbitrariness which was imparted through earlier thinking, which both oppressed persons

\(^{299}\) Origen, *PA* 1.2.2.

\(^{300}\) As Origen puts it: “The Stoics may destroy everything in a conflagration if they like. But we do not recognize that an incorporeal being is subject to a conflagration, or that the soul of man is dissolved into the fire, or that this happens to the being of angels, or thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers.” Origen, *CC* 6.71. Origen is here speaking of the benign “principalities/powers” – not the malignant which are referred to in Ephesians 6.12 (yet in his rejection of the notion of conflagration, Origen is proposing also that such is not the means by which these are to be overcome). There is much discussion of these principalities and powers in *PA*: for his treatment of the benign principalities and powers, see *PA* 1.5.1; 1.5.3; 1.6.2; 1.7.1; 1.7.2; 1.8.2; 1.8.4; 2.6.1; 2.9.4; 2.11.4; (and see also *CJn* 1.88; 1.214; 1.216; *PP* 17.2). For the malignant, see *PA* 1.5.2; 1.8.4; 3.4.1 (and see also *EM* 42, 48; *PP* 29.2; *CJn* 32.325).
and supressed development of the notion of the same.\textsuperscript{301} It is essential to note this directly and explicitly, in order to avoid giving Origen undue credit: Origen is simply a Christian thinker.\textsuperscript{302} It is the deeply Biblical nature – a nature which is radical when set alongside the other literature of its time – of Origen’s thought which causes it to seem so radical.\textsuperscript{303} The radical nature of precisely what occurred in the event of the Incarnation is held up to its accounting and telling in Scripture as Origen labours to bring the Scripture to this foundational event, through which labour he parses the κόσμος in the new horizons of meaning which are brought to light in both the event and its telling. The event holds primacy over its telling.

The topical division of the following three chapters on Origen is based on a tripartite paradigm which I discern in the Alexandrian’s thought. This paradigm is modelled on the


\textsuperscript{302} As Origen expressed it: “But I hope to be a man of the Church. I hope to be addressed not by the name of some heresiarch, but by the name of Christ. I hope to have his name, which is blessed upon the earth, I desire, both in deed and in thought, both to be and to be called a Christian.” Origen, \textit{HLK} 16.6.

\textsuperscript{303} The radical nature of Biblical experience is an immense topic, far exceeding the limits of this study. In lieu of a fuller treatment of the matter, I will propose a preliminary statement: the Biblical experience is radical experience in its decisive dismantling, re-defining, and inverting of a number of worldly standards, norms, and notions. The essence of the inversion which Biblical experience effected, including the redefinition of divine essence, is stated succinctly and elegantly by Jürgen Moltmann: “When the crucified Jesus is called the ‘image of the invisible God’, the meaning is that this is God, and God is like this. God is not greater than he is in this humiliation. God is not more glorious than he is in this self-surrender. God is not more powerful than he is in this helplessness. God is not more divine than he is in this humanity.” Moltmann, \textit{The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology} (New York: Harper & Row, 1974) 205. Italics Moltmann’s. What is perceived by the world as weakness is precisely and decisively nothing other than the choice of kenotic divestment by which the power of God’s will is reified in the freedom of the Cross. The absolute and eternal inner/economic Trinitarian power is expressed in the voluntary stepping out of power and eternality into weakness and temporality. The cry of the infant (born in the indignity of the stable!); the riding of the man into Jerusalem (on a donkey – a borrowed one – a colt!); the suffering of the innocent man on the cross: each of these acts is illustrative of the unfathomable power, will, and essence which has chosen to both create the cosmic stage, and also to redeem it by electing to assume His own tragic Πρόσωπον τοῦ πάθους. Earlier notions of κόσμος now demand deconstruction and demythologization. The Biblical world demands the μετάνοια facilitated via a new hermeneutics of experience. One need not spend more than a few moments with Origen’s \textit{Contra Celsum} to see precisely this deconstruction and demythologization in the inversion and re-defining of the κόσμος.
fundamental stratum of Origen’s thought. Simply put, this stratum is the experiential nature of
divine-human relations – a relation which is thoroughly Trinitarian.

The form of the paradigm is the dynamic of divine-human relation, constituted and
mediated via the tripartite experience of 1) being; 2) reason; 3) grace. The Trinity is the ground
and possibility of being, knowing, and grace. Following this paradigm, the chapter divisions that
follow are: chapter three: The Horizon of Being; chapter four: The Horizon of Reason; and
chapter five: The Horizon of Grace.

The present chapter presents several key notions of Origen’s thought on the foundations
of experience – the horizon of being – and provides a general schematization and sense of
Origen’s worldview, aided by a contrast with that of Plotinus on a number of key matters.
Comparison of the hierarchical schemata employed by the Alexandrians serves to highlight
Origen’s departure from Platonism/Neo-Platonism. It is shown that Origen’s deeply Biblical
thought places great emphasis on the being and dynamic of creation, the “beginning” of which
transcends by far the simple notion of act, and instead both constitutes and illustrates divine
presence in the κόσμος – a presence which is mediated and experienced by means of a series of
steps which ascend from general to particular experience of the same.
3.i.) Beginnings & Elements

3.i.a) Symbols & Hierarchies of Being: Divergent Foundations in Alexandria

The Egyptian city of Alexandria has come to symbolize two interrelated modes of thinking: Platonism and allegorical/symbolical interpretation. Mark Julian Edwards has put it well in saying “Alexandria stands for Platonism, as London stands for smog,” and more recently, P. Tzamalikos has stated that the branding of Origen as a “Christian Platonist” was (and still is) a matter of course. The particular manner of looking at the world which is outlined in the early thought above – centered around the notion of λόγος and the corollary nascent development of a notion of human being as both set off from, yet present within the κόσμος in a distinct manner – takes two divergent directions in early Alexandria: that of Plotinus, and that of Origen. It might even be the case that the fork in this conceptual road took shape within the walls of one particular “school,” under the tutelage of the same master: the elusive and mysterious Ammonius Saccas. Calling to mind the words of Edwards quoted

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304 Edwards, Origen Against Plato, 1.
305 P. Tzamalikos, Origen: Philosophy of History, xii. For a robust example of the persistence of equating Origen with Platonism, see Robert Berchman, From Philo to Origen (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1984). While Berchman states that he is not interested in the orthodoxy of Philo and Origen, but only in the paideia they reflect (12), it has been proposed that he “gives absolutely no indication that Origen was even a Christian who read the Bible.” Shaun Keough, Exegesis Worthy of God: The Development of Biblical Interpretation in Alexandria, PhD diss., (University of Saint Michael’s College, 2007) 200. But this isn’t quite fair to Berchman, who writes “The raw materials of Philo, Clement & Origen’s intellectual experience were contained in their Bible, and the symbolic systems used to organize and make sense of these, were Platonic. Platonism(s) provided the interpretive grid and symbolic system whereby they grasped and made comprehensible their scriptures.” Berchman, 15.

306 Another divergence has been noted by Samuel Laeuchli, in “Origen’s Conception of Symbolon,” in Anglican Theological Review 34 (1952) 102-16. Laeuchli says: “In undertaking a study of Origen’s conception of symbol, it is necessary to remember that Origen both started from and differentiated himself from the concepts of Clement of Alexandria.” Laeuchli, 102. Origen is not as inclined to appropriation as is Clement. Clement “develops and speaks about pagan and Christian symbols without distinction,” since “the symbol, pagan as well as Christian, is part of the divine.” Laeuchli, 102. This is going too far for Origen, who in CC 44 mocks the pagan cult for their need of visible symbols in their ascent to the noetic. In other words, in Origen’s estimate, there is no ontological relation between pagan signa and the res of divinity to which they aid ascent.

above, very different masonry comes to be built from the stone which the predecessors of these Alexandrians had cut for them. In the ‘stone’ left behind by the earlier literature, a thinker is left with a choice between two possible ways in which the development of the notion of human being could continue to unfold: it may follow the solipsistic path, retracting and retreating into a human being viewed principally in abstraction and isolation, standing alone in a world bereft of will – and hence bereft also of meaning – in its mechanistic uncreatedness. Or it may take that path which is inherently and dynamically relational, turning toward the κόσμος, seeking instead a model and dynamic of relations within the same, by which persons are expressed through engagement in relation within a κόσμος which in its createdness is an expression – a symbol – of the divine will. The “strange new world within the Bible,” to use Barth’s expression, is emphasized in its strangeness and newness in Origen. As Barth proposes, the “strange new world” is one in which readers and persons are confronted with choice.

What is at issue here is a standing at odds of the notions of solipsism and experience, as well as ἀλήθεια and ἀποκάλυψις. The notion of solipsism does not meet the criteria for the notion of experience given above in Chapter One. There the word “encounter” is said to be

63 (2009) 217-63. I believe it suffices to say that either thinker had some degree of familiarity with the other, and that this familiarity effected some degree of dialogue across and within Alexandrian tradition. Traditions emerge from out of such responsorial engagement.

308 See above, p. 42, n. 140.

309 This is the title of an address given by Barth, published in The Word of God and the Word of Man (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1978) 28-50. Barth defines the “new world” of the Bible as one in which the reader is confronted by choice: “And it is certain that the Bible, if we read it carefully, makes straight for the point where one must decide to accept or reject the sovereignty of God. This is the new world within the Bible. We are offered the magnificent, productive, hopeful life of a grain of seed, a new beginning out of which all things shall be made new.” Barth, Word of God, 41.

310 See above, pp. 25-7.
essential to experience. And by means of the encounter, experience is productive. Experience
is “a product of the intersection of something encountered and a being capable of interpreting
the results.”

In a play on words, Thomas Aquinas says that “Dicitur autem sapientia quasi sapida scientia (wisdom is knowledge well-tasted).” The “tasting” here is the “going out” which encounter demands and “symbolic” being provides. One goes out to encounter something which is other than one’s self. One expresses. One experiences the symbolic being of both self and others – and comes to be through the experience, is shaped by it, through engagement in it.

But the anamnetic path of Plotinus is essentially solipsistic. Interiority and insularity mark this path. The symbolic action, the movement/expression of the symbol is only inward. One “attains one’s own nature” by turning inward to the spurious remembrance that one’s nature is Mind. One comes to Being only through a retraction into One, or Mind. The

311 Over and above the notion that experience is either some form of objective state “out there” for the grasping as the “raw data” of phenomena, or the notion that experience is merely the affect at work – i.e., the notion that experience is “mood” or “feeling.”

312 See above, p. 25, n. 93.

313 Summa Theologica 2-2.45.2. My translation.

314 Here again is Rahner’s idea: “all beings are by their nature symbolic, because they necessarily ‘express’ themselves in order to attain their own nature.” See above, p. 25, n. 95.

315 Under the quantitative constraints of this thesis, my treatment of Plotinus cannot do justice to the eclectic tenor of his extraordinary thought. As Andrew Meredith puts it, “there are in Plotinus no straight lines across the map of the universe.” Meredith, “Origen, Plotinus and the Gnostics.” Heythrop Journal vol. 26.4 (1985) 395. Meredith is paraphrasing the 1917-18 Gifford Lectures of William R. Inge, in which he had said of Plotinus: “his map of the world is covered with contour lines.” In my treatment of Plotinus, I must draw a straight line across the map of certain schemata in the Alexandria of Plotinus and Origen, which ultimately will serve the latter, and in its limits, will, regrettably, work an injustice against the former. I am holding up Plotinus in a very restricted light as a means to emphasize Origen’s alternate worldview. While my Plotinic light is somewhat dark, that of Pierre Hadot is truly light; where I smooth the edges of Plotinus’ thought in presenting its negative aspects and suppress the positive, Hadot seems to smooth them toward mostly the positive, somewhat suppressing the negative. See Pierre Hadot’s monograph on Plotinus – a work of exquisite beauty: Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). A balanced treatment is that of Lloyd P. Gerson, in Plotinus (London: Routledge, 1998).

316 As Andrew Louth has put it: “As the soul ascends to the One, it enters more and more deeply into itself: to find the One is to find itself. Self-knowledge and knowledge of the ultimate are bound up together, if not identified.” Louth, The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) 39.

317 Here the movement toward a notion of self is arrested in Plotinus. As Richard Sorabji puts it, “he [Plotinus] does not even invent the idea that the self is something that you yourself can shape rather than something that has just been given you by nature.” Sorabji, Self: Ancient and Modern Insights about Individuality, Life, and Death
microcosm that is the mind is given primary emphasis to the detriment of the macrocosm of
Mind after history has been bracketed out. The κόσμος proper – the κόσμος wholistically as all
of being – is left wanting for a role in the meaning which is isolated by means of an internal
dialectic in the mind. One parses only oneself – and does so by engaging in an insular and
solipsistic hermeneutic. The vastness of the κόσμος and the dynamism of history is subordinated
to the stasis of mind as the body of history is cast aside. Caught in a reciprocating circle of
depreciation and derogation, the κόσμος is only as vast as a thinker’s mind, and the mind is only
as vast as a thinker’s κόσμος. If one may use the word “salvation” for this line of thinking, it is a
salvation which is contingent upon the limits and capacities of a thinker’s mind; the quality of
one’s salvation is arbitrarily predetermined by the quality of one’s mind. This is a vestige of the
lingering mythological presence of the irrepressible goddess, Fate. The thinker seeks ascent into
the stasis of Mind, which, remote in its timelessness, lacks the thelamic cleft of experience by
which the mind can get its foot into the door of meaning. There are here only pathways of
retreat in/into the mind which one discovers.

(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006) 119. The comment is made in the context of Sorabji’s rejection of the
notion that “Plotinus invented the concept of a self for the first time,” (ibid.) a concept for which Sorabji points to:
W. Himmerich, “Platonische Tradition in didaktischer Reflexion: Plotin-Comenius-Scheler,” Parousia, Festgabe
für Johannes Hirschberger (Frankfurt, 1965) 495.

318 As A. H. Armstrong defines it “the primary object of all of Plotinus’s philosophical activity is to bring his own
soul and the souls of others by way of Intellect to union with the One,” in Plotinus: Enneads, vol. 1 (Cambridge,
Mass., 1966) xxv. Armstrong also says that “Religion for Plotinus is individual, not social; it is a solitary journey of
the mind to God,” Cambridge Companion to Plotinus (Cambridge: The University Press, 1996) 204.

319 As one commentator put it, in Plotinus, “ontology reposes upon personal introspection, cosmology is the
extrapolation of psychology.” Elmer O’Brien, The Essential Plotinus (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing
Company, 1986) 90.

320 To the extent that this latter – the ‘body’ of history – factors at all into the salvific equation. Plotinus proposes:
“Getting up with the body [i.e., literally ‘waking up’] is only getting out of one sleep into another, like getting out
of one bed into another; but the true rising is a rising altogether away from bodies, which are of the opposite nature
to soul and opposed in respect of reality.” Plotinus, Enn 3.6.6.

321 From θέλημα: i.e., will, or desire.
Here is where ἀλήθεια\textsuperscript{322} and ἀποκάλυψις factor into the matter.\textsuperscript{323} The terms are clearly related, for the λήθη of ἀλήθεια indicates “concealment” (and “forgetfulness”), while the κάλλυμα of ἀποκάλυψις refers to a “veil.” There is a sense of hiddenness in both words. But each word accomplishes its work with different tools, and each word thereby expresses a different dynamic. In ἀλήθεια there is an alpha privative, hence, a privation or negation. In ἀποκάλυψις, there is a preposition, hence, a movement or event – i.e., events and movements typically demand prepositions: events happen to, for, by, with, in, at, since, before, after, and movement is among, into, toward, through, out of, away from, against, etc.\textsuperscript{324} In the solipsistic approach, of which one speaks not of ἀποκάλυψις, but of ἀλήθεια, there is yet no privation or negation, hence no unconcealment – for nothing had been concealed in the first place, but only forgotten. But it is inelegant to say that one unconceals one’s forgetfulness (λήθη). The ἀλήθεια in solipsism is only an object, not an event. Because there is no movement in solipsism, but only object, ἀλήθεια must begin to serve a novel function, and comes instead to indicate the object “truth” – the word into which ἀλήθεια is typically (and parsimoniously) translated into English. One ascends, in the solipsistic method of Plotinus, up along the thread of ἀνάμνησις, upward to the object of “truth” – a fossil shelved among any number of others in the dusty, non-expressive cabinetry of abstracted Mind. The other path out of Alexandria – the path of Origen – proceeds

\textsuperscript{322} Christophe Potworowski addresses “the difficulty in reconciling the multiplication of meanings and the unity of truth in the practice of interpretation” in the thought of Origen and Paul Ricoeur, in “The Question of Truth (ἀλήθεια) in the Hermeneutics of Origen and Paul Ricoeur,” Origeniana Quinta, 308-12. For Origen, “truth is the result of an encounter between two beings of freedom. Without this element of personal decision, truth is simply out of the question.” Ibid., 312.

\textsuperscript{323} It will no doubt be suspected that my close reading of the word ἀλήθεια has been influenced by Heidegger’s having done the same. But this is not the case. Heidegger’s treatment is spectacular; he makes a spectacle of the word, as he invariably does in his treatment of particular words. Our means (etymology) are the same, but they lead to very different ends, given Heidegger’s robust disavowal of Christianity. For Heidegger’s treatment of ἀλήθεια, see Martin Heidegger, The Essence of Truth (London: Continuum, 2002), and Mark A. Wrathall, Heidegger and Unconcealment: Truth, Language, and History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

\textsuperscript{324} This observation is of course complicated by such things as instrumental and locative datives in Greek and Latin grammar. But, as Origen said, “it is better to offend the philologists than to put any difficulty in our readers’ way.” Origen, CSong, 3.5.
out of the triune belief that there is an ἀποκάλυψις of the ἀρχή which is ἀλήθεια itself. One doesn’t retrieve “truth,” but stands witness to the historical action of its unveiling and unconcealing.

3.i.b) Ἀρχή & Στοιχεία

It is not only the Greeks who say that the designation “beginning” means many things.

It may be that Origen has already begun his explication of Christian being, with his decision to name his work Περί Ἀρχῶν. As Joseph Trigg notes, the word ἀρχή has two distinct ranges of meaning, one which was utilized primarily by early Greek thinkers, the other, by Christians. In the first range, it refers to “beginning.” This is the sense with which it is used by the 6th century Milesian philosophers who seek to isolate a material or elemental ἀρχή out of which the κόσμος took form. In the second range, the word refers to the logical premise or foundation of a philosophical position – in the case of Christian thought, ἀρχή came to refer to the rudiments or foundations of faith. In this reading, the material, elemental ἀρχή as source and/or impetus which sets the κόσμος into being is demythologized in a restructuring in which the two meanings are conflated: the ἀρχή in Christian understanding is the will of God, of which there is an ἀρχή as/in Christian teaching.

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325 Origen emphasizes the disparity in nature between Creator and creation by a series of apophases: “No one, therefore, ‘among the gods is like the Lord’ (cf. Ex 15:5,10), for no one is invisible, no one incorporeal, no one immutable, no one without beginning and end, no one creator of all, except the Father with the Son and the Holy Spirit.” Origen, HEx 6.5. This series of negations demythologizes the spurious notion that one gains salvation by means of the mythic, pantheistic notion in which the negative mechanism of ἀλήθεια serves toward an anamnetic task of an ‘unforgetting’ as it were, of the illusory notion that one’s own divinity is concealed in the mucky quagmire of λήθη, of forgetfulness. In decisive fashion, Origen says in CJn 6.38 that Christ is “truth-itself (αὐτοαλήθεια).”

326 Origen, CJn 1.90.

327 “On First Principles announces itself as simultaneously a philosophical treatise on the relation of God to the world (ἀρχή in the first range of meaning) and as a development of a coherent body of doctrine from the logical elaboration of the rudimentary doctrines of the Christian faith (ἀρχή in the second range of meaning), the implication being, as Origen intended, that the two procedures are identical.” Trigg, Origen: The Bible and Philosophy, 92-3. Mark Julian Edwards notes further that, over and above Plato’s idea that time is a “moving image of eternity” (Timaeus 37d), “for Origen, the arche [sic] or beginning of the universe, coeval with time itself, is none other than Christ the Second Person of the Trinity.” Edwards, Origen Against Plato, 64.
In taking up the matter of the meaning of ἀρχή, Origen moves through the semantic range of ἀρχή as “change;” 328 “way;” 329 “beginning as commencement;” 330 “that from which something comes;” 331 “that according to which something is made;” 332 and as “beginning which pertains to learning.” 333 Each of these meanings is applied to Christian being, after the distinction is made between the ἀρχή of which the Gospel of John speaks, 334 and the ἀρχή of material being. 335 Origen understands John to be speaking of Christ as the “by which” (ἀρχή) of creation, “according to which” (ἀρχή) he is wisdom, as “beginning (ἀρχή).” 336 There is emphasis on the middle point, the “according to which” Christ is wisdom. This aspect of ἀρχή is to be taken in relation to the structure of contemplation (περὶ τῶν ὀλων θεωρίας) and thoughts of all things, but it is the Word which is received, taken in relation to the communication. 337 Christianity is itself this relation, when the structures and potentialities of reason take expression in being communicated and received. 338

328 Origen, CIn 1.91.
329 Origen, CIn 1.91.
330 Origen, CIn 1.94.
331 Origen, CIn 1.103.
332 Origen, CIn 1.104. On Philo’s treatment of “from which” and “according to which,” see above, p. 70, n. 239. Both Philo and Origen are likely borrowing from Aristotle (Physics 2.3 and Metaphysics 5.2).
333 Origen, CIn 1.106.
334 Jn 1.1.
335 “It is clear that we are not to understand it in its meaning related to change, or a way and length. And we should certainly not take it in its meaning related to creation.” Origen, CIn 1.109. The latter proviso refers to the meaning of ἀρχή as “that from which something comes, as the underlying matter,” which is “thought to be a beginning by those who understand matter to be uncreated, but not by those who believe that God made the things which are from that which does not exist.” Origen, CIn 1.103.
336 “κατὰ δὲ τὴν πρὸς τὰ λογικὰ κοινωνίαν τῶν τεθεωρημένων τοῦ λόγου λαμβανόμενον.” Origen, CIn 1.110-111.
337 Origen, CIn 1.111.
338 Gerald Bostock says that “By disregarding the notion of ἀρχή as mere ‘beginning,’ Origen avoids the dangers inherent in the simple statement that God created the world at a certain point in time, with its clear implication that he then ceased to have an essential relationship with it. Creation for Origen is continuous because it is the reflection of the eternal wisdom.” Bostock, “Origen’s Doctrine of Creation,” Expository Times, vol. 118, no. 5 (London: Sage Publications, 2007) 223.
The manifold dynamic of ἀρχή in Christian being is developed with the aid of the word στοιχεῖα. The word is entangled in the early Greek enquiry into the cosmogenic ἀρχή. Just as he had done in his exploration of the word ἀρχή, Origen posits a stoicheic link between creation and Christian being: “Now, in my opinion, there are four Gospels, as though they were the elements (στοιχείων) of the faith of the Church.” And later in the same commentary, he says:

Now I think that all of the Scriptures, even when perceived very accurately, are only very elementary rudiments (στοιχεῖα τινα ἐλάχιστα) of and very brief introductions to all knowledge. Here, then, Christianity and its texts are the elements and first principles of the reason which informs faith, a beginning of God’s relation to the world, which ultimately is tantamount to the beginning also of Christianity. And in one of his definitions of ἀρχή – as “the beginning that pertains to learning” – Origen says that “the letters (στοιχεῖα) of the alphabet are the ἀρχή of writing.” Later in the same work, Origen draws together a relation between creation, letters, elements, and Scripture:

But if there are letters (γράμματα) of God, as there are, which the saints read and say they have read what is written in the tablets of heaven, those letters (στοιχεῖα) are the thoughts

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339 Bauer and Danker give the following range of meanings: I) a form of sun-dial. (II.1) A simple sound of speech, as the first component of the syllable. (II.2) In Physics, the components into which matter is ultimately divisible; elements. (II.3) The elements of proof, e.g. in general reasoning. (II.4) Generally, elementary or fundamental principle. (II.5) The stars; the planets; a sign of the Zodiac. Bauer and Danker, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

340 As for example in the four elements (στοιχεῖα) of ἀρχή in the thought of the Stoic, Zeno: “he [god] created first of all the four elements (στοιχεῖα). . . Fire is the hot element, water the moist, air the cold, earth the dry.” Diogenes Laertius, Lives II: 7.137.

341 In CJn, Origen treats ἀρχή and στοιχεῖα in the same context – in the 270 paragraphs (CJn 1.22-292) in which he focuses on the first five words (!) of the Gospel of John: “Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος.”

342 Origen, CJn 1.21.

343 Origen, CJn 13.30.

344 A beginning which eludes comprehension: “It is impossible to find the origin of God. You will never understand the beginning of movement in God, neither you nor anyone else nor any other kind of existing being.” Origen, HIsa 4.1. translation by Robert J. Daly, in Hans Urs von Balthasar, Origen: Spirit & Fire: A Thematic Anthology of His Writings (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1984) 318. Here Origen says the same also of the “last things,” that we only see “the things in between” (ibid).

345 Origen, CJn 1.106.
about the Son of God which are broken up into alpha and the letters that follow to omega, that (ἵνα) heavenly matters might be read through them.\textsuperscript{346}

Here Origen makes explicit the link between κόσμος and Scripture, the στοιχεῖα and γράμματα of God having been sewn decisively into and throughout the same into a fabric which is the divine will toward creation. The “heavenly matters,” which are “thoughts about the Son of God” are set out to be read in the text of the κόσμος and history so that (ἵνα) the insufficiency of ἀλήθεια as concept can be transcended as αὐτοαλήθεια, as the thoughts issue and express in and as Person.

In a homily on Genesis,\textsuperscript{347} Origen offers three interpretations of the “two lower decks” and “three upper decks” which are ordered for Noah’s construction of the ark.\textsuperscript{348} The third of these pertain to the material at hand.\textsuperscript{349} It should be noted that the readings occur in the order: 1) literal; 2) mystical; 3) moral. The moral is highest in this exegetical hierarchy. In this moral reading, Origen proposes that one build a three-tiered “library” within one’s soul:

If there is anyone who, while evils are increasing and vices are overflowing, can turn from the things which are in flux and passing away and fallen, and can hear the word of God and the heavenly precepts, this man is building an ark of salvation within his own heart and is dedicating a library, so to speak, of the divine word within himself. He is erecting faith, love, and hope as its length, breadth and height. He stretches out faith in the Trinity to the length of life and immortality. . . . From this library learn the historical narratives; from it recognize “the great mystery” which is fulfilled in Christ and in the Church.\textsuperscript{350} From it also learn to correct habits, to curtail vices, to purge the soul and draw

\textsuperscript{346} Origen, C\textit{Jn} 1.221. Note the distinction between letters as γράμματα and στοιχεῖα.

\textsuperscript{347} \textit{HGen} 2.5.

\textsuperscript{348} Gen 6.16.

\textsuperscript{349} The first of the three interpretations pertain to the exhortation in Philippians 2.10, in the bowing of every knee “in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.” The two lower decks refer to the “terrestrial regions” (i.e. on the earth), and to the region “under the earth.” The three upper decks refer to a trichotomy of heavenly regions, in reference to Paul’s mention of an ascent “even to the third heaven” (2 Cor 12.2). The second interpretation of the multiple decks proposes Christ’s overcoming of division in a harmony in which “Christ the wolf is with the lamb, the panther with the kid, the lion and the ox go to pasture together . . . and a small child will put his hand in the hole of an asp and suffer no harm.” In this second reading, Origen refers also to the Christic harmonization of the κόσμος via reference to the vision of Peter, “in which all the four-footed creatures and beasts of the earth and birds of heaven were contained within one sheet of faith tied together at the four corners of the Gospels” (cf. Acts 10.11-12). Origen, \textit{HGen} 2.5.

\textsuperscript{350} Cf. Eph 5.32.
it off from every bond of captivity . . . having knowledge within, works without, advancing pure in heart within, spotless in body without.\textsuperscript{351}

The literary allusions here form a relation between the \textit{στοιχεῖα} of \textit{κόσμος} (i.e., the “heavenly precepts”), Gospel, and history, as each is subsumed in the “library” of experience. Each is intermingled with the other toward a wholistic spectrum of Christian experience. This is a hierarchical Trinitarian experience, from the foundations of being (i.e., the “historical narratives”), the expression of the Incarnation (the “great mystery”), and the transformed and expressed life (“knowledge within, works without”). The “hearing of the Word” and the vision of “the heavenly precepts” from without effects a transformation within, in an experiential trichotomy of \textit{stoicheic} roots which take hold in the soil of historical experience, and grow upward to transformation and redemption.

To begin to untangle this painstaking treatment of \textit{ἀρχαί} and \textit{στοιχεῖα} into a cohesive notion – a hierarchical one – the following can be observed:

1) Being-in-the-world is \textit{ἀρχή} as reification of the divine will, the “from which” that overcomes the darkness of nothingness when it undergoes the speaking through the \textit{Λόγος} of the \textit{ἀρχή} of “change/way/commencement” as creation.\textsuperscript{352}

2) The divine will is the foundation of the \textit{ἀρχή} of all experience, the experience of which is for persons the “beginning which pertains to learning.”

3) The \textit{στοιχεία} – the foundational ‘stuff’ – of the \textit{ἀρχή} which pertains to learning is the \textit{στοιχεία} of the letters which constitute the \textit{ἀρχή} of writing. Hence experience may be communicated – it may become tradition, \textit{traditio} (i.e. \textit{trans} = across + \textit{dare} = to give).

4) The four Gospels are themselves the elements (\textit{στοιχείων}) of the faith of the Church.\textsuperscript{353}

\textsuperscript{351} Origen, \textit{HGen} 2.6.

\textsuperscript{352} Rebecca J. Lyman says “God’s desire (\textit{θέλημα}) is the linchpin between his nature and power.” Lyman notes also the personal nature of this expression of power: “Origen’s God is never beyond love for the individual or intervention; divine will is not merely for the good, but to increase the goodness of creation by specific actions.” Lyman, \textit{Christology and Cosmology}, 59.

\textsuperscript{353} Origen, \textit{CJn}, 1.21.
The ἀρχή and στοιχεῖα function as, respectively, constitutive and illustrative dimensions of experience. Divine will and desire are expressed as ἀρχάι, while the στοιχεῖα of letters and Church serve its expression. The Church issues from out of the dual dynamic of the constitutive and illustrative manifold oikonomía of Λόγος. It is what it illustrates, and it illustrates what it is. One must not say the church is what it does, as in some contemporary forms of ecclesial community,354 but instead one says, the Church does what it is.355 The Church is στοιχεῖα of the body of Christ – begotten by God, not made by hands. Towards this interpretation, Aloys Grillmeier sees in Origen an hierarchical oikonomía of Christ in a twofold role as reason which ascends toward wisdom,356 which effects ascent from “creaturely” reason to “supernatural” wisdom. Seen in this light, the bodily and scriptural incarnations are reason embodied and inscribed, which opens a door to experience of the one supernatural wisdom of divinity in which they share, which was spoken ἐν ἀρχῇ. The thought outlined here is expressed with great dynamic motion, as the divine will and impetus reaches outward to its lively expression in creation. This thought lays the foundations of possibility for divine-human relations, navigated in large part through the dynamic of exitus-reditus.

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354 I.e., in the spurious notion of “church planting.”

355 Yves Congar expresses this idea well: “The unity that is peculiar to the Church has its reality in the Church itself, but it has its foundation in God.” Congar, I Believe in the Holy Spirit vol. 2: “He is Lord and Giver of Life” (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2006) 20.

356 “The Logos has a twofold role: it is the source of creaturely ratio, but also of supernatural sapientia. The pneuma [Holy Spirit] inserts itself between these two functions. It provides a new substratum, which makes it possible to receive ‘the wisdom of Christ.’” Grillmeier, Christ in Christian Tradition, volume 1: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451) (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975) 139-40.
3.i.c) Exitus-Reditus

Both Plotinus and Origen explore the exitus-reditus dynamic through triadic structures. For Plotinus, there are the three primary hypostases; for Origen, the Trinity. Exitus-reditus is a conceptual dynamic which reveals much about either Alexandrian’s theology and worldview.

To the extent that symbolic nature expresses itself to attain its nature, there is a “going out” which shares, articulates, and forges this nature in the newness of experience. But this is not quite the case in Plotinus, only in Origen. In symbolic “action,” there is an intermingling of the nature which is wilful expression within the being of history among other historical agents – but, again, this does not appear to be the case with Plotinus, but only with Origen. To begin with the expressing of the exitus of Plotinus, he writes:

Since not only the Good exists, there must be the last end to the process of going out past it, or if one prefers to put it like this, going down or going away: and this last, after which nothing else can come into being, is evil.

In Plotinus’ explication, “this last” is said also to be matter (ὕλη):

Now it is necessary that what comes after the First should exist, and therefore that the Last should exist; and this is matter (ὕλη), which possesses nothing at all of the Good.

To further qualify this expression of psychic exitus, in another Ennead Plotinus appends a meontic theory of evil:

For the nature of the soul will certainly not arrive at absolute non-existence (μὴ ὄν), but when it goes down it will arrive at evil and in this way at non-existence.

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358 I.e., in the descriptive title given by Porphyry for Enn. 5.1, “Περὶ τῶν Τριῶν Ἀρχιῶν Ὑποστασεῶν.”

359 “The Good” is the first of Plotinus’ primary hypostases – also referred to as “One.” The triad of hypostases is completed by “Mind” and “Soul.”

360 Plotinus, Enn. 1.8.7.

361 Plotinus, Enn. 1.8.7.

362 Plotinus, Enn. 6.9.11.
Here Plotinus is speaking of the individual soul (as human being). It is not always clear if Plotinus is referring to the individual soul in its participation in the Soul of the primary hypostases, or whether he is speaking of the latter Soul per se. Yet at times Plotinus is clear about which soul is being considered. In the third Ennead, Plotinus speaks of the Soul of the primary hypostases, noting that it stirs up an instability within the hypostases, which stirring gives rise to an outward motion which is expressed as time. Plotinus posits in the first Ennead – which also focuses on the primary hypostases – that the Good is and remains in stasis. There is therefore no sharing of ontological properties within Plotinus’ triad, and this lack of sharing, coupled with incompatibility, gives rise to instability within and turgid inaccessibility without. Here the outward-going motion or expression is thus not due to a consent of will operative within the triad, but only due to its intrinsic, internal disparity.

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363 As Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI expresses it: “This doctrine of three substances is simultaneously his cosmology and his theology, the Neoplatonist ‘Trinity.’ It constitutes the essential framework of his anthropology. To the extent that the soul peers down into the recessive stream of the cosmic process it appears multiplied in the mirror of matter.” Writing as Joseph Ratzinger, in *Dogmatic Theology*, vol. 9: *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1988) 144-45.

364 It is helpful to note that the numbering of the Enneads is that of their editor and compiler, Porphyry, not that of Plotinus. Porphyry has moved sections of Enneads into others in pursuit of a thematic order, structured as an hierarchical paradigm which parallels (and is meant to facilitate for the reader – not always successfully) the ascent of the soul. For a helpful discussion of Porphyry’s compiling and editing, see Dominic J. O’Meara, *Plotinus: An Introduction to the Enneads* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 8-11.

365 “We must take ourselves back to the disposition which we said existed in eternity, to that quiet life, all a single whole, still unbounded, altogether without declination, resting in and directed towards eternity. Time did not yet exist.” Plotinus then speaks of “a restlessly active nature which wanted to control itself and be on its own,” namely, “because soul had an unquiet power, which wanted to keep on transferring what it saw there to something else,” with the result that “instead of keeping its unity in itself, squanders it outside itself and so goes forward to a weaker extension.” The upshot of this “restlessness” is disparity and the nascence of time: “Soul, making the world of sense in imitation of that other world, moving with a motion which is not that which exists There, but like it, and intending to be an image of it, first of all put itself into time, which it made instead of eternity, and then handed over that which came into being as a slave to time, by making the whole of it exist in time and encompassing all its ways with time.” Plotinus, *Enn* 3.7.11.

366 “That Mind is the first act of the Good and the first substance; the Good stays still in himself.” Plotinus, *Enn* 1.8.2.

367 However, as Gerson notes, “Plotinus sees no difficulty in saying both that will in the One is limited in no way and that the One cannot do otherwise than it does.” Gerson, *Plotinus* (New York: Routledge, 1994) 38.
As the Alexandrian vacillates between pantheism and panentheism, the reader struggles to grasp some sense of the perspective from out of which Plotinus speaks at any given time. Regardless, in the movement of the hypostases, in its “going out,” the soul (whether human or divine a reader cannot be certain – though likely both are implicated and affected) is caught up in the movement, which ultimately consummates in the expression of evil/matter, and/or a perilous flirtation with a relative form of non-existence.

Yet the “nature” of the soul is preserved in its descent into the nihility of matter. In this light, matter and evil are only a privation of the Good. The going out of exitus is caught short by the peril which nihility threatens, yet never establishes. This is seen when the text of the passage is read in full:

For the nature of the soul will certainly not arrive at absolute non-existence, but when it goes down it will arrive at evil and in this way at non-existence, not at absolute non-existence. But if it runs the opposite way, it will arrive, not at something else but at itself (αὐτήν), and in this way since it is not in something else it will not be in nothing, but in itself; but when it is in itself alone and not in being, it is in that; for one becomes, not substance, but “beyond substance” by this converse.  

The reditus of Plotinus effects a restoration of fuller being. Even after going out into nothingness, there remains just enough soul to effect a re-ascent. But, paradoxically, while the soul escapes this threat of nihility, it ultimately will arrive at what is tantamount to annihilation of self if it is successful in its ascent to the One:

So then the seer does not see and does not distinguish and does not imagine two, but it is as if he had become someone else and he is not himself and does not count as his own there, but has come to belong to that and so is one, having joined, as it were, from centre to centre. For here too when the centres have come together they are one, but there is duality when they are separate.

368 A reference to Plato, Republic 6.509.
369 Plotinus, Enn 6.9.11.
370 Plotinus, Enn 6.9.10.
The nihility which threatens and is shunned in the exitus is exchanged for a nihilility which is welcomed and sought in the reitus.\footnote{The passages referenced here from Ennead 6 conclude with the well-known phrase of Plotinus, rendered in popular expression as: “the flight of the alone to the Alone (φυγὴ µόνου πρὸς µόνον).” This Ennead is a tour de force of solipsism – a hierarchical ascent to ever more increasing gradations of Cartesian-esque remoteness, abstraction, and isolation.} This nihilility is to be preferred, rather inexplicably, over that nihilility. The duality is overcome by a kind of collapse into absolute solipsism, hence the unity remains always virtual, not actual. Solipsism cannot evade the notion of otherness by which it is constructed and defined. As a popular song from 1968 puts it: “One is the loneliest number.”\footnote{Three Dog Night, “One is the Loneliest Number,” from the album Three Dog Night (RCA, 1968).}

But in the exitus-reitus trajectory of Origen, there is no threat of nihilility. The trajectory is essentially a cosmic arc which reveals the divine will:

There is, however, a special activity of God the Father . . . there is also a special ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ . . . there is yet another grace of the Holy Spirit. . . . When therefore they obtain first of all their existence from God the Father, and secondly their rational nature from the Word, and thirdly their holiness from the Holy Spirit, they become capable of receiving Christ afresh in his character of the righteousness of God.\footnote{Origen, PA 1.3.7. The dynamic is expressed also in CRom, where Origen is considering Rom 11.36 (“All things are from him and through him and in him”). Focusing on Paul’s use of prepositions, Origen says: “‘From him’ means the initial creation of all things and that the things which exist received their beginning ‘from God.’ ‘Through him’ signifies that the things which were previously made are being ruled and superintended ‘through’ him from whom they derive the beginning of their existence. ‘In him’ means that those who have now been reformed and corrected stand firm ‘in’ his perfection. . . . We are said to possess ‘from God’ the fact that we exist; that we are being superintended and ruled is designated to come to pass ‘through him’; and that we stand firm in the summit of perfection is said to take place ‘in him.’” Origen, CRom 3.11.3.}

While the passage receives fuller treatment in the next section, there are three essential points to note presently. This is facilitated by first diagramming the two schemata of Plotinus and Origen:
Fig. 1. The Exitus of Plotinus:\textsuperscript{374}

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
  \node (one) at (0,0) {The One};
  \node (mind) at (1,0) {Mind};
  \node (soul) at (2,0) {Soul};
  \node (evil) at (3,0) {Evil};

  \draw[->] (one) -- (mind);
  \draw[->] (mind) -- (soul);
  \draw[->] (soul) -- (evil);
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

Fig. 2. The Exitus-Reditus of Origen:\textsuperscript{375}

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
  \node (father) at (0,0) {Existence from the Father};
  \node (christ) at (1,0) {rational nature from Christ};
  \node (holiness) at (2,0) {holiness from Holy Spirit};
  \node (christ2) at (3,0) {Christ received “afresh”};

  \draw[->] (father) -- (christ);
  \draw[->] (christ) -- (holiness);
  \draw[->] (holiness) -- (christ2);
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

The three points to be noted are: 1) unlike the remote and abstract primary hypostases of Plotinus’ triad, Origen’s Trinity goes to threefold lengths to express its nature; 2) the expression is toward distinct, created, individual Persons and selves, rather than a smattering of divine essence outward into units of nature. As Antonia Tripolitis puts it: “Origen could not, as a Christian, accept the idea that a person’s true self (rational soul) is by nature eternally pure,

\textsuperscript{374} For texts, see above, p. 98. There does not appear to be any clear-cut schema of one continuous exitus-reditus dynamic in Plotinus, neither in the movement of the primary hypostases, nor in that of the individual soul. The texts that touch on the dynamic are many, and are scattered throughout the Enneads. Antonia Tripolitis summarizes the matter in this way: “According to Plotinus, the rational or ‘higher’ soul remains always in the intelligible world, in continuous and direct contemplation of intelligible realities. It remains eternally stable and impassible, untouched by the passions, sin and suffering which are part of the sensible world. Eternally maintained in the intelligible universe, and in constant communion with the One, the rational soul continually receives from the One, through the eternal and spontaneous emanation of its energy, the power always to return to the world of the intellect. In its process of creative emanation, the One gives movement to the soul and the power to return to its source. It is thus the continuous illumination of the soul by the One which provides the soul both with the desire for, and the power necessary to achieve, salvation.” Tripolitis, “Return to the Divine: Salvation in the Thought of Plotinus and Origen.” Disciplina Nostrae: Essays in Memory of Robert F. Evans. Patristic Monograph Series, no. 6 (Philadelphia: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, Ltd, 1979) 174.

\textsuperscript{375} For text, see above, p. 101.
stable, changeless, and impassable.” In other words, there are persons. There are persons in all the impurity, instability, changeability, and passibility of the historicity which nips at the heels of contingent, created being: toward and amid such impurity, instability, changeability, and passibility, the Son plays a twofold role in the arc – a role in both the exitus and the reditus portions.

Having presented the outlines of the economic Trinitarian relations in exitus-reditus, I now make a closer consideration of each of the three facets, or steps, in and through which the Persons are present in and through creation. This consideration will permit two things: 1) the economy of the Persons is seen to unfold in a step-wise contingency of relation toward creation; 2) the immanence of the Persons are likewise seen as contingent relations toward creation, over against any thinking which posits Christological (and Pneumatic) subordination in Origen’s Trinitarian theology.

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376 Tripolitis, “Return to the Divine,” 175. Tripolitis explains Origen’s alternative this way: “Unlike Plotinus’ description of the ‘rational’ soul, for Origen there is no part of the soul (rational or otherwise) which inherently possesses goodness. Rather, the soul is given a share in goodness by God’s grace in accordance with its developing capacity to receive it.” Ibid.

377 On the rejection of the notion of a given nature, Origen, speaking of Paul, says: “For if, as the heretics think, he had been chosen either by uncertain fate or by the privilege of possessing a superior nature, surely he would never have expressed the fear that, if he were not to hold the restraints on his own body, it could potentially come to pass that he would be rejected (cf. 1 Cor 9.27) or that woe would be his if he were to cease from proclaiming the gospel.” Origen, CRom 1.3.3. The Scriptural context of these remarks are the ‘setting apart for the Gospel’ of Paul (sc. Rom 1.1), which for Origen refers to God’s foreseeing – a foreseeing in which free will is preserved. The issue of nature and freedom is addressed below, Ch. 5.
3.ii) The Hierarchy of Trinitarian Onto-Relational Contingency

3.ii.a) The Step of the Father

_Nothing in the Trinity can be called greater or less, for there is but one fount of deity, who upholds the universe by his word and reason._

The conceptual foundation which constitutes the fundamental stratum of Origen’s thought is the experiential nature of divine-human relations. The relation is a thoroughly experiential Trinitarian relation, in which each facet of being and experience is touched, including: 1) the foundation and sub-stratum of being-itsel; 2) the dialectical dynamism of reason and knowing; 3) the transformative suffusion of desire, grace, and will. The first touching of the Trinity constitutes the first of three respective steps, beginning with that of the Father.

Origen outlines these steps, noting the progressive nature in which the steps are taken: “But it is necessary to come to the universal benefits of God, and then, after his universal benefits, to what is particular.” Here Origen makes a distinction, speaking of the “universal,” as well as the “particular.” The universal pertains to being-itsel in the step of the Father: “God the Father bestows on all the gift of existence.” Whatever is “in” or “has” being, is or has it as a result of the sharing out of the gift of God as universal benefit. Being-itsel is posterior to the will of God, and anterior to the potentiality and freedom of sentient creation. Being-itsel stands μεθόριος between God and creation. It is an ὑπόστασις of encounter – or, better yet: it invites

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378 Origen, _PA_ 1.3.7. In his text, Butterworth proposes that here Rufinus “has modified some such phrase as ‘there is no separation in the Trinity’” (p. 37 n. 6.). The relation of this text to that of a Greek fragment (originating in a letter of Justinian) which parallels it, and which Koetschau includes in his text of _PA_, is examined below, pp. 116-20.

379 The other two steps are the _Christic_ (below, pp. 110-14) and the _Pneumatic_ (below, pp. 115-21).

380 Origen, _HJer_ 3.1.

381 Origen, _PA_ 1.3.8.

382 Remembering that ὑπόστασις refers: as an act, to: “standing under,” “supporting”; as a thing: “a coming into existence,” “origin,” a “substructure.” Metaphorically – i.e., in speech or discourse, it refers to “ground-work” or “subject-matter.” It also refers to a “plan” or “purpose,” as well as “undertaking” or “promise.” Definitions from Liddell, Scott, Jones, _A Greek-English Lexicon_ (Oxford, 1925-40).
and awaits encounter in its objectivity, awaiting the chiselling of effective freedom by which an ὑπόστασις will come to be sculpted. In Origen’s reading, the sculptor has her model in God:

God’s essence is one and exists always. If someone should join himself to it, he becomes one spirit with it, and through him who always is, even he himself will be said to be. However the one who is far from him and assumes no participation in him is not even said to be, just as we Gentiles were before we came to the knowledge of divine truth. And this is why it says that God “calls the things that are not as things that are.”

The “becoming one with” does not issue in the solipsism which Plotinus’ notion of “unity” does. Over and against this paradoxical and virtual unity in abstracted remoteness, one comes to be “said to be,” i.e., to participate in “him who always is.” The self is not only preserved, but comes to be in a community of persons.

To move backward from this communal heart of Origen’s thought, back to the foundation of being, the reader finds Origen run aground on an apophatic shoal:

Moreover, God does not even participate in being. For He is participated in, rather than participates. . . . However, there is much to say which is hard to perceive about being, and especially if we take “being” in the strict sense to be unmoved and incorporeal. We would have to discover whether God “transcends being in rank and power,” and grants a share in being to those whose participation is according to His Logos, and to the Logos himself, or whether He is Himself being, in spite of the fact that He is said to be invisible by nature.

To view being-itself in its standing-under – i.e., as ὑπόστασις – in light of Origen’s reservations about speaking of God’s participation in being, one can say that Origen’s

383 Origen, CRom 4.5.12. Paul’s words quoted here are: “καλοῦντος τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα” (Rom 4.17). In his commentary on Romans, Brendan Byrne notes: “Variations of this formula occur widely in the Hellenistic Jewish tradition to express the sense of creatio ex nihilo: Wis 11:25; 2 Macc 7:28; Jos. Asen. 8:9; Philo, Spec. 4.187; Opif. 81; Mig 183; Her 36; etc. . . Paul depicts Abraham’s faith in terms used by Greek-speaking Jews to commend and defend their belief. He certainly saw conversion and the foundation of communities of the converted as exercises of God’s creative power.” Byrne, “Romans” Sacra Pagina Series, vol. 6 (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2007) 159-60. Byrne’s interpretation accords well with that of Origen – an accord which might escape the notice of a reader who doesn’t look closely at Paul’s Greek.

384 See above, p. 88-91; 101-5.

385 Origen, CC, 6.64. See also Philo: “Among the virtues, that of God really is, [as] actually existing, inasmuch as God alone has veritable being. This is why Moses will say of Him as best he may in human speech, “ἐγὼ εἰμί ὁ ὄν” (Ex 3.14), implying that others lesser than He have not being, as being indeed is, but exist in semblance only, and are [only] conventionally said to exist.” Philo, Det 160.
Cosmotheoria posits two monisms: 1) that of Godself; 2) that of being-itself. The monism of being-itself is contingent upon – and stands upon – the gracious and effective step which has its being in the substratum Who is the Father. In other words, the monism of God is a suffusive monism. The universal beneficence of the grace of Godself suffuses the other monism, that of being-itself. This is akin to two interlocking rings or circles, which share an overlapping field of convergence. The convergence at which the monism of God (“beyond being”) and being-itself interlock, marks the zenith of divine-human relations – the antithesis of “the one who is far from him and assumes no participation in him,” and who, therefore, “is not even said to be.” Here is where Plotinus and Origen themselves come to something of a field of convergence in their thought, when Plotinus says: “when the centres have come together they are one, but there is duality when they are separate.” But Origen’s duality emphasizes the gracious freedom as potentiality in which both Creator and creation participate in the grace of creation, a duality which reaches across the two forms of monism – the suffusive and the receptive, and guides the soul away from the collapse into nihility or solipsistic and virtual “unity.” Any separation is always by choice. Likewise there is a parallel with Plotinus’ emanationist meontic theory of evil, in a passage from PA in which Origen provides his account of the Fall, saying:

386 Along similar lines, P. Tzamalikos notes in Origen’s thought the notion of a being “in” and being “out” of God, in which one is either in the world or in God. See Origen: Philosophy of History, 333-39. Tzamalikos proposes that Origen uses the notion “in order to depict the ontological hiatus between divine reality and the world.” Ibid., 334. Italics Tzamalikos’. There is, Tzamalikos notes, an “entering into God” which effects a “transformation of nature (yet not modification of ontology).” Ibid., 334.

387 Origen, CRom 4.5.12.

388 Plotinus, Enn 6.9.10.

389 Crouzel notes also that both Alexandrians utilize the notion of concealment, in their enquiry into the relation of the soul to the world. For Plotinus, the soul is “recouverte et salie par la matière,” while for Origen, it is “cachée par celle du Terrestre.” Crouzel, Théologie de l’image de Dieu chez Origène (Paris: Aubier, 1956) 211. For Origen the soul is not covered by “matière” but by a matterly reading of the world – a misappropriation of the world and matter as a means to meaning. This “harlotrous” misappropriation of matter is treated below, p. 193.
Now to withdraw from the good is nothing else than to be immersed in evil; for it is certain that to be evil means to be lacking in good. Hence it is that in whatever degree one declines from the good, one descends into an equal degree of wickedness.  

But here Origen diverges from Plotinus in two additional ways: 1) he does not equate evil with matter, and 2) his dynamic includes a robust emphasis on both free will and “the good”:

For the creator granted to the minds created by him the power of free and voluntary movement, in order that the good that was in them might become their own, since it was preserved by their own free will.  

In Origen’s thought, the point of convergence of the monisms of Godself and being-itself takes the form of what can be called the region of “becoming.” In the Contra Celsum, Origen contends that the Greek philosophical conception of “being” and “becoming” is a “good teaching,” yet it requires Christ to get it off the ground, to elevate it out of mere becoming and effect an actual being, as it were. For the Christian, in appropriating the notion of being and becoming:

It is not merely a matter of theory when they distinguish between being and becoming . . . and when they associate truth with being and by all possible means avoid the error that is bound up in becoming. They look, as they have learnt, not at the things which are becoming, which are seen and on that account temporal, but at the higher things, whether one wishes to call them “being,” or things “invisible” because they are intelligible, or “things which are not seen” because their nature lies outside the realm of sense-perception.  

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390 Origen, PA 2.9.2.  
391 Origen, PA 2.9.2.  
392 P. Tzamalikos seems to be saying something along similar lines: “What constitutes the personal identity of a rational creature is to be found in his relation to God rather than in the creature itself regarded as an isolated and independent subsistence.” Tzamalikos, Origen: Cosmology and Ontology of Time (Leiden: Brill, 2006) 98. Identity is not constituted in the vacuum of solipsistic subsistence; it is constituted only in the field of divine-human relation.  
393 Origen, CC 7.46.  
394 2 Cor 4.18.  
395 Origen, CC 7.46.
Yet Christians, Origen goes on to say, *do in fact* “look at becoming” – but this looking is a seeing through the filter or lens of grace, where becoming resides in the convergence of Godself and being-itself.\(^{396}\)

It is in this way also that the disciples of Jesus look at the things that are becoming, so that they use them as steps to the contemplation of the nature of intelligible things. “For the invisible things of God,” that is, the intelligible things, “are understood by the things that are made” and “from the creation of the world are clearly seen”\(^{397}\) by the process of thought. And when they have ascended from the created things of the world to the invisible things of God they do not stop there. But after exercising their minds sufficiently among them and understanding them, they ascend to the eternal power of God, and, in a word, to His Divinity.\(^{398}\)

In some ways the “error which is bound up in becoming” itself comprises a third monism: that of the non-being in which dwell those who are “far from him,” who thereby, “assume no participation in him,” and who are “not even said to be.”\(^{399}\) Origen has an extended reflection on non-being in his *Commentary on John*,\(^{400}\) when he sets out to reconcile the inherent tension of John’s statement, “all things were made through him,” and “without him nothing was made.”\(^{401}\) The enquiry centres around a reading of a passage from Esther in light of another from Exodus, the three main points of which must be quoted at length:

> In Esther, according to the *Septuagint*, Mordechai calls Israel’s enemies “those who are not,” when he says, “Lord, do not hand your scepter over to those who are not.”\(^{402}\) We can also introduce how the wicked are called “those who are not” because of evil, from

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\(^{396}\) Gerald Bostock proposes that “By anchoring the Logos in the scriptural figure of the divine Wisdom Origen’s theology spans the gulf between the realms of becoming and being, of contingency and necessity.” Bostock, “Origen’s Doctrine of Creation,” 223.

\(^{397}\) Rom. 1.20.

\(^{398}\) Origen, *CC* 7.46.


\(^{400}\) *CJn* 2.91-99.

\(^{401}\) Jn. 1.13.

\(^{402}\) \(\text{Μὴ παραδῶς τὸ σκῆπτρόν σου, κύριε, τοῖς μὴ οὖσιν.}\)’ This text is found in the “Old Greek” version of the Septuagint, at Esth 4 C, 22. For details on the textual variants of Esther in the Septuagint, see *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 424-25.
the name of God recorded in Exodus. “For the Lord said to Moses, ‘He who is, this is my name (Ἐγώ εἰµι ὁ ὄν).’”

Now according to us who boast that we belong to the Church, it is the good God who speaks these words. This is the same God who the Saviour honours when he says, “No one is good except the one God, the Father.” “The one who is good,” therefore, is the same as “the one who is.” But evil or wickedness is opposite to “being.” It follows that wickedness and evil are “not being.”

All, therefore, who share in “being” – and the saints share in it – would properly be called “those who are.” But those who have turned away from sharing in “being” have, by having deprived themselves of “being,” become “those who are not.”

It might be tempting to wonder if anything positive can be expressed amid so many negations and abstractions. But in fact, Origen has laid here a solid groundwork for a hermeneutical view of the world. Contemporary philosophical hermeneutics speaks of “horizons.” These are the matrices of understanding which are operative in events of encounter and knowing. Such are the building blocks of meaning. And as Kevin J. Vanhoozer has said well, “textual meaning will only be as determinate and decidable as the conception of reality that it presupposes.” Here is a general rule for the relation between meaning and metaphysics – a curious proposition that understanding works backward, while meaning works forward (by first reaching back and transfiguring the vestiges of one’s preunderstanding). Origen reaches back to being-itself as the

403 Origen, C/Jn 2.95, (citing Ex. 3.14).
404 Mk 10.18; Lk 18.19.
405 Origen, C/Jn 2.96.
406 Origen, C/Jn 2.98.
407 In a summary statement of his notion of horizon, Gadamer speaks in terms which are aptly applied to the present idea: “The horizon” according to Gadamer, “is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. Applying this to the thinking mind, we speak of narrowness of horizon, of the possible expansion of horizon, of the opening up of new horizons, and so forth.” A horizon, in this understanding, establishes the parameters for thinking. Horizons also serve to contextualize thought: “A person who has no horizon does not see far enough and hence overvalues what is nearest to him. On the other hand, ‘to have a horizon’ means not being limited to what is nearby but being able to see beyond it. A person who has an horizon knows the relative significance of everything within this horizon, whether it is near or far, great or small.” Gadamer, Truth and Method (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 1993) 302. See also above, p. 3, n. 5.
foundational hermeneutical tool for his vision of the world. Being-itself means; and from out of this foundational understanding one can oneself proceed from this understanding toward meaning, and thus circumvent the furtive threat of non-being and the insidious vacuum which gathers into nihility. But while being-itself is contingent upon God, the impetus for this reaching back is contingent upon one’s first having set foot in ascent upon the next step – the Christic.

3.ii.b) The Christic Step

I am investigating whether or not the statement, “If you knew my Father, you would know me,” can be equivalent to the statement, “If you knew me, you would also know my Father.”409 I think these statements cannot be equivalent to one another. The one who knows the Father ascends from knowledge of the Son to knowledge of the Father, and the Father is not seen otherwise than by seeing the Son.410

The Christic step is Origen’s paramount step. One reaches backward from Christ and “ascends” to knowledge of the Father – an ascent in reverse, as it were. And because “we say that he [Christ] was a sort of ‘composite being (σύνθετόν τι χρῆμα),’”411 Christ Himself comprises his own series of steps:

And perhaps, just as in the temple there were certain steps by which one might enter the Holy of Holies, so the Only-Begotten of God is the whole of our steps. And, just as the first step is the lower, and the next higher, and so on in order up to the highest, so our Saviour is the whole of the steps. His humanity is the first lower step, as it were. When we set foot on it we proceed the whole way on the steps in accordance with those aspects that follow after his humanity, so that we go up by means of him who is at the same time angel and the other powers.412

The Christic step upon which one reaches back and ascends to the Father, in its “composite being,” is a step which has composite names and parallel dynamics: “he who beholds Wisdom,

409 Jn 14.7.
410 Origen, CJn 19.34-35.
411 Origen, CC 1.66. The composite nature of Christ is explicated by Origen with the notion of the multiple “aspects (ἐπίνοιαι),” which will be considered more fully in Chapter 4.
412 Origen, CJn 19.38.
which God created before the ages for his works, ascends from knowing Wisdom to Wisdom’s father,”⁴¹³ and “you will say the same thing also about the truth:”

For one does not comprehend God or contemplate him, and afterwards apprehend the truth. First one apprehends the truth, so that in this way he may come to behold the essence, or the power and nature of God beyond the essence.⁴¹⁴

Though Christ exists as “composite being,” his essential unity is not compromised. Origen proposes that while Christ truly is each of the multiple aspects, he remains undivided in essence.⁴¹⁵ This dynamic is given similar treatment in Origen’s notion of λόγοι, in light of the relation between the Old and New Testaments.⁴¹⁶ In a section of the Commentary on John, when addressing Ambrose – at whose behest the commentary was written – Origen states how he might have denied Ambrose’s request, in light of Solomon’s admonition: “My son, beware of making many books.”⁴¹⁷ Origen justifies the continuation of his work,⁴¹⁸ however, in light of the unicity of his subject matter, namely, the Word:

The complete Word of God, which was in the beginning with God is not a multitude of Words (πολυλογία), for it is not words (λόγοι). It is a single Word consisting of several ideas (θεώρηµα), each of which is a part of the whole Word.⁴¹⁹

The key is to “cling to the goal which accords with the one Word,” while in contrast to this accord are those who “say much,” who are “loquacious (πολυλεγεῖ).”⁴²⁰ The fundamental

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⁴¹³ Origen, CJs 19.36.
⁴¹⁴ Origen, CJs 19.37.
⁴¹⁵ “But let no one take offense when we distinguish the aspects (ἐπινοίας) in the Saviour, thinking that we also do the same with his essence.” Origen, CJs, 1.200.
⁴¹⁶ The idea of Origen’s Logocentrism is expressed well by Joseph Trigg (though stated here somewhat implicitly): “His spiritual interpretation was not founded on some arbitrary set of correspondences, but rather on a conviction that God’s oikonomia operates in the same way in Scripture and the natural world, in the salvation of the cosmos and in each individual soul, and in the inner and outer man. One can therefore make analogies from one to another of these spheres.” Joseph W. Trigg, Origen (London: Routledge, 1998), 62.
⁴¹⁷ Eccl 12.12.
⁴¹⁸ A work which certainly had Origen ‘making many books’ – only 11 of which are extant, in varying degrees of incomplete and/or fragmentary texts – which yet managed only to bring him as far as the beginning of John’s 13th chapter, leaving almost 9 chapters of the Gospel unaddressed. If the work had been completed – and in 32.3 of the Commentary, Origen leaves the matter open – it could easily have reached 60 books.
⁴¹⁹ Origen, CJs, 5.5.
premise which Origen is refining here is an affirmation of the unicity of Λόγος as person and Scripture, upon which follow several corollaries. Looking backward from the Incarnation as person to that of Scripture, Origen relates how knowledge of the presence of the latter in the former is discerned through the knowledge which the Incarnation effects: “But since the Saviour has come, and has caused the gospel (εὐαγγέλιον) to be embodied in the gospel, he has made all things gospel, as it were.” Origen relates how knowledge of the presence of the latter in the former is discerned through the knowledge which the Incarnation effects: “But since the Saviour has come, and has caused the gospel (εὐαγγέλιον) to be embodied in the gospel, he has made all things gospel, as it were.” The incarnations as Scripture and man are both Gospel, as are the Church and the entirety of the κόσμος. Such are the στοιχεῖα of the εὐαγγέλιον; they are the elements of proclamation (ἀγγελία) of God’s essential Good (τὸ ἔὖ). The proclamation or expression takes different forms and different words, yet the essential Good which is expressed remains the same. It could be said that the cosmogony is constitutive, and speaks out a sophiagony, which is illustrative.

In the divine-human relations outlined here, there is a descent of truth which effects an ascent of meaning. The centrifugal centre which effects all of this motion is Christ. Origen

420 Origen, CJn, 5.5.
421 Origen, CJn, 1.33. But this is with the added proviso which Origen makes between firstfruits and firstlings: “But we ought to know that firstfruits (ἀπαρχή) and firstlings (πρωτογένη) are not the same. For firstfruits are offered after all the fruits, but the firstling is offered before. One would not go wrong, then, in saying that of the Scriptures which are in circulation in all the churches of God and which are believed to be divine, the law of Moses is the firstling, but the gospel is the firstfruits. For the perfect Word has blossomed forth after all the fruits of the prophets up to the time of the Lord Jesus.” Origen, CJn 1.13-14.
422 This lends further weight to Peter Martens’ fine expression, that for Origen, “Scriptural interpretation was . . . an occasion to perform the faith.” Martens, Origen and Scripture (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 193. Likewise Christophe Potworowski has written that for Origen “The work of interpretation is a form of participation in the truth.” Potworowski, “The Question of Truth,” 311.
424 “Each of those who hear words is taught either about the things above or learns about the things below. If I am taught what is below, I go down to the Word so that I may know the things below. But if I learn the things above, I go up to the Word for the things above so that I may meditate on what is there.” Origen, HJer 18.2.
demythologizes Heraclitus’ equation of opposites. As noted above,\textsuperscript{425} Heraclitus’ λόγος must be sought, listened to rather than heard. Heraclitus assures the reader that his is a deep discourse in which hearing will not suffice, but only listening. But if one attempts to listen, one hears only that “the way up and the way down is one and the same,”\textsuperscript{426} and “day and night: they are one,”\textsuperscript{427} etc. One cannot listen, but can only hear a dissembling discourse of a wayward world which takes the ground out from under one, setting it adrift and reeling as it spirals in the cyclonic vortex of a vertiginous and disorienting mythical construct. But in Origen, one listens to and hears the essence of the Father speaking through the Λόγος of the Son.

It should suffice to say that in Origen’s estimation there is a common property shared between not only the Father and the Son, but also the Λόγος and λόγοι. The common property is immutable, yet it is expressed – symbolized – through distinct economies of grace. “The manhood of Christ, like Holy Scripture,” in the estimation of Grillmeier, “is like a filter through which the Godhead is imparted in accordance with the receptive capability of man.”\textsuperscript{428} Origen emphasizes the role of the Spirit as guide who points beyond the veil of flesh of both Scripture and Christ’s manhood, helping the seeker to gain some sense of the pure essence and nature of the divinity which is hidden, yet “filtered” through these distinct elements and aspects.\textsuperscript{429} In his work on the Passover, Origen takes the admonishment of Exodus which warns against the

\textsuperscript{425} Pp. 44-5.
\textsuperscript{426} Heraclitus, D60.
\textsuperscript{427} Heraclitus, D57.
\textsuperscript{428} Grillmeier, \textit{Christ in Christian Tradition}, 143.
\textsuperscript{429} As Karen Jo Torjesen puts it: “The rationality of Scripture is its spiritual sense. And the content of this spiritual sense is the Logos, Christ in his divinity, hidden to be sure under the cloak of the letter, but a cloak which creates the possibility of his becoming known.” Torjesen, \textit{Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method in Origen’s Exegesis} (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1986) 110.
consumption of raw flesh,$^{430}$ as indicating how essential is the Spirit’s role in preparing a proper reception of Scripture:

If the lamb is Christ and Christ is the Logos, what is the flesh of the divine words if not the divine Scriptures? This is what is to be eaten neither raw nor cooked with water. Should, therefore, some cling just to the words themselves, they would eat the flesh of the saviour raw. . . . If the Spirit is given us from God and God is a devouring fire, the Spirit is also fire. . . . Therefore the Holy Spirit is rightly called fire, which it is necessary for us to receive in order to have converse ($προσομιλῆσαι$) with the flesh of Christ, I mean the divine Scriptures, so that, when we have roasted them with this divine fire, we may eat them roasted with fire. For the words are changed by such fire, and we will see that they are sweet and nourishing.$^{431}$

To converse with the Scriptures, to truly engage them, requires that any who would be conversant must first receive the Holy Spirit. To approach them otherwise deprives one of their nutritive essence, and causes them to lose their dynamic as a speaking, dialogic Word. Here again is another instance of the reaching back of understanding toward the progression of meaning: one can ascend and reach back to the $Christic$ step only after having stood forward on the next step, that of the $Pneumatic$.

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$^{430}$ Ex 12.8-9: “They are to eat the flesh . . . roasted with fire . . . do not eat any of it raw . . . but roasted with fire.”

3.ii.c. The Pneumatic Step

“The Spirit blows where it wills.”[^32] This shows that the Spirit is also a reality (οὐσία). For the Spirit is not, as some think, a mere power of God which, according to them, has no being of its own. And also the Apostle, when enumerating the charisms of the Spirit, immediately added: “All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit who apportions to each one individually as he wills.”[^33] If then he wills and works and disposes, he is a being (οὐσία) which acts and not just energy (ἐνέργεια).[^34]

The Holy Spirit has been referred to as the “Cinderella of theology.”[^35] Running with this theme, Alister E. McGrath adds, “The other two sisters may have gone to the theological ball; the Holy Spirit got left behind every time.”[^36] A far more reverent (and Scriptural) position is that of Von Balthasar: “The most mysterious aspect of God – ‘you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes’[^37] – can, it is true, be confirmed by statement as something existent but can never be captured in rigid concepts.”[^38]

A beginning of a conceptualizing of the Holy Spirit – a beginning of the hearing of the sound of it – can be found in the dynamic of relations – including the inner-Trinitarian, the divine-human, and the inter-personal. The notion of contingency is a *sine qua non* of all relation.

[^32]: Jn 3:8.
[^33]: 1 Cor 12:11.
[^37]: Jn 3.8.
[^38]: Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Credo: Meditations on the Apostles’ Creed* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990) 75. Von Balthasar adds that there is an unfortunate side to the ineffability of this mystery: “It is indicative that the dispute between the Eastern and Western Churches about this Mystery was never settled.” *Credo*, 75-6. And Gary D. Badcock says “Scholars often allege that Origen effectively has no pneumatology, or that his pneumatology is subservient to [his] doctrine of the Logos. Because of the all-pervading role of the Logos in Origen’s theology, in short, little is left to the Spirit.” But, Badcock adds, “We need to recall here the fact that, in seeking a theology of the Spirit, we need to look in the right place; no theology of the Spirit will correspond to a theology of the Word.” *Badcock, Light of Truth & Fire of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997) 43-4.
Trinitarian relations are contingent on a communion (κοινωνία) between the Persons, while divine-human relations are contingent on the being of a community of persons.

I have provided above several texts which show how relations and contingency are operative, beginning with a hierarchy of being/reason/grace, and act/ministry/grace. There can be no grace without knowing, and no knowing without being. One ascends through the three facets of expression of the Persons.\(^{439}\) And it has been demonstrated that knowledge of the Father is garnered on the *reditus* portion of *exitus-reditus*, after the grace of the Holy Spirit has been received.\(^{440}\) The Holy Spirit in this light is the Person who sanctifies experience. The work of the Holy Spirit is the locus point at which the essence of God – in the present form of the Holy Spirit – is met with the essence of human being – in the present form of free will and choice.\(^{441}\)

A source of misunderstanding of Origen’s Christological and Pneumatic subordination is two texts from *First Principles*.

The God and Father, who holds the universe together, is superior to every being that exists, for he imparts to each one from his own existence that which each one is; the Son, being less than the Father, is superior to rational creatures alone (for he is second to the Father); the Holy Spirit is still less, and dwells with the saints alone. So that in this way the power of the Father is greater than that of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and that of the Son is more than that of the Holy Spirit, and in turn the power of the Holy Spirit exceeds that of every other holy being.\(^{442}\)

\(^{439}\) Origen, *PA* 1.3.7. See above p. 101, n. 373.


\(^{441}\) “There is yet another grace of the Holy Spirit bestowed upon such as are worthy.”\(^{441}\) Origen, *PA* 1.3.7.; “the grace of the Holy Spirit, [enables] those beings who are not holy in essence [to] be made holy by participating in this grace.” *PA* 1.3.8.

\(^{442}\) Origen, *PA* 1.3.5. Though he includes this passage in his text of *First Principles*, Koetschau judges it to be a fragment. It is not included in the translation of Rufinus, but is found in the Greek of Justinian’s letter to Menas (9.524). In his introduction to Koetschau’s text, Butterworth contends that the passage is likely a reliable rendering of Origen’s thought, since the presence of many loyal followers of Origen would have necessitated Justinian’s keeping closely to Origen’s own words. See p. xliv in the Peter Smith edition of *On First Principles*. While this may be the case, one cannot be sure of exactly where Origen begins and Justinian ends in the thoughts expressed here.
This passage seems to be contradicted by another, later in the same work, in the Latin text of Rufinus:

Nothing in the Trinity can be called greater or less (\textit{majus minusve}), for there is but one fount of deity, who upholds the universe by his word and reason, and sanctifies “by the spirit of his mouth” all that is worthy of sanctification.\textsuperscript{443}

In his text of \textit{First Principles}, Butterworth proposes that here Rufinus “has modified some such phrase as ‘there is no separation in the Trinity.’”\textsuperscript{444} But this proposal is not necessary if – as I believe – Origen is here outlining a hierarchy of relation, rather than essence. If the Greek fragment was included in the primary text, it would not, in this reading, be contradicted by that of Rufinus.\textsuperscript{445} The text indicates this reasoning in the same (Latin) section: “What we have been describing is the peculiar grace and work of the Holy Spirit.”\textsuperscript{446} The movement is from the \textit{greater}, i.e., from universal experience (of being-itself), to the \textit{lesser}, i.e., the particular (of grace and holiness). As Catherine Mowry LaCugna has written: “\textit{The Father is the substratum of divinity.”}\textsuperscript{447} The sphere of participation of God the Father is therefore \textit{greater} than that of the Holy Spirit, whose sphere of influence requires the free assent of will of individual persons toward participation in holiness. Being is given, while holiness is sought. A little later in \textit{First Principles}, Origen continues his exploration of the inner-Trinitarian relations among the Persons:

There is, however, a special activity of God the Father, beyond that which he exercised on all things in giving them natural life. There is also a special ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ towards those on whom he confers the natural gift of reason, by means of which well-being is bestowed upon them in addition to mere existence. There is yet another

\textsuperscript{443} Origen, \textit{PA} 1.3.7.

\textsuperscript{444} P. 104, n. 378.

\textsuperscript{445} And there is a text in the Greek of \textit{CJn} (2.76-77) which lends support to this reading. This text is treated below, p. 119-20.

\textsuperscript{446} Origen, \textit{PA} 1.3.7.

\textsuperscript{447} LaCugna, in \textit{Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives}, Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin, eds. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), vol. 1, 166, n. 34. Italics mine.
grace of the Holy Spirit bestowed upon such as are worthy, a grace ministered indeed through Christ, but put into operation by the Father in proportion to the merits of those who become capable of receiving it.\textsuperscript{448}

The relation is inner-Trinitarian, since the foundation of grace is “put into operation by the Father,” as Origen puts it, as it ascends outward to the Spirit “through” the Son. The grace of the Holy Spirit is “ministered indeed through Christ, but put into operation by the Father,” in the ascent of the unbroken thread of grace. But the text seems somewhat out of order as it stands.

The next paragraph seems logically to precede the former:

\begin{quote}
God the Father bestows on all the gift of existence; and participation in Christ, in virtue of his being the word or reason, makes them rational. . . . Accordingly there is also available the grace of the Holy Spirit, that those beings who are not holy in essence may be made holy by participating in this grace. When therefore they obtain first of all their existence from God the Father, and secondly their rational nature from the Word, and thirdly their holiness from the Holy Spirit, they become capable of receiving Christ afresh in his character of the righteousness of God.\textsuperscript{449}
\end{quote}

The latter text should come first in the textual sequence, providing the essential foundation for the former. Read together, it can be seen that there is an onto-relational hierarchy of contingency at work in the relations, both in the expressions of the divine Persons and in that of being-itself. The primary participation is being-itself, then reason, then righteousness/holiness.\textsuperscript{450} The pivotal centre of the movement – in which one is turned from \textit{exitus} to \textit{reditus} – is effected by participation in the Holy Spirit, who turns the participant toward a renewal of experience of the world, and a second participation in Christ.\textsuperscript{451} This can be seen as a movement from reason to

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{448} Origen, \textit{PA}, 1.3.7.

\textsuperscript{449} Origen, \textit{PA}, 1.3.8.

\textsuperscript{450} The hierarchical presuppositions which affect the respective spheres of influence of the Trinitarian Persons is noted too by David L. Balas, in “The Idea of Participation in the Structure of Origen’s Thought: Christian Transposition of a Theme of the Platonic Tradition,” in \textit{Origeniana} (Bari: Istituto di letteratura cristiana antica, 1975). Balas works out the hierarchy be making a distinction between “natural” and “supernatural” levels of participation which occur on levels of “being/nature” and “salvation/moral and religious perfection.” Ibid., 264-7.

\textsuperscript{451} See above, pp. 101-3.
\end{footnotesize}
In a homily on Luke, Origen discerns a close quality of synergism between the effects of the Holy Spirit and the pre-natal Jesus on the pre-natal John, in his exegesis of Luke’s statement “he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb.” Origen here notes that John’s reception of the Holy Spirit “was not the principle of his being or nature.” If there is a principle of his being, it is the Father, if there is one of nature, it is his participation in reason, the Son, whose presence articulates the encounter. But John’s experience very far transcends reason, and he is said to “leap with joy” in his participation in the φρόνησις of the Holy Spirit who confers both ἀλήθεια and ἀποκάλυψις in His unconcealment of hypostatically-existing Truth by means of the removal of the veil of the flesh – several veils, in fact: those of the wombs of Mary and Elizabeth, and that of the fleshly Incarnation of the Λόγος.

There is a text from the Commentary on John which helps to fill out the essence of what Origen is saying above:

The Holy Spirit seems to have need of the Son ministering to his hypostasis, not only for it to exist, but also for it to be wise, and rational, and just, and whatever other thing we ought to understand it to be by participation in the aspects of Christ which we mentioned previously. I think, if I may put it this way, that the Holy Spirit supplies the material of the gifts from God to those who are called saints thanks to him and because of

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452 Noting that φρόνησις is defined as “the ability to understand, understanding, insight” – it can be said that φρόνησις works with the raw materials of God – a kind of reification of the “gifts from God” which Origen mentions in CJn 2.77: “I think, if I may put it this way, that the Holy Spirit supplies the material (ὕλη) of the gifts from God” – i.e., the “supplying” is a reification of the gift as it proceeds from the monism of God into the monism of being. The conclusion of the passage reads: “This material of the gifts which I mentioned is made effective from God (ἐνεργουµένης); it is administered (διακονουµένης) by Christ; but it subsists (ὑφεστώσης) in accordance with the Holy Spirit.” Noting that ὑφέστης (ὑφεστώσης) means essentially “to hypostatize,” the “subsistence” can be said to be a reification of the gifts. The gifts proceed out of God through the administration of Christ toward the reification/hypostatization of gift toward understanding and meaning. The gift of λόγος (reason) becomes φρόνησις (understanding/meaning).

453 Lk 1.15.

454 Origen, HLk 4.4. In his translation of the Homilies Joseph T. Lienhard states this sentence is an “An anti-Gnostic phrase. John the Baptist was not the Holy Spirit as some Gnostics asserted.” HLk, p.18.

455 Origen states this explicitly in CJn 2.109: “For it is as if the Word which exists in the nature of rational beings is a teacher (διδάσκαλος) who is inseparable from the student (μαθήματος).”
participation in him. This material of the gifts which I mentioned is made effective from
God; it is administered by Christ; but it subsists in accordance with the Holy Spirit.456

To the extent that the Holy spirit “seems to have need of the Son” it could be said that this is
because each of the Persons has their own particular roles – roles which are illustrative of their
individual characteristics as Persons – namely as “Being,” “Reason,” and “Grace.” Origen here
speaks explicitly of “bestowal” (a role exclusive to the Father) and “participation” (a role
shared in common by the Son and the Holy Spirit). It had been noted above that God does not
participate in being, but is participated in.457 All beings participate in being; rational beings
participate in Christ; the holy/graced participate in the Holy Spirit. Curiously, of the three
Persons, only the Holy Spirit is Himself said to participate in the others. In this way, the
hierarchy of onto-relational contingency constitutes the ground and possibility of all divine-
human relations.458 This kenotic hierarchy is an explication of the divine will rather than the
Trinitarian ousia or hypostases. One might speak of subordination from the side of creation, and
from the side of divinity, speak of kenotic divestment. Here “greater” and “lesser” qualify
“powers” in light of the degree of participation, not essence. The quality and energeia of love
operative in the divine will to effect salvation is not limited by ontological disparity, but steps
decisively over it into time and place, the divine will calling out to the counterpart will operative
within sentient creation.

There is something of an hierarchy of onto-relational contingency on the level of human
being also in Origen’s thought. In the Commentary on Song of Songs, Origen writes: “The

456 Origen, CJn, 2.76-77.
457 Above, p. 105.
458 Khaled Anatolios notes that “As Wisdom, the revelation of the knowledge of God is an activity that takes place
in the Son’s own person, as constitutive of his person, in a way that is at least ontologically prior to the Son’s
activity ad extra.” Anatolios, in “Christ, Scripture, and the Christian Story,” 59. This is owing to the eternal
generation of the Son: “He [Christ] is called Wisdom, as Solomon said. . . . And can anyone who has learned to
regard God with feelings of reverence suppose or believe that God the Father ever existed, even for a single
moment, without begetting this wisdom?” Origen, PA 1.2.2.
supreme function of knowledge is, therefore, to know the Trinity; and in the second place, to know God’s creation.⁴⁵⁹ Origen here is working step-wise in reverse, with the Trinity constituting the zenith of knowledge, and creation, its nadir. Origen posits a corollary ascent, by which the self also comes to be truly known in the ascent:

In addressing these words (“unless thy know thyself”)⁴⁶⁰ to His Bride – that is, to the souls of believers, He makes the height of spiritual health and blessedness to consist in the knowledge and understanding of oneself.⁴⁶¹

One proceeds from being-itself, to knowledge of the Trinity, then of creation. One can then attain “the height of spiritual health and blessedness” in both knowing and understanding oneself. This latter knowing and understanding is contingent upon knowledge of the Trinity.

3.iii) Κόσμος τοῦ Κόσμου: Song of Songs

3.iii.a) Κόσμοι of Meaning

Now that we have discussed to the best of our ability these questions about the system of the world, it seems not inappropriate to inquire into the meaning of the actual term “world”; for it is a term which is frequently shown in the holy scriptures to possess different significations.⁴⁶²

As noted above, being-in-the-world is ἀρχή in the form of the reification of the divine will.⁴⁶³ The ἀρχή and στοιχεῖα which bring the world to being and are present in the world function as constitutive and illustrative dimensions of experience. These two aspects serve as a vehicle of and for truth, threaded throughout creation and the movement of history, opening out all potentiality of and for meaning, calling all of sentient creation into a hermeneutic experience

⁴⁵⁹ Origen, CSong 2.5.
⁴⁶⁰ Cant. 1.1 (LXX 1.8). Origen supplies “thyself” to the text of Solomon, in which the second narrator of his text responds to the question of the first narrator, who had asked “Tell me where you pasture your flock” (1.7); the second narrator only says “if you do not know . . . follow the tracks of the flock” – i.e., there is no personal pronoun. Origen seems to be proposing that one comes to know oneself by means of following the “flock” i.e., the Church.
⁴⁶¹ Origen, CSong 2.5.
⁴⁶² Origen, PA 2.3.6.
⁴⁶³ Above, p. 96.
of itself. For Origen, the world is a text, and as such it requires interpretation. It can be an event of meaning.

In the second book of First Principles, while discussing various meanings of the word κόσμος, Origen begins first by working through the foundational definitions of κόσμος as “ornament/adornment,” “earth,” and “universe.” He also states what the world is not: it is not Plato’s world of forms. This he states in the context of Jesus’ proclamation of His not being of the world. The world from which Jesus comes is “difficult to describe and depict in actual truth,” since,

if we did so, there would be a risk of giving some men the impression that we were affirming the existence of certain imaginary forms which the Greeks call “ideas.” For it is certainly foreign to our mode of reasoning to speak of an incorporeal world that exists solely in the mind’s fancy or the unsubstantial region of thought; and how men could affirm that the Saviour came from thence or that the saints will go thither I do not see. Origen assures the reader that Jesus refers to a world which is “more glorious and splendid than this present world,” and that he invites and exhorts all who believe in him to direct their course towards it.” Furthermore, while Origen admits some uncertainty regarding the proximity of this κόσμος in which Jesus abides, he ultimately inclines to a belief that it stands close:

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464 As Anatolios puts it “The principle that Wisdom contains within herself the ultimate meaning and intelligible structure of all created realities has as its correlative the affirmation that created realities do refer to ultimate reality and ultimate meaning.” Anatolios, “Christ, Scripture, and the Christian Story,” 60. The ἀρχή is constitutive, and the στοιχεῖα are constructive and illustrative toward this ultimacy.

465 As de Lubac puts it: “But it is not only the soul, it is also the entire universe that must be the subject of a spiritual interpretation. For there is also a certain kind of fundamental unity between the universe and Scripture,” which is “like another world, built on the model of the first.” De Lubac, History and Spirit, 401. And Rowan Williams writes: “We cannot look to bodily histories as a source of intelligible pattern.” Williams, “Origen: Between Orthodoxy and Heresy,” Origeniana Septima: Origenes in den Auseinandersetzungen des 4. Jahrhunderts (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999) 12 (italics Williams’). Perhaps here is where the trouble of readers such as Hanson originate: Origen seeks the veracious source of this “intelligible pattern,” while Hanson is detained in his preoccupation with seeking the veracity of the pattern itself. Williams goes on the say “Bodies encode but do not originate or exhaust meaning.” Ibid., 13.

466 Jn 17:14, 16.

467 Origen, PA 2.3.6.

468 Origen, PA 2.3.6.
But whether that world, which he [Jesus] wishes us to know of, is one that stands widely apart and separate from this in space and quality and glory, or whether, as seems to be more likely, it excels in quality and glory but is nevertheless contained within the limits of this world is uncertain, and in my opinion an unsuitable subject for the mind and thoughts of men.  

Origen finds some clarity and cosmic cohesion with the help of Clement of Rome, who in his first letter to the Corinthians speaks of “The ocean, which is impassable to men, and the worlds beyond it.” Origen takes Clement to be indicating the governance of providence throughout all the realms of being, and the abiding of all “worlds” within creation as a “world” per se:

But what Clement appears to allude to when he . . . uses the plural “worlds” and indicates that they are all directed and ruled by the same providence of the most high God . . . he would seem to throw out to us some germs of an opinion such as this, that the entire universe of things that exist, both celestial and supercelestial, earthly and infernal may be spoken of in a general way as a single perfect world, within which or by which those other worlds that are in it must be supposed to be contained.

This reading is in accord with my proposing two monisms in Origen’s thought, in the agency of the suffusive monism of God out into the monism of being. The suffusion of the former into the latter constitutes a new κόσμος, when the two are drawn together as a “single perfect world” of experiential relation.

The final point in Origen’s cosmic exploration is the being of the Church:

We are not ignorant, however, that someone has taken the world to mean the Church alone, it being the adornment of the world (lit. κόσμον τοῦ κόσμου) since it is also said to be the light of the world, for Scripture says, “You are the light of the world.” And the Church is the adornment of the world, since Christ, who is the first light of the world, is its adornment.

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469 Origen, PA 2.3.6.
471 Origen, in PA 2.3.6.
472 See above, pp. 106-7.
473 Matt 5.14.
474 Origen, CJn 6.301.
The cosmic adornment that is the Church is an adornment of a different nature. It not merely beautifies, but enlightens. It becomes κόσμον τοῦ κόσμου, light from Pure Light: “Let the Church, therefore, be said to be the world when it is enlightened by the Saviour.” The adornment of the world is the Church; the adornment of the Church is Christ. In the trajectory or arc that is revealed as the divine will, the light that is Christ is drawn up from creation, insufflating the Church with enlightenment and drawing all of being back to Him. The light reaches back to draw forward, pulling it forward with His light and easy yoke. Origen’s readings of κόσμος in this section combine to express multivalent dimensions and elements of the monism of being which come together to express the conceptual wholism of κόσμος as a “system” of grace. This is certainly a grand conceptual construction – but it is quite remote and abstract. In his reflections on the Song of Songs, Origen brings the matter down to earth, as it were; he brings κόσμος down to the level of mundus.---

3.iii.b) Song of Songs: The Symbol & Expression of Κόσμοι

While Origen surpassed all writers in his other books, in his Song of Songs he surpassed himself.

Origen says in the prologue to the Commentary that the Song of Songs is a drama, and that its main theme is love. The narrative therefore involves the “comings and goings” of the characters of the “epithalamium” – the marriage-song – which is the story line of the drama. Origen’s reading of Songs is rich in movement; the comings and goings and the symbolic expression of characters – and the κόσμος of nature itself is an eloquent character in Origen’s

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475 Origen, CIn 6.303.
476 And as Celia Deutsch points out, Origen brings the matter down into his own world of the experience of the presence and withdrawal of the Λόγος, and he invites his hearers to “enter that process.” Deutsch, “The Interpreter as Intertext,” in Crossing Boundaries in Early Judaism and Christianity (Leiden: Brill, 2016) 223. This entering into the process “uses personal experience as a narrative to illuminate the biblical text, but that usage also shows ways in which the text illuminates Origen’s experience.” Ibid., 223.
477 Jerome, from his preface to his translation of Origen’s homilies on Song of Songs.
478 Origen, CSong 1.1.
drama – are ripe with meaning in their dramatization of love. The drama of the *epithalamium*, the movement and tension, are incorporated in a number of literary devices by Origen himself in the *Commentary*, and I therefore approach this work from a perspective of literary criticism. The section is focused primarily on Origen’s commentary and homilies on the Song of Songs.

In the *Prologue* to the *Commentary* Origen begins with a reflection on “inner” and “outer” elements of being – particularly of persons. Origen explains that Scripture employs homonymy, using “identical terms to describe different things.” The outer sometimes expresses the inner and vice versa. He draws from the Old Testament a number of examples contrasting “childlessness” and posterity, and also “carnal” and “spiritual” expressions of love. These are applied to the “image of the earthy” and “earthly desires” of the “outer man,” and the “image of the heavenly,” of the “heavenly desires” of the “inner man.” In other words, κόσμος in its definitions as, respectively, merely adornment, and κόσμος as system of grace which suffuses the world. Over against the idea that Origen somehow subordinates history and the material world, Origen is saying here that in its goodness and nobility, the earthy bears the heavenly. Here is the beginning of the symbolic dynamic of expression and understanding:

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479 Riceour too notes the dynamism – even the “character” of movement – in Origen’s interpretation of the Song: “Origen was careful to respect the dramatic form of this play with more than one character. The thread of this small drama turns out to be just as important as the spoken dialogues. It outlines the variations in distance and proximity, or approach and withdrawal along the way of mutual belonging. It is at the level of this dramatic dynamism that the transposition of the whole poem takes place, which alone allows one to reinterpret the very words (*verba*) of the Song of Songs in terms of all the diversity of their details.” Riceour, in “The Nuptial Metaphor,” in *Thinking Biblically: Exegetical and Hermeneutical Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) 282-283.

480 Origen, *CSong Prologue*, 1.2.

481 Origen makes the same point in *PA* 1.1.9: “For the names of organs of sense are often applied to the soul, so that we speak of seeing with the eyes of the heart.” As Deutsch puts it, “there is in other words, an analogous relationship between the text of Scripture and the text of physical human experience.” Deutsch, “Interpreter,” 244. And J. Christopher King notes how in *CSong, Prologue* 2.9, Origen compiles a litany of Old Testament references to various members of the body as a “complete sensorium” which, “[i]n their turn, these individual bodies, like cells or organs, together associate to form larger corporeal aggregates, these aggregates forming bonds in communities of ever-increasing magnitude.” The upshot of the aggregation, being “every physical body (*sôma*) as Origen conceives of it – whether the least element, an animal body or the entire cosmos – constitutes a ‘whole,’ and integrated unity.” J Christopher King, *Origen on the Song of Songs as the Spirit of Scripture: The Bridegroom's Perfect Marriage-Song* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 201-2.

482 Origen, *CSong Prologue*, 1.2.
The soul is moved by heavenly love and longing when, having clearly beheld the beauty and the fairness of the Word of God, it falls deeply in love with His loveliness and receives from the Word Himself a certain dart and wound of love. . . . If, then, a man can so extend his thinking so as to ponder and consider the beauty and the grace of all the things that have been created in the Word, the very charm of them will so smite him, the grandeur of their brightness will so pierce him as with a chosen dart – as says the prophet\textsuperscript{483} – that he will suffer from the dart Himself a saving wound, and will be kindled with the blessed fire of His love.\textsuperscript{484}

There are three steps to be noted, expressed in two different ways:

1) The soul “beholds the beauty and fairness of the Word.”
2) The soul “falls deeply in love with His loveliness,” receiving from the Word “a certain dart and wound of love.”
3) The soul “is moved by heavenly love and longing.”

And:

1) One “ponders and considers the beauty and grace of all things created in the Word.”
2) The “very charm” of the beauty and grace of creation “smites” and “pierces” one.
3) One suffers from “the dart Himself” a “saving wound,” and is “kindled with His love.”

The movement here is from perception to participation, from reception to expression, from “beholding/pondering” to “being moved/kindled,” and “suffering.” This is tantamount to a Christification; one becomes Christophoros (Χριστός + φορός). Pierced by the dart Himself

Who is the Λόγος, the lifeblood flows out of the “saving wound,” transforming and sanctifying the earthy.\textsuperscript{485} In contradistinction to this, the worldly/earthy/earthly things in the κόσμος of the outer man merely skip along the surface of the world. They do not pierce its skin and penetrate into the lifeblood that pulses beneath the gracious surface. In such a reading, the κόσμος is held fast in its definition as ornament/adornment, and fails to ascend upward to the meaning which its definition as order bears.

\textsuperscript{483} Isa 49.2.
\textsuperscript{484} Origen, CSong Prologue, 1.2.
\textsuperscript{485} Gerald Bostock proposes that the concept of the Logos may serve as the linchpin which steers Christian thought toward a correlation of physical and spiritual spheres of life and the doctrines of creation and redemption. See Bostock, “Origen’s Doctrine of Creation,” Expository Times vol. 118, no. 5, February 2007: 222-27.
In the second book of the *Commentary*, Origen notes that the third book of Kings speaks of the prudence (φρόνησις) of Solomon rather than his wisdom. Origen explains the distinction in these terms: “Learned men would have us understand prudence in relation to human affairs, and wisdom in relation to things divine.” Origen proposes that “the Church likewise marvels at the prudence of Christ for a time, while she is yet on earth and lives her life among men,” but such marvelling will be superseded, “when that which is perfect is come, and she has been translated from earth to heaven,” at which time, “she will see all his wisdom.”

Here is a parallel symmetry between earth and heaven – the *translation from earth to heaven* is effected by the kenotic divestment of heaven toward earth, setting in motion the exitus-reditus dynamic out toward “the dwelling that Wisdom has built for herself.”

In the third book of the *Commentary*, Origen turns to an agrarian motif. The book is something of a *panegyric* of the dynamic by which κόσμος expresses its inner participation in God, through the cyclic, generative and regenerative expression through seeds and seasons. Seeds and seasonal cycles in symbolic expression draw together the inner principles of λόγος in κόσμος, mediated here through what seems – on its surface – to be an unassuming text from Solomon: “Behold, thou art fair, My neighbour; behold, thou are fair. Thine eyes are doves.”

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486 3 Kgs 10.6.
487 Origen, *CSong* 2.1.
488 Origen, *CSong* 2.1.
489 Prov 9.1. The kenotic divestment seeks the response of the earth, i.e., the Church which will facilitate its turning to *reditus* in its reading of both Scripture and cosmos. As Frances Young has written, “Exegesis is meta-discourse, enabling the text to shape and re-shape readers in reading communities.” Young, “Sexuality and Devotion: Mystical Readings of the Song of Songs,” *Theology and Sexuality* 14 (2001) 81. Deutsch notes that reading in antiquity was “performative,” i.e., it was done aloud, with an implied audience – even when the reader was alone. See Deutsch, “Interpreter,” 224. Deutsch also notes that the reading of Song of Songs was “performative in a particular way” (see above, p. 124-5 concerning the dramatic nature of the Song). Origen “tells his hearers that they are to join the cast of the drama and take part in the action that will unfold.” Deutsch, “Interpreter,” 225. In *HSong* 1.1 Origen says “so that you may hear the things that are said to her, make haste at least to join the Bridegroom’s companions.”
490 Sg 3.15.
Here one can watch Origen surpassing himself, in the power, creativity, and energy of his panegyric.

The panegyric begins with the plea of the bride (synonymous with the Church in Origen): “Strengthen me with ointments, encompass me with apples,” which leads Origen to say “The Church is encompassed with apples.” These apples refer to “the souls who are being daily renewed according to the image of Him that created them,” who are “repairing His image in themselves by the renewal of themselves.” Then in the Commentary comes a catenae of images of “going out” or expression, of renewal and growth: agrarian and pastoral images through which the verdancy and life force of generation and regeneration in seeds and flowers and seasons bursts to life:

The whole time that seemed oppressive is now past, and the winter, whose incidence had been her excuse, has departed, and the unprofitable rains have ceased, and the time of flowers is come. “So, do not delay to take the road that leads to me. For look, the farmers likewise now that the time of spring has smiled upon them, are tending their vineyards and, amid the notes of other birds, the loud and welcome voice of the turtle-dove announcing spring is likewise heard. Yes, and the fig tree, sure of the mildness of spring, without anxiety puts forth her shoots; and the vines are so certain of the season’s calmness, that they venture to produce their flowers and scents.”

Note the outward motion of this passage, the exteriorization: the soul is called out onto the road that leads to the Word; farmers go out to their vineyards; the voice of the turtle dove calls out; the fig tree puts forth her shoots; the vines produce their flowers and scents. Here is a κόσμος which is not merely dormant adornment, but a κόσμος alive with speaking and expression. The beauty and λόγος of the adornment is in the hermeneutical eye of the transformed beholder, flowing out as it is pierced with a panacea which is an exteriorizing, expressing, wound of love.

491 Sg 2.5.
492 Origen, CSong 3.8, citing Col 3.10. Italics are translator’s.
493 Origen, CSong 3.11.
This movement and expression of nature leads Origen quite naturally to speak of the bubbling and ever-flowing streams of the fourth Gospel:

If there are some who are more able to receive the Word of God, souls who have drunk the water given them by Jesus . . . then such as these, in whom the Word of God bursts forth in frequent and abundant perceptions like ever-flowing streams, have become mountains and hills. . . . And the Word of God is fitly said to leap on them, and to spring forth from them, through the outpouring of their teaching, as a fountain of living water springing up into life everlasting.\textsuperscript{494}

Note the transport effected by the reception of the Word: those who drink at the lowlands where the waters are found “have become” the highlands as “mountains and hills.” Here is a remapping of the \textit{mundus} into a sacramental and suffusive κόσμος. In contrast to these “goings out” – and many others can be found throughout the \textit{Commentary} and homilies\textsuperscript{495} – the verdancy of spring and summer is contrasted with the suspension or stasis or death, of winter. This constitutes another demythologization of Heraclitus’ equation of opposites,\textsuperscript{496} as Origen uses even the seasons as allegorical tools with which to draw some meaning from out of being. The poetry of nature is rife with allegorical meaning. In reading “the winter is past, the rain is gone and departed to itself,” Origen turns to the notion of nihility:

\begin{footnotes}
\item[494] Origen, \textit{CSong} 3.11, citing Jn 4.14. Italics are translator’s.
\item[495] Later in \textit{CSong} 3.11 Origen speaks of the “tokens of spring and summer,” which is the Church, which “has brought forth flowers of progress,” the Church toward which Christ comes “leaping and springing forth.” In 3.12, Origen speaks of the mustard seed, in which is contained “correspondence between all things on earth and their celestial prototypes,” bearing “not merely that of some heavenly pattern, but of the kingdom of heaven itself.” There is a great deal of imagery of growth and expressing scattered throughout the whole of 3.14: the flight of birds in their rising up “from earthly and corporeal places to celestial ones,” particularly the turtle-dove, who goes out and “spends its life in the more hidden and remote localities, away from crowds; it loves mountainous wastes, or the secret parts of forests”; when the Word appears, the “vineyard is in flower,” and “the virtues and the orchards of good fruits will begin to bud”; when the Word of God appears to the soul, “the vineyard is in flower, the virtues and the orchards of good fruits will begin to bud”; “different trees are understood in the Church as meaning the individual souls of the faithful”; “there is in the soul a certain fig tree that puts forth its bud; and there is also a vine that flowers and yields its sweet smell,” purged by the Husbandman, the Father, “that they may bring forth much fruit”; the “sweet smell” of Sg 2.13 refers to the soul: “there is in every soul a potential force and a freedom of the will, by means of which it has the power to do all things good . . . it yields that odour which God the Creator had originally implanted in it”; And, in his second homily on the \textit{Song}, Origen says “when the maker of the universe created you, He sowed in your hearts the seeds of love.” Origen, \textit{HSong} 2.9.
\item[496] See above, pp. 44-5 for Heraclitus’ equation of opposites, including summer and winter.
\end{footnotes}
Well did He signify the natures of vices and sins in a single marvellous saying, when He said that this kind of winter and of rains that fall upon us from the offence and storms of vices had “departed to themselves,” thus indicating that sins have no being. For when a man’s vices leave him, they are not gathered together to form some other kind of being, but take themselves away and, being dissolved into themselves, they vanish and are reduced to nothing.  

Origen reads this as Christ speaking to the Church, and as “representing the whole duration of this present age within the cycle of the year.” Origen puts into the mouth of Christ the words:

Arise and come to me, for the winter which overwhelmed the unbelievers and held you down in ignorance, has passed. And the rain too has gone – that is to say, no longer will I bid the prophet-clouds to pour the rain of the Word upon the earth; but the voice of the turtle-dove, the very Wisdom of God, shall speak on earth and say: “I myself that spoke, I am here.” The flowers, therefore, of believing peoples and of budding churches have appeared on the earth.

3.iii.c) Conclusion: Reading the Horizon of Being

The foundational principles of divine-human relation in Origen stand in stark contrast to that of his predecessors. God is not a remote triad characterized and tainted with essential disparity among the hypostases, which disparity results in an emanation of evil, as was the case with Plotinus. Where the tension arises in the disparate relation between the first and second beings of Plotinus’ primary hypostases, in Origen there is an essential thelamic unity and intimacy between the first and second Persons effected and maintained by the eternal generation/begetting:

can anyone who has learned to regard God with feelings of reverence suppose or believe that God the Father ever existed, even for a single moment, without begetting this wisdom?

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497 Origen, CSong 3.14.
498 See Is 5.6.
499 See Is 52.6. Italics are translator’s.
500 Origen, CSong 3.14
501 See above, pp. 98-103.
502 Origen, PA 1.2.2.
In choosing to give his work the name Περί Ἀρχῶν, and in his application of the range of meanings to Christian being, Origen is saying that as ἀρχή, Christianity stands both constitutive and illustrative of itself. Christianity stands as the beginning of reason: it both is that reason itself, and it also articulates and expresses that reason.\footnote{Bonhoeffer proposes a very similar notion in his Christ the Center: “Christology as the study of Christ is a peculiar discipline because it is concerned with Christ who is himself the Word or Logos, from which we also derive the term for study. So that christology is really Logo-logy, the study of study, the word of the Word of God. Thus christology is self-evidently the science, because it is concerned with the Logos. Were this Logos our own logos then christology would be a matter of the logos reflecting upon itself. But it is the Logos of God. His transcendence makes christology the science par-excellence because it comes from outside study itself.” Bonhoeffer, Christ the Center (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978) 27-8.} It articulates itself, as it were. Out into and as creation it speaks being, by means of a λόγος who is ὁ Λόγος, in a speaking which is εὐάγγελος. It is not a reason which dwells remote and apathetic in its being as One. This speaking discards the concealing, mythic πρόσωπον as it expresses out as being as Πρόσωπα for πρόσωπα – not in mythical δρᾶµα, but in veracious history as ἀλήθεια. Unlike Plato, for whom the body is the prison house of the soul,\footnote{See Plato, Phaedo 82d; 91e.} and Plotinus, for whom “True awakening is resurrection from, not with, the body,”\footnote{Plotinus, Enn 3.6.6.} the anthropological element of Origen’s worldview proceeds from a first principle which views creation not as a punitive realm, but a reformative one.\footnote{As Antonia Tripolitis expresses it, creation “provides a penitential dwelling.” Tripolitis, Origen: A Critical Reading (New York: P. Lang, 1985) 22. And Fiona Thompson writes “The world is a dynamic arena of pedagogic soteriology as souls may, through the exercise of their free choice, advance spiritually or fall farther away.” Westminster Handbook to Origen, s.v. “Cosmology,” 85.} Creation is not a punitive mechanism in which one is subjugated under, or held suspended in, a state of incessant punishment. The fallen soul is not punished for the simple reason of its nature – it is not cast into creation misperceived as a prison house; the falling away is by choice.\footnote{“For the Creator granted to minds created by him the power of free and voluntary movement, in order that the good that was in them might become their own, since it was preserved by their own free will; but sloth and weariness of taking trouble to preserve the good . . . began the process of withdrawal from the good.” Origen, PA 2.9.2.} The telos of creation, from the perspective of Origen’s theological anthropology,
is essentially free participation in God through the exercise of free will. Christianity and its texts are the στοιχεῖα and ἀρχή – the elements and first principles – of the reason which informs faith, a beginning of God’s relation to the world, which ultimately is tantamount to the beginning also of Christianity. Such are the στοιχεῖα of the suffusive monism of divinity which will not be held fast in the ontological bonds and strictures of the monism of being-itself.

The Christic step comprises the centre. It has been shown to constitute a step which affects an ascent in two directions, ranging from the foundational ascent of knowledge of being-itself as reflection of divine willing, to the corollary ascents of participation in holiness and grace. One reaches backward from Christ to the Father and being-itself and reaches forward to an experience of grace and the Holy Spirit. These experiences therefore centre around the Person of Christ, of whom Origen posits a number of significations which themselves revolve around a core which is meaning per se. Chapter 4 turns to a fuller consideration of the complex of reason toward meaning which is housed in the Christic step.

508 “A fall does not therefore involve utter ruin, but a man may retrace his steps and return to his former state and once more set his mind on that which through negligence had slipped from his grasp.” Origen, PA 1.3.8.

509 “You must not think that she is called the Bride or the Church only from the time when the Saviour came in flesh: she is so called from the beginning of the human race and from the very foundation of the world – indeed, if I may look for the origin of this high mystery under Paul’s guidance, even before the foundation of the world” (cf. Eph 1.4). Origen, CSong 2.8. John A. McGuckin has written a very fine article on this notion: “Origen of Alexandria and the Mystery of the Pre-Existent Church,” in International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church vol. 6. no. 3, October 2006, 207-22. McGuckin writes of a “Cosmic Ecclesiology,” which, for Origen, is “the rediscovery of the original ontological order of creation (pre-mundane being) when the springs of our existence poured out directly from an immediate contemplation of the light of the divine Logos. God’s being was our own existence in a gift of participation (methexis).” Ibid., 213. In short, in McGuckin’s understanding, Origen’s is “An ecclesiology which takes its beginnings not from the liminal defence of boundaries, but from a cosmic vision of the eros of God for his world, and from the hope that all humans are called to rise into the spiritual apprehension (and ultimately – love) of the One God who comes to all of them through his descent as Incarnate pedagogue.” Ibid., 217.
Chapter 4: The Horizon of Reason

Introduction

Having schematized and presented in broad outline the parameters and foundational structures of divine-human relation which inform and govern Origen’s cosmotheoria, the present chapter focuses on the conceptual centre of Origen’s notion of these relations, namely, the horizon of reason. In Chapter 3, the Christic Step was explicated primarily in light of the ontological relation between the Father and Son. In the present chapter, the focus shifts toward human encounter with the Son.

I show here that the centre step in divine-human relations – the Christic – comprises a kind of ὑλή of meaning through experience of a complex of ἐπίνοιαι510 – “aspects” or “conceptions” of Christ – which themselves centre around and are subsumed under a genus of reason.511 I first provide a general overview of Origen’s treatment of ἐπίνοιαι, which is followed by close consideration of the primary ἐπίνοιαι, namely, Σοφία and Λόγος. The final section collects together the outflow of the above considerations in their interplay between symbol and θεωρία, and presents them under the aspect of a hermeneutics of reason in Origen’s thought.

510 For a fine summary of the notion in Origen’s thought, see Ronald E. Heine’s entry for “epinoiai” in The Westminster Handbook to Origen, pp. 93-95.

511 Crouzel numbers Wisdom as the “principle” epinoia, “by a priority of logic.” This is so, because “Wisdom which is the Son can be shared by rational creatures: the virtue of wisdom is in fact the highest of all, the mystical virtue par excellence which enables its possessor to see as by an intimate connaturality the divine realities.” Crouzel, Origen (New York: Harper & Row, 1989) 189, 190. By subsumption I mean that under the “primary” ἐπίνοιαι – i.e., λόγος and σοφία – are subsumed other ἐπίνοιαι which do not appear related, but which in fact affect a deeper understanding of the “primary.” The ἐπίνοιαι “way,” “door,” “shepherd,” “king,” “lamb” “true food,” denote, respectively, aspects through which one is given the path through which one finds the guide and supreme ruler who sacrifices and gives of himself toward knowing him, which is in turn a knowing of the Father, the ground of all being and knowing.
4.i) The Ἐπίνοιαι: Essence & Assent

4.i.a) Unicity Toward Multiplicity

*The only-begotten Son of God is His wisdom hypostatically existing.*

This quote from *First Principles* was also cited to begin chapter 3. It is worthy of opening the present chapter also, given that it serves well as the kernel, crux and summation of all of Origen’s thought. Everything Origen has written serves to articulate the idea contained in this précis of Christian being and experience. With this idea, Origen turns decisively and incontrovertibly away from Platonic thought, and disarms those who would regard Origen’s treatment of history with suspicion. Origen’s *cosmotheoria* centres around the veridical historicity expressed here, of the hypostatic existence of God’s Wisdom, of “Truth-itself (αὐτοαλήθεια).”

All of history and any experience of truth in history is contingent upon, qualified by, and understood through, this existential and sacramental event.

In this statement, Origen articulates succinctly the historicity of the being together of God *per se* and God *pro nobis*. The eternal attribute of Wisdom in God in his being *per se* – which, it will be remembered, is “beyond being” – is turned outward as existence into history, i.e., into being and act *pro nobis*. In other words, encapsulated in this précis, Origen posits an

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512 Origen, *PA* 1.2.2. “unigenitum Filium Dei, sapientiam ejus esse substantialiter subsistentem.”


514 The radical thrust of Origen’s idea has perhaps been dulled over the centuries since he spoke. If such a thing has in fact happened, it could be said that Christianity has become oriented largely and firstly by a will to believe and to obey, rather than by being shocked and astonished, and thereby affected, by the radical nature of the Event. Ricoeur speaks of a “disorientation” and re-imaging affected by Scripture’s “extreme sayings,” which touch the imagination. As Ricoeur puts it: “Parables, paradoxes, hyperboles, and extreme commandments all disorient only in order to reorient us. But what is reoriented in us? And in what direction? I would say that what is reoriented by these extreme sayings is less our will than our imagination. Our will is our capacity to follow without hesitation the once-chosen way, to obey without resistance the once-chosen law. Our imagination is the power to open us to new possibilities, to discover another way of seeing, or acceding to a new rule in receiving the instruction of the exception. As Ray Hart suggests in *Unfinished Man and the Imagination*, while the will is the intention to a specific project, the imagination is the intention of dominant direction. It is at the level of dominant direction that we are overtaken by the disorienting logic of Jesus.” Ricoeur, “The Logic of Jesus, the Logic of God,” *Figuring the Sacred* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995) 281.

515 See above, p. 105: “Moreover, God does not even participate in being. For He is participated in, rather than participates.” Origen, in *CC* 6.64.
irruption into history of actual, veridical, historically-enacted, divine-human relation. The relation is historical, not merely conceptual. Wisdom has to do not merely with epistemology, but with ontology. Wisdom is this. In this hypostatic existence there comes to be a relation of the objective and subjective.\textsuperscript{516} Objective wisdom \textit{per se} and the subjective as historical hypostatic existence \textit{pro nobis} constitute the lines of relation. In other words, the essence becomes assent. All experience of reason is mediated and navigated by means of a great number\textsuperscript{517} of Christic steps, which are revealed to be \textit{ἐπίνοιαι} of Christ in the otherness of subjectivity eternally generated from the objective being of God. In Origen’s \textit{cosmotheoria}, all operative reason in the \textit{κόσμος} is in essence a reflection of the will of the divine essence to become assent. Such a willing takes the form of movement from unicity toward multiplicity.\textsuperscript{518}

In his effort to articulate the historicity of the Incarnation and the Christic step into the horizon of reason, Origen weaves a single tapestry of many threads – a knitting together of the objective with the subjective.\textsuperscript{519} Yet it is a knitting together not of two disparate elements, but of realms, of monisms, when the absolutely objective divests out into the contingent in the form of otherness in and as subjectivity:

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{516} This is an idea which Grillmeier expresses well in approaching Origen’s notion of \textit{ἐπίνοιαι} from a dual and relational perspective: “the epinoa is typical of Origen in so far as it has a subjective and an objective side. It is ‘title’, ‘expression’, and at the same time objective reality.” Grillmeier, \textit{Christ in Christian Tradition}, vol. 1: \textit{From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon} (451) (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975) 141. Italics Grillmeier’s.

\textsuperscript{517} Joseph O’Leary estimates the number of \textit{ἐπίνοιαι} to stand at fifty. \textit{Westminster Handbook}, 143.

\textsuperscript{518} There are traces here of what may be subsumed under “natural law.” But this conflation accounts only for the being and persistence of reason, and leaves unaccounted any sense of divine willing. Origen notes many points of agreement between “the philosophers” and Christians: “Indeed almost the total philosophy which is called moral and natural holds the same views we do. But it disagrees when it denies that God is concerned about mortal things.” Origen, \textit{HGen} 14.3. On the matter of natural law in Origen, see William A. Banner, “Origen and the Tradition of Natural Law Concepts,” \textit{Dumbarton Oaks Papers} 12 (1958) 51-82; Riemer Roukema, \textit{The Diversity of Laws in Origen’s Commentary on Romans} (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1988); Brian Dunkle, “A Development in Origen’s View of Natural Law,” \textit{Pro Ecclesia} vol. XII, no. 3 (2004) 337-351.

\textsuperscript{519} Perhaps having been influenced by Philo’s treatment of \textit{μεθόριος} (see above, p. 65 ff.), Origen writes of offering prayers “to Him [God] through him who is, as it were, midway (\textit{μεταξ}i) between uncreated nature and that of all created things.” Origen, \textit{CC} 3.34.
\end{flushright}
But let no one take offense when we distinguish the aspects (ἐπινοίας) in the Saviour, thinking that we also do the same with his essence (οὐσία).\textsuperscript{520}

The salvific essence of the monism of God comes to the monism of being-itself which is torn in its multiplex need. The ἐπινοίαι are the manifold dynamics by which the undivided essence is experienced in relation. The Saviour is one in essence – his ἐπινοίαι having their urgrund in the monism of divinity – but he is multiple in act, divesting out toward the “many things” of particular subjects and persons:

God, therefore, is altogether one and simple. Our Savior, however, because of the many things, since God “set” him “forth as a propitiation”\textsuperscript{521} and firstfruits of all creation,\textsuperscript{522} becomes many things, or perhaps even all these things, as the whole creation which can be made free needs him.\textsuperscript{523}

The estrangement and need which is experienced as the divide between objective unicity and subjective multiplicity is crossed over by the ἐπινοίαι. The objective adorns himself in subjective, contingent garments in his going out to meet particular persons and histories:

There are, as it were, different forms of the Word. For the Word appears to each of those who are led to know him in a form corresponding to the state of the individual, whether he is a beginner, or has made a little progress, or is considerably advanced, or has nearly attained to virtue, or has in fact attained it.\textsuperscript{524}

It is important to bear in mind Origen’s affirmation of the eternal generation of the son,\textsuperscript{525} when considering his doctrine of the ἐπινοία of Christ. Because of the unbroken union of the Christic step with the step of the Father, the Son does not cease to partake of the Wisdom of

\textsuperscript{520}Origen, CJn 1.200.
\textsuperscript{521}Rom 3.25.
\textsuperscript{522}Jas 1.18.
\textsuperscript{523}Origen, CJn 1.119. Cf. Rom. 8.21.
\textsuperscript{524}Origen, CC 4.16.
\textsuperscript{525}“He [Christ] is called Wisdom, as Solomon said. . . . And can anyone who has learned to regard God with feelings of reverence suppose or believe that God the Father ever existed, even for a single moment, without begetting this wisdom?” Origen, PA 1.2.2.
God, but Christ is himself this very Wisdom, again, “hypostatically existing.” In the notions of the eternal generation of the Son from the Father, and that of the ἐπίνοιαι, Origen posits distinctions within a unicity of essence. Just as there is a sharing of divine essence in the distinct Persons of Son and Father, so too is there a categorical relation between the Son and his manifold and subjective ἐπίνοιαι. The situational ἐπίνοιαι of what God becomes in act and experience are drawn from the ontological wellspring of what God is in essence. Truth is the objective wellspring of all subjective experience of truth.

4.i.b) An Ordered Centre

Once we have collected the titles (ὄνομασίας) of the Son, therefore, we must test which of them came into existence later, and whether they would have become so numerous if the saints had begun and continued in blessedness. For perhaps wisdom alone would remain, or word, or life, and by all means truth, but surely not also the other titles which he took in addition because of us.

Origen posits a number of primary ἐπίνοιαι from which are drawn those others which might be considered secondary, or “situational.” The divine will expresses a diffraction of essence “because of us.” In their givenness, all subsequent ἐπίνοιαι necessarily participate in this essence, and are illustrative of its assent toward human being. The ἐπίνοιαι are clustered around


527 Such is the gist of what Ronald Heine refers to as “the Parable for the different narrators,” in his translation of CJn, vol. 1, p. 257. Noting a number of chronological discrepancies among the Gospels concerning the commencement of Jesus’ preaching (i.e., Mt 4.11-15; Mk 1.13-21; Lk 4.13-31; Jn 2-3), Origen proposes that the truth of the Scriptural accounts lies in their spiritual meanings, not in the historical experience contained in the report of the same. Different authors, each of whom have different capacities and proclivities, and are situated in different times and places, receive different impressions: “To the one, then, who thinks that the writing of these men is history, which would proceed to present the deeds through an historical image, and who supposes that God is in space with its limitation . . . it will seem impossible that the four men . . . are telling the truth.” Origen, CJn 10.15, 17. Origen proposes a kind of formulaic précis of this hermeneutic: “The spiritual truth is often preserved in the material falsehood, so to speak.” CJn. 10.20. The truth and light which the Λόγος expresses is received “not in the brilliance of his own light,” as Karen Torjesen puts it, “but rather in the multiplicity and diversity of individual colorations which are all partial forms of the single light once it has been diffracted through the experience of the saints.” Karen Jo Torjesen, Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method in Origen’s Exegesis (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1986) 112-13.

528 Origen, CJn 1.123.
the general notion of reason, in an overlap of semantic domain in their expressions as “wisdom,” “word,” and “truth.”

A clear articulation of this principle involves Origen’s tracing of the ἐπίνοια “truth” back into Godself when he considers the assertion in the Gospel of John “Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” 529 Origen makes a distinction here between truth per se and truth pro nobis – between objective truth and the experience of the same:

For if it is Jesus who declares “I am the truth,” how does truth come into existence through Jesus Christ? For one does not himself come into existence through himself. We must understand, however, that the ultimate truth itself (αὐτοαλήθεια) and, if I may put it this way, the archetype of truth in rational souls . . . did not come through Jesus Christ nor through anyone at all, but came through God. 530

The Truth which comes from God is the objective wellspring of all subjective experiences of truth generated through the Son, and is the archetypal source toward which all wisdom and reason aspire. This notion allows Origen to propose different ἐπίνοια of the Father, when he wonders:

if it is possible for someone who knows God not to know the Father. For if there is one aspect of him in accordance with which he is Father, and another in accordance with which he is God, perhaps it is possible for someone to know God, but not to know the Father beyond knowing him as God, and not to know the Father. 531

The ἐπίνοια “God” is unlikely to lead naturally to the ἐπίνοια “Father.” The former is essentially nominal or conceptual, while in its naming, the latter is necessarily relational. This line of relation only works stepwise from knowledge of the Son. 532 The contingency of the experience of wisdom is likewise a contingent condition of knowledge of God as Father:

529 Jn 1.17.
532 Rowan Williams notes how “patience with the multiplicity of created forms is enjoined,” and that “consideration of the Logos’s relation to God requires a certain stress on distance and difference to make it clear that the Logos is a subject or agent, whose work and nature it is to contemplate God, and is as such the necessary ground of our ability to contemplate.” Williams “Origen: Between Orthodoxy and Heresy,” 12. Italics, Williams’.
And he who beholds Wisdom, which God created before the ages of his works, ascends from knowing Wisdom to knowing Wisdom’s Father. . . . And you will say the same thing also about the truth. For one does not apprehend God or contemplate him, and afterwards apprehend the truth. First one apprehends the truth, so that in this way he may come to behold the essence, or the power and nature of God beyond that essence.533

All such contingency is satisfied in knowledge and experience of the Son as wisdom and truth “hypostatically existing,” and is expressed in the eternal generation of the Son from the Father in unbroken and eternal union in essence, through which the door of history in its seeking is opened to the eternality of divinity:

Thus there is a certain prudence of God which one does not seek except in Christ Jesus. For all such virtues, insofar as they are of God, are Christ: he is the wisdom of God, he is the power of God, he is the righteousness of God, he is sanctification, he is redemption. In this way he is the prudence of God. But though there is one substance, for differences in the aspects (ἐπίνοια) the names are many.534

There is an experiential catena of relation threaded throughout history and κόσμος along which one may ascend to the wellspring of archetypal truth, wisdom, word, and life. Hence God may be sought, experienced, and known when the will and power of God issues toward history through Christ in the manifold ἐπίνοια in all experiences of apprehending and knowing.

Origen notes that Proverbs makes a distinction between earth and heaven; the former being “founded (ἐθείλελιωσεν),” the latter “prepared (ἡτοίµασεν),”535 propping up his reading by means of Jeremiah, who speaks of God as having “stretched forth (ἐξέτεινε)” heaven.536 Recalling Philo’s statement that the Patriarchs are themselves living laws,537 Origen says “the

533 Origen, CJn 19.39.
534 Origen, HJer 8.5.2. The same assertion of unicity is stated many times throughout Origen’s corpus – it occurs often when he opens discussion of the ἐπίνοια. The most extended treatment of the notion begins with the same proviso: “But let no one take offense when we distinguish the aspects in the Savior, thinking that we also do the same with his essence.” Origen, CJn 1.200.
535 Prov 3.19.
536 Jer 10.12.
537 “We will for the present postpone [examination of] the particular laws which are copies as it were; and first of all examine the more general laws which are, as it were, the models of the others. Now these are those men who have lived irreproachably and admirably.” Philo, Abr 2.3-4. Italics mine.
righteous man is also heaven,”⁵³⁸ the result of having been prepared and stretched forth in wisdom toward prudence. “How then is heaven stretched forth? Wisdom stretches it forth,” Origen states, finding grounds in Proverbs: “I stretched forth (ἐξέτεινον) words (λόγοι) and you did not pay attention,”⁵³⁹ and also in Psalms: “stretching forth (ἐκτείνον) the heaven like a tent (δέρριν).”⁵⁴⁰ The divine salvific kinetics of the stretching forth of God enables a parallel stretching forth of the self through a listening and paying attention to the λόγοι which have been stretched forth, and ultimately in willing participation in the essential and situational ἐπίνοιαι toward a becoming prudence and heaven.⁵⁴¹

The stretching forth of heaven in the prudence of God is effected by means of the speaking of Christ from out of the centre of divinity:

You do not understand the same thing about Christ when you understand him as wisdom and when you understand him as righteousness. For when he is wisdom, you mean the knowledge of things divine and human, but when he is righteousness, he is that power which allots to every person according to worth. And when he is sanctification, he is what enables those faithful and dedicated to God to become holy. In this way also then you will understand him as prudence, when he is the knowledge of what is good and evil, and what is neither.⁵⁴²

Such dramatic movement in the stretching forth of the divine will in and through act and event in words and heaven, and in the responsive stretching out of human being, stands in profound contrast to divine-human relations in Plotinus, in the insularity of sentient being and

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⁵³⁸ Origen, HJer 8.2.2.
⁵³⁹ Prov 1.24.
⁵⁴⁰ Ps 103.2 (LXX).
⁵⁴¹ Patricia Cox addresses this divine-human movement in her article “‘In My Father’s House Are Many Dwelling Places’: κτίσμα in Origen’s De principiis,” in Anglican Theological Review LXII: 4 (Oct. 1980). Cox speaks (p. 323) of Origen’s “special interest” in explaining the “gathering” economy of God into the “single perfect world” mentioned in PA 2.3.6 (see above, p. 123). The pivotal notion is a reading of the “κτίσμα” of Prov 8.22 (Κύριος ἐκτισε· με άρην όδον αὐτοῦ εἰς ἄρα αὐτοῦ) – which, as Cox notes (324) refers not only to “a created thing,” but also a “foundation” or “building.” The intelligibility of “design and pattern” are inherent in the notion of “κόσμος,” irrespective of its having been “founded; prepared; stretched; or, created”; each of these requires a foundation of design or pattern if they would be intelligible, and if the soul were to spiral toward the gathering in unity.
⁵⁴² Origen, HJer 8.2.1.
the ontological disparity of his primary hypostases, and also in that of Philo, in his fervent emphasis on human passivity.\(^{543}\) The divine economy outlined here in Origen goes to profound lengths to effect relation to sentient creation. At the centre of all this motion is Christ, who, in Origen’s meditation on the many senses of the word ἀρχή, functions in an economic triad: Christ is ἀρχή in its sense as the “by which” of creation, and a kind of template of the same, i.e., ἀρχή as the “according to which” he is wisdom, and also ἀρχή as “beginning.”\(^{544}\) Wisdom therefore serves both an objective and subjective role, as both constitutive and illustrative. In a key passage concerning this dual role, Origen speaks of wisdom as “structure” and “communication.” Wisdom is both res and signum. It has its being, its res, and it is spoken and communicated via cosmic signa:

It is wisdom which is understood, on the one hand, taken in relation to the structure of the contemplation and thoughts of all things, but it is the Word which is received, taken in relation to the communication of the things which have been contemplated to spiritual beings.\(^{545}\)

When the stretching forth of the will of God is first communicated, then received in contemplation, one may oneself stretch forth in a dynamic and dialectical experience and relation which mirrors the stretching out of God from out of the divine centre: “But also our soul, formerly retracted, is stretched forth so that it can receive the wisdom of God.”\(^{546}\) Through the appropriation of objective wisdom, the subject becomes heaven – “the righteous man is also heaven”\(^{547}\) – via the reciprocal stretching out.\(^{548}\)

\(^{543}\) See above, p. 70, n. 239.

\(^{544}\) “It possible that he is ‘by which,’ which is effective, since ‘God commanded and they were created’ (Ps 148.5). For Christ is perhaps the creator to whom the Father says ‘let there be light’ (Gen 1.3). . . . But it is as the beginning that Christ is creator, according to which he is wisdom. Therefore as wisdom he is called the beginning.” Origen, CJn 1.110-111.

\(^{545}\) Origen, CJn 1.111. The final clause in this sentence is difficult, and is perhaps a little more clear in the original Greek: “κατὰ δὲ τὴν πρὸς τὰ λογικὰ κοινωνίαν τῶν τεθεωρημένων τοῦ λόγου λαμβανομένων.”

\(^{546}\) Origen, HJer 8.2.3.

\(^{547}\) Origen, HJer 8.2.2.
4.i.c) Multiplicity Toward Unicity

But also, this rational sense, which is in me, was entrusted to me so that I may use it for the understanding of divine things – talent, memory, judgment, reason, and all my emotions which seem to have been entrusted to me by God that I may use them in those things which the divine law commands.549

Origen writes that “there is a certain affinity between the mind and God, of whom the mind is an intellectual image.”550 The movement of the divine will from unicity toward multiplicity makes possible that of multiplicity toward unicity in willing creation. Origen speaks of a soulish artistry in explicating the “image and likeness” of Genesis.551 The image is formed at the core of one’s being as a created centre toward which one may find an inherent orienting principle, given its being as image and likeness: “he did not place this image on the outside, but within.”552 Given the divinity of the creative artist, the image is both voracious and indelible; while it can be obscured, it cannot be negated:

The Son of God is the painter of this image. And because he is such a great painter his image can be obscured by negligence; it cannot be destroyed by malice. For the image of

548 Origen’s mode of reading is also a “stretching out,” in which the engaged reader is shaped and stretched out to new possibilities in deep encounter with the text. This is reflected in Christophe Potworowski’s summary of Riceur’s understanding of understanding: “Understanding a text, for Riceur, is understanding oneself before the text. In the last analysis this means receiving from the text the self which allows me to dwell in the world proposed by the text. Truth, in this context, means dwelling in the correlation between text and life.” Potworowski, “The Question of Truth (ἀλήθεια) in the Hermeneutics of Origen and Paul Riceur,” 309. Riceur’s own words on understanding are helpful here: “To understand oneself before the text is not to impose one’s own finite capacity of understanding on it, but to expose oneself to receive from it a larger self which would be the proposed way of existing that most appropriately responds to the proposed world of the text . . . the self is constituted by the issue of the text.” Riceur, “Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation,” Essays on Biblical Interpretation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982) 108.

549 Origen, HLev 4.3.3.

550 P.A., 1.1.7.

551 Gen 1.26 and 5.1. For Origen's reflections on image and likeness, see Crouzel, Theologie de l'image de Dieu chez Origène (Paris: Aubier, 1956) 147-79. Crouzel articulates the distinctions between image and likeness at 217-45.

552 Origen, HGen 13.4.
God always remains, even if you yourself draw “the image of the earthly”\textsuperscript{553} over it in yourself. You yourself paint that picture in yourself.\textsuperscript{554}

Origen here proposes the freedom of an indelible potentiality which is at hand for all sentient creation, over and above any notion of a static or actual nature. The image and likeness abides dormant in potentiality. Where in divinity the freedom expresses via potentiality in creation, in sentient creation, the order is reversed: the potentiality precedes the freedom. Out of the potentiality of the image and likeness one steps toward freedom – out of the painting into effective history, as it were. One becomes in a sense a curator for the painting, framing it and exhibiting it in historical action worthy of the image. The notion of “image” is explicated also in a literary and narrative theme:

Do you wish to see still even another form of this image? There are certain documents that God writes; certain documents which we ourselves write. . . . by those things which we commit.\textsuperscript{555}

One in effect writes a self, a book, the essence of which is constituted by the drama set down in the narrative drafted by the author, by the self. One writes a plot line which is either in discord or concord with that of the divine author and painter, hence either suppressing or expressing the indelible narration and image, “by those things which we commit.” Origen alludes to the plasticity of creation’s own narration and painting, when he says in the \textit{Commentary on Romans},

When we think either good or evil things, certain marks and signs are left behind in our heart as if on wax tablets, both for the good thoughts and for the bad.\textsuperscript{557}

\textsuperscript{553} 1 Cor 15.49.

\textsuperscript{554} Origen, \textit{HGen} 13.4.

\textsuperscript{555} Origen, \textit{HGen} 13.4. Origen here quotes 2 Cor 3.2-3: “For you are an epistle written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in the fleshly tablets.”

\textsuperscript{556} Origen, \textit{HGen} 13.4.

\textsuperscript{557} Origen, \textit{CRom} 2.10.1. And along similar lines, Origen says “And so it is shown that in everything we do, our soul gives birth and generates sons, namely, its thoughts and the works that it does. . . . There is never a time when the soul is not giving birth.” \textit{HNum} 20.2.2-3; and also: “You see, deeds pass away, whether good or evil. According to their own characteristics, they represent and form the mind of the one who is doing them; and they leave it either good or evil, to be devoted to either punishment or rewards.” \textit{CRom} 2.1.2. With these ideas Origen is positing a kind of experiential circle in which the dynamic both precedes and follows the agent, both illustrating what is in the self, and also constituting the self. In his translation of the \textit{Commentary}, Thomas P. Scheck points to the influence.
The carving is not on stone, but on wax tablets. Writing in antiquity – particularly that of students – was on this sort of tablet. These *tabulae ceratae* permitted the erasure of errors and past lessons – a *tabula rasa* or clean slate.\(^558\) Likewise the archetypal image-document is open-ended. The image is essentially a narrative or painting in *diptych*, of both the *hexaemeron* and the primordial making in image and likeness. One expresses these archetypal narratives by means of articulating and expressing the artistry of the Son in the interior image, in narrative and historical emplottment and dramatization which articulates and reveals the archetypal artistry.

A similar exegesis of dialectic exchange between creator and creation occurs in a homily on Leviticus, in which Origen takes up the speaking of “deposit” of Leviticus 5.22.\(^559\) Origen here speaks of the compound givenness of body and soul, and image and likeness:

For my part I think that we receive our soul itself and the body as a deposit from God. And do you want to see another greater “deposit” that you received from God? God entrusted “his own image and likeness” to your own soul. That deposit, therefore, must be restored by you just as intact as it was received by you. . . . and if all things which are present in God through nature remain in you by imitation, “the deposit” of the divine image is safe within you.\(^560\)

\(^{558}\) of Epictetus (*Discourses* 2.18.7) for this line of thought. While there are traces of the idea in Epictetus (and in a great deal of late Stoic philosophy), I think the more raw form of it which Origen espouses here has more explicit parallels in Buddhist thought. The primacy of the thinker and agent is one of the main tenets of Buddhism’s struggle toward liberation from illusion and suffering. An early Buddhist text states: “What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday, and our present thoughts build our life of tomorrow: our life is the creation of our mind.” *Dhammapada: the Path of Perfection*, Juan Mascaro, trans. (London, Penguin Classics, 1973) 1.1. Along similar lines, Gregory of Nyssa says: “We are in some manner our own parents, giving birth to ourselves by our own free choice in accordance with whatever we wish to be . . . moulding ourselves to the teaching of virtue or vice.” Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses*, 2.3.

\(^{559}\) It must be admitted, however, that in *HJer* 16.10.1-3, Origen seems to say that there are indelible sins, namely those inscribed on the heart with what Jeremiah 16.21 calls an “iron pen with a point of diamond.” Origen says: “And if my sin was written in black ink, I would have wiped it off. But now it is written with an iron pen, it is written with a diamond point.” Origen, *HJer* 16.10.3.

\(^{560}\) “If a soul sins, and neglects the precepts of the Lord, and lies to his neighbor over a deposit or a partnership.” Origen, *HLev* 4.3.1. Origen adds that Christ and the Holy Spirit are also received as deposits. (4.3.2).
The giving of God should effect a response in parallel movement of a giving back by means of allowing the image and likeness to come to the surface in one’s will and historical action. By these means, and in a movement which parallels the Incarnation of God from the monism of God into that of being-itself, one incarnates in history what formerly dwelled only within as potentiality. What God is in nature, “the things which are present in God through nature,” are rendered operative and are glimpsed through the medium of cooperative freedom in historical action.

Now consider if it is likewise possible that the other things, too, in which Christ is said to be in the singular are multiplied in a similar manner and named in the plural, such as “Christ is our life,” as the Saviour himself says: “I am the way and the truth and the life” . . . For lives are multiplied because of Christ who is life in each one.

One expresses and externalizes the inherent symbol, and thereby “attains one’s own nature,” to again borrow from Rahner. One thereby becomes a living image and symbol through expressing the deposit of the image via the mediation of the deposit of the soul and body. The multiplicity of being is drawn into the unicity of Christification of self:

It is as though Christ is found in each saint, and because of the one Christ, there are many Christs who are imitators of him who have also been formed according to him who is the image of God.

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561 In this kind of interchange and historical expression, Potworowski finds the key which prevents Origen from lapsing into the dangers of subjectivism and relativism in his tireless emphasis on interiority, in which there is an apparent “lack of an explicit control element.” Potworowski, “Origen’s Hermeneutics in Light of Paul Ricoeur,” 163. This is particularly so, given Origen’s “apparent disrespect for the literal sense which for many is the essential element of control” (ibid.). Yet, as Potworowski notes, “The reference to history in Origen is not destroyed but interiorized and set within the dialogical framework directed towards salvation” (ibid).

562 Jn 14.6.

563 Origen, Cln 6.41.

564 As Nancy Clasby puts it in her article “Dancing Sophia: Rahner’s Theology of Symbols,” in Religion & Literature Vol, 25, No, 1 (Spring, 1993): “The universe is a great network of energy working itself out in a multitude of expressive forms. . . . Nothing real is still. The essence of each being is its self-creative gesture.” Ibid., 55.

565 Origen, Cln 6.42.
It is here that the will becomes operative in the choice and movement toward unicity. The divine will expressed as creation, reason, and grace, abides in the image, and opens up the potentiality of encounter and experience in the externalization of the same triune dynamic in the image-bearer. Above and beyond the image, the bearer stands in actuality in the givenness of creation. Creation is given. Reason stands in the centre where it can be accepted in the freedom of the image-bearer’s will. In other words, the freedom and will stand in encounter with reason which is bookended by the divine will as being and grace. Reason in encounter stands in the centre of being and grace. It is through this permeation and externalization of the image that likeness is effected.

Now the fact that he said, “He made him in the image of God,” and was silent about the likeness, points to nothing else but this, that man received the honour of God’s image in his first creation, whereas the perfection of God’s likeness was reserved for him at the consummation. The purpose of this was that man should acquire it for himself by his own honest efforts to imitate God, so that while the possibility of attaining perfection was given to him in the beginning through the honour of the “image,” he should in the end through the accomplishment of these works obtain for himself the perfect “likeness.”

At either side of Origen’s centring cosmotheoria stand the para-historical narratives of creation in image and likeness, and of Fall and consummation. Between these narrative horizons stands the centre of free will. Where the Fall and consummation are situated in para-historical narrative, the reparation is situated and enacted in the givenness of actual history. One historicizes the image, and effects a virtual transubstantiation of history:

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566 Origen, *PA* 3.6.1.

567 The idea of applying to history the word “transubstantiation” I first read in Kierkegaard, who, in a high estimate of the affective and effective nature of worldview, had stated: “A lifview (livsanskuelse) is more than a pure idea or a sum of propositions held fast in abstract neutrality; it is more than experience, which is always atomistic, it is namely the transubstantiation of experience.” Quoted in David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) 76. Here Kierkegaard comes close to my intentions in my use of the word “cosmotheoria.”
For the creator granted to the minds created by him the power of free and voluntary movement, in order that the good that was in them might become their own, since it was preserved by their own free will.\textsuperscript{568}

The imaginal good may again become “their own” in the parallel dynamic of ascent. The human being only comes to veracious fruition in a good which is embodied in the world and history. As in Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI’s appraisal of the human being, “in the human being heaven and earth touch one another,”\textsuperscript{569} it is in the very touching of these disparate elements that the human comes to being in the imaginal good of unicity.

4.ii) The Genealogy of Truth: Sophialogy & Logology

4.ii.a) Sophialogy: the Experience of Wisdom

For wisdom opens to all other beings, that is, to the whole creation, the meaning of the mysteries and secrets which are contained within the wisdom of God, and so she is called the Word, because she is as it were an interpreter of the mind’s secrets.\textsuperscript{570}

Σοφία stands as first or primary ἐπίνοια in the horizon of reason.\textsuperscript{571} For sentient being, Σοφία opens up all experience of herself by means of herself. Σοφία is both what is sought and also the means by which she is grasped, and she is finally the touchstone with which all thought in one’s mind is measured. In other words, there comes to be an experiential relation of God per se and God pro nobis, in which the eternal ἐπίνοια of Σοφία per se is engaged in experience of Σοφία pro nobis in all experience of knowing and meaning which wisdom effects, affects, and qualifies. The ineffable “meaning and mysteries” are rendered knowable and known through divine-human relation in Σοφία.

\textsuperscript{568} Origen, \textit{PA} 2.9.2.
\textsuperscript{570} Origen, \textit{PA} 1.2.3.
\textsuperscript{571} As noted above, Crouzel numbers Wisdom as “principle” of the ἐπίνοια by a “priority of logic.” See above, p. 133, n. 511. This priority of logic is well articulated in the quote which opens the present chapter.
The texts in which Origen seeks to expound the relation of Σοφία to creation are some of
his most enigmatic. The tension between the res and signum of the objective and subjective, of
the per se absolute and the pro nobis ἐπίνοιας, is found at the heart of any and all reflection on
Christian experience, and not just that of Origen. Experience is less resistant than language in
this respect. What comes to be in experience is often met with a robust degree of recalcitrance in
language. This seems particularly to be the case when theology seeks to outline and describe
divine-human relation and experience.

Origen often turns to prepositions to articulate the primacy of Σοφία in divine-human
relation, proposing that prepositions are not used arbitrarily.572 Hermeneutics is essentially the
language of prepositions. The lead of Paul is followed, providing the hermeneutical key to the
understanding that the prepositions “from,” “through,” and “in/to” articulate the essence and
expression of all divine relations: “all things are ἐξ him and δι’ him and εἰς him.”573 Origen takes
the text to indicate:

When “from him” is said, something originative seems to be indicated under the token of
this preposition. But when “through him” is said, the intelligence of a secondary cause,
that is to say, one which is after the principal cause, is designated. . . . “In him” means
that those who have now been reformed and corrected stand firm “in” his perfection.574

The movement is from effect to affect, from creation through to transformation and abiding,
from the primordial moulding of human being in the image, through to the moulding of the

572 Origen points to Rom 3.30, where Paul writes that the circumcised will be justified “ἐκ πίστεως” while the
uncircumcised will be justified “διὰ τῆς πίστεως.” He proposes the “alteration of prepositions was not uttered by
him [Paul] purposelessly,” (CRom 3.10.2) and that Paul’s alteration – as well as his references to
“circumcision/uncircumcision” – refers to the status of faith in an individual: “For the very same God justifies
members of both peoples who believe, and this is based not upon the privilege of circumcision or uncircumcision
but in consideration of faith alone.” Origen, CRom 3.10.1. In his commentary on Romans, Brendan Byrne notes
“why Paul varies the Greek prepositions has never been satisfactorily explained. The distinction is probably
stylistic.” Byrne, “Romans,” 140.

573 Rom 11.36.

574 Origen, CRom 3.11.3. See also CJn 2.10.
individual person toward likeness. In this line of reasoning, Ἀφίκημι stands as the originative ἐπίνοια of the experience.575

The summit of this experiential arc, the “standing firm in” effects a knowledge which reaches back to the primacy of “from” and “through,” and completes the relational circle, deeply affecting one’s worldview in the knowledge of createdness of being and the superintendence of God. One stands in perfection – in Ἀφίκημι – standing “reformed” and “corrected” through the agency of the reason which God is. In some ways wisdom is akin to a prevenient and latent reason. In contradistinction to efficacious and ascendant reason (λόγος), Ἀφίκημι does not guide or govern, but is herself the upper echelons of knowing. Only once standing in (εἰς) Ἀφίκημι can the dynamics of hierophantic revelation and interpretation be experienced. The being of wisdom is no longer set apart as a tool or a means to an end, but stands as the end itself.576 What is “contained” within also does the “opening” – hence this end is also its own beginning – but at that point Origen subtly shifts the dynamic of opening to the Word, referring to it now as “interpreting,” for the reason that when wisdom comes to the person through the portals of

575 And if Ἀφίκημι is here originative, the Holy Spirit is directive, providing orientation toward Ἀφίκημι in turning one to an experience in which one sees Christ “afresh” in the reditus toward Ἀφίκημι. See section on “Exitus-Reditus,” above, pp. 98-103; see also the section on “The Pneumatic Step,” pp. 115-21. Grillmeier has also noted a “twofold” role of the Λόγος which illustrates the close association between Λόγος and Ἀφίκημι in originating and directing ends: “The Logos has a twofold role: it is the source of creaturely ratio, but also of supernatural sapientia. The pneuma inserts itself between these two functions. It provides a new substratum, which makes it possible to receive ‘the wisdom of Christ.’” Grillmeier, Christ in Christian Tradition, vol. 1, 140.

576 Summarizing Rahner’s impetus for creating his theology of symbol, Nancy Clasby says: “Rahner’s analysis is founded on the premise that logos is not the basis of reality, but a projection upon reality, a system for filtering and ordering experience. He proposes a move from the structures of logos to a symbolic language.” Clasby, “Dancing Sophia,” 51. Furthermore, Clasby continues, “He suggests a move from logos to symbol may make it possible to recover the fullness of the word as it was experienced in pre-critical consciousness, to assimilate reality with the immediacy, if not the simplicity, of innocence.” Ibid., 51. This calls to mind the concern of Heidegger for the “symptom of decline” in the philosophy which followed the Pre-Socratics, whom he considered to have been “caught in the radical astonishment of being” (see above, pp. 52-3). Rahner himself said: “The whole of theology is incomprehensible if it is not essentially a theology of symbols.” Rahner, “Theology of the Symbol,” 235.
experience, it is heard through the agency and medium of speaking, of Λόγος: “so she is called the Word, because she is as it were an interpreter of the mind’s secrets.”

Origen says the “creation” of Wisdom is to be understood as God’s eternal begetting of the same, for no one could “suppose or believe that God the Father ever existed, even for a single moment, without begetting this wisdom,” hence: “wisdom . . . must be believed to have been begotten beyond the limits of any beginning that we can speak of or understand.”

One speaks therefore not of a beginning of wisdom *per se*, but of a “beginning of the ways” of God – i.e., one speaks of a beginning of divine agency – a “way” – in relation to the *via* of creation:

There is also a beginning which pertains to action, in which action there is some goal after the beginning. And consider if wisdom, since it is the beginning of God’s actions, can thus be understood as a beginning.

This beginning is unique in that its “goal” is one with its essence, with what informs its goal. This beginning is “outlined,” “prefigured,” and “implicit” in its dwelling and being, and turns now to creation as the *res* issues in cosmic *signa*. It is not simply the case that Σοφία propels one along the hermeneutical spiral of experience; Σοφία in effect *is* that hermeneutical spiral – the *Via in potentia* taken in every journey toward knowing. In the “creation” of Wisdom, there is a *thelamic* movement into being which begins to shed and reveal its abstract essence, to become open to being-itself. Wisdom is the prevenient dynamic toward Λόγος *pro me*. The movement of the divine will, first in being-towards-world, anticipates and issues finally in

577 Origen, *PA* 1.2.3.
578 Origen, *PA* 1.2.2.
579 Prov 8.22.
581 Such is the language of the dense Christological and Sophiological passages throughout the second chapter of the first book of *First Principles*, in which the gravity of “hypostatic existence” serves ultimately as foil to provisional states and stages such as “prefiguration,” “outline,” and “implicit,” as Origen seeks to fit contingency into the house of actuality.
582 On the *κένωσις* of Phil 2.7 Origen expresses in an interesting way how Christ’s essence was unchanged when it came to history: “but if that one who sojourned emptied himself in this life, that empty vessel was wisdom itself.” Origen, *HJer* 8.1.
being-toward-person. **Sophiagony** is God’s being-towards-world; **Logology** is God’s being-toward-person.

### 4.ii.b) **Logology: The Experience of Reason**

Because Christ is called the power of God\(^{583}\) and the gospel also is called the power of God,\(^{584}\) the following ought to be considered: whether Christ, as he is many other things, ought also to be understood as the gospel. Indeed perhaps what is called the “eternal gospel”\(^{585}\) should be interpreted with reference to him.\(^{586}\)

While Origen sometimes conflates \(\sigma φία\) and \(λόγος\),\(^{587}\) when he does propose distinctions, the primordial nature of \(Σοφία\) places her on the objective, yet abstract, side of divinity, the objective side of the objective/subjective dynamic of the \(ἐπίνοια\). Yet sides are never singular, and the common essence, bordered on one side by the objective, is bordered on the other side by the subjective, by the \(Λόγος\):

Now just as we have learned in what sense wisdom is the “beginning of the ways” of God and is said to have been created, in the sense, namely, that she fashions beforehand and contains within herself the species and causes of the entire creation, in the same manner also must wisdom be understood to be the Word of God.\(^{588}\)

The impetus of both the conflation and the distinction is Origen’s many treatments of Proverbs 8.22, which typically serve as corollary to his treatment of the \(ἀρχή\) of the Johannine prologue.\(^{589}\) The *hypostasis* of wisdom has ontological parameters in Origen’s estimate:

who in his sober senses ever looked for shape or colour or measurable size in wisdom, considered solely as wisdom?\(^{590}\)

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\(^{583}\) 1 Cor 1.24.

\(^{584}\) Cf. Rom 1.16.

\(^{585}\) Rev 14.6.


\(^{587}\) Origen explicitly does so in *PA* 1.2.1: “The Firstborn [i.e. Christ] is not, however, by nature a different being from Wisdom, but is one and the same.” John McGuckin says “The Divine Word, or Logos, stands next to Wisdom at the top of the list of *epinoiai*. The two are basically equivalent in Origen’s mind. . . . Both have been eternally with God, for God has always begotten the Logos and has always possessed Wisdom.” McGuckin, *Westminster Handbook*, 94.

\(^{588}\) Origen, *PA* 1.2.2.

\(^{589}\) See above, pp. 92-97.
It belongs solely to the Person of the Son to be “God’s wisdom hypostatically existing.” Origen distinguishes Scriptures from Gospel on the grounds that the former only “proclaims,” as opposed to the latter, which “makes known.” There is a parallel exegetical component in Origen’s distinction between firstlings and firstfruits, in which the former precede, the latter follow, the event of the Incarnation, when “the perfect Word has blossomed forth.” The Person of Christ is the “fruit” which centres and stands between the proclamatory firstlings and the making-known firstfruits. This distinction leads Origen to posit the Gospel of John as firstfruit of the Gospels, essentially on the merit of that Gospel’s “making known” via the silent and ineffable genealogy of the ἀρχή of the Λόγος: “It speaks of him whose descent is traced, and begins from him who is without genealogy.” In this line of reasoning, Mark, Matthew and Luke stand as Gospel firstlings: Mark due to his having begun his Gospel with the proclamation of the Baptizer; Matthew and Luke having begun their Gospels with proclamation in the form of their genealogies. Only John’s Gospel “makes known” by revealing the ἀρχή of the Λόγος, accomplishing this by means of “tracing his descent.” The relative poverty of firstling and proclamation is overcome by the richness of the firstfruits of making known. Where the synoptics sound the proclamatory horn of the triumphal procession and entry of making-known, John places the reader directly in the midst of the eternally-generated Entrant, who is made known and is followed in an impossible glimpse of the eternal generation in the ineffable paradox of poverty and richness in hypostatic

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590 Origen, PA 1.2.2.
591 Origen, PA 1.2.2.
592 “We must note . . . that the Old Testament is not gospel since it does not make known (οὐ διεικνύουσα) ‘him who is to come’ (Mt 11.3), but proclaims him in advance (προκηρύσσουσα).” Origen, CJn 1.17.
594 Origen, CJn 1.21.
existence of the Λόγος who precedes (proclaiming, making, and making known) his noble retinue of λόγοι.\(^{595}\)

It is helpful to restate here the dialectical and hierarchical order with which Origen views the relations between Scripture, Gospel, Church, and κόσμος:

1) The Scriptures are rudimentary elements (στοιχεῖα) of all knowledge.\(^ {596}\)
2) The elements (στοιχεῖα) of the faith of the Church are the Gospels.\(^ {597}\)
3) The Church is itself a κόσμος.\(^ {598}\)
4) Christ is Himself the eternal Gospel.\(^ {599}\)
5) the Λόγος is Himself a Κόσμος.\(^ {600}\)

Hence there is a commencing from proclamation through to making known in the hermeneutical circle centred around the Person of the Λόγος, who is himself a Κόσμος above and beyond the “manifest and perceptible world that consists of heaven and earth,”\(^ {601}\) which is insufficient to contain the Christic Κόσμος of the eternal Gospel:

But one who presents how Jesus is a multitude of good things can infer from these innumerable things written about him that the things which are in him in whom all the

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\(^ {595}\) Mark Julian Edwards has noted: “Plato had defined time as the moving image of eternity; for Origen, the arche or beginning of the universe, coeval with time itself, is none other than Christ.” Edwards, *Origen Against Plato*, 64. I think this can be extended to say that Christ himself is “the moving image of eternity,” recalling that Origen had said Christ is “His [God’s] wisdom hypostatically existing . . . and who can suppose or believe that God the Father ever existed, even for a moment of time, without having generated this Wisdom?” Origen, *PA* 1.2.2. In a captivating expression suggestive of the motions of both kenosis and ascent, Dumitru Stâniloae has said: “time is a kind of ladder extended by eternity . . . towards the world.” Stâniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology: The Experience of God. Vol. 1: Revelation and Knowledge of the Triune God* (Brookline, Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998) 157. The Λόγος is the mean by which reason (λόγοι) gets a foothold in and on history, and constitutes the single mean by which sentient being may follow behind it and him.

\(^ {596}\) *CJn* 13.30. See above, p. 94. See also pp. 92; 90-7.

\(^ {597}\) *CJn* 1.21. See above, p. 94.

\(^ {598}\) *CJn* 6.303. See above, p. 124.


\(^ {600}\) “But you will inquire if, in some sense, the first-born of all creation can be called a world, and especially in so far as he is “the manifold wisdom.” For by being the principles (λόγοι) of absolutely everything according to which all things made by God in wisdom have come to be (as the prophet says, “You made all things in wisdom” [Ps 103.24]), in himself he would himself also be a “world” that surpasses the world of sense perception in its diversity and excels it as much as the principle stripped of all the material of the whole world differs from the material world, a world constituted, not on the basis of matter, but on the participation of the things that have been set in order in the Word and Wisdom, which set matter in order.” Origen, *CJn* 19.147.

\(^ {601}\) Origen, *CJn* 19.146.
fullness of divinity “was pleased” to dwell “bodily” are by no means contained in writings.

The Church stands higher in the experiential hierarchy than the Gospels and the Scriptures; the former itself constitutes a κόσμος, while the latter two serve as στοιχεῖα toward its faith, understanding, and identity. The contrast is that between act and inscription, between event and canon. The Church gathers in act and event around “Truth-itself (αὐτοαλήθεια), and seeks under the duress of history to peer tentatively and provisionally into the Κόσμος of the eternal Gospel. The gathering around of the Church in act and event gathers around the act, inscription, event, and canon of the Λόγος, who, in hypostatic existence, both reveals and imparts Himself. The revealing and imparting therefore is not of mere conceptual reason (λόγος), but of salvific Reason (Λόγος). All experience of Reason is a following, since the meaning which is imparted cannot keep abreast of his speaking:

And he who is called “faithful” sits on the white horse, seated more firmly and, if I may so speak, royally, on words which cannot be overturned, words which run faster and swifter than any horse, and which surpass every opponent in their rush, that is, every supposed word which is a dissembler of the Word, and every dissembler of truth which seems to be truth.

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602 Col 2.9; 1.19.
603 Origen, CJn 1.60.
604 Origen, CJn 6.38.
605 “And consider if one can call human wisdom not false teachings, but the elementary aspects (στοιχειωτικά) of the truth, and the things that apply to those who are still men.” Origen, CJn 13.36.
606 “Let no one think . . . that when we give him the name ‘wisdom of God’ we mean anything without hypostatic existence (aliquid insubstantivum), that is, to take an illustration, that we understand him to be not as it were some wise living being, but a certain thing which makes men wise by revealing and imparting itself.” Origen, PA 1.2.2.
607 “For his wisdom does not exist merely in the mental images of the God and Father of the universe in a way analogous to the images in human thoughts. But if someone is able to comprehend an incorporeal existence comprised of the various ideas which embrace the principles of the universe, an existence which is living and animate, as it were, he will understand the wisdom of God which precedes all creation, which appropriately says of herself, ‘God created me the beginning of his ways for his works.’” Origen, CJn 1.244.
608 Cf. Rev 19.11.
609 Origen, CJn 2.48. Philo uses a similar analogy in describing the speed of λόγος at Mut 247-8; Sacr 65-6.
The soteriological revealing and imparting is grasped only via the *pro nobis* relation and the subjective mediation of the *Λόγος* in the *ἐπίνοια*. The *λόγος* within the *κόσμος* participates in truth, proclaims it “in advance” as it were – but it cannot express the truth which is the soteriological economy of the *Λόγος*; the latter requires dialogical encounter and participation in the unicity of truth which constructs all experiences of meaning. Here again Origen is decisive in his parting of ways from Plato, who had written:

> Writing, Phaedrus, has this strange quality, and is very like painting; for the creatures of painting stand like living beings, but if one asks them a question, they preserve a solemn silence. And so it is with written words; you might think they spoke as if they had intelligence, but if you question them, wishing to know about their sayings, they always say only one and the same thing.\(^6\)

The inert stasis of Phaedrus’ estimate of writing – which no doubt Origen would qualify as “a multitude of Words (*πολυλογία*)”\(^1\) – stands in radical contrast to the movement and expression of the living *λόγοι* – which is a “single word”\(^2\) – of the *Λόγος*, in Origen’s emphasis on his historicity:

> Now John does not see the Word of God mounted on a horse naked. He is clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood, since the Word who became flesh, and died because he became flesh, is invested with traces of that passion . . . . For, perhaps, even if in some way we attain the most sublime and highest contemplation of the Word and of the truth, we shall not forget completely that we were introduced to him by his coming in our body.\(^3\)

The *λόγος/reason* which one encounters in the *λόγοι* of Scripture is always brought back and read in light of the genealogy of reason as it has become incarnate in history.\(^4\) One can speak,

\(^6\) Plato, *Phaedrus* 275D.

\(^1\) Origen, *CJn*, 5.5.

\(^2\) See above, p. 111.

\(^3\) Origen, *CJn* 2.61.

\(^4\) Hence the entanglement of *λόγος* speaking as both Christological and linguistic referent – the *Λόγος* as Person, expressing and expressed in the *λόγοι* of Scripture. This relation is worked out masterfully by Mihai Vlad Niculescu in his *The Spell of the Logos: Origen’s Exegetical Procedure in the Contemporary Debate Over Logocentrism* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias, 2009).
can experience reason and put it into expression owing only to the fact of that creation/generation of Σοφία/Λόγος.

The historico-linguistic nature of experience is emphasized succinctly by Heidegger when he says, “language is the house of being.”615 I take him to mean that language is not only descriptive, but also constitutive. The pool of thinking (and speaking and hearing) is filled with the water of language. Being is housed in the construction of thinking, hearing, and speaking, the materials of which is language, silent or uttered. One can readily change the materials out of which one’s house is constructed.616 Origen would have found Heidegger’s assertion compelling, and likely would have qualified it further by saying “Λόγος is the house of being.”617

The Λόγος is both constructive, in the pro nobis ἀρχή in the beginning of the ways of God’s action,618 and also descriptive, as “interpreter of the mind’s secrets.”619 It is at the conjunction of λόγος and freedom that one constructs one’s self. One’s being resides in the house that one begins to construct through the encounter of the ἐπίνοιαι of the Λόγος.


616 The creative/productive nature of language is well-emphasized by Ricœur as creative/productive agent of reality which effects and affects the réalisation (the productive sense of the French “réalisation” is more apt here than the heuristic sense of the English “realisation”) of the same: “both poetic and scientific language aim at a reality more real than the appearances.” Ricœur, Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning, 67.

617 In reference to Prov 9.1 “Wisdom has built a house for herself,” Origen does indeed say “this (i.e., the “house”) is understood more correctly of the Lord’s incarnation.” Origen, HEx 6.12. And in the Dialogue with Heraclides, Origen takes up Mark 4.11 in which Jesus is said to explain his parables to those who came into his house: “Whoever sins is outside. This is why those outside must be spoken to in parables, in case they might be able to leave the outside and come inside. . . . Whoever enters Jesus’ house is his true disciple. He comes in by thinking with the Church, by living according to the Church. Being within and without are spiritual realities.” Origen, DH 15. And before Origen, Philo had interpreted Jeremiah 3.4: “οὐχ ὡς οἶκόν με ἐκάλεσας καὶ πατέρα καὶ ἀρχηγὸν τῆς παρθενίας σου," to indicate “he implies clearly that God is a house, the incorporeal dwelling-place of incorporeal ideas.” Philo, Cher 49. Interestingly, in the same work, Philo also speaks of the soul as house of God: “What house shall be prepared for God the King of kings . . . who in His tender mercy and loving-kindness has deigned to visit created being and come down from the boundaries of heaven to the utmost ends of earth? . . . One worthy house there is – the soul that is fitted to receive Him. Justly and rightly then shall we say that in the invisible soul the invisible God has His earthly dwelling place.” Philo, Cher 99-100.

618 See above, pp. 92-7.

619 Origen, PA 1.2.3. See above, p. 147.
4.ii.c) The Silent Discourse on Truth

Our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ was silent\(^{520}\) when false witnesses spoke against him, and answered nothing\(^{621}\) when he was accused.\(^{622}\)

This is the sentence with which Origen begins his *Contra Celsum*. It is perhaps surprising that he begins his defence of Christianity with an observation about Jesus’ silence. Origen proposes that it is not only the speaking of the Λόγος which is revelatory, but so too is his silence. This is a silence unlike that of Plato’s *Phaedrus*, the πολυλογία which “preserves a solemn silence.”\(^{623}\) Pertaining to the experiential nature of divine-human relations, all things which the Λόγος says and does are revelatory.\(^{624}\) Jesus’ silence speaks to both “does” and “is.” In other words, in this silence there are revelatory implications which speak of both act and essence. The silence speaks sometimes of act, sometimes of essence.

Now, Jesus did not speak all the words that he possessed while he was teaching in the treasury, but as many as the treasury could contain. For I do not think the world itself could contain the whole Word of God.\(^{625}\) Nevertheless, although he spoke so many words in the treasury and taught in the temple, Jesus was not yet arrested by anyone, for even his words were stronger than those wishing to arrest him. And as long as he speaks, none of those plotting against him will arrest him, but if he is silent then he is seized. This is why he is silent when he is examined by Pilate and beaten,\(^{626}\) since he willed to suffer on behalf of the world. For, if he had spoken, he could no longer have been crucified from weakness,\(^{627}\) since there is no weakness in the words that Jesus speaks.\(^{628}\)

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\(^{520}\) Matt 27.59-63; Mark 14.55-61.

\(^{621}\) Matt 27.12-14; Mark 15.3-5; Luke 23.9.

\(^{622}\) Origen, *CC* prologue, 1.1.

\(^{623}\) See above, p. 155.

\(^{624}\) Origen appropriates notions of both silence and verbosity. Unlike the “solemn silence” which writing preserves in *Phaedrus*, the writing of the Old Testament is verbose. Timothy Michael Law notes how even scribal errors in the Old Testament are “nonetheless important because they lead to meaningful exegesis,” a not uncommon practice in early Alexandrian exegesis which “was another way the Church’s Bible was superior to the Hebrew Bible; it was richer, more pregnant with interpretive possibilities, such that even scribal errors were Spirit-produced readings for the benefit of the church.” Law, *When God Spoke Greek: The Septuagint and the Making of the Christian Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) 145.

\(^{625}\) Cf. Jn 21.25.

\(^{626}\) Cf. Jn 19.9.

\(^{627}\) Cf. 2 Cor 13.4.

\(^{628}\) Origen, *CIn* 19.59-61.
Here the silence is indicative of act, and thereby, of will. The silence is perceived as weakness, but such a perception neglects the symbolic function of the act, and regards only the exteriority of the letter of the act, and not the spirit of the will. In this “bodily/earthly” reading, the symbol remains mute; it does not express itself toward the attainment of its nature. One is thereby reading only the ἄρχη of the στοιχεῖα and γράμματα of Christ, not the entirety of his “eternal Gospel,” not the entirety of his “making known.” Through the apparent weakness of the act of silence, the power of will and assent has undergone full inversion, and all that is heard is the deafening silence of heaven and earth touching one another. The Λόγος is still a Κόσμος and the κόσμος is still λογικός – still reasonable – but it has been re-defined as such as it stumbles along grasping desultorily at ἀλήθεια with a λόγος which is hobbled in the insufficiency of the mediation of language. Ἀλήθεια must now always be understood through act and assent, not mere concept. “Jesus was not yet arrested by anyone” when he stood strongly speaking in the silence and weakness of concepts; he is seized only in his silence.

Commenting on the words of Jeremiah 1.6, in which, under the duress of God’s order to speak, the prophet protests “I do not know how to speak,” Origen attributes the words to Christ, proposing the words be regarded not as ignominious, but “great and glorious” when applied to Christ via the “σύμβολον/figura” who is Jeremiah:

If you approach the Savior and know him as the Word in the beginning with God, you will perceive that he does not know how to speak since to speak is human, but he does not speak, since what he knows is greater than speaking.

629 See above, pp. 92-97, for Origen’s important treatment of ἄρχη, στοιχεῖα, and γράμματα, the upshot of which is Origen’s proposing the necessity of a kind of hermeneutical wholism in approaching divine-human relation.
630 See above, p. 152, where Origen makes a distinction between “scripture” which only proclaims in advance, and “Gospel,” which actually makes known.
631 See above, p. 153.
632 ὁ Ἱερεύς ἐν τούτοις σύμβολον τοῦ Σωτῆρός ὁ Ἰστ. Origen, HJer 1.5.2
633 Origen, in HJer 1.8.4.
If the Λόγος is indeed the “house of being,” he is so in the silence of his having-been-spoken in
the “dialect” of the Father, whom the Son addresses in a fascinating hypothetical dialogue:

He [the Son] says then, “I do not know how to speak (λαλεῖν).” I know some things
greater than speaking, I know some things greater than this human voice. Do you wish
that I speak to men? I have not yet adopted human speech; I have your dialect
(διάλεκτος), O God. I am your Word (Λόγος), O God.634

Origen’s distinction between language (διάλεκτος) and speaking (λαλεῖν) voices the ineffability
of the “greater” known. Where structuralism marks the distinction between langue and parole –
i.e., between language per se and speech in actu, in which parole is subordinate to langue635 –
here the διάλεκτος transcends both language and speaking. The “great things” which the Father
wishes the Son to speak are wholly other than any referential system or dialect can contain or
project or express. For the structuralists, the system subordinates the speaker – or, as Hans-
Georg Gadamer suggests – the game plays the player.636 By contrast, in Origen’s positing a
distinction, there simply is no system. Because God is “beyond being,”637 he is beyond system,
language, and speaking; what the Saviour knows is greater.638 The speaking of the Incarnation is
heard in a semantics of will expressed over and above any syntactical system.639 Reason cannot
– and certainly language cannot – keep up with this expression. In striking language, Ricœur

634 Origen, HJer 1.8.6.
635 “Langue is the code or set of codes – on the basis of which a particular speaker produces parole as a particular
message.” Ricœur, Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning, 3.
636 Gadamer proposes “a general characteristic of the nature of play that is reflected in playing: all playing is a
being-played . . . the game masters the players.” Gadamer, Truth and Method (New York: Continuum International
637 See above, p. 105: “Moreover, God does not even participate in being. For He is participated in, rather than
participates.” Origen, CC 6.64. “Since we affirm that the God of the universe is mind, or that he transcends mind
and being, and is simple and invisible and incorporeal, we would maintain that God is not comprehended by any
being other than him made in the image of that mind.” Origen, CC 7.38.
638 Likewise, Ricœur sees in structuralism a “choice of syntax over semantics. . . [which] lacks reflection on its
conditions of validity,” “in short [it is] a reflection on limits.” Ricœur, Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in
639 The intentionality of what is spoken and heard is the impetus that compelled Ricœur to effect a corrective to
structuralism, the gist of which is expressed in his pithy statements: “language (la langue) does not speak, people
do,” Ricœur, Interpretation Theory, 13; and “Discourse consists of the fact that someone says something to
someone about something.” Ricœur, “Naming God,” in Figuring the Sacred, 220.
speaks of an “annihilation” of “radical otherness,” and of a “Wholly Other” which is other than that constructed by means of reason and reflection:

I speak of the Wholly Other only insofar as it addressed itself to me; and the kerygma, the glad tidings, is precisely that it addresses itself to me and ceases to be the Wholly Other. Of an absolute Wholly Other I know nothing at all. But by its very manner of approaching, of coming, it shows itself to be Wholly Other than the archê and the telos which I can conceptualize in reflective thought. It shows itself as Wholly Other by annihilating its radical otherness. . . . This is where the question of faith becomes a hermeneutic question, for what annihilates itself in our flesh is the Wholly Other as logos.  

While in Origen the διάλεκτος/language of the Father speaks of “some things greater than speaking,” expressed via the semantics of will, in Ricœur, one speaks as having-been-addressed in a kerygma which proclaims and makes known the willing annihilation of its radical otherness. The Father’s dialect speaks (and is) will and extends a thelamic conduit which “annihilates radical otherness,” transforming it into a relative and relational otherness. The latter otherness opens up and lets down a conduit through which is heard the proclamation and kerygma of the same, and through which one may speak upwards via the freedom of will and expression.  

The incarnate Λόγος speaks a λόγος which is greater than reason, a truth which is greater than truth. The Λόγος is “truth itself (αυτοαλήθεια).” This dynamic is made explicit in the curious episode of Jesus before Pilate, which has a parallel in the contrasting of the thought of Plotinus with that of Origen. Here again are the dual dynamics of ἀλήθεια and ἀποκάλυψις. Hellenic thinking cannot succeed in articulating its most prized – yet elusive – quarry. Pilate was for all intents and purposes asking “What is Hellenic thinking?” when he said “What is truth?” But the stock-in-trade, the conceptual tool of Hellenic thinking is ἀλήθεια, not

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643 The relation between ἀλήθεια and ἀποκάλυψις was discussed above, pp. 88; 91-2.
ἀποκάλυψις. And now here before Pilate stands a most curious juxtaposition: a silent discourse of ἀλήθεια standing as ἀποκάλυψις – a silent discourse in which a mute Word speaks (and is) ἀλήθεια standing with (and is) ἀποκάλυψις. The silent confluence of divine power, will, and assent effect a glimpse into divine Σοφία. Truth silently elects the world, but the world elects and cries out for Barabbas. Just as Heidegger had lamented the “first step into philosophy” as a “symptom of decline,”644 here begins Truth’s ascent as the world declines and gathers together hammer and nails.

4.iii) Hermeneutics of ὁ Λόγος

4.iii.a) θεωρία

For one does not comprehend God or contemplate him, and afterwards apprehend the truth. First one apprehends the truth, so that in this way he may come to behold the essence, or the power and nature of God beyond the essence.645

Jesus’ silence meets with Pilate’s blindness, for whom truth and God remain radically other. Pilate fails to see the ἀποκάλυψις of ἀλήθεια who stood directly before him. Pilate seeks a theory and contemplation of philosophy rather than an apprehension and application of truth. Origen reveals a pragmatic side when he makes a distinction between disciplines which are strictly theoretical, and those which require praxis, or “application:”

The goal of one discipline is the discipline itself, while the goal of another discipline is its application. . . . I ought to know the theory and principles of medicine not merely to know what I should do, but to do it. In other words, I should incise wounds, prescribe a regulated and controlled diet, [etc.] . . . If someone merely knows these principles and does not follow them up with an application, his knowledge is pointless. There is a relation like that of the science of medicine to its application in the knowledge and service of the Word. Hence Scripture says, “Just as those who from the beginning saw and were ministers of the Word.”646 We should realize the words “they saw” indicate a discipline and a science, while the words “they were ministers” refers to applications.647

644 See above, p. 52.
645 Origen, CJn 19.37.
646 Lk 1.2.
647 Origen, HLk 1.5.
In contradistinction to purely theoretical disciplines, here the “seeing” is “doing,” and the “doing” is “seeing.” Pilate asks “What is truth?” – yet despite the asking, he ultimately sidesteps and circumnavigates the issue by failing to see its incarnate application, and looks beyond it in the hope of hearing and retreating into an opulent construction of words. “The eloquence of Jesus consisted not in grand words but in grand facts.” The presence of the \( \Lambda \varrho \omicron \varsigma \) is expressed and seen in the participation which is one’s doing. The impetus for the doing is the incarnate \( \Lambda \varrho \omicron \varsigma \). There exists no other means to effect a doing which issues in this seeing; all else is merely speculation and theory:

For, perhaps, even if in some way we attain the most sublime and highest contemplation of the Word and of the truth, we shall not forget completely that we were introduced to him by his coming in our body. 

Yet the coming into history “in our body” is in itself insufficient for seeing. One isn’t here simply looking at an object among so many others in the world. This body expresses a \( \lambda \omicron \gamma \omicron \varsigma \) which is \( \dot{o} \Lambda \varrho \omicron \varsigma \), a truth who is \( \alpha \nu \tau \omicron \alpha \lambda \iota \theta \varepsilon \iota \alpha \alpha \)ia, and who speaks \( \lambda \omicron \gamma \omicron \omicron \omicron \) which are seen rather than heard:

Scripture says, in Exodus, “The people saw the voice of the Lord.” Obviously, a voice is heard rather than seen. But the Scripture says this to show us that those who deserve to...
“see God’s voice” see it with different eyes. In the Gospel, however, it is not a voice that is seen but a word, which is more excellent than a voice. . . . The apostles themselves saw the Word, not because they had beheld the body of our Lord and Saviour, but because they had seen the Word. If seeing Jesus’ body meant seeing God’s Word, then Pilate, who condemned Jesus, saw God’s Word; so did Judas the traitor.653

The θεωρία requires the free assent of a life which expresses the Λόγος. Simply being in being, being in history, standing in some particular spot in time and place, is of no avail. There must take place an internalization of the Λόγος in which seeing becomes vision/θεωρία. The θεωρία must speak inside one, and must issue in meaning. In some sense, Λόγος and ἀλήθεια are the raw stuff of meaning, the ἔλη of meaning encountered through experience of the complex of ἐπίνοιαι, which must be given assent through their application and participation in a life. There is involved a dialectical and dialogical experience, an encounter through a progressive or cumulative dynamic of back and forth between one’s assent, and the ἔλη which is sought through the assent. A purity of heart is required for θεωρία, yet one must oneself first open to the purity, must leap into its hermeneutical and experiential circle:

Only one who has a pure heart and shows himself worthy of the vision of God will see . . . One will be pure of heart; another will still be stained with some filth. Although they will be in the same place, the place itself will not be able to help or hinder them. Whoever has a pure heart will see God. Whoever does not will not see what the other beholds. I think we should understand something similar of Christ, too, when he was seen in the body. Not everyone who laid eyes on him was able to see him. They saw his body, but, insofar as he was Christ, they could not see him. . . Pilate, who saw Jesus, did not gaze upon the Father. . . . Neither Pilate nor Judas saw Christ as Christ.654

There must be a reciprocity across wills divine and human. In the thought of de Lubac already quoted in part above,655 there is in Origen’s thought a dialogic quality to Christian being and divine-human relations. De Lubac proposes that for Origen, Scripture is:

a word (parole), which is to say, the start of a dialogue. It is addressed to someone from whom it awaits a response. More precisely, it is God who offers himself through it, and

653 Origen, HLk 1.4.
654 Origen, HLk 3.3-4.
655 P. 5.
he awaits more than a response: a return movement. . . . [people] can indeed read this book, written, like all other books, in their human language . . . [but] they do not, for all that, understand it. He alone understands it, who, in the unity of its divine intention, carries out the movement of conversion to which God was inviting him through these words.  

What de Lubac calls here “unity of divine intention” is a taking up of the Scriptural invitation to dialogue toward experience of αὐτοαλήθεια. The pure dialogue of God’s offer must be accepted and engaged through the response and “return movement” of expressed assent.

Such a dynamic is possible only after the “making everything Gospel” of the Λόγος. The “making known” of truth in θεωρία is wholly contingent upon the historicity of the Christic incarnation of God. The extraordinary vision of Moses, his vision into what Philo refers to as the “paradigmatic essences” is acknowledged by Origen, though as grand as Origen believes Moses’ purely noetic experience of God to have been, he maintains that it is only in the historicity of the incarnation that truth in its fullest sense can be known. If it is to transcend its attenuated form as a shadow, truth in this understanding is wholly and absolutely contingent upon the vision effected by God’s stepping into history. While the things which Moses accomplished were “shadows of certain realities,” Christ now stands in time and place as he who formerly had merely cast these very shadows of certain realities. In Origen’s estimation, the event of the Incarnation has effected a shift from the mere possession of a signifying portrait

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656 De Lubac, History and Spirit, 347.
657 “But since the Saviour has come, and has caused the gospel (εὐαγγέλιον) to be embodied in the gospel, he has made all things gospel, as it were.” Origen, CIn, 1.33.
658 See above, pp. 63, n. 214-5; 66.
659 “It is clear that Moses saw in his mind the truth of the Law and the allegorical meanings related to the anagogical sense of the stories he recorded. . . . since he could see better than us that the things accomplished through himself were shadows of certain realities” Origen, CIn 6.22.
660 As Henri Crouzel has put it: “By displaying a relationship between the two parts of the Christian Bible which is that of portrait to subject, of the signifying to the signified, Origen affirms their correspondence, their unity, the unity of the God of which they speak and of the Spirit that inspires them.” Origen, 64. Crouzel expresses well what could be referred to as the pan-syncretic nature of the dynamic relationship between spiritual exegesis and prophecy: “Spiritual exegesis is in a kind of way the reverse process of prophecy: the latter looks to the future, but the former looks back from the future to the past” (ibid., 71). The centrifugal “shadow” of Christ is cast in either direction.
of a subject to the coming to full fruition of the Signified in time and place, effecting decisive
removal of the veil (κάλυμμα) in the unveiling (ἀπο-κάλυψις) of ἀλήθεια:

Now the light which was contained within the law of Moses, but was hidden away under
a veil (κάλυμμα), shone forth at the advent of Jesus, when the veil was taken away and
there came at once to men’s knowledge those “good things” of which the letter of the law
held a “shadow.”

4.iii.b) The Incarnation Gives Rise to Symbol (II)

The Savior wanted to make the actions reported to us by the evangelists symbolic
(σύμβολα) of his own spiritual operations.

It is helpful to begin treatment of Origen’s notion of symbol by first taking note of the
divergence of meaning between the words σύμβολον/σύμβαλλω and διάβαλον/διαβάλλω. The
former speaks of “coming together; bring together; unite; contribute; be profitable; interpret;
agree; understand.” The latter speaks of rejection, of a “throwing across; to deceive; disprove;
misrepresent; accuse; attack; set at variance.” The common semantic core and agent of both
words is βόλος, which refers to a throw or cast, and also to the thing caught by the throw or cast.
Both words therefore refer to a “putting out” or “expression.” English permits one to say that
both σύμβολον and διάβαλον are σύμβολον. They both refer to a “putting out” of symbolic
economy. Intentionality comes to expression in the act of throwing or casting outward.

Origen takes the influence of the devil (διάβολος) on Judas to have been affected by
means of a βάλλων (throwing) of a βέλος (dart/arrow). The devil is one who throws deceit
across (διά):

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661 Origen, PA 4.1.6. Origen extends the theme in a homily on Exodus: “Only Moses’ face was glorified” after the
revelation of the law, but “in the Gospels the whole Moses is glorified anew.” Origen, HEx 12.3.

662 Origen, CMt 16.20. Translation by Daly, in History & Spirit, 235.

663 CIn 32.20-25. The text in question is Jn 13.2: translated in the NRSV as “The devil had already put it into
(βεβλήκότος) the heart of Judas.” Origen takes John’s verb βεβλήκότος (from βάλλω) to indicate “piercing” as by an
arrow, rather than the more prosaic “putting in.” Origen takes his exegetical cue from Ps 7.13-15: “He has prepared
his deadly weapons, making his arrows (βέλη) fiery shafts.”
If, then, someone else has not stood in the truth, it is clear that the devil (διάβολος), that murderer from the beginning, has not, and the reason he has not stood in the truth has been expressed as follows, “Because truth is not in him.” And the reason why truth is not in him is that he has been deceived and accepts lies, and he has himself been deceived by himself. On this basis he is reckoned to be worse than the rest of those who are deceived, since they are deceived by him, but he creates his own deception himself.

Note the awkward juxtaposition of active and passive dynamics with which Origen marks the reflexive nature of the deceit: the devil both “has been deceived,” and “he has himself been deceived by himself.” Caught in a self-propagating web or circle of deceit, the Διάβολος is the archetypal βάλλων of the incurvatus in se – the curvature of the self back into the self. The curvature and insularity is chosen over the trajectory of grace, as the Διάβολος throws the wheel of deception into motion via his exponential eschewal of truth. There is at work here no notion of static nature, but only of a fall propagated through the devil’s own agency. Yet as the ἀρχή of deceit in a world created “very good,” the devil’s deceit is “worse than the rest,” since all subsequent deception is a participation in his insular and deceptive wellspring, into which those who thirst dip their cups only to draw up nothing but arid and parched solipsism.

The world is also said by Origen to be thrown in his close consideration of the word καταβολή. The Κόσμος that the Λόγος himself is, “has nothing below even as this world has

664 Origen, Cln 20.243-44.

665 For the history of the notion of incurvatus in se, see Matt Jenson, Gravity of Sin: Augustine, Luther and Barth on Homo Incurvatus in Se (London: T&T Clark, 2006).

666 “He who made all things very good would not leave willing the good imperfect.” Origen, Cln 20.196. The same could be said about willing the bad: it too is not “left imperfect” but always issues in one’s expressing oneself into the same. One has the recourse and freedom to perfect either good or bad within – and as – oneself. Crouzel notes that Origen leaves behind the imperfect world of Philo’s “intelligibles” in his emphasis on the salvific interplay between the divine Mystery of Person, and the sensibles and freedom of historicity: “In the last analysis the Mystery is not an idea, but a person, the Son, and in spite of the multiplicity of ‘theorems’, that is of objects of contemplation, which it provides, the Intelligible World finds its perfection in the unity of the Person of the Son, one and multiple.” Crouzel, Origen 102.

667 Used in the Gospel of John (17.24) and Ephesians (1.4) to describe the act of creation.

The world’s *having-been-thrown-down* seems to preclude its having anything above it:

For how can this world, whose creation is a throwing down (*καταβολή*), have anything above? For one must not hear the phrase, “Before the throwing down of the world,” in just any way, [but] advisedly because the saints coined the expression “throwing down” to express such a concept, although they could have said, “Before the creation (*κτίσεως*) of the world,” and not have used the expression “throwing down.” The whole world, therefore, and the things in it are included in the “throwing down.” But the genuine disciples of Jesus, whom he chose out of the world that, by bearing their own cross and following him, they might no longer be of the world, come to be outside the throwing down of the world in its entirety.  

Therefore via the *κατάβολον* there is possibility of movement upward from *διάβολον* to *σύμβολον* – one may make one’s cast instead for concord, “outside” the “throwing down” of the world and the “throwing across” of the *diabolics* of discord and deceit. One effects this by means of becoming a *σύμβολον* and expression of the Λόγος:

I would say (*μέν*) that those who have contemplated the bodiless realities called “invisible” and “not seen” by Paul, who exist by reason (*λόγος*) apart from everything perceptible by the sense, are ruled by that preeminent (*προηγομένης*) nature of the only begotten. But (*δὲ*) those are ruled by the Christ who have arrived at the rational principle (*λόγον*) of those things perceptible by the senses, and through them glorify the one who made them, and are themselves ruled by reason.

There is a distinction and contrast made here, governed by Origen’s use of *μέν* and *δὲ*. The former seems to involve an experience which occurs outside of the tactility of embodiment and the relationality of historical experience, a somewhat detached experience of *αὐτοαλήθεια* – of “truth-itself” – rather than truth in the dramatic relationality of “hypostatically existing.”

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669 Origen, *CJn* 19.149. It is not entirely clear to me what Origen means by this statement. Perhaps he is here wishing to avoid an intermingling or conglomeration of “natures” within either world.

670 Jn 17.24; Eph 1.4.

671 Jn 15.19.


673 Cf. Col 1.16; Rom 1.20; 2 Cor 4.18.


675 Origen, *PA* 1.2.2. See above, pp. 84; 119; 134; 137; 139; 152-3.
latter, on the other hand, is thoroughly grounded in, and proceeds from out of, historicity, from “things perceptible to the senses.” The former is a ruling by “preeminent” reason, i.e., reason which hasn’t been projected – reason before it has been sent out (προηγουμένης: πρό + ἀγω) and stood out (pre + eminere). The latter seems more human and humanizing than the ideal and idealizing which constitutes the former. One “stands out” the λόγος through participatory expression of the same. Furthermore, the latter involves persons in the work and economy of the “glorification” of “the one who made them.” One opens the assent and becomes thereby a conduit through which glorification is expressed in the participatory intersection of wills divine and human.676

Origen uses the language of propagation to emphasize the symbolo-poetic677 freedom of agents, speaking of “conception” and “generation” which issue through assent as symbol expressed in the “giving birth of the soul:”

And so it is shown that in everything we do, our soul gives birth and generates sons, namely, its thoughts and the works that it does. And if what it does is in accordance with law and in accordance with the Word of God, it gives birth to the spirit of salvation, and for that reason “it will be saved through the generation of sons”678 ... But if what it does is contrary to the law and is sin, doubtless it gives birth to evil offspring as a result of a conception from a hostile spirit.679

676 Origen’s notion of “glory” is treated below, in Ch. 5, but it is important to here note that the glorification of God occurs through a participatory dynamic, in history and through “the rational principle (λόγον) of those things perceptible to the senses.” As Grillmeier puts it: “From his begetting onwards he exists for mankind. In him the transcendent properties of the Father take form, as the expression of an objective, inexpressible reality. By means of participation, Christians too for their part can express the perfections of Christ and further the unfolding of the epinoiai.” Grillmeier, Christ in Christian Tradition, vol. 1, 142.

677 Here I am again employing the sense of “poetic” mentioned above, p. 1: “hermeneutics is poetic, in the sense of the Greek root – ποιεῖν – to create.”

678 1 Tim 2.15.

679 Origen, HNum 20.2.2-3. The source from which the agent draws is perpetuated and reified in act. The agent stands between a well of Λόγος and a well of evil. In the context of a discussion of λόγοι and natural theology in Maximus Confessor, Dumitru Stâniloae says: “The Logos is for us the potential womb of all concepts and meanings.” Stâniloae, Orthodox Spirituality (Pennsylvania: St. Tikhon’s Orthodox Theological Seminary Press, 2002) 219.
The double economy of symbol – of Christ’s actions symbolizing his “spiritual operations” and of “everything we do” – stands at the heart of Origen’s divergence from Clement in their respective treatment of symbol. As mentioned above, Samuel Laeuchli notes a parting of ways of Origen from his fellow Alexandrian, Clement, on the nature of symbol in pagan theory and praxis. I see the gist of the distinction to be a view of symbol as representation (in the view of Clement), in contradistinction to symbol as expression, or better yet, as expressing (in the view of Origen). Symbolic economy serves a different function for either Alexandrian. Origen mocked the pagan attempt to ascend along the thread of a manufactured and mute symbol up to the gods, to rise upward to the gods from “images which are lacking in life and feeling,” regarding the attempt as an impossible one from the work of humanly-created signa to the uncreated Res. This attempt is an untenable reversal of the symbolic economy as Origen sees it – a futile bid to hear Life through an articulated lifelessness. One tries to go up into the

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680 P. 87, n. 306.

681 In the opinion of Laeuchli, Clement “develops and speaks about pagan and Christian symbols without distinction.” This is so because “these symbols in no way derogate from the majesty of God, inasmuch as the Divine cannot be affected by any form of symbolic expression of Himself. The symbol, pagan as well as Christian, is part of the divine.” (Laeuchli, 102). Laeuchli notes an existential turn in emphasis in Origen: “The symbol became an act, a person, or a saying in connection with Jesus Christ, the incarnate Logos” (105). Origen moves beyond symbol as abstract or representational, and hence cannot abide by the interchangeability of symbols pagan and Christian, rejecting any decidedly arbitrary assigning of some particular object as Christic symbol. There is a relation between what is symbolized/expressed and who or what symbolizes/expresses.

682 “Even if some maintain that these objects are not gods but imitations (µιµήµατα) of the true gods and symbols (σύµβολα) of them, nonetheless they too are uneducated and slaves and ignorant [italicized words indicate Celsus’ charge against the Christians] because they imagine that the hands of the artisans can make imitations of divinity.’” Origen, CC 6.14.

683 Origen, CC 8.18. “What intelligent person would not laugh at a man who, after studying in philosophy the profoundest doctrines about God or gods, turns his eyes to images and either prays to them or, by means of the sight of these images, offers his prayer, indeed, to the God who is known spiritually, imaging that he must ascend to Him from that which is visible and external?” Origen, CC 7.44.

684 Rowan Williams notes an inextricable relation between res and signum in the interplay between the object of immaterial truth, and the “textuality/subject” of material being in experiences of truth: “A ‘heterodox’ teacher, in Origen’s terms, would be one who removed the locus of unity and intelligibility entirely to the immaterial world, leaving the material as something only accidentally related to the truth of spirit. . . . Orthodoxy requires both that the distinction between material and immaterial be affirmed . . . and that the material be defined as a ‘text,’ embodying an intelligible history shaped elsewhere. . . . Bodies encode but do not originate or exhaust meaning.” Williams, “Origen: Between Orthodoxy and Heresy,” Origeniana Septima, 12-13.
symbol rather than listen to it expressing outward. Origen departs from the arbitrary nature of symbol – the “bastard reasoning”685 – of the thought of his predecessors, by grounding and centring his notion of symbol around an ontological principle, namely, the propagation – the conception and generation – of symbolic expression by a kind of “parentage” or progenitive and inextricable father/son relation:

If you become so pure in mind, so holy in body, and so spotless in your deeds, you can even produce Christ himself according to him who was saying, “My little children, for who I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you.”686

Laeuchli states that “Origen nowhere says that Jesus (as person, in his existence) was a symbol for anything.”687 To the best of my knowledge, this is accurate688 – but it does not preclude Jesus’ being symbolic, of symbolizing. His horizontal movement through the stream of history was interspersed with conjunctions of tributaries which ran vertical,689 a notion evident when Jesus says: “You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world.”690 By means of this conjunction in history, there is a relation between the Κόσμος which the Λόγος himself is,691 which “has nothing below it” – and the mundane κόσμος “which has

685 This is of course how Plato describes knowledge of his “receptacle (ὑπόδοχον/χώρα)” – it is comprehended by means of a “bastard form of reasoning (μετ’ ἀνανοησίας ἂπτόν λογισμὸν τινι νόθῳ)” Timaeus, 52B.2-3. This knowledge is not fathered by the historicity of the senses.


687 Laeuchli, “Origen’s Conception of Symbolon,” 111. Laeuchli does go on to say, however, that “where Origen praises the person who sees Jesus no longer as doctor, or as shepherd or as redeemer but as truth and logos and justice (i.e., CJn 1.124), a symbolistic reference cannot be denied.” Ibid., 113.

688 Rufinus translates Luke’s “σημεῖον” (Lk 2.34) as “signo” in his translation of Origen’s Commentary on Romans: “Similarly it is said about the Lord himself in the Gospel, ‘Behold, he is destined for the falling and rising of many, and to be a sign (σημεῖον) that will be spoken against’ (Lk 2.34). For the sign (signo) under which Christ had come was spoken against because one thing was seen in him, and something else was recognized. Flesh was perceived and God was believed.” Origen, CRom 4.2.5. The “something else” must of course have been symbolized/expressed for the “recognizing” – the θεωρία – to have occurred.

689 My intention in making the distinction “horizontal/vertical” is far less ambitious than that of P. Tzamalikos. In his explication of the complex entanglement of the dynamics of ἄιδων, ἡρέμος, and καιρός, the spatio-temporal mechanics of the relation between the horizontal and vertical are worked out masterfully by Tzamalikos, in chapters 4 and 6, of his Origen: Philosophy of History.

690 Jn 8.23.

The centrifugal conjunction effects a divine-human relation of the sort that both God and human being encounter expressivity in their symbolic movement, and through these expressions, “attain their own nature.”

Divine-human relation draws together a number of multiplicities. Principal among these is: 1) the multiplicity inherent in the three-in-one unicity of the Trinity; 2) the multiplicity of monisms – i.e., that of God, and that of being-itself; 3) the multiplicity of beings within creation. That there is no collapse of any being in its being expressed and encountered, and that there is nothing arbitrary in the expressing and encountering, is an idea made clear by Origen. These relations are effected and affected in the essential and actual unity of Father and Son. Toward the beginning of First Principles, Origen says:

And can anyone who has learned to regard God with feelings of reverence suppose or believe that God the Father ever existed, even for a single moment, without begetting this wisdom?

And toward the conclusion of the same work, he says:

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692 Origen, CIn 19.149.

693 It is well beyond the limits of this study to present a comprehensive treatment of Rahner’s notion of symbol. But it will be helpful to add the next step Rahner takes after proposing that “all beings are by their nature symbolic, because they necessarily express themselves in order to attain their own nature.” To this idea Rahner adds a corollary notion that “all beings (each of them, in fact) are multiple, and are or can be essentially the expression of another in this unity of the multiple and one in this plurality, by reason of its plural unity.” Rahner, “The Theology of the Symbol” 225-6. The multiplicity of beings is not a disparate multiplicity: “these plural moments in the unity of a being must have an inner agreement among themselves on account of the unity of the being.” (227). One need only call to mind the Christological and Trinitarian formulae of the Councils to find credence in Rahner’s ideas here. Any talk of Father and Son affirms a Trinitarian application of Rahner’s proposal of all beings as “plural unity,” of the “unity of the multiple and one,” and also of the realization or attainment of a nature by means of the expression.

694 These rei, these multiplicities, are actual; they are in being as Being has come together in the relation between the monism of God and that of being-itself. The alternative, the positing of some sort of break in relation, of something which is outside this relation, would demand another monism – one which is merely virtual. Perhaps this idea can be found in Origen’s notion of “non-being” – in which dwell those who are “far from him [i.e., God],” who thereby, “assume no participation in him,” and who are “not even said to be.” Origen, CRom 4.5.12. see above, pp. 105-10.


696 Origen, PA 1.2.2.
And I would dare to add that as he is a likeness of the Father there is no time when he did not exist. For when did God, who according to John is said to be “light” (for God is light)\textsuperscript{697} have no “effulgence of his own glory,”\textsuperscript{698} that we should dare to lay down a beginning for the Son, before which he did not exist?\textsuperscript{699}

By statements such as these, the unity is well expressed. As per the symbolizing – the expressing of the symbol by which occurs “attainment of nature” – it is effected in the expression of the Son’s “feeling,” “deciding,” “assuming,” “descending,” “coming down,” “suffering,” when Origen says:

He came down to earth out of compassion for the human race, feeling our sufferings even before he suffered on the cross and decided to assume our flesh. For if he had not suffered, he would not have come to live on the level of human life. First he suffered, then descended and became visible. What is this suffering which he suffered for us? It is the suffering of love. And also the Father himself, the God of all . . . does he not in some way suffer? Don’t you know when he directs human affairs he suffers human suffering? For “the Lord your God bore your ways as a man bears his son.”\textsuperscript{700} Therefore God bears our ways just as the Son of God bears our sufferings. The very Father is not without suffering. When he is prayed to, he has pity and compassion; he suffers something of love and puts himself in the place of those with whom he, in view of the greatness of his nature, cannot be.\textsuperscript{701}

The “attainment of nature” is effected by means of the coming down of love which God is, in the paradoxical coming-to-be “with those with whom he cannot be.”\textsuperscript{702} Love expresses as suffering and reifies and attains its relational nature through the suffering which unites the object of love, with the subjects of Lover, and beloved.\textsuperscript{703} A tear fell from Jesus’ eye in front of

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\textsuperscript{697} Jn 1.5.
\textsuperscript{698} Heb. 1.3.
\textsuperscript{699} Origen, \textit{PA} 4.4.1
\textsuperscript{700} Cf. Dt 1:31
\textsuperscript{701} Origen, \textit{HEzek} 6.6. It is interesting to note how Augustine departs from Origen’s emphasis on God’s “bearing our ways,” and “suffering the suffering,” preferring to speak of divine agency rather than divine experience \textit{in se}. In a fairly late work (ca. 418-423), addressing God’s repentance at having made Saul a king (1 Sam 15.11), Augustine says that: “when he [God] is angry, he is not moved, but punishes; and when he is merciful, he does not feel sorrow, but sets free.” Augustine, \textit{Answer to an Enemy of the Law and the Prophets}, 1.40. Translation by Roland Teske, in \textit{Arianism and Other Heresies} (Hyde Park: New York, 1995).
\textsuperscript{702} 1 Jn 4.8.
\textsuperscript{703} As Aidan O’Boyle puts it: “Thus, in relation to the Father, the Son is conceived as being revelatory of God’s substance in his own hypostasis as well as in his activity.” O’Boyle, \textit{Towards a Contemporary Wisdom}
the tomb of Lazarus. If it was a real tear, it had no “actuality” or “essence” prior to its falling. The tear fell from the eye of one whose actual essence inclined its falling. God experienced this fall, went from not having experienced this fall, to having experienced it – and “attainment of nature” occurs in the falling. The expressions of “feeling,” “deciding,” “assuming,” “descending,” “coming down,” “suffering,” are not left imperfect, but issue in an expressive and perfect attainment and salvific meaning.\footnote{704}

To speak of “expressing to attain one’s own nature” does not mean that there is some underlying or internal nature which has yet to be expressed. Rahner’s “all beings . . . express themselves in order to attain their own nature” could perhaps be paraphrased to say instead ‘themselves express,’ giving instead: ‘all beings themselves express in order to attain their own nature.’ Human being engages in expression. An artist engages in art. An artist finds herself in her art. God expresses conceptual λόγοι in the soteriological artistry of relational Λόγος, which is not ars gratia artis; this art brings to fruition and attainment the love that God is in realizing his suffering.

4.iii.c) Conclusion: Reading the Horizon of Reason

In Origen’s thought, the Incarnation of the Λόγος gives rise to a veracious and non-arbitrary symbol of λόγος. This λόγος/symbol in turn gives experiential and participatory rise to thought through expressive action in history and encounter which divests and re-defines merely conceptual and ratiocinative reason. The absolute and objective qualities which God is per se

\footnote{704} “He who made all things very good would not leave willing the good imperfect. But neither is it possible to conceive of willing the good unless action that is good in relation to such willing is joined with the good willing.” Origen, CJn 20.196.
are expressed in the words and ἐπίνοιαι of the Λόγος, and are revelatory of divine will pro nobis. This choice and absolute freedom of the divine objective stands in stark contrast to Plotinus’ exitus, in which the “going out” of emanation is a result not of choice, but of essential disparity within the primary hypostases. Disparity and necessity are rejected by Origen in favour of choice and will. Ontological disparity is rejected in favour of ontological unity when the choice and will come to history in veracious “hypostatic existence” which is incarnate and speaks in the eternal generation of the Son from the Father. Reason is the hermeneutic key which unlocks the meaning of the cosmic text. This is nothing new, of course. But in Origen’s thought, reason is theologically-oriented. This too is nothing new (cf. Heraclitus, the Stoics, Philo). But in Origen, there is a dialectic relation between ἀρχή, ἀλήθεια, ἀποκάλυψις, and history. One could perhaps say: ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ἡ ἀλήθεια· ἐν ἱστορίᾳ ἐστιν ἡ ἀποκάλυψις. Reason is not side-lined or held fast in abstract estrangement from the world, but comes to be re-defined and known anew in the essentially hierophantic event when the essence and being of reason-itself (Λόγος) becomes assent as will and act.

Reason stands as a μεθόριος of human experience. It is given great emphasis by Origen as a means to articulate the great and corollary emphasis he places also on freedom of the self. As the ὀλη of meaning, reason is the potentiality of the free agent at which and out of which life is transformed at the instant of decision and assent. But it is only a centre. It is bookended in Trinitarian experience also in the givenness of creation and grace. The next chapter turns to the latter.
Chapter 5: The Horizon of Grace

Introduction

The notion of grace that I have in mind in this chapter is more expansive than is typical in contemporary Christian reflection on the matter. If the topic is a vast one in Christian thinking, it is unmanageably so in that of Origen. Because the topic cannot receive due justice in the short space of this paper, I will here compile my own miscellanies, or στρωμάτα, drawing together a patchwork of Origen’s thought which speaks about his notion of grace – if somewhat implicitly at times – paying particular attention to ideas which pertain to Origen’s cosmotheoria and divine-human relation and experience.

In the horizon of grace, one arrives at the final of the three categories I have proposed of divine-human relation and experience. The horizon of grace encompasses experiences of a different sort than those of being-itself, and those of reason. Where being and reason reveal divine power and essence, grace is where divine will is revealed. Just as being-itself was worked out with emphasis on God the Father, and reason with special reference to the Son; so grace will centre around Origen’s notion of Spirit. Given Origen’s relatively fluid and expansive notions

705 A more expansive notion of grace in Origen’s thought is seen also by Joseph S. O’Leary, who writes: “though he does not formulate strong theses about grace, Origen’s writings are, in fact, suffused with a multifaceted sense of divine grace, which might even serve to correct a certain narrowness of focus in the Augustinian tradition on the issue.” Westminster Handbook to Origen, (Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 2004.), s.v. “grace,” 115. Roger Haight offers a succinct and apt definition of grace as: “God at work outside of God’s self, so to speak, and immanently present within human subjects as an offer of personal encounter.” Haight, “Sin and Grace” in Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives, volume II (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991) 115.

706 The title of a work of Clement of Alexandria, and also of Origen (not extant), which is usually translated as “miscellanies,” or “patchwork,” owing to the non-systematic approach of the works.

707 And here it should be noted that Origen uses an expansive understanding of Spirit as well. Peter Martens notes in his article on the Holy Spirit in the Westminster Handbook to Origen how: “Origen refers to the ‘Holy Spirit,’ also to the ‘Spirit of God,’ the ‘Spirit of Christ,’ the ‘divine Spirit,’ simply the ‘Spirit,’ the divine Power,’ and the ‘Paraclete.’” Ibid., 125. In a homily on Leviticus, Origen asks “What is the Lord?,” finding the answer in Scripture: “the Lord is Spirit” (2 Cor 3.17), and “God is Spirit” (Jn 4.24). From this, Origen concludes: “If therefore both the Lord and God are ‘Spirit,’ we ought to hear spiritually those things which the Spirit says. Still further I say, we are to believe the things the Lord says, not only to be spiritual things, but even the Spirit.” The things said are themselves Spirit! Origen is no doubt playing with the two senses of πνεῦμα – the exteriority and materiality of “wind,” and the interiority and immateriality of “spirit.” Ultimately, Origen is referring not to the exterior, material “fleshly” words themselves, but to the interior, immaterial “διάλεκτος” of God – referring to langue rather than
of both Spirit and grace, the approach taken in the chapter could be considered a reflection on “Spirituality” or “life in the Spirit” – a kind of summation of the *ethos* of Christian being and experience. In short, the concern here is with experience which transcends the determinations “being” and “reason.”

### 5.i) The Divine Will

#### 5.i.a) Revealing & Making Known

*Plainly it is a gift of God that we exist; it is the grace of the Creator who willed us to exist.*

At its most fundamental level, grace is the divine will speaking in history. It sounds first at the nascence of being-itself and history as sole impetus of the plenipotentiary which rends the silence of the *ὑνάσκω* of nothingness. There is something rather than nothing because there is grace. The something that is – the *κόσμος* – reveals the divine will. Simply in its being it serves as a firstling toward revelation of the divine will, to the effect that it proclaims it in advance.

From the simple fact of being one begins ascent toward the making known of the upper regions and affects of the will:

There are realities that are so great that they find a rank superior to humanity and our mortal nature; they are impossible for our rational and mortal race to understand. Yet by the grace of God poured forth with measureless abundance from Him to men through that minister of unsurpassed grace to us, Jesus Christ, these realities have become possible for us.

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*parole.* For the distinction between *langue* and *parole* posited by Structuralism and Ricœur, see above, p. 159. This subject seems to have fascinated Origen: for his treatment of the relation between speech and sound, see *CJn* 2.193-5; *HGen* 3.1.2; *HEx* 13.1.2.

708 Origen, *CRom* 4.5.2.

709 In the sense of both *creatio ex nihilo* and Plotinus’ *meontic* theory of evil. See above, pp. 98-103.

710 For the distinction which Origen makes between “proclaiming in advance,” and “making known,” see above, pp. 152; 155.

711 Origen, *OP* preface, 1.1.
There is in effect a rupturing of the possible through the being of grace. A new dimension of being-itself is opened out.\(^{712}\)

Being itself is merely the ἀρχή and στοιχεῖα of the revelation and experience of the divine will and grace. Being proclaims in advance and reveals by means largely of the inherent λόγοι within creation, which issue toward a making known in grace which both succeeds and exceeds mere being. In this idea, Origen’s approach to Scriptural exegesis and his understanding of creation and history bear remarkable similarities:

One must understand the divine scripture intellectually and spiritually; for the sensible or physical way of knowing that is according to the historical meaning is not true. If you try to draw the divine sense down to the purely external aspect of an expression, lacking any foundation there, it will go back to the home which is its proper object of contemplation; for, supplied by its guide, the Holy Spirit, it has wings, the spiritual graces. Therefore, high above the ether itself, so to speak, it flies away. Therefore not to rise above the letter, but to cling to it insatiably, is the sign of a life that is not true.\(^{713}\)

In this light, both history and Scripture bear an “external” – the “letter” – which in itself bears meaning, but is not the meaning itself. The “sensible way of knowing” grasps after meaning from without, and can only draw back into itself, *incurvatus in se*,\(^{714}\) in futility and dejection, unless it follows the guidance of the Spirit-wing “back to its home” into “proper contemplation.” The materiality of these letters – these στοιχεῖα – must be accepted in their advance proclamation, but they ultimately must be *made known* via engaged, participatory encounter – an experiential hermeneutics of grace, as it were. The divine will is revealed to have

\(^{712}\) Incorporating the Heideggerian distinction between “existentiell,” which indicates “concrete, actual possibilities for Dasein,” and “existential,” which indicate the “wide,” or general possibilities which limit the former, John Macquarrie writes: “Grace is the event in which God restores to me and places within my grasp my lost possibility of authentic being, that is to say, the being which God intended in creation and from which [human being] has fallen away into sin. . . . For it was because of past sins that [human being] was fallen into a situation in which [choosing] authentic being was no longer an existentiell possibility. . . . The event of grace, therefore, means both a deliverance from the past – forgiveness – and a new possibility for the future.” Macquarrie, *An Existentialist Theology* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1973) 34; 145. Both the actual existentiell possibilities and the pool of possibility of the existential are opened out by grace.

\(^{713}\) Origen, *CProv* 23. Translation by Robert J. Daly, in *Origen: Spirit & Fire*, 93.

\(^{714}\) See above, p. 166.
a two-way dynamic; where creation is akin to God’s pointing out of himself, the Scriptures are akin to God’s pointing in to himself while drawing attention to the symmetry and harmony which exists between creation, revealed Λόγος and Scripture, and the reason and order which are attributes of divinity. One steps into this hermeneutic circle through the horizon of grace, through which is revealed both Godself and God’s will via the medium of his work of creation, including Scripture: 715

The works of divine providence and the plan of this universe are as it were rays of God’s nature in contrast to his real substance and being, and because our mind is unable of itself to behold God as he is, it understands the parent of the universe from the beauty of his works and the comeliness of his creatures. 716

The “rays of God’s nature” must now remain to some extent obscure, just as the sun remains obscure to vision due to its power, but is nevertheless known through the shadows it casts. By means of participation in its light, it is better known than seen. “It is one thing to see, another to know.” 717 Just as a spiritual reader of scripture sees the letters, yet knows their import, in similar fashion one sees the Son, hence knows the Father, so intimately and mutually inclusive are they:

For if “whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise,” 718 then in this very fact that the Son does all things just as the Father does, the Father’s image is reproduced in the Son, whose birth from the Father is as it were an act of his will proceeding from the mind. . . . in willing he uses no other means than that which is produced by the deliberations of his will. 719

Here Origen is positing an elasticity of time in the relation of cause to effect in the divine will.

The cause is also the effect, and the object is also the subject. The “act of will” that is born is the Son, who is himself the διάλεγμα of the deliberation – the very act – of willing, who is reified in the

715 As Rebecca Lyman puts it “God’s desire (θέλημα) is the linchpin between his nature and power, so that the will (βουλή) of God operates in no impersonal or abstract way in creation and redemption. Origen’s God is never beyond love for the individual or intervention; divine will is not merely for the good, but to increase the goodness of creation by specific actions.” Lyman, Christology and Cosmology, 59.

716 Origen, PA 1.1.6.

717 Origen, PA 1.1.8.

718 Jn 5.19.

719 Origen, PA 1.2.6.
“doing” of both the Father and the Son. But this “doing,” “reproducing,” “birth,” “act,”
“proceeding,” “willing,” “producing,” and reification, does not exhaust the depths of divine will.
The will always remains foreshadowed, even when intimated in Incarnation. Without exhausting
knowledge of the same, the divine will is revealed on both Golgotha and Tabor, the former by
darkening, the latter by illuminating. It has always done so:

The word of the Law and the prophetic word were “a glowing light,” but it was burning
within the Temple and could not radiate its splendor beyond there.720

There is in Origen’s thought an essential relation between the revealing and making
known dynamics of cosmogony and – to venture a neologism – chariology.721 There is a close
association between the divine oikovomía operative in cosmogony, chariology, and Scripture.
The Lógos which constitutes the effective heart of the divine oikovomía is rendered tactile
through cosmogony, affective through chariology, and legible through Scripture. In these three
chapters of the λόγοι of being, in their history and historicity, cosmogony constitutes a plot,
Scripture a script, and chariology its dramatization or production. Through these threefold
media, each of the aspects express and in-corporate quite essentially the desire of God, each
setting out this desire for human being to seek and to parse all experience in an eternally
upward-ascending hermeneutic of the κόσμος. On the human end of divine-human relation,
Origen’s Christianity was fundamentally a hermeneutic of experience of the κόσμος.722 This

720 Origen, HLev 13.2.1.
721 From χάρις, “grace.”
722 Patricia Cox has written well of the dynamic analogy between text and life: “Origen of Alexandria developed
not so much a system of theology as a style of reading biblical texts, a theological poietis which followed the
spiralling path of the soul in metaphor, symbol, and allegory.” Cox, “In my Father’s House are Many Dwelling
Places,” 322. And Manlio Simonetti: “In fact, Origen sees the relationship between the sacred text and its reader not
statically, as the passive apprehension of something given, but dynamically as an effort by the exegete to penetrate
ever more deeply into the inexhaustible depths of God’s Word, according to his own skill and tenacity. The
meanings of God’s Word are infinite, and so are the levels in which the reader can progressively share as he grows
in spiritual fitness.” Simonetti, Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic
Exegesis (T&T Clark, 1994) 44.
experience included a perception of being-itself as a procession and reification of the divine will outward as incarnation and salvation, in dynamic, experiential matrices of reason and grace.

5.i.b) Sharing

At the heart of Origen’s notion of grace is found a dynamic of sharing in divine-human relation through engaged, historical expression.\(^{723}\) There is no retreat into the mind. Origen is explicit that salvation and Christian being is not reducible to the crypto-Gnosticism of a quietist \textit{sola fides}, in which the object of faith effects the flip of a salvific switch, after which one goes about one’s way, saved, having acquired an indelible nature.\(^{724}\) Natures are not saved; persons in their historicity are saved. Origen wonders how those “who come forth of the school of Valentinus or Basilides,”

Should imagine that there is a nature of souls that would always be saved and never perish, and another that would always perish and never be saved.\(^{725}\)

Origen’s \textit{κόσμος} is more alive than that imaged by the Gnostics despite all the dramatic tension in their literature. And it is more dynamic and experiential than the abstracted vacuum of \textit{sola fides}. Such thinking is amenable only in a Plotinic worldview in which there exists nothing apart from God and pure intellects, only abstracted and indelible natures into which one is either born, or into which one can somehow retreat decisively and inextricably. Willed, created, historical, free, and willing being collapses into stasis and redundancy in such a worldview. But God created not only minds: God created a good \textit{κόσμος} and free history. God became

\(^{723}\) This is also the position of Lyman, who says: “Creatures as contingent share existence with God by his will; and, as existent they may, however imperfectly, share the goodness of divine nature. This is grace: they exist to be drawn into intimacy with God. Confidence in divine power and active love is anchored ultimately in the very structure of eternal being and created existence.” Lyman, \textit{Christology and Cosmology}, 59.

\(^{724}\) On Rom 2.5-6 (“in accordance with your hardness and impenitent heart you are storing up a treasure of wrath for yourself on the day of wrath and revelation God’s righteous judgment, who will repay each month according to his deeds”), Origen says: “In the first place let the heretics who claim that the natures of human souls are either good or evil be shut out. Let them hear that God pays back to each one not on account of his nature but on account of his works. In the second place let believers be edified so as not to entertain the thought that, because they believe, this alone can suffice for them.” Origen, \textit{CRom} 2.4.7.

\(^{725}\) Origen, \textit{CRom} 8.11.2.
incarnate. Rather, salvation is the suffusion of divine grace with which the subject engages in a
dialectic of not only thought, but also action, in the historicity of faith and life lived, not merely
thought. Living is the vehicle of the grace of life. The Gnostic denigration of history and the
material order and the stasis of natures was soundly rejected by Origen. 726

The faith which inheres in a believer must be expressed. As Gregory of Nazianzus would
later say, “The unassumed is the unhealed,” 727 and abides as such, unliving in imperfection and
isolation; it is frustrated and found wanting, even “halved.” One first is a disciple, then becomes
an apostle, in the advancement from the `ἀρχή and στοιχεῖα of faith toward its sending off (ἀπό +
στέλλω) out toward the hope of perfect expression:

I consider faith to be the first beginnings and the very foundations of salvation; hope is
certainly the progress and increase of the building; however, love is the perfection and
culmination of the entire work. That is why love is said to be greater than everything else. 728

This culmination has parallels with the Son’s “feeling,” “deciding,” “assuming,” “descending,”
“coming down,” “suffering,” which are not left imperfect, but which issue in expressive and
perfect salvific meaning. 729 “First he suffered, then descended and became visible. . . . It is the
suffering of love.” 730 Maurice Wiles notes the importance of relation in his definition of
“salvation,” proposing “an understanding of salvation as an unbreakable relationship of loving

726 For a helpful overview of Origen’s criticisms of Gnostic thought, see Peter W. Martens, Origen and Scripture: The Contours of the Exegetical Life, 114-31; and Thomas P. Scheck, Origen and the History of Justification: The Legacy of Origen’s Commentary on Romans (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008) 20-30. Scheck states the chief concern of Origen as being “denial of free choice of the will and the doctrine of salvation by natures.” Ibid., 20.

727 “For that which he has not assumed he has not healed; but that which is united to his Godhead is also saved. If only half Adam fell, then that which Christ assumes and saves may be half also; but if the whole of his nature fell, it must be united to the whole nature of Him that was begotten, and so be saved as whole.” Gregory of Nazianzus, letter 101.32 Translation in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, vol. 7, 440.

728 Origen CRom 4.6.3. Cf. 1 Cor 13.13.

729 See above, p. 166, n. 666: “He who made all things very good would not leave willing the good imperfect. But neither is it possible to conceive of willing the good unless action that is good in relation to such willing is joined with the good willing.” Origen, CJn 20.196.

730 Origen, HEzek 6.6.
obedience to God for which the best (though still imperfect) analogy is that of personal relationship.”

The openness and dynamic nature of relationship informs Origen’s thoughts on justification. A misreading of the same can lead to a kind of commodification of justification, in which it is held to be something which is not engaged, but merely possessed or not possessed. Grace is rendered redundant, since it is possessed in the commodity and imputation of justification. But neither grace nor justification are possessions. Grace and salvation are relation. Grace and salvation are engaged and engaging. Neither grace nor salvation is an object, neither are persons. Grace, salvation, and persons come together in a relation which is very far beyond any notion of object or commodification.

Calling to mind that Origen posits two levels of experience of Christ in an exitus-reditus dynamic, it can be said that the second of the two experiences – that experienced in the reditus – is an experience of Christ which is affected by the dynamic of grace. In this reditus experience of Christ, the Holy Spirit colours and affects the experience:

From the fullness of the Spirit, the fullness of love is infused into the hearts of the saints in order to receive participation in the divine nature, as the apostle Peter has taught, so that through this gift of the Holy Spirit, the word which the Lord said might be fulfilled, “As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be one in us.” This is, of course, to be sharers of the divine nature by the fullness of love furnished through the Holy Spirit.

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732 Origen is explicit in his leaving justification as open-ended: On Ps 143.2 “There is no one who is righteous,” “no one living will be justified in your sight,” Origen says “For as long as a person lives in the body, he cannot be justified or declared righteous, but when he departs from the body and leaves the struggles of this life.” Origen, CRom 3.3.13.
733 See above, pp. 98-103.
734 2 Pt 1.4.
735 Jn 17.21.
736 Origen, CRom 4.10.9.12.
The operative notion of wholism expressed here is witness to a long history which has been outlined above, beginning with Heraclitus. Throughout this history there has been a grasping after absolute essence, expressed at times as λόγος, or in the theories of σπερματικὸς λόγος and natural law, or in the emphatic passivity of human being in Philo. None of these ideas speak of a veracious sharing or relation – the crux of which can only be love. Origen’s shift opens up the possibility of human being as active agent in the experience of love over and above a notion of an observer standing watchful though detached in a world permeated with an elusive reason, or as a merely passive receptacle into which meaning is slotted.

5.1.c) Expressive Intimacy

In the distinction made by Origen between “firstlings” and “firstfruits,” one moves from simple revealed knowledge to a more intimate dynamic of making known. Indeed, one can come to reveal God through one’s own person in experiential relation: one can “produce an Isaac, that is, joy . . . the first fruit of the Spirit.” And in one’s “producing of Christ,” one can have God coursing through the very being and fabric of one’s own person. For Origen, mere knowledge of God is not sufficient as a goal. A merely noetic experience of God is left behind in favour of historical encounter. Knowledge of history is a noble pursuit, but it ultimately cannot be an end in itself. At issue here is an interiority which might elude one who establishes a worldview merely by looking to history, and marshalling up an interpretation and account of it. “I have often said already that in these stories history is not being narrated, but mysteries are

737 Beginning with Heraclitus. See above, pp. 43-9.
738 In the thought of the Stoics. See above, pp. 54-9.
739 See above, p. 70.
740 See above, pp. 112, n. 421; 136; 152.
741 Origen, CRom 4.6.9.
742 “If you become so pure in mind, so holy in body, and so spotless in your deeds, you can even produce Christ himself according to him who was saying, “My little children, for who I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you (Gal 4.19).” Origen, CRom 4.6.9.
interwoven.” The “narration of history” which effects tension across the Gospels is history viewed through the lens of the ἐπίνοια which are encountered and expressed in the narrative, and in participation of the same, through one’s being in the Λόγος himself:

But also the journey in wisdom, that is the active journey of the saved which takes place in him by means of discussions concerning truth in the divine Word and activities in conformity with the true righteousness, enables us to perceive how he is the way on which one needs to take nothing.745

One goes out toward authentic being only when one is in Christ. Christic Λόγος exercises, effects, and directs expressive intimacy through myriad expressions of revealing, even in the “riddles” of Scripture:

That is why the prophet has spoken in parables and riddles, so that our mind would be expanded – or, rather, that it might be gathered into one and see the precise points that have been made – and by withdrawing from the defects of the body, as it comes to understand the truth, it may direct the course of its life according to that same.746

The unassuming passage “There was a man sent from God,” gives Origen pause. As Ronald Heine notes, “At the literal level, he [Origen] says, this means he was sent to Israel and to those who heard him preach in the wilderness. At the deeper level, it means he was sent into the world.” The deeper level – that there has been a sending – gives one pause, and renders

743 Origen, HGen 10.4. The relation between history, narration, and mystery are contingent relations. They are the essence of Christianity, and they require the cohesion of dialectical engagement – a reading together – in order to issue in meaning. As David Dawson puts it: “allegorical reading enables one to see the allegorical (which is to say, the real) meaning of – not in place of – the letter.” Dawson, “Allegorical Reading and the Embodiment of the Soul in Origen,” in Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community, edited by Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones (New York: Routledge, 1998) 26. Italics Dawson’s. Origen applies this manner of reading also to history and the world itself. He does not mitigate either, but applies a reading strategy to both which seeks after the meaning conveyed through these respective containers: “The spiritual truth is often preserved in the material falsehood, so to speak,” as Origen puts it as CJn. 10.20. Dawson says “When read allegorically, the biblical text reveals a surprising and total isomorphism with the very structure of spiritual reality; to read this text properly is to be brought into direct relation with the way things – in their deepest reality – actually are.” Dawson, “Allegorical Reading,” 37.

744 Jn 14.6.
745 Origen, CJn 1.183.
746 Origen, HEzek 11.2.
747 Jn 1.7
748 Heine, Commentary on the Gospel According to John, introduction, 18.
deeper the literal meaning, as one comes to understand the nature of the one sent. This deeper level denigrates neither the being of history or the historical, nor the literal sense or reading. In fact, it does the opposite, giving additional depth to history, as both event and textual narration, as it both “expands the mind” and “gathers it into one” as the reader’s present history parses and engages that of the text. Inattentive readers of Origen have been plagued through such parsimonious and denigrating reading through the centuries. Origen wants to mine the depths of the intimacy of divine-human relation, to garner a deeper sense of the meaning it contains, and to learn how to effect a deeper intimacy and relation. Relations are reciprocal, and one is negligent to take the relation merely on faith, and fails to seek to foster the relation through invested and engaged interest.749

In some ways similar to Riceur’s notion of discourse in which “Someone says something to someone about something,”750 Origen focuses on the intentionality of the sending, and wants to better know both the sender and the sent. One is always sent from somewhere, by someone, to somewhere. That there has been a sending – many sendings, in fact, since the event of creation – is the essence of spirit in the mode of grace. “Christianity is not a religion of the book”751 – it is the religion of the intimacy and ineffability of having been sent. And just as one seeks to be in Christ, so too does one seek to have the sent Christ within:

749 “Let us too, therefore, work so that God might appear to us at this moment.” Origen, HLk 3.4.
750 Riceur, “Naming God,” in Figuring the Sacred, 220.
For what profit is it to you, if Christ once came in the flesh, unless he also comes into your soul? We should pray that he will come to us each day so that we can say, “I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me.”

The living that Christ does in one is veritable living, not merely a static symbol of presence, but a dynamic (i.e. suffering) and expressing symbol:

For it was not only for himself that Jesus progressed in wisdom and stature and grace with God and men, but also in each of those who accept progress in wisdom and stature and grace Jesus progresses in wisdom and stature and grace with God and men. . . . He who would curse the Word . . . . the strength of Jesus fails in such a person, and the strength of the Word is not in him, so that again, his strength experiences the opposite.

Jesus himself is not left untouched in his dwelling within one, but as “αὐτοσοφία” – as “Wisdom-itself” – all experience of wisdom is necessarily experience of and is also experienced by – αὐτοσοφία, including experiences of its growth and diminishment. Hence there is an experiential and reciprocal sharing between the soul and αὐτοσοφία, in the tensions which arise from out of the myriad and ambivalent experiences of both the former and the latter.

5.ii) Οἰκονομία

5.ii.a) The Net of Grace

God plans always that the net is thrown on the lake of this life, and all kinds of fish are being caught.

The net thrown into the world is woven of the perfection of Trinitarian love expressed as will. The divine Trinity shares a common essence of θέλημα. The θέλημα dances around,
among, between – i.e., πέρι χορός – the Persons and “becomes” when it is expressed as an ἀρχή as it transcends the divine monism, casting outward to the monism of being-itself. The transcendent transcends. Like water passing through a net – “He is participated in, rather than participates”758 – the monism of the divine water casts and draws the net of creation through it. The net of creation dances around in submersion into and within the divine thelamic waters: “What is woven is thrown around the souls of the hearers.”759 Hence there is a catching and a retrieval of souls toward God. The “hearers” hear God’s desire speaking to draw closer, in the elsewhere-speaking (ἀλλή + ἀγορεύειν) of allegory. God no longer speaks from elsewhere. The speaking of God annihilates his “radical, absolute otherness”760 as he becomes spoken, and becomes the subject who experiences – “feeling,” “deciding,” “assuming,” “descending,” “coming down,” “suffering” – as the ἄλλος who descended from the remoteness of radical ἄλλη, and now speaks in the ἀγορά of being-itself. The desire unfolds and bridges the chasm from ἄλλος μὲν to ἄλλος δέ, casting a net across and opening up veracious divine-human relation through the “composite being”761 who is Christ, when heaven and earth touch one another. Both in his act of creation and in his having been sent, he permits the earth to touch heaven.762

757 As Paul M. Blowers has written, “we fail utterly to comprehend Origen’s ‘system’ if we do not acknowledge the driving force of his vision of the Logos, in his Commentary and Homilies on the Song of Songs, as the Bridegroom or Parmamur who seeks, in a mysterious and refined sense, to romance or court alienated creatures, reconciling them through passionate engagement of their minds and their deep-seated desires. Blowers, Drama of the Divine Economy: Creator and Creation in Early Christian Theology and Piety (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 93.

758 Origen, CC, 6.64.

759 Origen, HJer 16. 1.1.

760 For Ricoeur’s “annihilation of absolute, radical otherness” see above, p. 160.

761 “According to Christian teaching, Christ is a ‘composite being’ (σύνθετον τι χρῆμα).” Origen CC 1.66.

762 “All the things in the visible category can be related to the invisible, the corporeal to the incorporeal, and the manifest to those that are hidden; so that the creation of the world itself, fashioned in this wise as it is, can be understood through the divine wisdom, which from actual things and copies teaches us things unseen by means of those that are seen, and carries us over from earthly things to heavenly.” Origen CSong 3.12. Italics mine.
The net “thrown around the souls of hearers” is an allegory of love and the mode of spirit, “spread abroad into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.” Origen wonders if that love “is that by which we love God or with which we are loved by God.”

Now if, indeed, that love by which we love God is to be understood (intelligatur) here, the statement needs no confirmation. But if that love by which we are being loved by God is instead to be understood here, since he said, “the love of God is poured out into our hearts,” it is certain that he is putting down love as the highest and greatest gift of the Holy Spirit so that, just as the gift was first received from God, through this [gift], by which we are loved by God, we are able to love God himself.

Origen is here trying to trace the source of the love, the love by which “we are being loved.” He strives to see the limen of the horizon of grace, in an effort to discern from what source love has come. It is given greater attention, since it is that which makes possible all experience of love:

Now if “the Spirit of love” and the “Son of love” and “the God of love” are found (invenitur), it is certain that both the Son and the Holy Spirit are to be understood as springing from the one fountain of paternal deity. From the fullness of the Spirit, the fullness of love is infused into the hearts of the saints in order to receive participation in the divine nature, as the apostle Peter has taught, so that through this gift of the Holy Spirit, the word which the Lord said might be fulfilled, “As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be one in us.” This is, of course, to be sharers of the divine nature by the fullness of love furnished through the Holy Spirit.

Origen discovers a trichotomic experience of love. It is important to note the passage from “understanding (intelligatur)” to “finding (invenitur).” The Trinity is not so much understood as found and experienced. The form is an inversion of what I have called “Trinitarian onto-relational contingency.” It is inverted as it passes from ontology, from concept, to experience.

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763 Rom 5.5.
764 Origen, CRom 4.9.12.
765 Cf. 1 Jn 4.19.
766 Origen, CRom 4.9.12.
767 2 Pt 1.4.
768 Jn 17.21.
769 Origen, CRom 4.9.12.
770 See above, pp. 104-21.
to history. The net has been woven and now one sees it in its graceful action, feels oneself being caught in it. It may also be seen as the moment at which the *reditus* is initiated.\textsuperscript{771} There is movement from personal experience of love, the “Spirit of love,” to incarnate love – *αὐτοαγάπην* as it were – of the “Son of love,” to the ground and being of all of being and love, the “God of love,” the “fountain of paternal deity.” The experience of love is traced along a *catena* of relation up to its source who both loves and enables and empowers all loving.

5.ii.b) *Οἰκονομία* of Inversion

*And my Saviour and Lord has assumed all of the opposites so that by the opposites he might dissolve the opposites, and we might know wisdom from the foolishness of God,*\textsuperscript{772} and after we have been instructed in these things, we might be able to mount up to wisdom, to the strength of God.\textsuperscript{773}

As mentioned above, Ricœur speaks of a “disorientation” and re-imaging affected by Scripture’s “extreme sayings,” which touch the imagination, and affect new relations of understanding and meaning.\textsuperscript{774} “Parables, paradoxes, hyperboles, and extreme commandments all disorient only in order to reorient us.”\textsuperscript{775} Similarly, reflecting on the “adornment the Word that became flesh wears,” in light of the washing of his disciples’ feet and his κένωσις, Origen says:

But he puts aside this garment that exists in a kind of robe woven of phrases with phrases and sound with sounds, and is unveiled to a greater extent with the form of a servant.\textsuperscript{776}

\textsuperscript{771} See above, p. 102, fig. 2.

\textsuperscript{772} Cf. 1 Cor 1.25.

\textsuperscript{773} Origen, *HJer* 8.3.

\textsuperscript{774} Above, p. 134, n. 514.


\textsuperscript{776} Origen, *CJn* 32.44-6. Cf. Phil 2.7.
In other words, the disorienting events of revelation as servant serve to reorient, and “to a greater extent” are revelatory toward the essence of divinity. The ἐπίνοιαι are illustrative of both the divine essence and will.

In Origen’s thought, Truth, Word, and Power abide as absolutes in the monism of divinity, but when they step into the plurality of history, they undergo radical inversion as the objective is generated out into the subjective, stepping from names as absolutes and concepts into a single name as subject. All experiences of ἀλήθεια, λόγος, and δύναμις in the κόσμος remain as truth, reason, and power; but when Christ as Ἀλήθεια, Λόγος, and Δύναμις steps from the monism of divinity into that of being-itself, there is inversion toward ἀποκάλυψις. The Incarnation dismantles, inverts, and redefines all worldly norms and standards of wisdom, truth, and power. Perhaps the clearest articulation is in Origen’s reading of the inversion of the notion of “power”:

But of all the marvellous and splendid things about him there is one that utterly transcends the limits of human wonder and is beyond the capacity of our weak mortal intelligence to think of or understand, namely, how this mighty power of the divine majesty, the very word of the Father, and the very wisdom of God, in which were created “all things visible and invisible,” can be believed to have existed within the compass of that man who appeared in Judaea; yes, and how the wisdom of God can have entered into a woman’s womb and been born as a little child and uttered noises like those of crying children . . . and how at the last he was led to that death which is considered by men to be the most shameful of all.

Ultimately, this conceptual inversion has to do with the expression and revelation of the divine will, and, as Ricœur, puts it, “the naming of God.” Philo had used the analogy of an

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777 Col 1.16.
778 Origen, PA 2.6.2.
779 See “Naming God,” in Figuring the Sacred. Ricœur’s ideas here are not easy to summarize, but they play on the “circular,” “antagonistic” tension of the “history of names of God,” which speak of names between the “liberating acts” and “total power” of the Old Testament, and the “total weakness,” of the New.” Ricœur, “Naming God,” 231.
architect,⁷⁸⁰ and Origen too uses it,⁷⁸¹ but it is spoken only of the creation of the κόσμος. As such, there is an expression only of the effect of divine intention, or οἰκονομία, which I believe is distinct from divine will. Intentions and designs and plans have to do with effect, not affect. They are not yet grace. They have to do with objects. Where effect pertains to objects, affect pertains to persons. The λόγοι which suffuse creation express only the οἰκονομία – but the Λόγος expresses the will. Expressed as λόγος, reason stands always (and only) as λόγος; expressed as Λόγος, λόγος undergoes inversion in the redefinition also of power. God is not named “architect,” but named the Person of the willing servant. The λόγοι present in concepts in creation reveal that God is; only the Λόγος reveals what God is like.⁷⁸²

When, therefore, we see in him some things so human that they appear in no way to differ from the common frailty of mortals, and some things so divine that they are appropriate to nothing else but the primal and ineffable nature of deity, the human understanding with its narrow limits is baffled, and struck with amazement at so mighty a wonder knows not which way to turn, what to hold to, or whither to betake itself. If it thinks of God, it sees a man; if it thinks of man, it beholds one returning from the dead with spoils after vanquishing the kingdom of death.⁷⁸³

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⁷⁸⁰ “Just as the city that was marked out beforehand in the architect had no location outside, but had been engraved in the soul of the craftsman, in the same way the cosmos composed of the ideas would have no other place than the divine Logos who gives these ideas their ordered disposition.” Philo, Opif 20. See above, pp. 61, n. 205; 63-4.

⁷⁸¹ “We might say that a house has come into existence by the word of an architect, and a ship by the word of a shipbuilder, so, then, the heavens have been established by the Word of God.” Origen, CJn 1:288.

⁷⁸² “For there is a difference between knowing God and knowing God’s will. God could be known even by the Gentiles ‘from the creation of the world through the things that have been made’ (Rom 1.20). His will, however, is not known except from the law and the prophets.” Origen, CRom 2.7.1.

⁷⁸³ Origen, PA 2.6.2.
5.ii.c) Synergy: Nature, Freedom, & Revelation

But consider whether it is possible to see “revealed (ἀποκαλυπτόμενον)” in two ways. In one way, a thing is revealed when it is understood (νοεῖται); in the other, if this thing should be prophesied, it is revealed on the condition that it has occurred and been fulfilled, for it is revealed at that time when it is completely fulfilled (ἐπιτελεῖται πληρούμενον).\(^{784}\)

Origen’s enquiry into revelation calls to mind his mention of “imperfect” and “perfect,”\(^{785}\) and has affinities with the theory of ἀλήθεια as “correspondence” over against that of “disclosure.”\(^{786}\) The first definition of ἀλήθεια proposes a homogeneity between a “thing revealed” and the “understanding” of it. Truth in this reading is “what is” or “actuality.”\(^{787}\) The second definition entails a participatory, disclosive dynamic – a correspondence between prophecy and fulfilment in the economy of revelation. Origen is here proposing that revelation occurs not only in, but quite literally through creation. It therefore requires the assent of sentient creation, which participates in, and actually effects and discloses the ἀλήθεια of revelation.

Salvation and revelation occur in lives lived, not in laws embraced or thoughts thought. This economy involves the assent of creation toward the perfection of its expression, and leads to the emergence and coming to fruition of persons who are forged on the model of authenticity such as that impressed on the image and likeness.\(^{788}\)

For the Creator granted to the minds created by him the power of free and voluntary movement, in order that the good that was in them might become their own, since it was preserved by their own free will.\(^{789}\)

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\(^{784}\) Origen, C\textit{Jn} 6.26.

\(^{785}\) See above, p. 166, n. 666.

\(^{786}\) A helpful description of these two understandings of truth – and several others – can be found in Wrathall, \textit{Heidegger and Unconcealment: Truth, Language, and History}, 11-39.

\(^{787}\) This definition is from Vanhoozer, \textit{Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Rie}çœur: \textit{A Study in Hermeneutics and Theology}, 70: “In Western thought, truth has traditionally been associated with present being, ‘what is’ or actuality. Truth was defined as the correspondence of mind to what is (the actual) – as \textit{adequatio intellectus et rei}.” Italics Vanhoozer’s.

\(^{788}\) See above, pp. 142-9.

\(^{789}\) Origen, \textit{PA} 2.9.2.
There is inherent in persons a goodness – all of creation is good⁷⁹⁰ – and this is brought to the surface and becomes “one’s own” in the formation of one’s own personal character. One is born both by one’s own freedom, and also of God, who impressed the image on the soul.

But freedom can also issue in an opposite form and expression. Origen works through this possibility on the model and analogy of the material, of the bodily over against the spirit which houses meaning and grace:

It may be, however, since some men are of the devil, and others have been born of God, that we would be correct in saying that all who have not been born of God have been born of fornication. For those of the devil, whom he either begets or makes, are not of the bride, but of the whore (πόρνη), matter. And because they have craved bodily things and been engrossed in them, they join themselves to the whore, matter, and become one body with her.⁷⁹¹ Those who have been born of God separate themselves from the whore, matter. They join themselves to the Lord and are united with the Word who was in the beginning with God, and with his wisdom, which “he created as a beginning of his ways for his works.”⁷⁹²

It should be noted that Origen’s strong emphasis of matter as a harlot speaks of a misappropriation or *fallenness*, rather than a pejorative reading of matter. In misappropriation, one turns from matter as vehicle of grace and reason, to the deceptive and disorienting harlotry of matter as meaning.⁷⁹³ Origen makes the misappropriation clear in the Prologue to Song of Songs:

This command undoubtedly implies that we should also love wisdom and right-doing and piety and truth and all the other virtues; for to love God and to love good things is one and the same thing. . . . All the same, you must understand that everyone who loves money or any of the things of corruptible substance that the world contains, is debasing

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⁷⁹⁰ See Origen, *HGen* 1. Origen provides an extensive treatment on the goodness of creation in this homily.
⁷⁹¹ Cf. 1 Cor 6.16.
⁷⁹³ Mark Edwards notes that for Origen, the subsistence of creatures “depends on matter” (see *PA* 1.6.4), which is “neither an effluence of the deity nor a coeternal substrate, but a creation out of nothing by his will.” Edwards, “Christ or Plato? Origen on Revelation and Anthropology,” in *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community*, 17. Matter serves as a touchpoint of divine will, at hand as a potentiality with which one sets one’s course toward or away from divinity. “Matter,” Edwards continues, “is not an icon, not so much as a distant shadow of divinity; it is the principle of differentiation which ensures that there is something other than God.” Ibid.
the power of charity, which is of God, to earthly and perishable objects, and is misusing the things of God by making them serve purposes that are not his.\footnote{540}

5.iii) \(\Theta\epsilon\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma\)

5.iii.a) Meaning

\textit{God saw that it was good, means this: God perceived good in the purposes of each thing, and saw how each of the created things is good in relation to the purposes for which it had come to be.}\footnote{545}

Here Origen constructs a dynamic understanding of “good.” It is dynamic because it is “in relation to a purpose.” Aside from the extraordinary experience of Moses,\footnote{546} the objective good which God sees is accessed, experienced, and expressed primarily in, through, and as, the agency of persons. More alive and dynamic than a teleological notion, good resides in encounters “in relation to the purpose,” in expressions of the relation.\footnote{547} Meaning is in a sense primarily an experience of the divine will, and secondarily, a coalescence of divine and human wills. Truth has its foundation on the divine side of divine-human relations, while meaning comes to be on the human side as a new creation when there is coalescence between Truth and the reason operative in the conscious subject.\footnote{548} For Origen Truth, reason, and meaning are not equated; meaning emerges from Truth and reason only where a purely ratiocinative detachment is co-operative with engaged \(\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\omicron\varsigma\), i.e., only when \(\Lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\omicron\varsigma\) becomes participatory in the subject.

\footnote{544}{Origen, \textit{CSong} Prologue 2.}
\footnote{545}{Origen, \textit{CJn} 13.280.}
\footnote{546}{See above, pp. 63-8.}
\footnote{547}{As Stephen P. Brey expresses it in his dissertation on Origen: “In other words Origen finds the goodness of every created thing grounded, not in ontology as such, but in the economy of God’s salvation, and thus the transformation of our sight will only be complete when we perceive the good purpose for which God created each thing, and indeed the good purpose behind all of creation. . . . Thus, the transformation of sight needed is the ability to see the salvific significance of all of life: of how in a grand sense all of creation is gospel.” Brey, “Origen’s Commentary on John: Seeing All of Creation as Gospel” PhD diss. (Indiana: Notre Dame, 2003) 46-47.}
\footnote{548}{This idea seems to stand between the positions of Gadamer and Riceur on the nature of understanding. See above, p. 29 for George H. Taylor’s contrasting of the positions, which involve for the former the discernment and bridging of “an underlying commonality,” and for the latter, “the creation of similarity across difference.” In Origen’s thought, through the event of the Incarnation, the horizon of God invites participation toward an underlying commonality which bridges the difference.}
While reason permeates creation, the conscious discernment of this presence and participation effects the experience of reason as meaning.

Origen is explicit about his belief on the purpose of being itself. In addressing the “white fields” which are “ready for harvest” in the Gospel of John, Origen begins by outlining the foundation of his understanding of the “whiteness/readiness for harvest,” saying:

“the fields are already white for harvest” when the Word of God is present clarifying and illuminating all the fields of Scripture that are being fulfilled by his sojourn.

The “clarifying and illuminating presence” of the Word’s sojourn into creation effects θεωρία in creation upward to purpose and meaning:

The Word which is present with the disciples urges his hearers to lift up their eyes both to the fields of Scripture and to the fields of the purpose in each of the things that exist (τῶν ὄντων λόγου), that one may behold the whiteness and brightness of the omnipresent light of truth.

Ultimately, purpose and meaning emerge through a kind of deification of one’s eyes, an interpretative seeing through the θεωρία with which God sees all things:

But perhaps, too, the white fields that are ready for harvest to those who lift up their eyes are all the beings that are perceptible to the senses, including heaven itself and the beings in it. This would be true because the purpose (λόγος) of being is clear to those who, by being “transformed into the same image from glory to glory,” have assumed a likeness of those eyes that have seen how each of the things that have been made was good.

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799 Jn 4.35.
800 Origen, CJn 13.279. On this notion Karen Jo Torjesen speaks of a “hermeneutic-pedagogical principle” in Origen’s thought, which is operative through Christ’s present speaking: “It is the power of the words of the Logos that makes the progression possible. It is the effect of his teaching which causes progress in the soul. If the word of the Logos was not effective, or if he was not present teaching, then the steps of the progression would be an empty scaffolding into which the soul could gaze, but not climb.” Torjesen, Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method in Origen’s Exegesis, 41; 137.
801 Origen, CJn 13.284.
802 2 Cor 3.18.
803 Origen, CJn 13.280.
One views the world through a lens of grace and divine θεωρία, and one is witness thereby to the vibrancy of purpose and meaning with which it is charged in its being suffused with divine θέλημα.

For the purpose of emphasis, it is illuminating to place Origen’s notion of meaning and θεωρία as it pertains to his notion of “person,” alongside that of Plotinus and early Buddhist philosophy. As noted above, Richard Sorabji proposes that Plotinus understands “self” to be “given,” not made.804 Buddhist philosophy goes even further, and proposes that there is no self, positing instead the notion of “non-self” (anatman).805 Through the practice of vipassanā,806 Buddhist psychology seeks a pre-conceptual experience of being – an experience which precedes the tainting affect of the mediation of the senses and conditioned consciousness which is constructed and ultimately conflated to “self.” In the approach of Plotinus, one seeks to become an island, while in the robust monistic worldview of Buddhist psychology, there is nothing but island. In the former, one leaves the world behind in solipsistic retreat into the mind. In the latter, the world serves no immediate hermeneutical purpose, but is something always to be gotten in front of, as it were, by a consciousness that finds itself plunked down amid a congeries of objects and relations which bear no intrinsic meaning, cast as they are in the shifting sands of ephemeral being.

804 See above, p. 89, n. 317.
805 The teaching is centred around reflection on impermanence: “the five aggregates (material form; feeling; cognition; volitions; consciousness), which together account for subjective experience, on closer investigation turn out to be impermanent and not amenable to complete personal control. Therefore a permanent and self-sufficient self cannot be found within or apart from the five aggregates.” Venerable Anāyalo, Satipaṭṭhāna: The Direct Path to Realization (Cambridge, Windhorse Publications, 2003) 208. A helpful assessment of anatman – from the perspective of a scholar of Western philosophy – can be found in Christopher W. Gowans, Philosophy of the Buddha (London: Routledge, 2003) 61-104.
In Origen’s thought, there is neither a static, given nature or person, nor any divesting of self toward pre-cognitive experience of being. Instead, what is sought after is an awareness of self in its createdness. The self looks out toward the world through the lens of grace, looks out into the knowledge of having-been-called-into-being. The κόσμος has been called into being, and the calling itself serves a supreme hermeneutical function. The self is not divested, but sought in the realization of its own createdness. One strives or seeks after awareness of the κόσμος as community. The notions of the community of persons and the hermeneutic nature of experience of the κόσμος is essential in achieving the goal toward which one aims in θεωρία.

There is no Plotinic One: there are Three – a community of Persons who call forth the community of κόσμος and persons. There is no pre-conceptual, pre-cognitive experience of being, there is only the ἀρχή which ἦν ὁ Λόγος. Being situated in the κόσμος is not accidental – not merely a locus point out of which one stands in remote detachment, observing a kind of shell of being which is super-added and extrinsic to self. In its createdness, the κόσμος itself forms a community.

5.iii.b) Μετάνοια: The Medium Becomes the Message

*We need to realize that it is one thing for there potentially to be existence in a subject, it is another thing for it to be in actuality or effectual achievement, what the Greeks call δύναμις and ἐνέργεια. For example, a newly born child is potentially a rational human being since it is capable of becoming rational if it matures... In this way, as well, then one must believe that Christ, who is the Word of God, is indeed potentially near us, i.e., near every human being, just as reason (λόγος) is to children; but it will be said that he is in me in actuality when I shall have confessed with my mouth that Jesus is Lord and believed in my heart that God raised him from the dead.*

It is not by chance that Origen weighs up the notion of “potential” and “actual” by a discursive move through being-itself (i.e., “existence”), then reason (λόγος), then Christ (Λόγος).

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808 Origen, *CRom* 8.2.5
This order highlights a hierarchy from being-itself, to reason, and finally to the grace of Christ as αὐτολόγος. Having a common source in divine θέλημα, the horizons of being and grace share a common economic function. Where the former is creative, the latter is re-creative. One’s mind is created anew in metanoietic transformation toward the experiencing “afresh” of Christ in the reditus of the mind toward the ground of being and grace.809

When I hope in Christ Jesus, I do not know the man. Not only do I not know the man, but I do know Wisdom, Righteousness itself, a man through whom all things in heaven or on earth, either seen or unseen, whether principalities or authorities, were created.810 Cursed is he who has hope in man. Even if the Savior testifies that he whom he carried was man, even if he was also a man, he is now by no means a man. For even though we knew Christ according to the flesh, we no longer know him thus,811 says the Apostle. Through him I no longer am a man, if I follow his words, for he says, I said: “You are gods and all sons of the Most High.”812 Hence just as he is the first fruit of the dead,813 so he has become a first-fruit of all men who change into a god.814

Origen moves beyond the articulation of his precursors in which the generalizing notion of the nature of human being as λογικός is posited as the locus point of unity with the λόγος inherent in nature. This notion is left well behind as he comes to a more refined expression toward the essence of persons as both free and called to follow. The kenotic act of the Incarnation stepping down into the Bethzatha of created history demanded that any and all conceptual horizons which engaged the dynamic of λόγος be read in a new light. The veil (κάλυψις) of the temple in which early thinkers had made conceptual homage to λόγος was not merely torn in two, but was fully removed (ἀπό) in the incarnational act of ἀποκάλυψις. The anonymity and mythology of divine-

809 See above, p. 101-3.
810 Col 1.18.
811 2 Cor 5.16. There words of Paul serve as a riposte to an observation of Hanson: “Origen was not devoted to the humanity of Jesus, as his theory of epinoiai very clearly shows.” Hanson, Allegory and Event, 276.
812 Ps 81.6.
813 Col 1.18.
814 Origen, HJer 15.6.1
human relations are cast off, and the μετάνοια toward becoming persons is opened out as the veil falls.

Even the true worshipper who worships in spirit and truth performs certain symbolic acts so that, by acting in a most accommodating manner, he might free those who are enslaved to the symbol and bring them to the truth that the symbols represent.\textsuperscript{815}

The medium \textit{becomes} the message: the medium \textit{is} not the message,\textsuperscript{816} but \textit{becomes}. The message, the εὐαγγέλιον – “since the Λόγος has come, he has made all things gospel”\textsuperscript{817} – now is a message spoken through the medium of the transformative freedom and historicity of μετάνοια. The message comes both to reveal and to make known the Λόγος.

\textbf{5.iii.c) Conclusion: Reading the Horizon of Grace}

In an analogy which is perhaps less than enticing, Origen proposes that departed souls enter into a kind of lecture hall.\textsuperscript{818} The task of seeking after meaning in the κόσμος has its corollary and recapitulation as it is drawn now into the confines of a kind of cosmic \textit{revelatorium}. What is to be revealed is foreshadowed in the world, just as the Gospel “teaches a shadow of the mysteries of Christ,”\textsuperscript{819} who “is expressed by means of a shadow and types and images,”\textsuperscript{820} in whom we say that “we live in his shadow, that is, in imitation of him.”\textsuperscript{821} One will then “keep festival in the heavenly places of which there was a shadow among the corporeal.”\textsuperscript{822}

The desire to eat of the tree of good and evil will then no longer affect one, the insatiable lacuna or μὴ ὀν of vice and wickedness having been displaced by the antithesis of absolute being

\textsuperscript{815} Origen, \textit{CJn} 13.111.
\textsuperscript{816} As in the maxim of Marshall McLuhan, cited above, p. 59.
\textsuperscript{817} Origen, \textit{CJn}, 1.33. Cited above, p. 112.
\textsuperscript{818} PA 2.11.6.
\textsuperscript{819} Origen, \textit{CJn} 1.39.
\textsuperscript{820} Origen, \textit{CJn} 2.49.
\textsuperscript{821} Origen, \textit{CLam} 116. (Trigg). Origen here quotes 1 Cor. 11:1: “be imitators of me as I am of Christ.”
\textsuperscript{822} Origen, \textit{CJn} 10.85.
in the presence of the fullness of divinity. Because evil is meontic, it cannot have a terminus, and one can only fall interminably into a vacuum in which there is no floor upon which the fall will finally be halted and broken. Grace is the antithesis of μὴ ὄν. It too cannot have borders, owing not to μὴ ὄν, but to the graceful absence of limits in an ascent which cannot be halted or broken.

Rightly then love, which alone is greater than all, will keep every creature from falling away at that time when God will be all in all.823

Where being and reason reveal divine power and essence, grace is where divine intention is revealed, transforming one’s perception of being and reason, and filling out the essence of what it means to say that “being-itself now means,”824 and what it means to be λογικός. The στρωμάτα which I have compiled here describe the multivalent horizon of grace under the auspices of “spirit” or the “spiritual.” Centred around Origen’s understanding of Spirit, they constitute a kind of zeitgeist of divine-human experience – the defining spirit of the relation. But it is more accurate to say this is not merely a spirit of the times, but a spirit of the κόσμος. It is the hermeneutical key, and ultimately the meaning, of the κόσμος. There is something rather than nothing, and there is meaning rather than despair, because there is grace.

823 Origen, CRom 5.10.15. Cf. 1 Cor 15.28.
824 Above, p. 109-10: “Origen reaches back to being-itself as the foundational hermeneutical tool for his vision of the world. Being-itself now means.”
Chapter 6: Conclusion

In the reflections in the preceding chapters, I have shown the fundamental strata of Origen’s thought to consist of a way of thinking and enquiry about divine-human relations which are discerned through an experiential dynamic of relation between creation, reason and grace. Through the inherent and expressed relations of these several strata, Origen’s *cosmotheoria* has emerged.

While a preliminary statement of my intention in using the word “*cosmotheoria*” was given above,\(^{825}\) it is helpful to now expand on why I have chosen this word over the more common term “worldview.” I have chosen the word because its polysemy helps to capture the sense of my intention. Unlike “κόσµος,” the word “world” speaks neither of “system” nor “beautification,” nor “adornment,” nor does it seem as effective to say that Christ and the Church are “worlds,” as it does when Origen says that Christ is a Ἰς κόσµος\(^{826}\) and that the Church is a κόσµος.\(^{827}\) Origen’s treatment of the word deeply emphasizes his view of κόσµος as an expression and “system” of grace, and in some sense even a paradigm or template of grace – ideas which are very far above and beyond the “manifest and perceptible world that consists of heaven and earth.”\(^{828}\) Yet at the same time, κόσµος in fact *does* beautify and adorn, by means of reifying and *in-corporating* divine will and grace. Ultimately, these polysemous κόσµοι are not merely “looked at” (θεωρεῖν), but are considered and come to be understood (θεωρεῖν), and issue ultimately in meaning via grace. In short, the word *cosmotheoria* expresses two sets of corresponding double references – one set of double references for both κόσµος and θεωρία. The dynamic of freedom in the instant of decision, and the dynamic of the “system” of grace, come

\(^{825}\) Above, pp. 24-5.
\(^{826}\) Origen, CJn 19.147. See above, p. 153.
\(^{827}\) CJn 6.303. See above, pp. 124; 153.
\(^{828}\) Origen, CJn 19.146.
together to form the catalyst which effects cohesion across the sets, and affects the wholistic dynamic of *cosmotheoria*. Origen’s *cosmotheoria* is a surveying of the goodness and adorning beauty of the κόσμος – a seeing of the beauty of the order by which it is suffused in its Christic and ecclesial nature. By means of such a *cosmotheoria* the world and experience is *transubstantiated*. 829 I begin this conclusion with a quick précis of the preceding chapters, and will conclude by drawing these together in a fuller articulation of the *cosmotheoria*.

**Chapter Summary**

In chapter one, I described the suitability of reading Origen with the aid of a number of tools of contemporary philosophical hermeneutics, identifying my audience as those who see merit in combining description with interpretation and appropriation – who see as the task of theology a pastoral coming together of the historical-critical with the hermeneutical. I laid the groundwork for this reading in my definition of the word “hermeneutic,” which I take to refer to the engagement (and risk) involved in the construction of meaning via poetic (productive) reading. 830 I have illustrated this suitability throughout the thesis, yet have also recognized its limits. 831 I showed how Origen’s treatment of the polysemous word κόσμος, combined with the likewise polysemly of the word θεωρία, are justifiably drawn together to describe what essentially Origen is doing: he is constructing a *cosmotheoria*. I stated that Origen parses the disparity of the κόσμος into a unified θεωρία through this construction and his Trinitarian hermeneutic, giving his thought the extraordinary character that it has. I set the groundwork for illustrating how in Origen’s thought, persons are ordered to a Trinitarian hermeneutic through which the Christian mystery gives history its meaning.

829 See above, p. 146, n. 567 for Kierkegaard’s application of “transubstantiation” to worldview.

830 See above, pp. 1; 3; 31; 52; 73; 156, n. 616; 168.

831 See above, pp. 31-3.
In the second chapter I delineated the passage from shadow to reality which the event of
the historical Incarnation effected. While providence has always been and always is the *limen* at
which creation encounters the divine, I showed that before the Incarnation, providence was
encountered in an epistemological threshold below which its stimulus typically remained
obscure. I outlined how Philo turned the conceptual arc of Heraclitus and the Stoics toward a
*λόγος* which speaks to a people in the entanglement of history and narrativity. I articulated how
the Incarnate irruption effected the passage from the limen of shadow to the New Song sung in
the liminality and symbolics of freedom toward reality.\textsuperscript{832}

In chapter three, I presented the parameters of being in Origen’s thought, in large part
through contrast with that of his fellow Alexandrian, Plotinus. I showed how Origen’s emphasis
on *ἀρχή* and *στοιχεῖα*\textsuperscript{833} opens up the reality that all experience and knowledge is necessarily
garnered and parsed in degrees and hierarchies, and in the dialectic context of relational
encounter, rather than solipsistic retreat. I illustrated how Origen’s development of the notion of
“person” was effected through his demythologization of the meaninglessness which is found in
many of the thinkers who precede him. I outlined a tripartite contingency, hierarchy, and
experience of being, reason, and grace in Origen’s thought, detailing how he utilizes a
Trinitarian hermeneutic to parse the same, in his exploration of the field of convergence and
experience encountered between the suffusive monism of Godself, and of being-itself, which
expresses a panegyric κόσμοι of meaning.

In the fourth chapter I articulated Origen’s treatment of the threefold experience of
reason in the *κόσμος*, namely, in *λόγος*, *Λόγος*, and *Σοφία*, in relations *per se* and *pro nobis*,
mediated through the symbolic action and expression of the objective toward the subjective. I

\textsuperscript{832} See above, pp. 71-80.
\textsuperscript{833} Chapter three, pp. 92-97.
illustrated how Christ comes as the centrifugal ὃλη of reason, and therefore of meaning, who is mediated and encountered through myriad ἐπίνοιαι, particularly in his hypostatic existence as God’s Σοφία and reified assent. I showed how λόγος, Λόγος, and Σοφία constitute the threefold conceptual and historical standpoint out of which one commences to bring the image and likeness of God to the surface, and expresses the same in the freedom of historical action, incarnating in history what formerly was subordinated and concealed within as potentiality. I articulated how through this relation, one thereby “attains one’s own nature,” becoming a living and wholistic image and symbol of ἀλήθεια through reification and revelation of the image and likeness.

In chapter five, utilizing an expansive notion of grace, I described the catena extending from being-itself and reason which reveal divine power and essence, to a revealing of divine will via the dynamism and spirituality which God speaks intimately in the polysemous voice of grace. I articulated how grace affects one’s stepping into an experiential, metanoietic hermeneutic of grace-itself, a hermeneutical circle constituted by the two-way dynamic of God’s pointing out of himself through the κόσμοι of creation, and pointing into himself through the disorienting chariology and strange new κόσμος which is Scripture.

The Hermeneutic Cosmotheoria of Origen

The chapters above show that Origen sees the person as ordered to a Trinitarian hermeneutic of the world toward experience of God. The experience has been parsed by means of a Trinitarian hermeneutic of the world, and mediated via the trichotomy of being, reason, and grace – a schema which parallels, reflects, proclaims, and makes known the Persons of the Trinity. In Origen’s thought, experience of this trichotomy through the lens of grace is tantamount to experience of the three Persons. Knowledge and experience of the three reifications in creation points beyond the experience of the same to the Persons who are these
qualities in essence. I will conclude by reading together the trichotomy, the reading together of which will serve to articulate Origen’s *cosmotheoria*.

**Being**

Gerald Bostock has noted the “vexed question of historicity” in allegorical exegesis and interpretation.” The vexation arises out of the possibility for allegory “to become so many elusive abstractions if it is not effectively and imaginatively related to the real world.” Bostock rightly adds that allegory must not “dismiss the facts of history or the earthly levels of reality.” While this is certainly true, it requires some qualification before it can be applied to Origen. Origen’s sense of “real world,” of “history,” and of “earthly levels of reality” are of a different sort than those of post-Enlightenment modernity, and of much of contemporary Biblical exegesis. As I stated in chapter one, a reader must understand that Origen is interpreting the world. To state it more particularly, Origen is interpreting the coming-to-be of God in the world in the historical event of the Incarnation. Origen is engaged in a hermeneutic of the relation of \( \alphaλλος \muεν \) to \( \alphaλλος \ δε \). This event is the centrifuge of all that is “real” – of all “history” and the hierarchical gradations of the “earthly levels of reality” which constitute the rings of the hermeneutical spiral up which one may ascend to meaning, to the Trinitarian reality *per se*. Origen reads the \( \kappaοσμος \) through the lens of grace as coming-to-be in Incarnation and Scripture, where some contemporary thought reads Scripture through the lens of the world (sc. ‘history’). Creation is the matrix of grace which is expressed in a form in which the wisdom

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835 Bostock, ibid.
836 See above, p. 4.
838 As in Bultmann’s “demythologizing” project, or in the subjectivist or relativizing sense with which postmodern reading is, perhaps unfairly, characterized. A more fair estimate of postmodern thought is found in feminist theorist Susan Hekman: “Postmodernism does not espouse relativism as its critics claim. Rather, it calls for a redefinition of
which inspired and created it can “hypostatically exist” within it. This reality will continue to evade sufficient and final expression, and cannot cease to bubble up into inestimable possibilities of encounter and meaning.

Origen’s deeply Biblical thought places great emphasis on the “ἀρχή” of these encounters and relations – relations which are mediated and experienced by means of a series of steps ascending from general to particular experience of the same. One can only find oneself always somewhere on these steps, which are the ἀρχή of all divine-human experience and relation.

Reason

In his preface to Hans Urs Von Balthasar’s Spirit and Fire, Robert J. Daly states: “if we are thinking of modern exegesis when we ask: ‘Was Origen an exegete?’, ‘No’ is a far more correct answer than ‘Yes.’” Because Christianity is not a religion of a book, Origen is not merely an exegete. What Origen was seeking after in his work was both more fundamental and broader than the scope of much modern exegesis. He is not concerned with merely making some sense of the units of meaning which constitute the texts, or garnering some meaning out of the individual words – though of course he does collect these στοιχεῖα along the way — but these

knowledge that displaces the relative/absolute dichotomy and identifies all knowledge as hermeneutic.” Hekman, Gender and Knowledge: Elements of a Postmodern Feminism (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1990) 135. Origen’s exegesis often involves many steps, layers, and redefinitions. Origen very often prefaced an idea with a number of provisos and qualifiers: “consider if,” or “could it be that” are catchphrases found throughout his texts. The many steps of Origen’s exegesis has parallels with Ricoeur’s notions of distanciation and appropriation in the meeting of the worlds of the text and the reader (see above, p. 3) and also his notions of the relation between a first and second “naïveté” in the act of reading. Dan R. Stiver describes the relations between these dynamics as “a first, rather innocent act of understanding; a second moment of explanation; and a third moment . . . variously characterized as a second immediacy, a postcritical naïveté, appropriation, and application.” Stiver, Theology After Ricoeur: New Directions in Hermeneutical Theology (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001) 57.

839 Daly, Spirit & Fire, xi.
840 See above, pp. 92-7.
remain always as “elementary rudiments.” 841 Origen is engaged in hermeneutics – a θεωρία of the κόσμος. In the manner in which a curator removes a veil from a work of art, Origen removes the sense of κόσμος as mere adornment, un concealing an aesthetic of κόσμος as the beauty and order of the οἰκονομία of divine will. 842

The στοιχεῖα are read always and essentially in light of what God becomes in act as ἐπίνοιαι which are drawn from the ontological wellspring of what God is in essence. Through the portals of historical experience, all ἐπίνοιαι necessarily participate in this essence, and are illustrative of its assent toward human being. The assent of God calls for a response in parallel movement, offered through a cathartic disclosure of the creative image and likeness via willing and historical action.

By these means, and in a movement which parallels the Incarnation of God from the monism of God into that of being-itself, one incarnates in history what formerly dwelled within as a kind of virtual potentiality. What God is in nature is opened in experiential relation to the “deposit” of “things which are present in God through nature,” 843 reified and witnessed through the medium of cooperative freedom in historical action.

Σοφία and Λόγος reveal the thelamic movement, shedding their abstract essence in favour of relation in becoming open to being-itself. Σοφία is the prevenient dynamic of God’s being-towards-world, while Λόγος is God’s being-pro-nobis. The οἰκονομία expressed in the hierarchy of Trinitarian onto-relational contingency is the unifying principle spoken in creation, and is centred around Σοφία and Λόγος. The κόσμος is a κόσμος because it is suffused and permeated with Σοφία and Λόγος, and the conscious discernment of this presence opens up the experience of reason as meaning. Meaning is a new creation in which the οὐσία of ἀλήθεια inheres in the

841 See above, pp. 92-4.
842 See above, pp. 121-30.
843 Origen, HL ev 4.3.1. Origen adds that Christ and the Holy Spirit are also received as deposits. (4.3.2).
substance of the encounter. Because Christianity is not a religion of a book, its revelation occurs in the reading of the λόγοι present within the created κόσμος. Revelation occurs in lives lived and re-created. One does not sit bound like a prisoner in Plato’s subterranean cave, passively watching the objects of a virtual revelation projected on a screen. One emerges out into historicity and encounter in the historical and actual embodiment of revelation. One becomes co-operator in the fulfilment and perfection of revelation as it passes from mere concept or commodified object as sola fides, into history as act and expression.\footnote{He who made all things very good would not leave willing the good imperfect. But neither is it possible to conceive of willing the good unless action that is good in relation to such willing is joined with the good willing.” Origen, \textit{CJn} 20.196.}

Reason is the hermeneutic key which unlocks the meaning of the cosmic text, unlocking it by means of entering it, \textit{pro nobis}, in “hypostatically existing.” One does not retrieve “truth” via an \textit{anamnetic} ascent, but stands witness to the historical action of its unveiling, unconcealing, and disclosure in the historical centre who is “\textit{αὐτοαλήθεια}.”

\textbf{Grace}

\textit{The letters (στοιχεῖα) of the alphabet are the ἀρχή of writing.}\footnote{Origen, \textit{CJn} 1.106. This text is treated above, pp. 93-4.}

In a similar manner, the στοιχεῖα of grace spell the ἀρχή of divine-human relation. Where the monism of God is said to be a “suffusive monism,” the horizon of grace can be seen as the footsteps of this suffusion of divinity, whereby God crosses over and infuses the monism of being-itself with divine will and act.

There are realities that are so great that they find a rank superior to humanity and our mortal nature; they are impossible for our rational and mortal race to understand. Yet by the grace of God poured forth with measureless abundance from Him to men through that minister of unsurpassed grace to us, Jesus Christ, these realities have become possible for us.\footnote{Origen, \textit{OP} preface, 1.1.}
Grace spells and pronounces great being in allegorical utterances. If one were a poet, one might perhaps say “being is allegory.” Being is never given, but is always sought in its “measureless abundance.” As Heidegger puts it “Dasein is constantly ‘more’ than it factually is.” Being is itself a kind of primordial allegory, serving as a bridge or ladder toward realities both “great” and “more” than those in which one presently stands. While analogy describes, the poetics of the will constructs. By means of the expression of grace, truth is always an option as and in one’s freedom experience.

Origen’s cosmotheoria does not attempt to “get in front of” consciousness in order to render it neutral. Rather than seeking pre-conceptual, objective, being-itself, Origen seeks the Persons who have expressed being-itself, reason-itself, and grace-itself. The figure of the conscious self is not waylaid in an effort to effect a pre-conceptual experience of being. In the hermeneutic circle which the dialectic of being-itself, reason-itself, and grace-itself effects, the conscious subject comes to the experience of being-pro-me, reason-pro-me, and grace-pro-me. The κόσμος speaks of having come to be not merely to neutrally be, but to be well. There is a Subject who speaks these things, not a hollow, vacuous, pre-conscious objectivity which neither speaks nor listens.

Christianity is not a religion of the book: it is the religion of the intimacy and ineffability of the having been sent of grace into participatory hypostatic existence.

847 Here I am using “being” in the dual sense of what “is” and what “might be” – what has “become possible for us” as Origen puts it. The greater portion of being always lies ahead in what might be. Kevin D. Vanhoozer’s Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: A Study in Hermeneutics and Theology, is a masterful study of the theological notion of the “possible.” The semantic key is Ricœur’s treatment of metaphor: “Metaphor refers to a world that is ‘deeper’ than the world of empirical objects where ‘being’ is limited to the here and now, to the actual. Similarly, metaphor enlarges the concept ‘truth’ so that it is not merely the truth of empirical verification.” Ibid., 70.

848 Heidegger, Being and Time, 185. The word “Dasein” is treated above, p. 26.
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