

Logos, Sin, and Moral Transformation in Origen's De Principiis 3.1

by

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Abstract

Origen of Alexandria's treatise on "self-determination" (*De Principiis* 3.1) has proven highly influential for subsequent theological and philosophical discussions of free will. There is still considerable debate about the finer points of Origen's understanding of "self-determination" (*autexousion*) and where his notion of it fits within the broader *Ideengeschichte* of free will. In this thesis I examine the free will treatise, but focus instead on the role of the Logos in his understanding of human freedom and moral transformation. In chapter one, I trace the historical development of the Logos concept from Heraclitus and the Stoics through Middle Platonism and the Biblical Platonists, particularly Philo and Clement of Alexandria, to provide a contextualization of Origen's doctrine. Then, on the basis of this contextualization, I argue (in chapters two and three) that Origen's Logos is not a neutral rational faculty but possesses a paraenetic quality, actively prompting moral agents toward virtuous action. By analyzing Origen's psychology of self-determination, especially his use of *aphormē* ("prompting"), I demonstrate how the Logos influences the moral choices of rational beings. In chapter four I articulate and motivate what I call the "problem of noetic sanctification" in Origen's theology, and in the fifth and final chapter I propose a solution to the problem on Origen's behalf in which the Logos within each rational being provides a persistent, pre-cognitive motivation towards goodness, thereby facilitating noetic sanctification through interaction with Christ as the cosmic Logos and "light."

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to Samantha, my wife. “He who finds a wife finds a good thing / And obtains favor from the Lord” (Proverbs 18:22).

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Introduction

The object of this thesis is to clarify how Origen's notion of the *logos* functions conceptually in his influential treatise on human freedom (*De Principiis* 3.1).¹ The first chapter concerns itself primarily with the historical development and evolution of the concept of the Logos prior to the period of Origen's own life and work, a development which begins with Heraclitus and, following a hiatus in the Classical period, at last comes into full view with the early Stoics. Origen's Middle Platonic heritage was, in large measure, shaped by the marriage of early Stoic doctrines of the Logos with a Pythagorean and biblical understanding of the mediated relationship between the transcendent first principle and the physical cosmos. This chapter's central contention is that characterizations of the Logos, especially in writers immediately preceding Origen, take on a markedly "non-neutral," or *paraenetic* quality, such that the Logos, in the view of these characterizations, providentially orients the cosmos and its constituents towards morally good ends.

The second chapter's purpose is to show that there exists a considerable degree of continuity between Origen and his most immediate intellectual background as to their doctrines of the Logos. Origen's doctrine of the subjective and cosmic Logos is examined, primarily with

¹ The original Greek of this treatise is preserved, very substantially, in the 21st chapter of the *Philocalia*, a compilation by Basil of Caesarea and Gregory Nazianzen of various influential passages from Origen's writings. For some introductory discussion see Louth 2022: 433-436. Unless otherwise indicated, all references to *De Principiis* are to John Behr's edition.

reference to passages within *De Princ.*, and where further clarification is necessary I refer to other relevant sources, though I do not perceive any substantial changes in Origen's doctrine of the Logos as it is expressed across his *oeuvre*. I then bring this doctrine into connection with his oft-discussed doctrine of free will and attempt to clarify what some of the implications of this connection are, particularly as they relate to a Christian's continued ability to sin, and to the effects of sinful actions on an agent's moral consciousness, while leaving most of these details for chapter four.

The third chapter examines the psychology of self-determination in *De Princ.* 3.1. An extensive exegetical examination of Origen's use of *aphormē* in *De Princ.* is offered, along with some consideration of the Classical, Stoic, and Middle Platonic background to this term, and of the relation of Origen's usage to this background. In view of the thesis' preceding conclusions about the Logos in Origen and his influences, I argue that evidence of the Logos paraenetic quality reveals itself, among other places, in the "promptings" (*aphormai*) which it, in its subjective appropriation as the human rational faculty, supplies to the moral agent.

Chapter four consists mainly in an articulation of Origen's notions of sin and its effects, with a particular focus on the noetic effects suffered by rational creatures as a result of actual sin. My purpose here is not to offer a comprehensive exposition of Origen's doctrine of sin, but to motivate what I and others see to be a difficult problem latent within Origen's theology of human freedom, sin, and universal, eschatological redemption. That problem, I argue, is one of accounting for how morally (and cognitively) depraved rational creatures may achieve moral progress or transformation when the noetic abilities which moral progress presupposes are damaged by sin. This tension is especially acute within Origen's theology, which posits a pessimistic hamartiology in conjunction with an optimistic soteriology and eschatology.

The fifth and last chapter leverages the argumentation of the first three chapters to provide a solution to the problem articulated in the fourth chapter. This solution is offered on Origen's behalf, and is drawn from his own writings and theology rather than added to them from without as a supplement. My aim, then, is to develop a little more fully the mechanism by which rational creatures are sanctified or cleansed from the effects of sin upon their minds, and a crucial part of this mechanism involves the notion of there being a paraenetically active Logos within each rational being that supplies to the volitional context – the matrix of moral character, knowledge, and habit out of which decisions emerge – a constant, pre-cognitive source of motivation that perdures any noetic hardening on the moral agent's part. An individual's noetic sanctification, it will be shown, hinges upon the interaction of this inward, subjectively appropriated "light" with the Son, the cosmic Logos, in his capacity as the "light" – that being the first *epinoiai* of Christ exclusively devoted to humanity's redemptive needs, though Origen fails to mention it in *De Princ.*, where his discussion pertaining to the *epinoiai* seems rushed or truncated.² Christ, in his capacity as "light," ensures the survival of human noetic capacity in the face of the corruptive forces of sin by sustaining a kindling presence in each rational creature, and then providentially arranging that creature's environment to suit the strength of its inner light.

Chapter One: Pre-Origenian Logos Theology

² In *De Princ.* 1.2.13, at the very end of his christological discussion, Origen acknowledges the insufficiency of his treatment of the *epinoiai* ("notions," "concepts," or "aspects" seem to fall short; in the Latin of Rufinus, *appellationes*), and hints at undertaking a more comprehensive study at some later time.

Introduction

Joseph O’Leary, in his helpful and orienting article on “Logos” in Origen’s theology, surmises that “the notion of Logos was predestined to play a central role in Origen’s thought,” and the point is well taken that, despite Origen’s originality as a thinker, we are right to expect considerable interaction with and integration of his primary influences: biblical literature, the various philosophical traditions stemming from Plato (but primarily Middle Platonism), and to a less but still significant degree, the Stoics (2004: 142-145). Here John Dillon reminds us that the Middle Platonists appropriated (though not without qualification) the Stoics’ idea of the Logos as a divine, ordering principle immanent to the cosmos, but retained their commitment to the existence of a transcendent, ontological first-principle, two popular names of which were “the One” (in Plato’s *Parmenides*) and “the Good” (in his *Republic*) (1996: 46).³ A notable exception to this tendency among the Middle Platonists was Antiochus of Ascalon who, though a Platonist in many key respects, rejected the existence of immaterial objects; for him, in Dillon’s words, “Plato’s Demiurge and World Soul have here been merged, and become one positive force immanent in the world, the Logos” (1996: 83-84). Therefore, before proceeding to define Origen’s specific formulation of the Logos-doctrine in *De Princ.*, it will be instructive, first, to consider in broad outline the conceptual development of this doctrine prior to Origen, though with a considerable degree of selectivity. My intent in doing so is not to construct an *Ideengeschichte*,⁴ but rather to substantiate my contention that, despite earlier glimmers in Heraclitus and the Stoics, the Logos, both in its subjective appropriation as human “reason,” and in its objective, cosmic operation as the divine reason of God applied to creation, comes very

³ See, e.g. Diogenes Laertius 7.134-135, 147, 156. All references to ancient sources are, unless otherwise indicated, to the Loeb editions and translations.

⁴ For a more comprehensive study of the Logos-doctrine, see Kelber 1958.

explicitly to acquire a certain non-neutral or paraenetic characterization and function, first with the biblical Platonists of Alexandria - those being Philo, Clement, and Origen. This characterization of the Logos and the ways in which it impinges upon various other doctrines in Origen has been underappreciated in Origen studies.

The Stoics

Hal Koch (1932: 175) lists among the many detectable philosophical influences in Origen the Stoic doctrine of Logos (*Logoslehre*), after which, according to Koch, Origen closely modeled his doctrine of the pre-Incarnation Logos. It is most fitting, then, to begin with the (Old) Stoic understanding of the Logos, since, as Wilhelm Kelber (1958: 46; my trans.) has written in his *Die Logoslehre: Von Heraklit bis Origenes*, though the cosmic Logos emerges in the thought of Heraclitus, “The view of the Macro-Logos, of the Logos which sovereignly rules over all things and rises up from there as mankind’s reason, disappears with Socrates, his student Plato, and Plato’s student Aristotle,” only to reappear with an increased level of detail and precision in the Stoics.

To be sure, the Stoics owed much to Heraclitus and his concept of the Logos. In Heraclitus’ view, the Logos accounts for the harmony of the cosmos as the latter’s “unifying formula” or organizing principle, and it carries out this function as an actual constituent of the very cosmos it superintends (Kirk & Raven 1957: 188). Heraclitus even identifies the Logos, much like the Stoics, with the element of fire, or at any rate he understands them to be coextensive – it seems dubious, with what little has survived from Heraclitus, to make the relationship any more precise (Kirk & Raven 1957: 188). There is another respect in which Heraclitus might have influenced Stoic thinking, and that is in the metaphysically and

epistemologically fruitful suggestion, implicit in his philosophy, that “there is a fundamental relationship between cosmic events and human thought or discourse” (Long 1986: 146).

So it is that a metaphysical coherence is achieved by the Stoics through an identification of the divine immanence – Logos, Nature, Pneuma, or God⁵ – with the principle of human rationality that enables humankind to think, to deliberate, and to speak (Long 1986: 108).⁶ Said another way, this divine Logos is the *pneuma* (“breath” or “spirit”) that, for the Stoic, both orders the universe demiurgically *and* facilitates even the most basic epistemic operations like sense-perception in ensouled beings (Diog. Laer. 7.156).⁷ Considered from the standpoint of epistemology, such a doctrine has the distinct advantage of providing a metaphysical backing for the known object’s accessibility to the knowing subject, an accessibility which comes as a corollary to the notion that the faculties of knowing intrinsic to the knowing subject and the knowable object consist of the self-same ontological substance.⁸

The concept of the *logoi spermatikoi*, originating among the Stoics, is aptly summarized by Kelber. The Greek *spermatikoi*, “seeds,” is conjoined with *logos* to capture the function of the

⁵ Each of these designations, though they subtly vary in *intension*, have basically the same *extension* in Stoicism. See Diog. Laer. 7.135, 147, 156 and 157. See also the discussion of Diog. Laer. 7.87-99 below.

⁶ See esp. Diog. Laer. 7.143, where a fragment of the cosmos, *qua* “rational, animate and intelligent,” is possessed by each rational creature.

⁷ In Cleanthes’ *Hymn to Zeus*, the Stoic deity is called “Zeus, prime mover of nature, who with your law steer all things” (*SVF* 1.537; trans. Long & Sedley 1987: 326-327 (vol. 1)). All mortals are descended from Zeus and therefore, as rational creatures, partake, by way of reasonable speech (*logos prophorikos*), in the source and originator of rationality himself. Cleanthes continues in his adoration: “All this cosmos, as it spins around the earth, obeys you, whichever way you lead, and willingly submits to your sway. Such is the double-edged fiery ever-living thunderbolt which you hold at the ready in your unvanquished hands. For under its strokes all the works of nature are accomplished. With it you direct the universal reason [κοινὸν λόγον] which runs through all thing.” The ability, or even propensity, of “universal reason” to effect moral transformation is strongly implied when Zeus is invoked for that very purpose: “Bountiful Zeus of the dark clouds and gleaming thunderbolt, protect mankind from its pitiful incompetence. Scatter this from our soul, Father. Let us achieve the power of judgement by trusting in which you steer all things with justice.”

⁸ See Gerson 2009: 1-13. Gerson distinguishes between modern approaches to epistemology, which generally characterize knowledge as a certain propositional attitude” (i.e. belief) that meets certain criteria (the belief being true, the belief being “justified” - however that term is understood), and ancient approaches, which treat knowledge as a *sui generis* type of cognition suited to objects peculiar to the nature of knowledge. In this sense, knowledge is “rooted in metaphysics” - the kind of object that is to be cognitively engaged with determines the kind of cognition used by the knowing subject.

Logos immanent in the cosmos, namely that of growing and developing the natural potential of the cosmos' nascent parts. The “effectiveness” (Wirksamkeit) of the seed is the “origination of all life,” and thus “the Logos spermatikos, as a concept, connected the spiritual essence of the world, namely the Logos, with the idea of germinating life” (1958: 49; my trans.).⁹ Humans, as rational beings, are uniquely endowed with the Logos in seed form, so that, in Stoic thinking, the gradual development of self-consciousness, attained especially in one's adolescent years, is conceptualized as the full maturation of the *logos spermatikos*, and thus as the Logos *in toto* (1958: 59-61).¹⁰ As Kelber writes, “The micro-Logos in mankind is fanned into flame by the macro-Logos of the world” (1958: 61; my trans.). So, the seed-like Logos (“Mikrologos”) that grounds the intellectual and cognitive development of rational beings is simultaneously the Logos which providentially governs and arranges the cosmos (“Makrologos”), of which it remains a part, and by which it is kindled.¹¹

Moreover, just as Stoic philosophy achieves a coherence at the levels of epistemology and metaphysics with the fundamental unity of *intellegens* and *intellegendum*, so too does it intertwine each of these disciplines with that of ethics. Sextus Empiricus provides us with the view of Posidonius, who “supposed the [threefold] discipline of philosophy to be rather like an animal, with the flesh and blood corresponding to physics, the bones and sinews to logic, and the

⁹ In Kelber's view, the association that arose between “life” (Leben) and the Logos *via* the concept of the *logoi Spermatikoi* prepared the way for the Johannine Prologue's (Jn 1:4) linkage of Logos and Life (ζωή): “in him was life” (ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν).

¹⁰ See Aetius 4.11.1-4 (*SVF* 2.83).

¹¹ Diog. Laer. 7.148: “Nature [φύσις] is defined as a force moving of itself, producing and preserving in being its offspring in accordance with seminal principles [ἐξίς ἐξ αὐτῆς κινουμένη κατὰ σπερματικούς λόγους].” The germination and fruition of the *logos spermatikos* in each individual rational creature is fundamentally, therefore, a function of “nature”. This “nature,” as the principle of organization and growth which the divine mind effects and guides, is basic to every part of the cosmos, while obtaining a fuller realization or refinement first in beings with vegetative growth, then with ensouled beings, and finally with *rational* ensouled beings. It is in this connection that Chrysippus and Posidonius (as reported by Diog. Laer. 7.138-139) affirm Mind's (νοῦς) penetration of the whole cosmos, though its penetration reaches deeper in some parts than in others.

soul to ethics” (Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Dogmatists* (hitherto, *M*) 7.19; my trans.). Such an expression of the relationship between the three Stoic philosophical sub-disciplines of physics, logic, and ethics underscores the organic unity that holds between each of the three. Diogenes Laertius associates many of the foremost figures in Old and Middle Stoicism, not only with this threefold organization of the philosophical curriculum, but more importantly, with its organic unity. After having mentioned that, according to Zeno, Chrysippus, Diogenes the Babylonian, and Poseidonius, “the account of philosophy is threefold,” differences of terminology are mentioned with regard to the “sub-divisions” (τὰ μέρη); while Apollodorus terms them “places” (τόπους), Chrysippus and Eudromus prefer “forms” (εἶδη), with yet others preferring “kinds” (γένη) (Diog. Laer. 7.39-41). Notwithstanding these terminological differences, in Diogenes Laertius’ account *all* cited authors apparently “liken philosophy to a living being” or animal (εἰκάζουσι δὲ ζῶν τὴν φιλοσοφίαν), an “egg” (ἢ πάλιν ᾠῶ), a “fertile field” (ἢ ἀγρῶ παμφόρῳ), or to a “city” (ἢ πόλει) (Diog. Laer. 7.39-41).¹² Cicero has Cato remark in *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum* (3.74):

The fact is that I have been led on by the marvellous structure of the Stoic system and the miraculous sequence of its topics; pray tell me seriously, does it not fill you with admiration? Nothing is more finished, more nicely ordered, than nature; but what has nature, what have the products of handicraft to show that is so well constructed, so firmly jointed and welded into one? Where do you find a conclusion inconsistent with its premise, or a discrepancy between an earlier and a later statement? Where is lacking such close interconnexion of the parts that, if you alter a single letter, you shake the whole structure

¹² Three of the four metaphors are transparently organic. The fourth, that of ‘philosophy = city’, fits with the theme of organicity if one bears in mind the comments of Aristotle in *Politics* 1252a24-1253a37.

Neither in nature (this point of comparison would have indeed been flattering to a Stoic) nor in the products of human craftsmanship is there so cogent a system as that of Stoic philosophy.

An implication of this description of philosophy as an “organic whole” is the inability to neatly analyze philosophy in terms of its component parts, even conceptually. As Long remarks, “the subject-matter of logic, physics and ethics is *one* thing, the rational universe, considered from three different but mutually consistent points of view” (1986: 119). Consequently, the Stoic “wise man,” as an idyllic moral exemplar, the perfect concretization and fulfillment of – perhaps even *in-humanation* (*enanthrōpēsis*) of – the Stoic ethic, is best equipped for the study of physics and logic, since he actually lives *by* and *through* the principles that he studies; the inverse is also true, namely that a wise man must of necessity also be a student of physics and logic, for how else will he live in accordance with the rational universe (Long 1986: 119-120)¹³ This integration of ethics, physics, and logic, present in the Stoics and carried forward by subsequent philosophical schools prior to Origen, will come into play when the nexus of free will, sin, and knowledge in Origen’s writings is discussed. Particularly important for the purposes of this chapter’s argument is the observation – and this ought not to be lost on us, though the post-Cartesian subject-transcendent¹⁴ epistemology in which we swim is of little help to us here – that living morally, by Stoic lights, is epistemically rewarding, and that conversely immoral living is epistemically damaging to the knowing subject.¹⁵

¹³ See Diog. Laer. 7.46-48, 83, and Plutarch, *De Stoicorum repugnantibus* 1035C-D (*SVF* 3.68).

¹⁴ The epistemology I describe in general terms here is nestled within the larger Enlightenment “philosophy of the subject” which posits, in various ways through various authorial voices, a hard separation between the subject, who transcends space and time, and the object extended in space and time. For discussion, see McCarthy 2004: vii-xvii.

¹⁵ I intend here to contrast modern notions of knowledge which disregard the context, or the situation of the knowing subject in his relation to the object of knowledge, with ancient epistemologies of the sort I am interacting with throughout this thesis. A distinctly *modern* approach to epistemology consists, for example, in an analysis of knowledge whereby a subject S knows a proposition P if and only if 1) P is true; 2) S believes, or assents to P, and 3) S has some justification for believing P. Knowledge is therefore, on this view, “justified true belief.” Absent from

Before progressing to Origen’s Middle Platonic heritage, an additional peculiarity of the Stoics, indeed one which follows logically from the metaphilosophical unity they achieved in the philosophical subdisciplines of Physics, Logic, and Ethics, is in need of plain exposition. The Stoic notion of “Nature” (*phūsis*) has ethical content, which is to say that as the divine immanence that actively organizes the cosmos, Nature *tends* in certain directions as a matter of course, and because of the close connection between Nature and Logos in Stoic metaphysics, the Logos exhibits a similar sort of ethical “gravity.”¹⁶ The Logos, as we shall see shortly, is in the Stoic view not simply a bare means of rational decision-making; rather, in its subjective appropriation by a rational creature it supplies the standards necessary for rational volition *and* exerts a pull on the creature’s decision-making in the direction of virtue, i.e. what is in accordance with Nature.¹⁷

According to the doxography of Diogenes Laertius, the Stoics thought that “an animal’s first impulse [...] is to self preservation” (Diog. Laer. 7.85). This first impulse is supplied by nature (*phūsis*), since “it was not likely that nature should estrange the living thing from itself [...]. We are forced then to conclude that nature in constituting the animal made it near and dear to itself [οἰκειούσης αὐτὸ <αὐτῷ> τῆς φύσεως]” (Diog. Laer. 7.85). Again, and more explicitly, “the first thing appropriate to every animal [...] is its own constitution and the consciousness of

this view is any explicit consideration of the subject’s moral status. Westphal 1990: 200-209 argues that moral failure, i.e. sin, is an “essential epistemological category,” and that it has been largely neglected in modern epistemology.

¹⁶ See the comments of Long and Sedley 1987: 351 (vol. 1) on the identification of “Nature,” cosmic reason, and the divine immanence.

¹⁷ Diog. Laer. 7.87-9: “This is why Zeno was the first (in his treatise *On the Nature of Man*) to designate as the end “life in agreement with nature” (or living agreeably to nature), which is the same as a virtuous life [φύσεως τέλος εἶπε τὸ ὁμολογουμένως τῇ φύσει ζῆν], virtue being the goal towards which nature guides us. [...] And this is why the end may be defined as life in accordance with nature, or in other words, in accordance with our own human nature as well as that of the universe, a life in which we refrain from every action forbidden by the law common to all things, that is to say, the right reason which pervades all things [ὁ ὀρθὸς λόγος, διὰ πάντων ἐρχόμενος], and is identical with this Zeus, lord and ruler of all that is.” Bénatouïl 2009 points out how scandalous the claim of Zeus’ exhaustive providence was for other Hellenistic philosophical schools.

this [πρῶτον οἰκεῖον λέγων εἶναι παντὶ ζῴῳ τὴν αὐτοῦ σύστασιν καὶ τὴν ταύτης συνείδησιν]” (Diog. Laer. 7.85). So, according to Chrysippus, nature determines what is “appropriate” (οἰκεῖον) for an animal, after which the animal receives impulses. These impulses, which may now be thought of as psychological drives, are supplied by the animal’s nature, and they aim at what is appropriate for the animal. Survival is most immediately relevant, or appropriate, for any living creature, so it is perfectly “natural” that it be the object of a living creature’s first impulse.

In Seneca (*Epistles* 121.6-15) we find that “each age has its own constitution [constitutio], different in the case of the child, the boy, and the old man.” With each age-specific “constitution” comes, moreover, a special “appropriation” in and through which the animal orients itself ethically (*omnes ei constitutioni conciliantur in qua sunt*).¹⁸ The account given above from Diogenes Laertius describes, in Seneca’s terms, the first constitution and its associated state of *oikeiōsis*, but as humans mature and develop so too does their *oikeiōsis*, which may be defined as “an orientation, or set of orientations, given to us by nature (either from birth or in the course of our natural development)” (Bett 2018: 536-538).¹⁹ One’s primitive orientation towards survival expands and evolves with the blossoming of the Logos in the human soul, so that what is *rational*, and not simply what conducts individual self-preservation, begins to guide human impulses toward the rational *telos* for which they exist; in the words of Chrysippus, “[reason] supervenes as the craftsman of impulse” (Diog. Laer. 7.86). This development should not be thought of as a triumph of reason over nature, but rather as nature’s refinement, or indeed

¹⁸ *Conciliatio* and its cognates, for Seneca (and Cicero), often translate οἰκειώσις and its cognates. See Pembroke 1971: 120.

¹⁹ Long 1986: 172 comments: “*oikeiōsis* determines an animal’s relationship to its environment, but that to which it is primarily well-disposed is itself [...]. Its self-awareness is an affective relationship, and all behaviour can be interpreted as an extension or manifestation of the same principle. Thus the direction of an animal’s impulses is determined both by what it senses and by its innate capacity to recognize things which belong to itself.” On the translation of *oikeiōsis*, see Pembroke 1971: 115-116, who prefers for *oikeiōsis* the translation “well-disposed”; Long and Sedley 1987: 351-352 (vol.1) prefer “appropriation.” The term and its cognates, as all authors acknowledge, are notoriously difficult to translate.

as a fuller self-realization of nature *qua* the subjective Logos (Bett 2018: 536-538). With the transition in constitutions from childhood to adulthood, the more basic instincts of self-preservation, native to the earlier constitution, are taken up into the more explicitly rational orientation of the more mature constitution (Bett 2018: 537-538). Long aptly summarizes: “In the Stoic view of human development, innate impulses are so transformed by the flowering of reason that they cease to exist as an independent faculty. They are taken over by reason” (1986: 173).

When reason (*logos*) becomes the “craftsman of impulse” in an individual soul, living in accordance with reason becomes natural, i.e., something proper or appropriate to that individual. Certainly, Chrysippus’ description includes the idea that rational souls have a kind of veto power over the impulses which may allow the maturation of some into action while preventing the same in others. But if reason is to be considered a “craftsman” (τεχνίτης) of impulses, it would seem that reason, as the subjective Logos, should play a part in actually formulating, or at least shaping impulses. In other words, the Stoic “reason” is no neutral arbiter of competing impulses. It has, in Chrysippus’ view, been given, “by way of a more perfect leadership,” to rational creatures (τοῦ δὲ λόγου τοῖς λογικοῖς κατὰ τελειοτέραν προστασίαν δεδομένου), with the result that living rationally becomes, for those rational creatures, *natural* (Diog. Laer. 7.86). Pembroke (1971: 117) is therefore quite right to point out that “*logos* is [...] essentially continuous with impulse; it is not brought in from outside the biological realm but at a certain level of organisation arises spontaneously within it.”²⁰ Life in accordance with reason becomes, in some sense, instinctual.

²⁰ In contrast, Frede 1998: 78 presents the transition from impulse-directed behavior to reason-directed behavior as rather discontinuous.

Antiochus and the Middle Platonists

A fairly wide-ranging network of ideas – the network in which the *logoi spermatikoi* and related ideas were enmeshed – eventually merged with a broadly Platonic metaphysics (i.e. “physics,” in Stoic reckoning) to form a cluster of doctrines known in modern scholarship as “Middle Platonism.”²¹ Pertinent to our discussion are developments in Middle Platonism which relate specifically to “physics” and “ethics.” To paint the situation with a broad brush, the Platonic notions of transcendent Being (Monad and Dyad) and an immanent, demiurgic figure (drawn from the *Timaeus*) both enjoyed a continued, if subtly inflected existence in the later Platonists discussed below, and ethical discourse during this period remained mostly tethered to and determined by the metaphysical commitments of the respective author (Dillon 1996: 43-46).

Sedley describes the first century C.E. as a period “in which philosophy loosened its historic moorings in the great philosophical schools of Athens and entered the Roman world” (2012: 1-2). A new focus on the foundational texts of Plato and Aristotle, as evidenced by the wealth of commentaries produced, came to dominate philosophical inquiry during this period, and this shift was accompanied by the – hitherto impossible – interpretive possibility of taking Plato and Aristotle as “authoritative twin voices of a single philosophical project” (Sedley 2012: 2). This historically new expression of philosophical inquiry bloomed within the cultural hubs of Rome and Alexandria, the former being the city that both Antiochus and Philo of Larissa fled to from Athens in 88 B.C. shortly before that city’s siege in the first Mithridatic War (Dillon 1996: 53-54).

²¹ Tarrant 2015: 66 warns that the application of the label ‘Middle Platonism’ to the philosophies subsequent to Plato’s immediate successors and antecedent to Plotinus’ species of Platonism obscures the philosophical heterogeneity of this period. I indicate by ‘Middle Platonism’ here simply the historical period of philosophical inquiry normally referred, without implying by its use any undue homogeneity.

Antiochus is credited by Dillon with introducing into Middle Platonism the tendency to immanentize the Platonic “Ideas” or “Forms” as the Logos, and since this conceptual development is crucial for understanding the physics and epistemology of the Alexandrians, beginning of course with Philo, his thought is especially worthy of our consideration (1996: 46-48, 83; Berchman 1984: 27).²² Antiochus’ eclecticism is justifiable on the basis of its being, in his mind, a recovery of Plato’s (i.e. the first-generation Academics’) original doctrine. Bonazzi (2012: 308) writes regarding Antiochus’ genealogical intentions, that, in our reports from Cicero, Antiochus “aimed at reviving the philosophy of the *veteres*, basically the philosophy of Plato along with his successors in the early Academy from Speusippus to Polemo (Cic. *Luc.* 70; *Ac.* 1.13), Aristotle included (*Fin.* 5.7, 5.14; *De Or.* 3.67),” that, according to Antiochus, “Plato left a most complete philosophical system,” and that this tradition was adhered to and housed within the Peripatetic and Academic schools, which differed one from another only nominally; Stoicism was additionally interpreted as a recovery of originally Platonic doctrines. Antiochus thus saw himself, if our evidence from Cicero is reliable, as a faithful Academic who achieved a recovery of the genuine, Platonic philosophy that had been obscured by the Academic Sceptics, albeit all *through eclectic means* (Bonazzi 2012: 314).

Following Bonazzi, it is reasonable to assume that unless proven otherwise, Antiochus tread, in his philosophical commitments, more closely to what were perceived in his time as characteristically first-generation Academic doctrines. One of these doctrines, that of the existence of immaterial Forms (or “Ideas”), was destined to undergo numerous

²² Charles Brittain (2012: 104-106) argues against trying to “press the evidence [of Antiochus’ epistemology, and philosophical commitments in general] into an Academic or Peripatetic mould that does not fit it,” and suggests that Antiochus was not, in point of fact, a Platonist, but an “Academic.” Antiochus’ adoption of the Stoic criterion of truth (on which, see below) is less anomalous, since his philosophical commitments are not governed by his faithfulness to Plato, but rather to his Academy’s pursuit of truth.

“transformations,” beginning even within the lifetime of Plato himself (Dillon 1996: 47).²³ The philosophical-historical phase of this transformative process which most concerns us begins explicitly with Philo, where the Forms, the Demiurge of the *Timaeus*, Stoic discussions of the divine and immanent Logos, the Monad and Dyad of Pythagoreanism, and the biblical Yahweh’s divine transcendence are all in some way incorporated so as to construct a cosmology wherein God’s transcendence and immanence are both maintained. In this cosmology, the physical world is structured around the Forms, which in turn are located within the mind of God (Berchman 1984: 27). The Logos is according to Philo the aggregate of the divine mind’s ideas directed “outward” into material creation as its metaphysical blueprint and demiurge (Berchman 1984: 27-30).

In the case of Antiochus, the pressing question apropos to this study is whether, or to what extent, Antiochus’ take on Plato’s doctrine of the Forms prefigures, or prepares the way for Philo’s version of the doctrine. Some, such as Boys-Stones, argue that the evidence is far from sufficient to ascribe to Antiochus a firm commitment to the classic construal of Plato’s Forms as immaterial, transcendent paradigms; in so doing, they oppose the “romantic” interpretation of Antiochus as the “founding father of the Platonist revival [...] in the post-Hellenistic era” (Boys-Stones 2012: 221-222). However, given Antiochus’ firm commitment to what he saw as the original Academy, it seems unlikely that Antiochus would have traded earlier Academic thinking on the Forms for the strictly material *koinai ennoiai* (“common notions”) or the like, unless of course he had good reason for doing so; As Bonazzi writes, “when combining Stoic and Platonic terms and concepts, [Antiochus’] aim was not simply to place Plato and Stoicism on

²³ On Plato’s theory of Forms in general, see Sedley 2016: 3-22. For discussion of the theory’s transformation as witnessed in the early dialogues, see Dancy 2004. For evidence of change in the “middle period,” see Rickless 2009: 10-93.

the same level [...]. Comparison, in other words, leads to subordination [of Stoicism to Platonism]” (2012: 322). Boys-Stones (2012) offers what I think is a compelling *via media* between a “two-worlds” view of Antiochus’ ontology and a view which is too Stoic to be Antiochus’, if the arguments of Bonazzi cited above are right. He suggests that, in order to preserve some semblance of Platonism, Antiochus’ Forms be taken as ontologically “given” – though material – ideas or notions *intra mentem dei*.²⁴ In other words, Antiochus, plausibly, adheres to a materialistic version of divine conceptualism, an ever-so-slight conceptual break with traditional Stoicism which nevertheless has at least one significant pay-off: “In epistemology [...] there might be scope to say that the thoughts that constitute the divine mind are directly accessible to human cognition, and so the ultimate guarantors of knowledge (as transcendent Forms are in later Platonism)” (Boys-Stones 2012: 231-232). Even still, the only possible assessments of the evidence for Antiochus’ view of Forms are that it is untrustworthy, that it is unclear, or that it is insufficient for showing that Antiochus self-consciously reconceptualized Plato’s forms to fit his Stoic physics.

Antiochus accepted the Stoic criterion of truth – the *kataleptikē phantasia*²⁵ – and rejected the skepticism of his Academic teachers (Dillon 1996: 63-69). In so doing, he made “cognitive impressions” the basis for his entire system of philosophy, which, as the preceding

²⁴ Boys-Stones means that the immanent and fully material Logos of classic Stoicism is hereby reconceptualized as “a mind *constituted* by ‘Forms,’ in such a way that these Forms can be considered determinative of all that might exist and all that might be thought.” The ontological priority of the Ideas, on this view, is what distinguishes it from a more standardly Stoic conception. Again: “This would represent a subtle but significant difference from the Stoics, for whom the thoughts god has are *posterior* to his substance.” Dillon (1996) accounts for Antiochus’ “Ideas” in basically the same way, except that he makes the incorrect assessment that Antiochus’ theory of Forms is, like his epistemology in general, straightforwardly Stoic (p. 69, 95). He fails to appreciate the ontological priority that Antiochus’ notion of the Ideas seems to require if, as he himself recognizes, the Forms/Ideas are what the physical world is patterned after (p. 95).

²⁵ The phrase is variously translated; I have opted for “cognitive impression” to stress the term’s relevance to human cognition and psychology. Long and Sedley 1987: 250 (vol.1) prefer the rendering of “cognitive impression,” with the recognition that a “more literal translation would be ‘impression capable of grasping (its object).’”

discussion has shown, included a rather Stoic conception of the Logos, though with the above-noted caveats. According to Stoic thinking on the matter, a cognitive impression, as that which puts the knowing subject into contact with reality, has as its semantic content a proposition-like, “incorporeal” and therefore “subsisting” *lekton* (pl. *lekta*). The Stoics, as Sextus Empiricus reports, hold that a *lekton* is “that which underlies a rational impression” (τὸ κατὰ λογικὴν φαντασίαν ὑφιστάμενον), and that a *phantasia logikē*, a species of “impression” to which the *kataleptikē phantasia* belongs, is a “an impression in which what appears is presented to reason [or: in speech; my trans.]” (φαντασίαν καθ’ ἣν τὸ φαντασθὲν ἔστι λόγῳ παραστηῖσαι) (Sext. Emp. *M.* 8.70; Diog. Laer. 7.49). So, *lekta* underlie the sorts of impressions which *rational* beings (i.e. humans) experience, and the experience of a *phantasia logikē* only occurs through the use of “reason” (*logos*), the very same reason present both in the *hēgemonikon* of the human soul as the “inward speech/reason” (λογός ἐνδιάθετος)²⁶ and which pervades the cosmos as the principle of its rational ordering. Strictly speaking, *lekta* are classified by Stoics as “non-existents,” though the meanings which they convey inhere in the cosmos and press themselves upon the human mind *via* the senses, an occurrence which the mind itself (more precisely, its “rational part”, or *logos*) facilitates (Dillon 1996: 67).

If the suggestion of Boys-Stones given above is accepted, then Antiochus’ modification makes special provision for the contents of the immanent Logos being immediately accessible to human cognition (2012: 231-232). A conceptual development of this kind would have shored up, at least in Antiochus’ own philosophy – but plausibly also in his heirs – the idea that the Logos functions paraenetically, guiding moral agents towards virtuous and rational action as the ethical

²⁶ See *SVF* 2.43.15. According to Sextus Empiricus’ doxography (*M.* 8.275-276), a human being is distinguished from “irrational animals” (τῶν ἀλόγων ζώων) by their possession of an “internal logos/speech” (τῷ [λόγῳ] ἐνδιάθετῳ). On the distinction between *logos endiathetos* and *logos prophorikos* and the history of its origination and use in philosophical discourse, see Mühl 1962: 7-56.

telos of rational animals. A materialist construal of divine conceptualism of the sort discernible, if only in rough outline, in our sources on Antiochus would have made the later biblical Platonists uncomfortable, since it is hard on such a view to avoid pantheism and the violation of the biblical creator-creature distinction. But Antiochus' thought brought into intimate, ontological connection the contents of the divine mind and the cognitive-volitional faculties of human beings, and by this prepared the way for the doctrine's theistic transformation in the biblical Platonists - the writers who constitute Origen's most immediate intellectual background.

The Biblical Platonists

Not long after the death of Antiochus (c. 68 B.C.), Alexandria gained ascendancy as the center of Platonist thought. However, it is when Platonism finally gains a foothold in Alexandria through Eudorus and, with a biblically more agreeable bent through Philo, that we begin to approach the proximate thought-world of Origen and his contemporaries (Dillon 1996: 64, 139-143).²⁷ Philo's Platonism follows the stoicizing tendencies of Antiochus insofar as he accepts the Stoic criterion and its attendant epistemological implications, and he accepts the Stoic notion of the *logoi spermatikoi*, albeit without the materialist packaging typical of Stoicism and Antiochus' "Platonism" (Dillon 1996: 159). In this connection, Niehoff (2018: 94-96, 99-100) calls attention to a shift in Philo's theology of creation from a more Platonic emphasis on God's transcendence to a more Stoic immanence; God is never identified with Creation or Nature in Philo, but his use of Stoic ideas, along with a renewed interest in the *Timaeus* following his visit to Rome, allows Philo to rearticulate God's providential interaction with Creation and Creation's relationship to God's mind.

²⁷ See Rogers 2022: 86-92 for examples of Origen's direct and indirect use of Philo. In numerous places Origen refers to Philo as his "predecessor."

This balance of Stoic immanence with Platonic transcendence is seen most clearly in Philo's summary of what are, in his view, Moses "fairest and best" teachings concerning God and his creation of the world. Philo has Moses assert, as the first three teachings, God's eternity and unity, and Creation's temporality, i.e. it's having been created *in time*, and as the fifth, "that God providentially administrates his Creation" (πέμπτον δ' ὅτι καὶ προνοεῖ τοῦ κόσμου ὁ θεός) (*De Opificio Mundi* 170-172). Especially noteworthy is Philo's description of *why* God "oversees" his Creation: "For that the Maker should care for the thing made is required by the laws and ordinances of Nature [φύσεως νόμοις καὶ θεσμοῖς], and it is in accordance with these that parents take thought beforehand for children" (*De Opif.* 172).

In point of fact, Nature has, especially in Philo's later writings, both a normative status and a pedagogical function in much the same way that it does in Stoic authors. For Zeno and all later Stoics, the ethical ideal for humanity was a life lived in accordance with Nature, the operations of which, as we have seen, are not morally neutral, but actually indicate the parameters within which a moral life can occur.²⁸ Seneca the Younger, who writes often on Nature's human-oriented pedagogy, clarifies for the recipient of his 120th epistle that Nature teaches humankind about virtue through indirect means, providing the human cognitive apparatus with "seeds of knowledge" ([*natura*] *semina nobis scientiae dedit*) (Seneca, *Epistles* 120.4; Niehoff 2018: 159). Cicero's interesting presentation of "law" (*lex*) as the highest manifestation of the Stoic's immanent reason, which is itself "implanted in nature," expresses rather clearly the Stoic conceptualization of these ideas' interconnectedness. Nature eventually gives rise to reason in humankind, and that reason makes accessible to them the "divine reason" (*mens divina*) with its "natural law" ordinances (Cicero, *De Legibus* 2.10; Niehoff 2018: 159).

²⁸ See e.g. Seneca, *Epistles* 119.2-4.

Philo considers the Torah – God’s Law – to be a codification of the principles that are inherent in Nature, and Nature itself a product of the divine mind. To live in accordance with Nature is, therefore, to live in accordance with the Torah (*De Opif.* 3). The crucial difference between Philo and the Stoics remains, however, that in Philo God’s being remains transcendent, while in the Stoics the divine principle is immanent.

The Logos is for Philo a “glue” and a “bond” which holds creation together *and* a “cutter” (τομεύς) with which God “divided universal being, previously formless and without quality and the four elements of the cosmos set apart from it and the animals and plants solidified from them,” so that Philo appears to achieve a balance, in his conception of the cosmos, between the two poles of nominalism and monistic idealism, all of which befits Philo’s biblical convictions.²⁹ Moreover, to these two characteristics of the Logos, *viz.* the Logos as cohesive-agent of creation and as creative tool of God, must be added a metaphysically crucial third detail: that the Logos contains and is constituted by the Forms, and is in that capacity termed a “noetic world” (*kosmos noētos*; see *De Opif.* 24).³⁰ God’s Logos houses the metaphysical blueprint – the *kosmos noētos* – for all of creation, and actively creates and sustains it in accordance with this blueprint.³¹

Significant too in this regard is the metaphysical “location” of the Forms, or indeed of the Logos which contains them. As Dillon (1996: 45-49) notes, the *Timaeus*, a dialogue of singularly

²⁹ O’Brien 2015: 54, citing *Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres* 188 and 140.

³⁰ O’Brien 2015: 59-60 notes that Philo’s Forms are different from Plato’s, in that for Philo, the Forms prefigure and determine the totality of the created order, while for Plato the Forms appear to signify much less.

³¹ *De Opif.* 16: “For God, since he is God, anticipated that a beautiful copy would not come about without a beautiful model and that none of the sense-perceptible things would be blameless, if it was not modelled upon the archetypal and intelligible form [ἀρχέτυπον καὶ νοητὴν ιδέαν] and having decided to fabricate the invisible cosmos beforehand, in order that he might employ it as an incorporeal paradigm, most similar to God, and bring to perfection the corporeal world, a younger representation of an older exemplar, which encompasses as many sense-perceptible kinds as there are intelligible kinds in the other cosmos.”

great importance to the Middle Platonists,³² seems to attribute to the *paradeigma* used by the Demiurge in the creation of the cosmos an independent existence, that is to say, an existence ontologically *external to* the Demiurge (Dillon 1996: 159).³³ Early Platonism had flirted with the idea of Forms being constituents of the *Nous*, or Intellect, in the figure of Xenocrates, but that conceptual move had to wait for Antiochus of Ascalon, as has already been mentioned, before it would begin to dominate in Middle Platonic authors (Dillon 1996: 29; Berchman 1984: 29). An alternative reading credits Philo as the first author to employ this metaphysical configuration – Radice (1991) is in this vein, calling it a “most philosophically important” innovation, though O’Brien (2015: 36) has doubts – but in any case it is with Philo that the doctrine becomes explicitly articulated, and quite apart from any materialist ontology, at that. Certainly, the doctrine of divine conceptualism is theologically suited – necessary, even – to someone of Philo’s convictions. For, an ontologically distinct realm of abstract entities - the Forms or Ideas - would have created issues reminiscent of those encountered in, for example, Plato’s *Euthyphro*. In this connection Philo’s *De Opif.* 8 may be cited, a text which, as Dillon (1996: 157-158) notes, conspicuously places the Stoic “active principle” (τὸ δραστήριον) above both the “passive principle” (τὸ δὲ παθητόν) and what appear to be Forms: the active principle, as the “mind of all things” (ὁ τῶν ὅλων νοῦς) is metaphysically prior to that which it orders and that on the basis of which it orders. Moses, who in Philo’s mind had “attained the summit of philosophy” because of the “divine instruction” he had received, “could not have failed to recognize” this twofold architecture of the cosmos (*De Opif.* 8).

Philo’s Logos functions mediatorially between God (who is radically transcendent and beyond all noetic grasp) and the physical world (the world of *hylē*, composed of either four or

³² See also Yli-Karjanmaa 2017: 115-129.

³³ See Plato, *Timaeus* 28a-b.

five elements),³⁴ throughout which the Logos is scattered as *logoi spermatikoi* – the transcendent “Ideas” of God made immanent and hence operative in matter as its formative or creative principles (Dillon 1996: 159-160; Berchman 1984: 28; O’Brien 2015: 65). *Heres* 205 is instructive: “To His Word, His chief messenger, highest in age and honour, the Father of all has given the special prerogative, to stand on the border and separate the creature from the Creator.” As Kelber (1958: 96; my trans.) writes, God’s “being” is such that a radical ontological divide separates Him from the cosmos, entailing his epistemological inaccessibility to his creatures *sans* mediation, so that “all the theophanies of the Old Testament are, in [Philo’s] view, mediates through the Logos or through an archangel.” Perhaps not coincidentally, the Logos is in certain passages of Philo personified, a development which Kelber plausibly attributes to Philo’s biblical monotheism, and which he thinks prefigures the type of Logos-christology present in the Gospel of John (1958: 98-99).³⁵

This striking personalization – Kelber (1958: 98-99) emphasizes Philo’s use of “first-born” (πρωτόγονος) and “son of God” (υἱὸς θεοῦ) as descriptors illustrative of this novel development – bears upon yet another facet of Philo’s doctrine of the Logos, that being his pre-Christological doctrine of the *imago dei*. The Logos is the *imago dei simpliciter*, and humankind is created, most emphatically, *after the image* (LXX Gen. 1:26). Philo’s purpose with this doctrine is explicit: as mentioned above, he seeks to protect the divine transcendence from

³⁴ Dillon (1996: 158, 170) interprets Philo as being dubious on the topic of whether matter is created or uncreated. He cites *Heres* 160 as an example, but this passage serves, rather, to emphasize God’s skill as a *dēmiourgos* in bringing order out of chaos. Philo’s description of *hylē* in that same passage suggests that this is in fact Philo’s purpose: “the material which He had used for His work, material soul-less, discordant and dissoluble, and indeed in itself perishable, irregular, unequal” In *Heres* 158 Philo makes the point that exceptionally skillful craftsmen are able to make high-quality products out of lesser-quality materials, thereby showcasing their skill. Moreover (and as Dillon notes), passages like *De Providentia* 18 and *De Legum Allegoria* II 2 clearly indicate matter’s creation by God.

³⁵ In *De Agricultura* 51 Philo calls the Logos his “firstborn son” (πρωτόγονον υἱόν). See also Philo’s priestly-mediatorial description of the Logos in *Heres* 205.

anthropomorphism or any kind of immanentizing tendencies (*De Opif.* 69). To this end, Philo is clear that the *image dei* is the divine Mind (*nous*), and that that part of a human being created after the divine image is nothing else than the human mind, which Philo qualifies as the “hegemon of the soul” (τὸν τῆς ψυχῆς ἡγεμόνα) (*De Opif.* 69).³⁶

A human being’s capacity to reason is exalted as a “most perfect and divine thing” (λογισμὸς δὲ [...] τελειότατον δὲ καὶ θειότατον ἔργον) and, explicitly alluding to the words of Moses in Gen. 1, an “impressed likeness of the divine image” (εἰκόνοσ θείας ἐκμαγεῖον ἐμφορές) (Philo, *De Mutatione Nominum* 223). Clearly, it is in virtue of this creation “after the image,” i.e. after the divine Logos, that human beings are capable of reason. Images of the Image, as it were, are in possession of an innate capacity for knowledge, but, like the Stoics, Philo’s epistemology is basically empiricist in its foundations: a rational creature’s system of knowledge is constructed through the acquisition and assent of sense-impressions.³⁷ Predictably therefore, the Stoic criterion, the *katalēptikē phantasia*, is accepted by Philo as the means through which knowledge is principally acquired. Unlike the old Stoicism of Chryssipus discussed above however, Philo accepts the existence of natural kinds whose existence is grounded in the intelligible world (*kosmos noētos*) of the divine Logos, so that the cognitive development of universals is more appropriately a process of discovery than it is abstraction from particulars.³⁸ In *De Opif.* 139, a passage most pregnant with anthropological and epistemological significance, we read:

³⁶ That the *nous* spoken of here is actually the Logos is made transparent by Philo’s comments in *De Fuga et Inventionem* 101. See also *De Somnis* 239.

³⁷ See Wolfson 1948: 3-11 (vol. 2). Wolfson notes the epistemological status that Philo awards to biblical prophecy. After enumerating the first two types of knowledge he sees in Philo, those being first a knowledge immediately given by the senses (“opinion”) and the second a scientific system of knowledge derived from sense-experience, Wolfson writes that, “to Philo, however, prophecy in all its four functions constitutes what he considers the third and highest kind of knowledge. What to Plato and to other Greek philosophers is to be attained by philosophy is to Philo to be attained by prophecy” (p. 22). This form of knowledge is acquired independently of sense experience, and is received directly from God himself (p. 23).

³⁸ *De Somnis* 186-88; Wolfson 1948: 9 (vol. 2).

That in soul also he was most excellent is manifest; for the Creator, we know, employed for its making no pattern taken from among created things, but solely, as I have said, His own Word (or Reason). It is on this account that he says that man was made a likeness and imitation of the Word, when the Divine Breath was breathed into his face. The face is the seat of the senses. By the senses the Creator endowed the body with soul. To the senses, when He had installed the sovereign Reason in the princely part of man's being, He delivered it to be by them escorted to the apprehension of colours and sounds, as well as of flavours and scents and the like. The Reason, apart from perception by the senses, was unable by itself alone to apprehend these. Now the copy of a perfectly beautiful pattern must needs be of perfect beauty. But the Word of God surpasses beauty itself, beauty, that is, as it exists in Nature. He is not only adorned with beauty, but is Himself in very truth beauty's fairest adornment.

In keeping with basic Stoic psychology, Philo links the ensouled *pneuma* of a human with his capacity for sense-perception (the Greek seems to imply that the process of God “ensouling” the human body *just is* providing it with perceptive faculties: τῶν αἰσθήσεων [...] αἷς τὸ μὲν σῶμα ἐψύχωσεν ὁ δημιουργός); indeed, for the Stoics the ability to receive sense-impressions is a distinguishing characteristic of “ensouled beings” (*psūchikoi*), whether they possess reason or not.³⁹ The rational part of the soul is then discussed – following the conventional sequence of Stoic psychological doxographies – and here too, Philo employs traditional Stoic parlance: the *hēgemonikon*, as that part of the Stoic soul which governs the other seven parts (the five senses

³⁹ Philo makes this exact point in *Leg. Alleg.* 2.23.

and the faculties of speech and reproduction),⁴⁰ is invested with a certain “reason” (*logismos*) by God for the purpose of evaluating sense data.⁴¹ The sensory faculty enables the bare reception of the data of sensory experience, but human reason, i.e. the appropriation of the divine Logos in an individual human soul, is handed over (by God, no less) to be escorted towards the impressions, upon which it then carries out its proper functions.⁴²

God’s involvement in human cognitive processes is frequently stressed by Philo, but his involvement in these processes bespeaks God’s ultimate *telos* for human action, *viz.*, an ethical “perfection” and “fullness,” a life in accordance with nature and therefore free of unnatural passions (*De Agr.* 53). God facilitates *and encourages* humankind’s moral and epistemic improvement *via* his Logos, and simultaneous with this process, or perhaps even basic to it, is God’s administration of the cosmos, also *via* his Logos. “Land and water and air and fire, and all plants and animals which are in these, whether mortal or divine, yea and the sky, and the circuits of sun and moon, and the revolutions and rhythmic movements of the other heavenly bodies” are all, Philo writes in *De Agr.* 51, “under the hand” of the divine “shepherd”; their manifest order derives from the government of the Logos, under which they rest.⁴³ In the same breath, Philo bids each human creature praise his God for his pastoral tutelage, though, most decidedly, with the “voice” of their understanding, which comprehends “the ends of the universe, for it cannot be

⁴⁰ See Dillon 1996: 174-175. As Dillon notes, Philo varies his terminology when discussing the soul, shifting between Stoic and Platonic *formulae*; nevertheless, the division between “rational” and “non-rational” parts is fundamental and consistently applied. See also for discussion Reydams-Schils 2008: 187-195.

⁴¹ See *De Opif.* 36, where the “incorporeal world” (Ὁ μὲν οὖν ἀσώματος κόσμος) is said to be “installed” or “established” in the divine Logos (ἰδρυθεὶς ἐν τῷ θεῷ λόγῳ), with ἰδρύω being a close cognate of the verb used in *De Opif.* 139 to describe the installment of Reason in the *hēgemonikon*. Plausibly, Philo wants his readers to appreciate the parallels between the Logos as the organon and container of the intelligible world, and the *hēgemonikon* as the very same, but on the level of the individual human being.

⁴² In *Leg. Alleg.* 1.29 Philo describes the relationship between the human mind (ὁ νοῦς) and sense-perceptible objects (τὰ αἰσθητὸν) as one of ongoing mutual exchange. Interestingly, the *nous* is here described in active terms, as that which moves the sense-perceptive faculty towards the object of perception, all so that an impulse might occur.

⁴³ See also *Alleg. Inter.* 1.18.

that there should be any lack of a fitting portion, when God rules, whose wont it is to bestow good in fullness and perfection on all that is” (*De Agr: 53*).⁴⁴ God’s continual creation of the cosmos is analogous to his active sanctification of the human mind.⁴⁵ Man’s placement in Eden by God is, for Philo, an allegory for God’s having placed “the mind amidst virtue” (*Alleg. Inter. 1.47*). God’s intent for the human race – an intent which the Logos must necessarily share – is that they be “trained as unto virtue,” a purpose which ostensibly requires placement “within virtue” (ἐν τῇ ἀρετῇ) (*Alleg. Inter. 1.47*). An impious and “godless” (ἄθεος) mind presumes authorship of its own virtue, when in fact the human mind is “passive” in this respect: God, rather than Man, “plants and builds virtues in the soul” (*Alleg. Inter. 1.48-49*).⁴⁶ Moreover – and as a corollary to God’s paraenetic work in the implantation of virtues – God leads the aspiring “wise man” out of the swampy morass of sense-perceptual distraction and its concomitant passions, and “sets his face towards the mountain of Gilead,” a posture directed towards the achievement of virtue (*Alleg. Inter. 3.19*). Elsewhere, Philo admits that humankind’s internal reason (*logos*), which for Philo as for the Stoics grounds human self-determination, is *useless* unless it bears the fruits which befit it (*De Vita Mosis 2.130*).

It needs to be stressed that all of this emphasis placed upon God’s active role, *via* Logos, in effecting virtuous action is never set in opposition to the equally strong emphasis, typical of Stoic ethical discourse, that Philo lays upon the role of human agency in the attainment of virtue. For Philo as for every Stoic, the soul enslaves itself by subjecting itself to passions – “desire” (ἐπιθυμία), “pleasure” (ἡδονή), “fear” (φόβος), “pain” (λύπη), and “anger” (ὀργή) – and lives

⁴⁴ On Philo’s distinction between the internal and external *logos*, see Philo, *De Vita Mosis 2.127*.

⁴⁵ On God’s creating being continual, see Philo, *Alleg. Inter. 1.18*.

⁴⁶ Niehoff 2018: 219, 235. Niehoff sees in Philo’s use of Stoic ideas to describe God’s relation to the human mind a “[deprecation] of human autonomy and [a celebration of] divine beneficence.” See also *De Plantatione 99-101* and *Quod Omnis Probus Liber Sit 70*.

freely by exercising virtue, “vanquish[ing] ignorance with good sense, incontinence with self-control, cowardice with courage and covetousness with justice” (*Quod Omnis Probus Liber sit* 159). The human soul’s enslavement is, furthermore, the result of its “spontaneous and self-determined will” (*Quod Omnis* 47). The freedom (ἐλευθερία) of the “good man” (ἀστυεῖος) consists in the ability to live as one desires, or to live in accordance with one’s will, and a man’s enslavement to his passions prevents his living in accordance with his will (*Quod Omnis* 59; see Fürst 2022: 141-142). There exists in Philo, however, despite his broad acceptance of the moral intellectualism of his philosophical predecessors (i.e. Plato and the Stoics), the possibility of “repentance” (τροπή) for a moral agent, a repentance which, as Dihle remarks, “only God’s mercy can bring about” (1982: 96).⁴⁷ Such a work of divine grace in a human soul, for Philo, amounts to the implantation of a moral conscience within the soul that can provide the moral agent with an unfailing, i.e. *incorruptible* moral standard, and a paraenetic impetus towards virtue (Dihle 1982: 97). In *Quod Deus Immutabilis sit* 135, Philo uses the language of illumination to describe this quickening of one’s moral conscience: God’s “rebuke” (ἐλεγχος), as the “true priest” (ὁ ἱερεὺς ὄντως), comes to us and bears witness to our sins, illuminating our souls like “a most pure ray of light” (φωτός τις ἀγνή καθαρωτάτη), and in the section immediately prior this moral illumination is equated, significantly for my argument, with the entrance of the “divine Word” (ὁ θεῖος λόγος) into our souls.⁴⁸

Clement of Alexandria

⁴⁷ Dihle’s assessment of Philo’s notion of repentance is, interestingly, that it was in sore need of a concept of will.

⁴⁸ See Chapter five of this thesis for an attempt to connect Origen’s “light metaphysics” with the paraenetic Logos and its effect of moral transformation in rational beings.

In the writings of Clement of Alexandria we are provided with “the first systematic expression of Christian Middle Platonism in the formative age of Christianity” (Berchman 1984: 56). Clement is an important figure to consider in the context of this study, not least because of his inheritance of Philo’s notion of the Logos and his integration of it within a thoroughly Christian theological framework, and it should be noted that inasmuch as Clement made changes to Philo’s philosophical theology, those changes became normative for later authors in the Middle Platonic tradition (Berchman 1984: 56, 62).

In Philo, God’s absolute transcendence is maintained, and the Logos, as the mind of God, mediates between God and the cosmos through its creative and sustaining operations. God, as transcendent, admits of no qualification; the Logos, as the mind of God, provides metaphysical grounding for the real existence of qualities in nature. Clement’s Logos is nearly identical to that of Philo, yet the terminology Clement employs is sufficiently different so as to obscure the considerable overlap. Chadwick (1984), for example, after relating Christ’s incarnation to the Logos as the latter’s preeminent act of mediation, writes that Clement “thinks of the divine Logos as the Father’s will and energy (not, however, as the expression of God’s latent reason, since this way of thinking is almost gnostic)” (p. 51). While admitting that the Logos is “the Father’s servant in relation to the world,” Chadwick seems to go farther in his conclusions drawn from Clement’s unique terminology than is warranted. Implied in the concept of “power” (*dūnamis*) is a *telos* of power – power *for* – and Clement’s description of the Logos as the “power of God”⁴⁹ more adequately captures the continual operation of the Logos, i.e., its sustaining and directive activity within the cosmos, *without* excluding the formal-conceptual function of the Logos; rather, as Berchman (1984) rightly says, “the power of the Logos is his

⁴⁹ See Gibbons 2016: 78-79.

[i.e. God’s] capacity to comprehend the universe, to order it, and to form it in accordance with the divine ideas” (p. 58; see also Edwards 2000: 166-168). Pertinent to this is the observation that Philo himself often used the language of “power” and “effect” in his discussion of the Logos: while the Logos proceeds directly from God, as many as five distinct powers proceed from and are governed by the Logos, such that the Logos is even termed the “charioteer” of the powers (see *Fug.* 101).⁵⁰ All this to say, irrespective of the subtle differences in language, a significant degree of continuity exists between each author, at least with regard to their theories of the Logos.

One locus of continuity between Philo and Clement respecting “the divine power(s)” is especially significant for my purposes. For both authors, as David Runia (2004) says, “divine power refers primarily to goodness and grace, extended to creation, and transmitted further by human beings who follow in God’s footsteps” (p. 262). God’s “powers,” for both authors, are involved in conforming the cosmos to his good intentions (intentions which, as has been shown, exist ideally in the Logos). Philo’s enumeration and definition of the powers across his *oeuvre* is somewhat inconsistent,⁵¹ but in *De Cherubim* 27 he finds in the biblical image of two cherubim guarding Eden (Gen. 3:24) an expression of God’s two *chief* powers, the first of which, “goodness” (ἀγαθότης), expresses God’s creative ability, while the second, “sovereignty” or “ruling authority” (ἐξουσία), betokens his active rule over his creation. Reason (*logos*) is symbolized by the flaming sword held between the two cherubim, “for it is through reason that God is both ruler and good” (λόγῳ γὰρ καὶ ἄρχοντα καὶ ἀγαθὸν εἶναι τὸν θεόν) (*De Cher.* 28).⁵²

⁵⁰ On Philo’s influence on Clement’s notion of the divine powers, see Runia 2004. See also, on Philo’s conception of the “powers” of God, Dihle 1982: 92.

⁵¹ For a brief discussion of which, see Lévy 2022.

⁵² A similar conviction guides Origen’s thinking on the relation of divine sovereignty to human freedom (see esp. chapters three and four of this thesis for discussion).

These two powers – “goodness” and “sovereignty” – are elsewhere named the “creative” (ἡ ποιητική) and “kingly” (ἡ βασιλική) powers, and in *Quaestiones in Exodum* 2.68 a “merciful” power is subordinated to the creative, and a “punitive” one to the “kingly.”⁵³ One power, in other words, blesses and rewards virtue, or the turn from sin to virtue (repentance), while the other punishes and corrects vice. This twofold operation is used by Clement in his characterization of the Logos and its powers, although Clement avoids the “two powers” language which surrounds Philo’s description, preferring instead to speak of God’s power in the singular (Runia 2004: 264-265; Osborn 1957: 42-43). For Clement, it is the “self-same Word” who “calls men to salvation,” who persuades, heals, and encourages the soul (*Paedagogus* 1-2; trans. Wood).

The key development chronologically interposed between Philo and Clement is, of course, the emergence of the New Testament writings and their various conceptions of the incarnate Son.⁵⁴ Most central among them is the Johannine Prologue (John 1:1-18), where the divinity and kosmocratic activity of the Logos are expressed in close connection with its incarnation: the same “Word” who was “in the beginning with God” and indeed “was God,” that being “through whom all things came into being” is also termed “the Light of men” in whom “the Life” resides. Finally, as the prologue’s capstone of the Son’s economic activity as Logos, he is said to have “become flesh” and to have “dwelled among us.” The exalted language in Paul’s *Carmen Christi* (Colossians 1:15-20) of Christ being the “image of God,” the one “in whom all things were created” and “in whom all things hold together,” is probably influenced by sources similar to those of the Johannine Prologue.⁵⁵ *Wisdom of Solomon* 7:25-27, as a case in

⁵³ See also Philo, *De Vita Mosis*, 2.99 and, for discussion, Runia 2004: 263.

⁵⁴ For discussion of the Johannine Prologue and its place in the development of Logos theology, see Harris 1994: 196-201. See also the wide-ranging article by Frey 2016: 189-234.

⁵⁵ For an analysis which is rather critical of allegations about Hellenistic Wisdom literature influencing Paul, see Fee 2007: 296-303. van Kooten 2019 is more enthusiastic in his acknowledgement of such influences.

point, is a particularly illustrative witness to the kind of Logos-Wisdom tradition that both Philo and the NT authors drew upon, and which influenced later theologians.⁵⁶ Here we find the hypostatized “Wisdom” (*sophia*) being characterized as a “breath of the power of God”⁵⁷ and a “pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty,” and in the following verse “she” is called a “reflection [*apaugasma*] of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image [*eikōn*] of his goodness.” *Apaugasma* is roughly synonymous with *aporroia* in the previous verse, thus exhibiting a transparent Hebrew parallelism binding the two verses together. While *aporroia* is never used in the NT, *apaugasma* is used only once, in Hebrews 1:3, where it is applied to Christ, who is a “reflection [*apaugasma*] of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being. [...] When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”⁵⁸ We have already observed that Philo links the biblical concept of the *eikōn* of God to the Logos, yet so too does Paul identify the “image of God” with Christ on two separate occasions (2 Cor. 4:4 and Col. 1:15).

A peculiar feature of the Logos-doctrine which comes to its fullest expression in the New Testament, but which emerges with Philo and the Hellenistic wisdom literature of the intertestamental period, is its economic function as a paraenetic force in the lives of the moral agents it inhabits. Nowhere in these writings is the view even intimated that the Logos, in its external, cosmic existence, or even in its internally appropriated (i.e. anthropological) existence,

⁵⁶ John and Paul most obviously drew upon this tradition, but see below for a potential parallel with Heb. 1. See Fürst 2015: 294-296 who suggests Philo himself as a plausible author of the *Wisdom of Solomon*. Significant for the purposes of my argument is Fürst’s claim that “*Wisdom* belonged to the Alexandrian tradition, which stemmed from the Hellenistic Judaism of Alexandria and which was intensely received into certain branches of early Christianity” (p. 296; my trans.). Osborn 1957: 38-39 sees in Clement’s Logos theology a supplantation of *Wisdom of Solomon*’s “Wisdom” by the Son as the divine immanence.

⁵⁷ All Bible translations are from the NRSV, unless otherwise stated.

⁵⁸ Kittel 1964 cites Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus* 4.123 and *De Opif.* 146, where Philo uses the term to describe the relationship of “man to God,” and of “the human spirit to the divine Logos.” Kittel also cites Philo, *De Plant.* 50, where the term designates the relationship of divine Wisdom to the created world, the latter being a copy or image of the former. In that passage, Philo uses *eikōn* synonymously with *apaugasma*.

functions *neutrally* in a human being, as the ontological ground of a *mere capacity*. In *Wis.* 7:27, a cosmological, even metaphysical description of *Sophia* (for instance, “though being one she is able to do all things, and though remaining in herself she renews all things”) is set alongside one that is strikingly economical: “in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes [κατασκευάζει] them friends of God, and prophets.” Again in *Wis.* 8:4-7, Wisdom is an “associate in [God’s] works,” with “works” expressly encompassing God’s physical creation and organization of the cosmos *and* the moral development of humankind: “her labors are virtues [οἱ πόννοι ταύτης εἰσὶν ἀρεταί]; for she teaches self-control and prudence, justice and courage [σωφροσύνην γὰρ καὶ φρόνησιν ἐκδιδάσκει, δικαιοσύνην καὶ ἀνδρείαν]; nothing in life is more profitable for mortals than these.”

As can be said for Philo, from whom his doctrine of Logos acquires much of its conceptual structure, so too for Clement, the Bible could not have failed to shape his view of the Logos, to provide it with a certain personal character akin to the way Paul describes the Torah as a “pedagogue” (*paidagōgos*): in the same way that a pedagogue might “steer” his student by providing positive moral instruction, along with a certain *parainesis* towards that moral content, the Law steered the Israelites towards Christ (3:23-24).⁵⁹ In the same vein, Philo explicitly identifies the Torah with the Logos of God, and as the Logos, it has the power to effect moral transformation (Wolfson 1948: 10 (vol. 2)).

Clement’s Logos is likewise characterized in terms of its active capacity to effect change – moral or otherwise, and this presumably lies behind Chadwick’s comments mentioned earlier, notwithstanding the fact that Chadwick’s interpretation obscures the kind of transformation that the Logos-doctrine undergoes with Clement. The personal, paraenetic character of the Logos is

⁵⁹ For helpful discussion of Paul’s use of this metaphor, see Lull 1986.

added without the subtraction of its ontological and epistemological features. In even clearer terms than were used in *Wis. 7*, the first chapter of Clement’s *Exhortation to the Greeks* merges the demiurgic-cosmological and formal-epistemological functions of the Logos with those which effect moral transformation in human beings. Clement’s “minstrel” (ὁ ᾠδὸς ὁ ἐμὸς, i.e. Christ the Logos) is capable of softening the hearts of even the most depraved, beast-like men.⁶⁰ This “new song” (τὸ ἄσμα τὸ καινὸν), the Logos-Christ, regenerates those deadened souls who hear its melodies, a creative (or perhaps regenerative) act which Clement places alongside Christ’s demiurgic function of melodically organizing the cosmos – down to its fundamental elements – according to his symphony (*Exhortation 1*). Clement seems ambivalent about whether the Logos is the instrument of music upon which God plays or the Holy Spirit, but this ambiguity is rather immaterial to the more general point that the Logos is involved at the levels of anthropology and cosmology, and that, furthermore, on the level of anthropology, it exerts a moral impetus while also constituting the cognitive preconditions for knowledge, moral and otherwise.⁶¹ Karamanolis (2021) emphasizes this aspect of Clement’s Logos Christology in his discussion of human freedom and divine providence in the early Fathers; the Logos does indeed, for Clement, “stir in men the desire to follow God and become like God” (p. 149). Even Plato’s *Meno* is brought to bear on the question of where true virtue and wisdom come from, with the answer ready at hand that “virtue” (ἡ ἀρετὴ) is present by a “divine dispensation” (θεία ... μοίρα) to those in whom it resides (Clement, *Stromata* 5.13). Even more to the point, however, is Clement’s statement which immediately follows: “Wisdom, which is given by God, being the power [δύναμις] of the Father, exhorts indeed our self-determination [προτρέπει μὲν ἡμῶν τὸ αὐτεξούσιον]” (*Stromata*

⁶⁰ Clement refers in this connection to Matt. 3:9 = Luke 3:8, where a decisive and not gradual transformation is in view.

⁶¹ Osborn 1957: 41 writes that “The Spirit is the strength of the Logos as blood is the strength of flesh.”

5.13; my trans.). Wisdom, which in Clement as in Philo is interchangeable with God's Logos and power, is given by God, and actually "exhorts" the "self-determining will" towards what is virtuous.

Moreover, and unsurprisingly given his devotion to New Testament revelation, Clement attaches especial importance to the incarnation of the Logos, seeing it as a necessary provision on the part of God for the educative development of humans as enfleshed, rational beings created "in the image" (the image here being the Logos of God, as with Philo) (Gibbons 2016: 83). Indeed, as Gibbons points out, Clement's conception of the Logos as the single, "paradigmatic cause" of the sensible world under whose providential care each human individual exists basically requires the incarnation of that Logos in order to "ensure that human beings are able to put their rationality to its proper use" (2016: 81-82). Gibbons further explains:

human beings fully participate in the cosmos only by grasping to some degree the metaphysical principles by which the sensible world is governed; the paradigmatic cause that provides the model for the sensible cosmos, the Logos, must therefore be involved in the philosophical education of individual human beings (2016: 81-82).

Underlying all of this discussion of the educative character of the Logos is Clement's original notion, at least when considered from the standpoint of the Logos-doctrine's historical evolution, that the Logos contains the formal essences of *individuals* and not just universals; this entails that the providence of Logos, in Gibbons' words, "run a tidier ship than [Clement's] Platonic contemporaries" (2016: 83, 85). Each rational creature acquires its own "idea" in the Logos, which is the "idea of ideas" (see Philo, *De Opif.* 6, cited in Osborn 1957: 42) and since the Logos is bound to effect the *telos* of the divine will in creation, each creature must, therefore, receive

sovereign oversight and guidance as regards its moral development and eventual eschatological unification with Christ.⁶² Like Origen his successor, Clement sees God's success in redeeming⁶³ the *whole* of sinful humanity as an eschatological certainty, and a certainty, furthermore, that the mediating Logos initiates, oversees, and completes (Osborn 1957: 102).

For all of Clement's emphasis on the active sovereignty of the Logos in relation to human moral action, his writings evince a robust commitment to individual moral responsibility, and to a kind of "free will" or "self-determination" (*to autexousion*) as its necessary metaphysical precondition – a set of commitments also observable in Origen, as will be shown later (Osborn 1957: 69-73). Clement's notion of human free choice is obviously influenced by that of the Stoics, a fact which is made evident by the multitude of references in his writings to that peculiarly Stoic coinage, "what is up to us"⁶⁴ (*to eph hēmin*) (Frede 2011: 104). Clement follows the Stoics in giving pride of place to "passionlessness" (*apatheia*) in an individual's moral life. To resist, and ultimately to be free of the passions and the actions which they steer us towards is something which is "up to us," and indeed for Clement there is added significance in the ideal of *apatheia*, in that God himself is "passionless" (*apathēs*), so that the gradual process of ridding oneself of passions is simultaneously the process of becoming like God (Osborn 1957: 92, 106).⁶⁵

In addition to its close connection with the axiom of human moral responsibility, the doctrine of human free will in Clement was also used to safeguard the goodness of God. Frede

⁶² Osborn 1957: 45-47. Clement, *Stromata* 7.2 is germane.

⁶³ A redemption which is articulated by Clement in terms of "assimilation" to God, which in turn is parsed theologically as a reattainment of the *imago dei* – the "divine and kingly Logos," on which see Osborn 1957: 90, 107-109.

⁶⁴ Most occurrences are in the *Stromata*. Eg. 1.17.18, 2.6.26, 2.12.5, 2.13.59.

⁶⁵ Gibbons 2016: 139 argues convincingly that indeterminacy (*viz.* alternate, genuinely possible futures) is not a prerequisite for Clement's accounting of human autonomy.

writes, in this regard, that “many of the massive assumptions associated in Stoicism with the doctrine of free will, for instance, the assumption of a universal divine providence and a divine order regulating everything which happens in the world down to the smallest detail, were utterly unacceptable to Peripatetics, acceptable only with serious qualifications by Platonists, but apparently quite congenial to Christians” (2011: 103). Clement and later Christians of his stripe shared with the Stoics the notion that God’s sovereignty was both purposive and comprehensive, and as has been shown, they also borrowed considerably from the Stoics’ conceptual hardware in order to articulate this sovereignty. But Christians keenly maintained, against the Stoics, that God’s ontological separation from the cosmos and his perfect goodness were essential constituents of biblical revelation.⁶⁶ The Valentinian “Gnostic”⁶⁷ interlocutors with whom Clement and Origen both engaged had posited a kind of determinism based on individual “natures,” but as Clement and Origen both observed, this view makes God the author of evil.⁶⁸ As an answer to their interlocutors, Clement, and later Origen, denied the existence of varied, individual natures, but affirmed a sort of privative existence of evil as a product of the uncoerced, free-choice of rational creatures – a free-choice which God permits (Osborn 1957:

⁶⁶ For Clement, God’s transcendence entails a knowledge of God through negation. See Osborne 2015: 278-279 who cites, in this respect, *Strom.* 5.11, 7.1.1-5.

⁶⁷ I accept the arguments of Williams 1996 about the opacity of the term ‘gnostic’ and therefore make a habit of avoiding the use of this word, except where an interaction with source material which employs it makes its usage more convenient and clarifying than otherwise. Wherever possible, I use the term either with qualifiers such as “Valentinian” and the like.

⁶⁸ Karamanolis 2021: 144-157 argues that the Valentinian distinction between “earthly” (*hūlikon*), “psychic” (*psūchikon*) and “spiritual” (*pneumatikon*) human beings lies behind much of the Christian argumentation in support of the freedom of the will that we find first in the Apologists of the 2nd century, and then in the Alexandrians of the 3rd century. According to such a view (and as reported by Irenaeus), the “spiritual” are guaranteed their salvation in virtue of their being made in God’s image, the “psychic,” as those made according to God’s *likeness*, have the ability to choose (*autexousion*) but are not guaranteed their future salvation, while the “earthly” are, owing to their inferior nature, inclined towards wickedness and therefore unable to gain salvation for themselves. Whereas the first and last natures possess no free will and are fated to inherit salvation or the lack thereof irrespective of their actions, only the middle nature actually possesses *to autexousion*.

73). Osborn provides two caveats for the student of Clement's notion of freedom that are worth quoting in full:

First, God does all he can to prevent sin by *persuasive, non-arbitrary means*.

'Everything, then, which did not hinder man's free choice, he made conducive to virtue.'

He has made us for righteousness, not for sin. His Son, our Paidagogos, constantly uses every device to turn us from sin [...]. Secondly, after sin has been committed, God is active to modify the effects of man's sin. He uses up evil for good (1957: 73).

So we see that in Clement two particularly Stoic accents – a “Handlungstheorie” constructed from impressions, impulses, and cognitive assent in the “leading part,” and an immanent Logos that is morally non-neutral (i.e. paraenetic) in its interaction with individuals – are conjoined with the Platonic concern of protecting the perfect goodness of God (ὁ θεὸς ἀνείροτος) (Fürst 2022: 181).

Chapter Two: Logos in Origen's *De Principiis*

Introduction

When turning to Origen, one is struck by how harmoniously both the personal and the cosmic, the economic and the ontological elements of his Logos doctrine coexist and complement one another. Of course, after having considered the development of these ideas in Origen's intellectual predecessors one ought not to be surprised. As has been shown, the economical and paraenetic elements of the Logos already emerge in the Stoics, and a marked stress is placed

upon them in the case of Philo, the various New Testament authors who employ the concept, and Clement. It is the object of this chapter and the next to demonstrate the degree of continuity between Origen's theory of the Logos and those of his predecessors, particularly in regard to its non-neutrality.

Irenaeus, whom I have not examined in detail here primarily for reasons of space, was a contemporary of Clement's, and prefigured later orthodox trinitarianism in holding that the Logos and the Father were of like substance. He eschewed the "powers" language that proved so fruitful for Clement, Philo, and other non-biblical Middle Platonists, and he seems to have largely shied away from the involved metaphysical speculations present in these authors, yet he remained committed to what he perceived were the two biblical tenets of (pre-incarnate) Logos-Christology: that the Logos is responsible for creating the material world, and for making the Father known to the world as his revelatory agent (Lashier 2012: 350-361). As O'Leary writes, "Irenaeus uses the term ['Logos'] sparingly and seeks to reground it in the biblical economy" (2004: 143). Origen follows Irenaeus' scriptural trajectory, and shares his concern for the economic function of the Logos as revealed most explicitly in scripture, but he does so without sacrificing the metaphysical advances made by his philosophical and theological predecessors.

Wisdom-Christology in *De Principiis*

Origen's intent in *De Princ.* is, by his own admission, to construct a system of truth – or at least to begin such a work – entirely on the basis of the received tradition of apostolic preaching (*ecclesiastica praedicatio*). One is justified in his expectation, therefore, that the conceptual development of the Logos will be, especially in this work, most fully integrated with his other

doctrines (*De Princ.* Pr. 1-2, 10). “Only those things,” writes Origen in his preface to this work, “are to be accepted as true, which are in no way discordant with the ecclesiastical and Apostolic tradition” (*De Princ.* Pr. 2).⁶⁹ Behr (2017) notes in his discussion of the preface’s avowed criterion that “Origen clearly sees himself as building, out of what he has found in Scripture and what follows on from this, ‘the kind of integrated, demonstrative, logically coherent system of knowledge that in the Aristotelian tradition was called a science (ἐπιστήμη)’” (p. xlvii-xlviii). The “starting points” or axiomatic principles of his system of knowledge (*archai*) correspond to the *traditio ecclesiastica et apostolica* that he has enumerated in the preface, while the “body” (*corpus*) of truths consists either of logical deductions from those first principles, or of notions derived from Scripture through sound exegetical method (Behr 2017: xlvii-xlviii; *De Princ.* Pr. 10)

As an axiomatic foundation for his doctrine of the Son, Origen sets out the apostolic commitment to the preexistence and divinity of the Son, along with his demiurgical role in creating and arranging the cosmos (*De Princ.* Pr. 4). Rufinus’ Latin translation mirrors the Vulgate’s rendering of Jn. 1:3, implying that Logos-theology, even if not explicit, is at least present in the background. This Son is not properly called the *source* of created reality; rather it is the Father, as the *traditio* asserts, who is responsible for *creatio ex nihilo* – the creation and arrangement of all reality out of nothing (*De Princ.* Pr. 4).⁷⁰

God’s Son, Christ, is in *De Princ.* 1.2.1 immediately identified with the “Wisdom” of Prov. 8:22-5 whom the Father continually begets from eternity past. This first appellation of Christ’s, being logically prior to the other *epinoiai* or “aspects” of the Son, is likewise identified

⁶⁹ Edwards 2022: 284 points out that in Origen’s view, Christians have a *katalēptikē phantasia* – and thus a source of certain knowledge – in the apostolic testimony about Christ.

⁷⁰ Origen cites as support the first verse of the *Shepherd of Hermas*’ first commandment.

with the *Sophia* of Wis. 7:26, the *aporroia* (“emanation”; Lat. *manatio*) of the “purest glory of the Almighty” (*De Princ.* 1.2.5; O’Leary 2004: 144). Christ as Wisdom contains within himself the metaphysical blueprints for intelligible reality, the “species and reasons of the whole creation,” similar to Philo’s ante-mundane Logos in respect of its primarily ontological – rather than economic – denotation (*De Princ.* 1.2.3). And then a rather perplexing passage: within Wisdom subsists “every capacity and form of the creation that would come to be – both of those things which exist primarily and of those which occur in consequence, having been formed beforehand and arranged by the power of foreknowledge regarding these very created things” (*De Princ.* 1.2.2). The substance of what is said here has clear precedent in Clement’s Logos-theoretic innovation that the Logos contain the essences or forms of *individuals*, and insofar as Origen’s Logos resembles Clement’s and its “high-resolution,” metaphysically speaking, Gibbons’ (2016) comments about the latter apply to the former: “Because the Logos possesses the form of each thing from eternity, Clement can understand the providence of God and the Logos over the cosmos to require the creation and administration of individuals as individuals. Through this activity the Logos exercises his role as a cosmic statesman” (p. 85).

The providential reach of the divine Son *qua* Wisdom goes deep, but Origen is equally at pains to articulate the extent to which God, by his Wisdom, administrates over the whole and guides it towards its predetermined *telos*. “By the ineffable art of his Wisdom,” writes Origen, God creates, transforms, and restores “all things, in whatever state they are” (*omnia, quae quoquomodo fiunt*), and however varied the types and movements of souls are (*animorum varietate; diversis [...] motibus animorum*) to a single unity of purpose and advantage (*ad utile aliquid et ad commune omnium [...] profectum*) (*De Princ.* 2.1.2). Salvation for every creature is the stated purpose of God’s providence, which means that God’s task, as Origen sees it, is

nothing less than the coordination of “each thing” (*haec singula dispensasse*) in perfect relation to the whole, and the whole in relation to each thing, but in such a way as to exclude the possibility of any zero-sum games in the economy of salvation (*De Princ.* 2.1.2). And yet, as Origen is at pains to make manifest throughout *De Princ.*, the “freedom of choice” (*libertas arbitrii*) of every rational creature remains secure in, which is to say entirely consistent with and complimentary to, God’s unique administration of each rational creature’s path to salvation (*De Princ.* 3.5.8 and *passim*).

To the question of which things “exist primarily” and which things “occur in consequence,” it may first be remarked that Rufinus’ Latin diction is noteworthy, specifically his use of the term *deformatio* (“form” or even “delineation”) in the previously quoted passage.⁷¹ *Deformatio* is used, as far as I can tell, only one other time in the Latin *De Principiis*, i.e., 2.11.4, where the term, in conjunction with *adumbratio*, designates that kind of noetic sanctification which a devotion to “piety and religion” can bring in someone’s life; the eager pursuit of this kind of study impresses upon the human soul an “outline” of divine knowledge, by means of which a fuller, complete reception of divine knowledge is made possible. The signification of *deformatio*, based on Rufinus’ usage of the term in *De Princ.* 2.11.4 is thus a kind of preparatory outline that exists for the express purpose of being fulfilled. This signification fits well with the surrounding context of the term’s occurrence in *De Princ.* 1.2.2, and *virtus* (“power” or “ability”) there additionally contributes to this sense of potentiality or ability, so that what is most likely indicated is not a kind of spiritual “carbon-copy” of the world, with all the lines filled-in, but rather something akin to a metaphysical sketch consisting of the nascent principles which will, as

⁷¹ *Formatio* rather than *deformatio* is used in β (consensus codicum B C). Even if the reading were genuine, it would have no substantial impact on the sense of the passage.

a matter of course, produce those things which “occur as consequences” (*accidunt consequenter*) (*De Princ.* 1.2.2).⁷²

Origen’s comments in his *Commentary on John* 2.92-99 are pertinent to the question of the scope of what preexists in *sapientiae subsistentia*, and it should be noted in this connection that Origen’s concern to avoid making God the “author of evil” is front and center, and lies behind his unflinching defense of free will in *De Princ.* 3.1 over and against the Valentinian notion of a hierarchy of human natures.⁷³ As Daniélou (1955) rightly says, for Origen, and in contrast with the fatalism of his Gnostic opponents, “essence was determined by liberty,” and not the other way around (p. 206).⁷⁴ Putting a moral agent’s nature or essence, in logical sequence, prior to their moral action shifts blame onto the creator of those natures, which for Origen is entirely unacceptable.⁷⁵ His attempted solution, then, to the metaphysical problem of evil more generally, and to the subsidiary problem of accounting for what preexists in Wisdom, is perhaps unsurprising given his philosophical milieu. Evil things – “evil, and every outpouring of sin, and wicked things, [...] sins and blemishes [my trans.]” (ἡ κακία, καὶ πᾶσα ἡ χύσις τῆς ἁμαρτίας, καὶ

⁷² This is, I believe, all that is meant by Origen when he reasons in *De Princ.* 1.2.10 that for God to be considered “almighty” (παντοκράτωρ) from all eternity – for to say otherwise would be to imply that God changes – he must have had some sort of creation over which to exercise his might. Behr 2017: lvi-lvii thinks that Origen’s language here “recall[s] both the Platonic ‘ideas’ and the Stoic ‘reasons,’” and concludes that “if creation can be said to be eternal [for Origen], it is only in a prefigurative sense.”

⁷³ Dunderberg 2022: 52-60 suggests the possibility that Valentinianism actually made room for moral progress and improvement within their theological system, and that there is reason to doubt that the predestination of human beings according to the assignment of natures is genuinely Valentinian. His conclusions stem from his avowed methodology of interpreting the Valentinian fragments in Origen’s commentary on their own terms, and then involving external, heresiological sources about Valentinus and his views only after. The problem with this methodology is of course the fragmentary nature of the primary evidence. I am inclined to trust Origen’s interpretation of Valentinus on the predetermination of natures over an interpretation based solely on such fragmentary evidence. On Origen’s apologetic intentions *vis à vis* “Gnosticism,” see Daniélou 1955: 205-206.

⁷⁴ Daniélou’s following comment that “there is no need to remark on the *modernity* of such a theory [emphasis added]” shows that his understanding of Origen’s doctrine of human freedom is basically libertarian. I suspect, however, that such an anachronistic lens, easy though it is to apply, obscures just how thoroughly the human subject is determined, not by their better or worse “nature,” but by the Logos, through which the cosmos is providentially created and arranged, and by which human creatures reason and will.

⁷⁵ See *De Princ.* 3.5.4-5, where Origen berates those who take the “variety of arrangement” of creation to be a consequence of either chance or necessity, rather than of the free will of rational creatures. Such interlocutors of Origen’s “have not been able to show that the providence of God is blameless.”

τὰ πονηρὰ [...] τὰ ἁμαρτήματα καὶ τὰ ἀποπτώματα) – are assigned the ontological status of “nonexistent,” and so do not come about through the agency of the Logos, implying that they have no preexistent, or prefigurative subsistence in Wisdom.⁷⁶ Origen is clear in *Com. Jn.* 2.70-72 that the Logos is God’s instrument of creation, that *through which* “all things were made.” However, he is equally clear – quoting Ps. 104:24 – that Wisdom is the formal cause of creation, that *in which* all things are made made, so that what subsists in Wisdom, for Origen, is brought into *actual* existence through the Logos (Fürst 2015: 310-311).⁷⁷ In much the same way that Clement’s Logos contains and presides over the moral development of individuals, Origen’s Wisdom, as a kind of *locus intra mentem dei* (“place in the mind of God”) for individual *logikoi*, secures the possibility of their future perfection, while his Logos makes actual what in Wisdom is only potential.

Interesting, however, are Origen’s assertions about morally good things. He reasons: “for [...] it is not surprising that all creatures have been made through the Word (we must also understand that of necessity the acts of bravery and all virtuous actions have been performed by the blessed through the Word), but this does not now follow also for acts of sin and falling away” (*Com. Jn.* 2.92; trans. Heine). Since morally good deeds occur *through* the Logos, they exist *in* Wisdom, and therefore *in sapientiae subsistentia* (“in the subsistence of wisdom”) as those things which occur “by consequence”; since evil deeds have no positive existence, but rather “exist” as *privatio*, it is incorrect to attribute them either to the Logos as the instrument of their

⁷⁶ Daniélou 1955: 277 writes: “On the one hand, he rejects the gnostic theory, which makes evil an alien substance, not created by God; on the other, he excludes the Stoic idea that evil is only apparent. [...] There is no evil [for Origen] except in men’s wills.” I take Daniélou’s point that Origen wanted to resist both Gnostic and Stoic extremes regarding the problem of evil, but I find his contention that Origen accepted the *real* existence of evil to be at variance with Origen’s discussion of evil in the *Com. Jn.* referenced below. See Scott 2022: 394-396.

⁷⁷ Fürst agrees that the Father is for Origen the “efficient cause” and the Son the “formal” and “instrumental” causes, but he neglects to mention that the Son’s causal functions map on to different *epinoiai*.

performance or to Wisdom as their formal cause, for they neither inhere in the latter, nor, consequently, are they enacted by the former.⁷⁸

The Logos and Redemptive *Epinoiai*

I have, thus far, gone on at some length about the metaphysical contents of Wisdom, and about the relation which the two most principal of Christ's *epinoiai* bear to one another. But in order to see more clearly the threads of influence from Origen's predecessors that weave themselves into his Logos theology, a closer examination of the Son *qua* Logos is necessary. If "Wisdom" describes the Son in his ante-mundane existence as the container of intelligible reality, "Logos" refers to that same intelligible reality, but now instantiated in the physical world. This distinction is basic, as has been shown above, to the Logos metaphysics of Philo and Clement. Origen's main innovation here, when compared with his predecessors, lies in the linguistic overlay he provides, and in his integration of it with his Christology; in effect, many of the functions attributed to the Logos and its powers in Philo and Clement are in Origen attributed to one of the many *epinoiai* of the Son.⁷⁹ Hengstermann (2022) puts the distinction succinctly: "While 'Wisdom' denotes the Son's timeless contemplative rest with the Father, 'Word' designates his eternal creative motion" (2022: 336). Again, "as Wisdom [the Son] contains the 'reason-principles' (*logoi*) of every being, the principles in accordance with which all things are made by God in his wisdom" (Prinzivalli 2015: 292). In contrast, "*qua* Logos the Son creates the

⁷⁸ Kuhner 2017: 198-199 and *passim* highlights the logical corollary that, just as *logikoi* participate in the Logos and so are metaphysically prefigured in Wisdom, so too is he in us, not only as the immanent, rational capacity but as virtue itself.

⁷⁹ But, lest we suppose these designations to imply a kind of christological modalism, or that they imply an ontological division in the Son, Kuhner 2017: 98 quotes Origen's *Comm. Jn.* 1.200 (his trans.): "But let no one take offense when we distinguish the aspects [ἐπινοίας] in the Savior, thinking that we also do the same with his essence [τῆ ὀυσίᾳ]."

logikoi, that is, intelligible creatures [...] according to the dynamic models contained in Wisdom” (Prinzivalli 2015: 292). The title “Word of God” or “Logos” thus signifies a christological function that is intimately related to the function signified by the title “Wisdom”: When Wisdom “discloses to all other beings, that is, to the entire creation, the reason of the mysteries and secrets which are contained within the Wisdom of God,” she “is called the Word, because she is, as it were, the interpreter of the secrets of the intellect” (*De Princ.* 1.2.3). This disclosure is said to be a kind of interpretive act, in which case it seems proper to say, in one sense, that when Wisdom interprets herself for “the whole creation,” she becomes the Word of God – the secrets of God’s mind revealed to the created order. The cosmos is made intelligible through Wisdom’s *becoming* Word to the created order, and this process is to Origen a precondition for the existence of rational beings: “how could rational beings exist, unless the Word or Reason preceded them” (*De Princ.* 1.2.4)⁸⁰

After establishing the ontological priority of “Wisdom” and “Logos,” that is to say, their validity as descriptions of the Son’s ontology independent of his post-creational economic activity, Origen considers other of the Son’s *epinoiai*, among which are “the Life” (*vita*), “the Way” (*via*), “the Truth” (*veritas*), and “the Resurrection” (*resurrectio*), these being appellations which designate his salvific “works and powers” (*De Princ.* 1.2.4) aimed at restoring created rational beings (*logikoi*) to their initial, pre-lapsarian state as “minds” (*noes*) voluntarily yet entirely engrossed in their contemplation and love for God’s Logos (Daniélou 1955: 251-262; Prinzivalli 2015: 292-293). As Hengstermann writes, “While his original *epinoiai* [*Sophia* and *Logos*], used absolutely, denote the Son’s *being* at rest in his eternal contemplation of the depths

⁸⁰ The language of “becoming” that I have chosen to describe the interplay between the Son as *Sophia* and the Son as *Logos* should not be taken as implying any “christological modalism” in Origen’s christology. See O’Leary (2004): 143.

of the paternal godhead, his later ones [see above], which he assumes ‘for us’ delineate his *becoming*” (2022: 342). This distinction is implied in *De Princ.* 1.2.4, for example, where *veritas* and *vita* are mentioned first among the economic *epinoiai*, since they concern the Son’s relation to created reality independent of that creation’s fall into sin. Next in sequence is *resurrectio*, since, writes Origen, “it was to come to pass that some should also fall away from life, and bring death upon themselves by this very act of falling away from life,” and that therefore “there should be such a power that would destroy the death that was to come and be *the resurrection*” (*De Princ.* 1.2.4). This *resurrectio* is said to exist within *sapientia*, *verbum*, and *vita* as an economic development or modification of those latter, ontological *epinoiai*; in other words, *resurrectio*, and by extension Christ as *via*, *lux* etc., are rightly understood as applications of the Son’s being (as Wisdom and Logos) to a world that has fallen from the ideals for, by, and through which it was created.

In the final paragraph of *De Principiis* 1.2, whilst lamenting his inability to devote more attention to some of the other *epinoiai* of Christ left unaddressed, Origen appears to intimate a desire, or perhaps even a plan, to complete his task in a later work (*De Princ.* 1.2.13). Ostensibly, his *Com. Jn.* serves just this purpose, particularly the latter half of Book I and nearly all of Book II, and just as in *De Princ.*, Origen’s christological discussion here is structurally and substantively dominated by the *epinoiai* of Christ, though by the nature of the case more exegetically tethered to those in John’s prologue.

In several chapters of Book I, Origen explores the meaning of the term *archē* as found in the prologue to the Gospel of John. According to Origen, Christ is *archē primarily*, though not exclusively, in the sense that he is the “Wisdom” which determines the structure of the cosmos. This characterization of Wisdom is consistent with that found in *De Princ.*, but here Origen uses

a metaphor which is quite instructive: “For I think that just as a house and a ship are built or devised according to the plans of the architect, the house and the ship having as their beginning the plans and thoughts in the craftsman, so all things have come to be according to the thoughts of what will be, which were prefigured by God in wisdom” (*Com. Jn.* 1.114; trans. Heine). The Son is a kind of “blueprint” for the cosmos, a standard or principle on the basis of which the created order is fashioned.

Origen brings his exegetical inquiry on the first phrase of John 1:1 to a close by posing the question of whether any other titles besides “Wisdom” might be correctly said to apply to Christ *prior to* his economic functions. The contours and logic of Origen’s discussion here are consistent with *De Princ.*, even if he sounds less confident with his assessment: “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” (*Com. Jn.* 1.123; trans. Heine). As in *De Princ.*, the hierarchy ‘Wisdom–Word–Life–Truth’ is adhered to,⁸¹ with the first two expressing Christ’s purely ontological functions and the latter two expressing his economic yet pre-redemptive functions. The titles of “Resurrection” and “Light”⁸² for example, are important for Origen when discussing Christ’s redemptive relation to the created order, but less helpful when trying to think about the nature of Christ *en archē* (see Fürst 2015: 301).

Therefore, as one might expect given the approximate dating of these two texts and their polemical aim at Origen’s Valentinian interlocutors,⁸³ the *Com. Jn.* is remarkably consistent with

⁸¹ In *De Princ.* 1.2.4, Origen varies the order of the latter two *epinoiai*, absent of any real significance.

⁸² The first receiving some treatment in *De Princ.* but comparatively less in *Com. Jn.*; the second is mentioned but receives little treatment in *De Princ.*, while in the *Com. Jn.* it receives significant treatment. Christ as “true light” (*lumen verum*) is mentioned in *De Princ.* 1.2.6, and in 1.2.7 in connection with the “splendor of the glory of God” of Heb. 1:3 (ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης). As far as I can tell, these together comprise of all the mentions of the “Christ as light” *epinoia* in *De Princ.*

⁸³ For a succinct discussion of the dates of composition of the two works in question, see McGuckin 2004: 29-30, 36-37.

De Princ. in its Christological portrait. Towards the end of Book II Origen discusses the role of the Logos and its relationship to Wisdom. He writes that Wisdom *precedes* the Logos, in which case the Logos should be thought of as residing *in* Wisdom (conceptually, of course), since Wisdom is the true *archē* spoken of in John 1:1; Origen's exegesis of Proverbs 8:22-25 enables him to speak of Wisdom as having this preeminent role among the other *epinoiai* (Fürst 2015: 301-303). The Word announces Wisdom, or makes known the contents of Wisdom, and the subsequent *epinoiai* restore fallen *logikoi* to their God-intended state, the same state which Wisdom adumbrates and whose future consummation Wisdom secures.

It is admittedly a little difficult to understand how the Logos, in its role as an “announcer” of Wisdom, could fit with the other “ontological” *epinoiai*, since it would intuitively seem that the action of announcing presupposes a crowd that is being announced to. To make more sense of this, we should consider for a moment the constitution of the Logos. In the fifth book of his *Com. Jn.*, Origen describes the Logos as a unity composed of a plurality of “words” (or *logoi*):

The complete Word [*logos*] of God which was in the beginning with God is not a multitude of Words [*logoi*], for it is not words. It is a single Word consisting of several ideas, each of which is a part of the whole Word. Those, however, which are outside of this one, declaring that they contain an exposition and a declaration of whatever sort, even if they are words about truth, as it were – and I will express it paradoxically indeed – no one of them is a word, but each are words. For they are in no way a unit, and in no way are they harmonious and one [...]. Consequently, according to this understanding, we would say that he who utters anything hostile to religion is loquacious, but he who speaks

the things of truth, even if he says everything so as to leave out nothing, always speaks the one Word (*Com. Jn.* 5.5).

Origen is unambiguous in his declaration that there is one divine Logos, but this Logos is properly called *the* Logos, “the source of reason [*logos*] in each rational being” (*Com. Jn.* 2.15; trans. Heine).⁸⁴ His classification of the Logos as one of the ontological *epinoiai* makes sense, therefore, because of its constitution as a unity of pluralities. In eternally generating the Son, along with the *logoi* contained within the Son as Logos, God is always a creator with creatures – remembering that the *logoi* are metaphysical prefigurations of rational beings (humans, demons, etc.) (O’Leary 2004: 144; see also Lyman 1993: 55). Thus, the Word is continually “announcing” the contents of Wisdom to the noetic creatures that are being generated by the Word.⁸⁵

As in Clement, Philo, and the Stoics before him, so too with Origen, a conceptual distinction basic to his systematic reflections on the Logos is that between the internal Logos as the “light of reason,” the *logos endiathetos*, and the cosmic or macro-Logos, as the formal-instrumental cause of the physical world.⁸⁶ Moreover, Origen’s conception of the Logos is tied to a particular view of salvation history in which “man becomes more and more like the Logos, in whose image he was created” (Daniélou 1955: 207). By way of comparison, the Stoics defined *eudaimonia*, their ethical *telos*, as a life lived “in accordance with Nature [or Logos],” and the ethical-nomological principles which define eudaimonic living exist *a priori* within each human mind as a possessor of reason (Long 1986: 179).⁸⁷ Even Nature herself, contravening

⁸⁴ Origen’s reasoning in *Com. Jn.* 2.12-18 trades on the definite article accompanying *logos* in John’s prologue.

⁸⁵ For a succinct summary of Origen’s thought on the metaphysical relations between *the Logos*, *logoi*, and the intelligible realm, see Prinzivalli 2015: 292-293.

⁸⁶ Daniélou 1955: 207 agrees that Origen’s Logos-doctrine is, at least respecting its fundamental building-blocks, “entirely dependent on existing tradition.”

⁸⁷ For an exemplary expression of this ethical *telos*, see Stobaeus 2.77,16-27 (*SVF* 3.16).

moral neutrality, urges each human mind through the use of implanted “seeds of knowledge” and “impulses to virtue” to live harmoniously with her (Long 1986: 182). So also in Origen’s thinking, the Logos “is everywhere in the cosmos and individual *logoi* are mere sharers in his properties” by virtue of ontological participation, and it too, like the Stoic *phūsis*, contravenes moral neutrality in its subjective and cosmic instantiations, as later chapters will more clearly show (Daniélou 1955: 255).⁸⁸

Individual *logoi* participate in the eternally-begotten Son, *the* Logos, in virtue of their creation “after the image,” the “image” (*eikōn*) in this case referring exclusively to the Son (Crouzel 1989: 92-98). It is important to emphasize that human beings, for Origen, bear their status as “after-images” only in their capacity as “rational beings” (*logikoi*), and since the anthropological component which grounds their rationality is the Logos residing in the “leading part” (*to hēgemonikon*) of their souls, it is, to be more specific, *this* part, *viz.* the *rational* part of a human soul, which participates in the Son as an after-image (Crouzel 1989: 94-95).⁸⁹ Sanctification is therefore framed as the rational soul’s (*psūchē*) continual and certain progression, superintended by the Son through his manifold functions, towards a pure knowledge of God, the completion of which progression results in an eschatological state of being (the *apokatastasis*, or *consummatio*: “restoration”)⁹⁰ wherein what was formerly “soul” is properly

⁸⁸ For some general discussion of Origen’s use of *phūsis*, see Zachhuber 2021: 31-33. Zachhuber’s discussion leaves out the paraenetic and normative elements of *phūsis* which I see operating, first in Origen’s intellectual predecessors, and then, albeit after some recasting to fit his theological purpose and polemical context, in Origen himself.

⁸⁹ Origen’s connection of the “after-image” with human reason is shared by both Philo and Clement. Origen’s concept of the *imago dei* is noticeably more dynamic than Philo’s: in Philo’s view, the *eikōn* refers solely to the Logos, whereas Origen is guided through NT revelation towards a christology, and hence a view of the *imago dei*, which embraces numerous conceptually distinct but interrelated functions beyond those classically attributed to the Logos *simpliciter*. I believe this difference is due to the dynamism of Origen’s anthropology (on which, see chapter four below). Regardless of the human soul’s level of sanctification the *eikōn* must make salvific provision, and it can do this only by adapting itself to the human soul. For an articulation of Origen’s Logos which places this adaptation front and center, see Koch 1932: 62-74.

⁹⁰ See Origen, *De Princ.* 3.6.1-7. For discussion see McGuckin 2022: 415-423.

called “mind” (*nous*) (Alviar 2022: 386-387). “The question,” writes Daniélou, which most animates and innervates Origen’s entire system of theology, is “how free creatures are to return to the good” (1955: 276). The various institutions and ordinances, moreover, which accompany humankind in their embodied existence, from the church as the “school of souls” (*schola animarum*) to the creature’s own body and its physical circumstances, all have as their purpose and end the gradual – but certain – moral, intellectual, and spiritual education of rational beings, so that “everything the rational mind, when cleansed from all the dregs of the vices and utterly swept clean of every cloud of wickedness, can sense or understand or think will be all God” (*De Princ.* 3.6.3).

Chapter Three: Logos and the Psychology of Self-Determination in *De Princ.*

3.1

Introduction

For Origen the transcendent Logos, as the realm of the ideas, prefigures creation and is its metaphysical principle of order.⁹¹ The *koinai ennoiai* of the creation order, the governing principles or patterns by which creation operates and “holds together,” all have their metaphysical ground in the Son *qua* Logos.⁹² This same Logos *also* exists in each human mind

⁹¹ Berchman 1984: 129, calls the Logos “*the* cosmological principle in Origen’s theoretic,” as distinct from the Father, as the principle of pure being, and the Spirit, which has, for Berchman, a purely soteriological role without any metaphysical function.

⁹² See Origen’s comments in *Com. Jn.* 2.105-111. I am admittedly blurring concepts, to some extent, when I describe Origen’s Logos metaphysic in terms of the originally Stoic “common notions” and the originally Platonic “ideas,” but it may be replied in defense of this that these concepts had already undergone a considerable obfuscation in the post-Hellenistic philosophy preceding Origen. Some remarks from Berchman 1984: 127-131, are helpful in qualifying Origen’s Logos, and in legitimizing my usage of these terms: “the Logos is conceived as an active intellect that thinks the genera and species of creation within his mind, and who creates them outside of his mind.

as the source of its rational capacity. In order to better substantiate my claim that Origen's Logos exerts a paraenetic effect on a human being's psychological apparatus, it will be necessary at this juncture to turn to Origen's treatise "On Self-Determination" (*peri autexousiou*; *De Princ.* 3.1),⁹³ since it is here where Origen's Logos doctrine most clearly impinges upon his understanding of human psychology.

Self-Determination and Logos

From the start of this treatise there is acknowledged the controlling conviction of adherence to the ecclesiastical doctrine of the righteous judgment of God (*De Princ.* 3.1.1). This doctrine serves as the foundational premise in Origen's argument for the self-determination of "rational natures," the category of beings to which humankind belongs (*De Princ.* 1.5.2). Origen's argument is intuitive: if God's judgment is to be considered "just" or "righteous," then beings who receive his judgment must deserve it, and if they deserve it, their actions which warrant such judgment must have freely flowed, uncoerced, from their own decision-making faculties.⁹⁴ To use Origen's words: the doctrine of "the righteous judgment of God [...] clearly acknowledg[es] that things worthy of praise and blame are within our own power [τῷ ἐφ' ἡμῖν]."⁹⁵

[...] There is no world-soul in Origen's theoretic as there was in earlier Middle Platonic proposals. [...] The Logos is the supreme law and harmony of the universe, and his *logoi* hold together, administer, and penetrate matter. However, as the formative principle that orders matter, the Logos is itself non-corporeal and without soul. [...] Origen's definition of the Logos-Son as an *idea ideōn* and as *ousia ousiōn* cannot be separated. As the idea of ideas the Logos is the primary form of all created things. As the substance of substances the Logos is the principle which gives substantial existence to all created things." The Logos of Origen is thus, in Berchman's reading, the efficient, formal, and material cause of all creation.

⁹³ "Free will" in Rufinus' Latin rendering (*arbitrii libertas*).

⁹⁴ See Frede 2011: 107, who observes that the notion that ethical responsibility – and the corollary of a just divine judgment – requires creaturely free-will is found already in Alexander of Aphrodisias and Tatian. The question naturally arises for a reader aware of Origen's universalistic conception of salvation whether such a strong defense of free-will is necessary in order to preserve the divine benevolence and just nature.

⁹⁵ Origen, *On First Principles*, 3.1.1.

It needs to be emphasized, if one aspires to a correct understanding of Origen’s notion of “self-determination” (*to autexousion*), that his discussion of the concept in *De Princ.* 3.1 has as one of its primary goals the refutation of his Valentinian interlocutors’ fatalistic conception of human nature, a view which Origen found entirely repugnant since it made God the direct author (i.e. the “proximate cause” in addition to the ultimate cause) of sin.⁹⁶ Indeed, the evidence from his writings suggests that Origen had a constant preoccupation with correcting “Gnostic” errors and disabusing his readership of their views.⁹⁷ We ought not, therefore, allow ourselves to be misled by the ostensibly systematic appearance of *De Princ.*, and to conclude therefrom that Origen’s authorial intentions are basically dogmatic.⁹⁸ Doing so might lead us to draw the premature conclusion that Origen’s theory of will was basically libertarian⁹⁹ in its construction and overall purpose, a veritable *novum* in the history of theology, when there is less reason to believe that this is the case than is sometimes supposed. All that Origen needs to do, to state the matter plainly, in order to be successful in the project he has set for himself is to refute the idea,

⁹⁶ Such is the substance behind Origen’s remarks in *De Princ.* 3.1.9: “...and let them show how the good and just, or only the just, God appears just in hardening the heart of him who, on account of being hardened, is lost, and how the just God becomes the cause of the loss and disobedience of those who are punished by him on account of their being hardened and being disobedient. [...] For one who believes that the Scriptures are true and that God is just must necessarily, if he is honest, endeavour to show how God, in using such expressions, may be clearly understood to be just.” See also *De Princ.* 3.1.8, where Origen appears to be referring to a Valentinian reading of Pharaoh’s hardening that had gained currency.

⁹⁷ Trigg 2012: 7-9, sees in Origen’s definition of “Gnosticism” the “denial that the God and Father of Jesus Christ was also the God of Israel, the creator of the world and giver of the Law,” a belief which united the disciples of Valentinus, Basilides and Marcion, though he also acknowledges the importance of the Valentinian idea of a hierarchy of natures, since it “seemed to deny free choice and moral responsibility.” O’Leary 2004b: 115 seems to suggest that there were present in Origen’s early writings – writings which included *De Princ.* – elements which could be characterized as “Pelagian” or “rationalistic,” and that these elements had been “constructed under the overwhelming stimulus of his desire to oppose various ‘fatalisms’ of late antique religion.” O’Leary is correct to acknowledge the overwhelming influence of Origen’s polemical purposes in the *De Princ.*, but he is led, I think, to a mischaracterization of these elements of Origen’s thought through a neglect of Origen’s view of the sovereign, but persuasive, operations of the Logos.

⁹⁸ Lyman 1993: 43-44 sets forth a balanced description of Origen’s purposes in the *De Princ.*: “Origen may best be described not as a systematic, but as ordering his theology and exegesis on the basis of certain axiomatic principles from philosophy and theology.”

⁹⁹ By “libertarian,” I mean simply a view of free will according to which a subject is free if and only if he is able to choose otherwise than he does, in fact, choose in any given scenario (O’Connor and Franklin 2022). It is quite a matter of live debate as to whether Origen held to this kind of free will (see discussion in chapter four of this thesis).

on philosophical and exegetical fronts, that either individual divinely allotted “natures” or the movements of the astral bodies somehow determine a person’s actions (i.e. those matters which are “up to us”).¹⁰⁰ To fail to do so would be to leave open to attack the doctrine of God’s just judgment of human actions.¹⁰¹

Origen transitions from his introductory remarks into a more theoretically tinged discourse, in an effort to distinguish, first, between moving things which “have the cause of their movement within themselves” (τὰ τινα ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἔχει τὴν τῆς κινήσεως αἰτίαν), and those which “are only moved from without” (ἕτερα δὲ ἔξωθεν μόνον κινεῖται) (*De Princ.* 3.1.2).¹⁰² The latter type, we learn, encompasses “portable” objects made of wood and stone, i.e., “matter” (*hūlē*), while the former type of being would seem to include animals, plants, and “whatever is held together by nature and soul” (ὅσα ὑπὸ φύσεως καὶ ψυχῆς συνέχεται) (*De Princ.* 3.1.2). But self-movement, evidently, is to be distinguished from self-determination, even though

¹⁰⁰ Lyman 1994: 45: “[Origen’s] masterful use of Middle Platonic Ontology and Stoic psychology, his enquiries into Hellenistic Jewish exegesis, and his relentless repudiation of Gnostic election theology were all ordered by his optimistic belief in the accommodation of the Logos to the mind and life of the individual person.” I think it is more accurate to say that Origen’s doctrine of the providential and educative Logos is forcefully set forth in the *De Princ.* to directly refute the “Gnostic election theology” whilst maintaining a robust notion of the divine sovereignty. See also Lyman 1993: 57-58: “The interaction between divine will and human will rests on God’s infinite goodness and human freedom, which he refuses to compromise on either side in light of Gnostic teaching of election [...]. Divine will is therefore not an overruling force which overcomes human freedom, but a personal energy active in relation to particular events and actions. [...] The whole shape of human existence is therefore an engagement between human freedom and the saving will of God.” To these comments I might add that the divine will succeeds without the coercion of the wills of rational beings by administrating the world through his Logos. This administration *cannot fail*, for Origen, to persuade each rational creature to pursue what is good.

¹⁰¹ *De Princ.*, pr. 5, 1.5.2., 3.1.1. See Jackson 1966: 14 and Fürst 2022: 189-194. Fürst goes so far as to say that “free will was for Origen, together with the Trinity, a foundational doctrine of the Christian faith” (p. 194; my trans.).

¹⁰² *De Princ.*, 3.1.2. His comments here mirror those in chapter six of his *De Oratione* (“On Prayer”). Here as there, Origen’s purpose is, once again, to refute overly deterministic “Gnostics.” See Van Der Eijk 1988: 340. A brief exposition of the psychological anthropology prevalent in his day suffices, for Origen, to show that that class of natures moved from without excludes rational beings, and that rational beings (*logika zōa*), as a subclass of that class of beings moved “by themselves” (*aph heautōn*), have a rational nature which, as a corollary, entails moral culpability. In no way, therefore, is the Valentinian distinction of natures an excuse worthy of consideration, since rational natures *know* the moral quality of a potential action and can *choose* whether to heed or neglect reason in conducting that action. That the Stoic psychology which Origen uses in these first sections of his free will discourse goes unsupported is good evidence that the model was presupposed by his audience. Perhaps Origen felt that the antiquity or popularity of the views he expresses was justification enough.

self-movement would seem a necessary condition for self-determination. Among those beings which are self-moved, inanimate beings are those which are moved “of themselves” (*ex heautōn*), while animate beings are moved “by themselves” (*aph heautōn*). For a thing to move “of itself” means, for Origen, that the movement was determined by the thing’s nature or essence, but without the input of the thing’s will, owing to the thing in question having no reason, and therefore no will.

Origen further analyzes this category of beings who move *aph heautōn* in terms of rational and irrational animals, the crucial component here being the presence or absence of *logos*. To illustrate the distinction: in both rational and irrational animals,¹⁰³ an action is initiated when an “image” (*phantasia*) arises, presumably within the organism’s faculty of cognition, producing an “impulse” (*hormē*). This impulse is said to be moved by the “imaginative nature” in an “orderly manner” (*De Princ.* 3.1.2). The impulse, as Origen conceives it, seems to function conceptually as an intermediary between the passive reception of the perceptual image and the praxis, or concrete manifestation of the image in the being’s actions, and in this respect likely corresponds to what modern readers call “natural instinct,” whereby sensory stimuli elicit a response that accords with the animal’s nature, resulting in more or less predetermined forms of behavior. But the distinction lies most emphatically in this, that whereas in irrational animals sensory inputs (the *phantasiai*) and the animal’s “imaginative nature” (*phantastikē phūsis*) determine the output of praxis, in rational animals sensory input, nature, *and* reason (*logos*) determine praxis, with the added ingredient of reason bringing moral significance to the action (*De Princ.* 3.1.3).

¹⁰³ The concept of an animal (*zōon*) seems to be equated with an “animated being,” which is Behr’s rendering of τὰ ἔμψυχα.

The language Origen uses to make the above distinctions is undoubtedly carefully selected, given the presence of this same language in connection with similar concepts in Stoic and Middle Platonic writings, not least in Clement and Philo.¹⁰⁴ In fact, Origen essentially reproduces at this juncture the standard Stoic account of human psychology: Inwood (1985) calls Origen’s exposition a “report” of the standard Stoic (probably Chrysippean) expansion of Aristotle’s *scala naturae*, a *scala* based on the type and means of movement in nature (p. 21-24). In Aristotle’s *De Anima*, “desire” or “appetency” (*orexis*) is made the primary source of movement in animated beings capable of locomotion,¹⁰⁵ but *phantasia* is posited as the *condicio sine qua non* of appetite (433b27-29). Philo also distinguishes between “living” beings and non-living (i.e. inanimate) beings on the basis of the former receiving both *phantasia* and *hormē* (“impression” and “impulse”) (*Legum Alleg. II-III* 1.30, 2.23). In *Quod Deus* 41-42 *aisthēsis* is a “putting-in,” in the sense that the respective faculty delivers what it receives through the senses from perceptible objects to the “mind”; *phantasia* – here designating the faculty thereof – “imprints” the received sense-perceptive data onto the soul, at which point the soul is effected, either “appropriately” or otherwise, with the qualifier “appropriately” (*oikeiōs*) presumably indicating the agreeableness of the impression to the perceiving animal’s nature. *Aversion* (*aphormē*), and not impulse in the strict sense of that word, would follow an animal’s reception of an impression beckoning it towards something *contrary*, in some way, to its nature (cf. Diog. Laer. 7.88).

I have already briefly introduced Origen’s distinction between a *zōon* with *logos* and a *zōon* with exclusively *phantasia*, but the specific character of *logos* in relation to a rational

¹⁰⁴ Behr 2017: 287n2 identifies, among others, Clement’s *Stromata* 2.20.110-111 and Philo’s *Quod Deus* 41-44, though in fact sections 41-50 are pertinent to this discussion.

¹⁰⁵ Note that for Aristotle, inanimate life like plants also possess soul, exhibiting as they do the most basic faculty of the soul: *threptikon* (“nourishment” or “nourishing part”). See Lloyd 1968: 187-188.

creature's self-determination is worth exploring further. Creatures with *logos* possess the capacity to judge the deliverances of their sense-perceptive faculties, and to “reject” (*apodokimazō*) some of the images while “accepting” (*paradechomai*) others. In other words, as Origen writes, rational creatures in possession of reason are responsible, not for the “data” which flood their sense-perceptive faculties and impress upon the soul, but for what they do with it: morally good impressions ought to be assented to, while morally bad impressions ought to be rejected (*De Princ.* 3.1.3). Origen again, when bringing his discussion of psychological matters to a close at the end of *De Princ.* 3.1.5, restates the fundamentals of his action-theory: “Reason, therefore, demonstrates that things from without are not within our power [τὰ μὲν ἔξωθεν οὐκ ἐφ’ ἡμῶν ἐστὶ], but to use them in this way or otherwise – having received reason as a judge and investigator of the manner in which we ought to meet those things that come from without – this is our doing” (*De Princ.* 3.1.5). Clearly, Origen intends for his readers to take with them as they continue reading the view that *logos* is simultaneously our guide for moral behaviour and the metaphysical grounds for our self-determination.

***Aphormē* and the Context of Volition**

At this point I would like to examine Origen's use of the term *aphormē* in *De Princ.* for reasons which will shortly become clear. *Aphormē* first occurs in *De Princ.* towards the end of 3.1.3, where our author is clearly at pains to make clear that “nothing other than the reason which is in us [τοῦ ἐν ἡμῶν λόγου]” is responsible for our actions. This “reason,” Behr translates, “determine[s] to use what has happened either in this way or that [...], either activating us, from its promptings [παρὰ τὰς ἀφορμὰς], to the impulse inciting us to what is good and befitting, or turning us aside to the opposite” (*De Princ.* 3.1.3). The translation of *para tas aphormas* as

“from its promptings” (that is, from the promptings of a subject’s *logos*) by Behr depicts the *logos* operative in human beings as less of a neutral capacity for choice and assessment and more as a non-cognitive supplier of paraenetic stirrings towards virtue.

Rufinus’ Latin (again in Behr’s translation) lends more credence to the “neutral” reading of *logos*: “By the judgement of this reason we use the stimuli that come to us from without for whatever purpose that reason itself may approve [*ad id, quodcumque ipsa ratio probaverit*], directing by its bidding our natural movements *either to the good or to the contrary* [*naturalibus motibus nostris nutu eius vel ad bona vel ad contraria gubernatis*; emphasis added]” (*De Princ.* 3.1.3). In Rufinus’ translation, the purpose of *ratio* is simply to make a decision, albeit one based on the “judgment” (*judicium*) of the “impressions” with which it is provided. Indeed, Rufinus identifies *ratio* with *judicium* just a few lines later (*De Princ.* 3.1.3).¹⁰⁶ Notwithstanding Rufinus’ observed penchant for explanatory interpolation, however, there is a manifest absence of any attempt to translate or explain *para tas aphormas*.

It is I think reasonable to hold that Rufinus’ translation communicates “‘les grandes lignes’ of the original doctrine of Origen” as he meant to express them in *De Principiis* (Rist 1997: 99). Still, the conclusions that John Rist draws in his comparison of the Latin and Greek texts of *De Princ.* 3.1 are useful for making sense of Rufinus’ apparent slip-up. Rist’s contention is that the thought-worlds of Origen and Rufinus are different in several key respects, and that these differences help to explain some of the significant divergences which are observable between their two texts (1997: 99). One difference which Rist observes is Rufinus’ seeming preoccupation with “judicial and disciplinary interests” (1997: 100). More specifically, “Rufinus

¹⁰⁶ Towards the end of Rufinus’ trans. of *De Princ.* 3.1.3, Behr translates: “but to judge and determine how we ought to use [impressions], when they happen, is a matter and act of nothing other than that reason which is in us, *that is, our own judgement* [emphasis added].”

seems particularly concerned [...] to recast Origen’s Greek in a legal or judicial mold which is missing in the original” (1997: 99). The example from *De Princ.* 3.1.2 mentioned above is a case in point: by explicitly identifying “reason” with “judgment” (*judicium*), Rufinus implicitly restricts reason’s function in decision-making to the evaluation and election of impressions. Origen’s intentions in writing were heresiological, and aimed at achieving and encouraging dogmatic piety amongst his readers, but they were also, if only partially, philosophical and exploratory (1997: 101-102). Another case in point – this one acquiring apt treatment from Rist – is Rufinus’ apparent misunderstanding of *phantasia*. In *De Princ.* 3.1.1, Rufinus transliterates the term (as *fantasia*), but in the two instances in this section where the term occurs he feels the need to define the term for his readers: in the first instance as “a certain desire or impulse [my trans.]” (*id est voluntas quaedam vel incitamentum*), and in the second, as “a certain desire or ambition [my trans.]” (*id est voluntate quadam vel studio*). Neither of these definitions would have been acknowledged as correct by any Stoic Origen was reading (Rist 1997: 104-105).¹⁰⁷

So, many of the shortcomings of Rufinus’ translation are rather “the subtle and often unconscious changes which arise from [his] being a product of Latin rather than Greek culture, from his Latin desire for rhetorical embellishment and Vergillian echoes, and from his emphasis on law and the judiciary, rather than on philosophical enquiry and the quarrels of the schools,” than anything else (Rist 1997: 111). Even still, if Rufinus has shown us his inability to handle a

¹⁰⁷ Epictetus, writing a few decades before Origen, makes the proper (i.e. rational) “use” (*chrēsis*) of *phantasiai* the defining characteristic of human existence (Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.20.16); *phantasiai* are for him “modification[s] of the rational capacity” from without (Dinucci 2017: 110-111). Seneca’s diction for “impression” seems to be *species* (*De Ira*, 1.3.7-8; *Epistles* 113.18; See for discussion Graver 2023: 47-51. In point of fact, making *phantasia* equivalent to *voluntas* or *studium* undermines Origen’s argument for human free will, because it makes each a product of circumstances rather than of volition. *Incitamentum* more successfully comprehends the Stoic notion of *phantasia*, though since it would appear simultaneously to bear the meaning of *hormē*, in the end it succeeds only in blurring the careful distinctions present in the Greek. Sorabji 2000: 42-44 points out that in Seneca’s *De Ira* *voluntas* seems to take on the sense of *hormē*, a sense usually carried by *impetus*, and in other, earlier Stoic thinking, an impulse of this sort is incited by a *hormētike phantasia* (a “motivating appearance”), all of which accounts for the association of *voluntas* and *incitamentum* in Rufinus’ mind, but not for their joint association with *fantasia*.

concept so basic to Origen's psychology as *phantasia*, it is little surprise that his translation fails to capture the more subtle notion of *aphormē* and Origen's equally subtle employment of it in *De Princ.*

Of Origen's four uses of *aphormē* in *De Princ.* (twice in 3.1.3, once in 4.2.3 and once in 4.2.6), the latter two have the straightforward sense of "opportunity" or "occasion" and are thus consistent with the classical usage of that term (see Demosthenes 18.156, Thucydides 1.90.2, Isocrates. 4.61, and Euripides' *Hecuba* 239). but the two instances in 3.1.3 seem to have taken on a rather different shade of meaning. I have already mentioned above the second of these two instances, where the subjectively appropriated Logos appears to supply "promptings," as Behr translates, suggesting that the Logos does more than simply evaluate impressions and make decisions.¹⁰⁸

In the Stoicism of Chrysippus, an *aphormē* is an "aversion" or "repulsion," and is a psychological function equal and opposite to that of *hormē*. An especially instructive report of Chrysippus' position is found in Plutarch's *De Stoicorum Repugnantiis* (1037f): Chrysippus, according to Plutarch, held that "the impulse [ὀρμή] in man is reason prescriptive of action for him [λόγος ἐστὶ προστακτικὸς αὐτῷ τοῦ ποιεῖν]" and that "repulsion [ἀφορμή] is prohibitive reason [λόγος ἀπαγορευτικός]." Since reason, in Chrysippus' psychology, is made to encompass all the soul's functions and faculties, it makes perfect sense for Chrysippus to have defined these two functions as well in terms of *logos*, a corollary of which is that both impulse and aversion are either to be identified with assent to an impression (*sugkatathesis*), or at least flow from such an assent (see Sorabji 2000: 43-44). Stobaeus (2.86,17-87,6; *SVF* 3.169) relates that the Stoic

¹⁰⁸ Origen's identification of Christ as the *verbum* (λόγος), and as the "truth" (*veritas*) and the "life" (*vita*), all in the same breath (*De Princ.* 1.2.3-4), suggests that the operation of the Word is to energize rational activity in rational beings, all of which makes the neutral reading seem even more implausible.

impulse is a “movement of soul towards something”; elsewhere one finds evidence of an expanding notion of *hormē* in the definition “[a] movement of soul towards *or away from* something [emphasis added]” (*SVF* 3.377; cited in Long 1987: 172), but is in any case the product of an impression’s special incitation (*De Princ.* 3.1.2). In rational beings, the psychological process leading from impression, through impulse, and finally to action is superintended by reason (*logos*); given the presence of reason in an animal, impressions – whether their sources be internal or external – upon their receipt require rational “assent” in order for the appropriate impulse within the animal to occur, and hence for the action which corresponds to that impulse to take place (Long 1987: 172-173).¹⁰⁹ Presumably, in irrational animals there are impressions which, in accordance with the nature of the animal, illicit positive impulses, i.e., impulses directed *towards* an “object”¹¹⁰ of some sort, and, conversely, other impressions which stimulate a negative impulse, or an impulse directed *away from* an object.¹¹¹ Plutarch’s report indicates that in rational beings (*zōa* with *logos*), the internally appropriated, subjective *logos* is responsible for the impulse or aversion that an animal experiences upon its reception of an impression.

Certainly, the Stoic meaning of *aphormē* more closely approximates Origen’s intent in *De Princ.* 3.1.3 than do many older, classical meanings. Görgemanns and Karpp’s (2010) choice of

¹⁰⁹ Though see Sorabji 2000: 42-44 who argues that impulse and assent are, at least on some occasions, to be construed as a single psychological function. Inwood 1985: 42-53 discusses extensively the distinction between *hormē* and *sugkatathēsis*, and maintains that while the idea of *hormē* “performs much of the work of ‘intention’” in a conceptualization of human action, it is also, from a causal perspective, a sufficient condition for action. One can, on this view, have an “intent” to act a certain way without actually acting that way, but one cannot have an *impulse* to act without carrying out that act, assuming no interruption occurs.

¹¹⁰ I use ‘object’ here in the general sense of whatever an impulse may be said to be about.

¹¹¹ See *De Princ.* 3.1.2. Inwood 1985: 113 writes that “[in addition to the distinction between rational and irrational impulses] a further distinction is between impulses which cause an action in a narrower sense and those which cause either avoidance behaviour or the abstention from action. The latter kind of impulse has a distinctive name, *aphormē*, and it too is distinguished into rational and irrational forms.”

“Voraussetzung” (i.e. “precondition” or “presupposition”) as a translation¹¹² has classical precedents,¹¹³ and the advantages of making adequate sense of the text, and of applying consistently to each of the four instances of *aphormē* in *De Princ.* This choice of translation, however, makes Origen’s diction almost clumsy, for the reader is expected, in exactly the place where context would strongly suggest a meaning colored by Stoic psychology,¹¹⁴ to nonetheless read “means.” Of course, owing to what has been said about the Stoic *aphormē* above, not to mention a plain reading of the passage in question from *De Princ.*, it should be clear that a simple imposition of the Chrysippean sense of the term is also unacceptable.¹¹⁵ The English translations of Frederick Crombie (1885) and Butterworth (1966), as well, exhibit a complete lack of sensitivity to the Stoic currents of thought in the passage, with the former providing for *para tas aphormas* the trivially true “as occasion offers,” while the latter provides for the same phrase “as the alternatives appear,” and in doing so steps beyond a plain translation of the Greek.¹¹⁶

Aphormē and *hormē* are to Chrysippus and his followers basically the same psychological function, but the way Origen uses *aphormē* in *De Princ.* 3.1.3 forbids taking it that way as well. The unique function of the human *logos* is to “decide, or to refuse to use an occurrence in a certain way” (Τὸ δὲ κρίναι οὕτωςι χρήσασθαι τῷ γενομένῳ, ἢ ἐτέρως), a

¹¹² They translate *para tas aphormas* in *De Princ.* 3.1.3 as “auf Grund der (in ihr liegenden) Voraussetzungen.” Their clarificatory insertion of “in ihr liegenden” does, however, correctly situate the *aphormas* within the subjective Logos.

¹¹³ Demosth. 18.233, Lysias. 24.24, and Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* 3.12.4 are a few examples (i.e. “means” or “preconditions,” but in a material sense).

¹¹⁴ *hormē* is used, after all, in its straightforwardly Stoic sense in the very same disjunctive clause.

¹¹⁵ Behr follows the translation of Görgemanns and Karpp with the first instance of *aphormē* in 3.1.3 (“therefore, since there are, in the nature of reason, *means* to contemplate both the good and the shameful [emphasis added]”), but inconsistently shifts to “promptings” with the second instance.

¹¹⁶ Butterworth’s translation appears to depend on *aphormē* having the sense of “opportunity” common to classical usage. An “opportunity” or “occasion,” when considered in the context of the passage in question, could reasonably denote the set of possible *phantasiai* awaiting the mind’s assent.

function which is further analyzed in dichotomous terms: the *logos* may “energize” us *παρὰ τὰς ἀφορμάς* “*towards* impulses calling forth what is good and fitting” (πρὸς τὰς ἐπὶ τὸ καλὸν προσκαλουμένας καὶ τὸ καθήκον ὀρμάς), or else “turn us aside to the contrary” (ἢ ἐπὶ τὸ ἐναντίον ἐκτρέποντος). Both the encouragement towards good impulses and the deviation towards vice are possible functions of the subjective *logos*, but only the former function is qualified with the prepositional phrase *para tas aphormas*.¹¹⁷ Origen’s phrasing would seem to suggest that the subjective *logos* comes with baked-in inclinations or inducements, and that it is guided by them away from immorality and towards virtue – towards what is “good” and “fitting” (τὸ καλὸν and τὸ καθήκον).

Behr’s translation of the first occurrence is inconsistent with his translation of the second:

Therefore, since there are, in the nature of reason, *means* [ὄθεν ἐπεὶ ἐν τῇ φύσει τοῦ λόγου εἰσὶν ἀφορμαὶ] to contemplate both the good [τὸ καλὸν] and the shameful [τὸ αἰσχρόν] – following which, contemplating the good and the shameful, we choose the good but avoid the shameful – we are praiseworthy when devoting ourselves to the practice of the good, but blameworthy in the opposite case [emphasis added] (*De Princ.* 3.1.3).

In his translation of *aphormai* as “means,” Behr opts for the classical signification, and though the passage itself does not contain any mention of “impulse,” the background of Stoic psychology that lies behind these and other passages in *De Principiis* 3.1, in addition to the

¹¹⁷ One might argue that Origen is relying on the parallel grammatical structure of the sentence to carry the force of *παρὰ τὰς ἀφορμάς* to the second disjunct. This argument would be more convincing if the same participle were operative in both disjuncts yet simply understood in the second.

proximity of this passage to the second occurrence's passage, still make the usage of a classical sense rather unlikely.

Even still, whatever the philosophical background of the passage contributes to the likelihood of the term's sense as a pre-volitional inclination or reflex, it may be argued, is outweighed by the syntax of the sentence and the neutral sense of *logos* it appears to demand. According to this reading (implied by Behr's translation), "means" fits better than "promptings" because *aphormai*, when considered in syntactical relation purely to τοῦ θεωρῆσαι τὸ καλὸν καὶ τὸ αἰσχρὸν ("of perceiving the good and the shameful"), would seem to require a neutral reading, for both sides of the moral spectrum are in view. But when *aphormai* is considered in relation to the following relative clause – the antecedent of which is *aphormai* – the morally neutral reading becomes awkward, since "means" are typically used rather than "followed," whereas "promptings," "instigations" or "inducements" are more easily thought of as the sort of psychological phenomena one might "follow." The individual's choosing of the good and avoidance of the shameful (αἰρούμεθα μὲν τὸ καλὸν, ἐκκλίνομεν δὲ τὸ αἰσχρὸν) is in close conceptual and syntactical relation to the individual's obedience to the *aphormai* of the *logos*: choosing the good and avoiding the shameful is, in other words, obeying promptings, and to do "otherwise" (τὸ ἐναντίον) would be to resist those promptings.

My consideration of reason's promptings here will, I think, be benefitted by a few more observations about the Stoic *aphormē*. There is another sense of *aphormē* – a sense besides that of "aversion" – which crops up from time to time in Stoic circles, and is often erroneously attributed to *hormē*. I quote Inwood (1985) at length:

Many writers on Stoicism seem to assume a vague conception of *hormai* as drives or desires, instinctual urges which provide the basic raw material of human or animal nature.

This uncertain notion is no doubt encouraged by the now entrenched translations ‘impulse’ or ‘tendance’. But it is fundamentally wrong. This is not because the Stoics did not think that animals have innate tendencies to develop and act in certain ways. *Such tendencies are very important and are called aphormai, inclinations* [emphasis added] (p. 45).

Diogenes Laertius (7.89) is cited as an instance of this usage, and the passage is indeed worth quoting in full for purposes of illustration:

By the nature [φύσιν] with which our life ought to be in accord, Chrysippus understands both universal nature and more particularly the nature of man [τὴν τε κοινὴν καὶ ἰδίως τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην], whereas Cleanthes takes the nature of the universe alone as that which should be followed, without adding the nature of the individual. And virtue, he holds, is a harmonious disposition, choice-worthy for its own sake and not from hope or fear or any external motive. Moreover, it is in virtue that happiness consists; for virtue is the state of mind which tends to make the whole of life harmonious. When a rational being is perverted [διαστρέφεσθαι δὲ τὸ λογικὸν ζῷον], this is due to the deceptiveness of external pursuits or sometimes to the influence of associates. For the ἀφορμὰς of nature are never perverse.¹¹⁸

Here, *phūsis* in its universal and anthropic varieties supplies both the norms to which a moral agent must conform himself *and* the well of motivational resources or “inclinations” (*aphormas*) from which the agent draws as he makes his decision. Any corruption or perversion suffered by

¹¹⁸ I have left ἀφορμὰς untranslated in my quotation, instead of including Hicks’ “starting-points,” which I find inadequate.

the agent's moral character is due exclusively either to the "bad company" he keeps or to the "enticements of external affairs" (τὰς τῶν ἔξωθεν πραγματειῶν πιθανότητας); the input of *phūsis* is always morally sound, and the quality of *paraenesis* or exhortation it provides to the agent is never compromised by the agent's moral character.¹¹⁹

Moreover there are found, as it happens, indications of this shade of meaning in sources outside the Stoics, though its prevalence is apparently rather slight. The Greek orator Demosthenes (*Orat.* 1.23), for instance, makes mention of accidental success being an "inducement to foolish thinking among the foolish [my trans.]" (ἀφορμὴ τοῦ κακῶς φρονεῖν τοῖς ἀνοήτοις).¹²⁰ In another oration – and one where, coincidentally, the character of Philip of Macedon is once again the subject of criticism – Demosthenes speaks of the "greater claims" (πλείους ἀφορμὰς) that the Athenians have to the favour of the gods (*Orat.* 2.22). Here the sense of "pretext" may very well be in use, though the sense of "inclination," or even "intention," has an equal claim to this passage, for it serves the orator's rhetorical purposes equally well to say that the Athenians *aspire* more to the gods' favour than does Philip.

Occurrences of *aphormē* abound in Philo's work, and his ideological proximity to Origen lends greater weight to his usage. Fürst (2022) is quite right that Origen's use of the term in *De Princ.* 3.1.3 is influenced by Philo's own usage (which is admittedly varied), but he mistakenly associates the *aphormai* with "beginnings" or "principles" (*Ansätze*) within a human being's

¹¹⁹ Krentz 2008: 126-131 discusses Epictetus' views on *pathē*, and helpfully juxtaposes, on the one hand, *pathē*, which are defined along classically Stoic lines as perturbations of the soul, the heeding of which would amount to living inconsistently with the all-encompassing *phūsis*, and the quite natural inclination, on the other hand, of a human being to "endure the rational" but to "avoid the irrational." Nature supplies human beings with *logos*, and to a *logikos* what is irrational (*alogon*) is *naturally* repugnant. Of course, rational beings are not made by Nature the beneficiaries of a fully-trained rational faculty simply upon reaching the biological "age of Reason"; rather, all of the Stoics stress the need to educate (through *paideia*) the rational faculty to choose what accords with nature (and therefore reason), but also to more strongly *desire* what is natural (and reasonable). Cf. Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 7.11: "To the rational creature the same act is at once according to nature and according to reason."

¹²⁰ "Occasion" or "opportunity" also work as possible senses, though in comparison to "inducement" they would seem to soften Demosthenes' rhetorical blow against the character of Philip.

natural reason. These *Ansätze*, for Fürst, do not provide the moral agent with an *a priori* knowledge of “moral ground-categories”; rather, as he writes (quoting Hengstermann 2016: 36) “it requires upbringing and education to develop these 'beginnings', 'which he has from birth,' into a well-founded knowledge, 'which he must internalize in a moral character' and by which he must orient his decisions [my trans.]” (2022: 200). Without excluding the possibility of moral education having a determinative effect on the *aphormai* within the *logos*, a feature which Fürst and Hengstermann rightly emphasize, I do want to stress the paraenetic “tug” of the *logos*-born *aphormai* on the volitional capacity as one of their essential points of definition.

Fürst cites, in support of his reading, Philo’s *Quod Omnis* 71: “having therefore such ἀφορμαί in ourselves, shall we not blush in our announcement of the lack of wisdom in the race of men, a wisdom which the ἀφορμαί could, through their bellows, fan into flame, like a spark on a smouldering piece of wood [my trans.]?” The *aphormai* are interpreted as “capacities” or as “opportunities for certain behaviours [my trans.]” (Fürst 2022: 200n33), but such an interpretation seems to ignore indications in the passage which assign an active, energizing role to the *aphormai* in fanning wisdom into flame, though certainly, as Philo makes clear in the preceding section, failure to attend to these *aphormai* leads, ultimately, to their withering. What is therefore worthy of blush, for Philo, is less the untapped potential of human virtue and more the vicious suppression of the “seeds of virtue” (τὰ καλοκάγαθίας σπέρματα) whence comes, through a normal cultivation thereof, the fruits of “intelligence,” “righteousness,” “virtue,” and “prudence” (τὸ φρονήσεως, τὸ δικαιοσύνης, τὸ ἀνδρείας, τὸ σωφροσύνης) (*Quod Omnis* 69-71). A similar sense appears again in *De Specialibus Legibus II* 93, where Philo’s description of the viciousness of tax-collectors includes their having been given “incentives [or inducements] towards dishonest gain” by their masters (τὰς πρὸς πλεονεξίαν ἀφορμὰς αὐτοῖς ἐνδιδόντες),

incentives to which the “natural perversity”(τῆ φυσικῆ σκαιότητι) of the tax collector are happily amenable. Then again, in *Quod Omnis* 78, in a very interesting description of the Essenes, we find the identification of material gain through commerce with “inducements to dishonest gain”; such external inducements to wickedness, Philo remarks, have been renounced by the Essenes.¹²¹ These two instances from *Quod Omnis* are especially intriguing, since in the first instance we have, if my interpretation is correct, an expression of the view that there are present in a human’s psychological apparatus innate promptings that aim at the flowering of divine wisdom for that individual, and that there are external “temptations” or “inducements” which tug in a direction opposite to that of those inward promptings. It is this basic dichotomy of external inducements towards vice and internal inducements towards virtue which, I contend, we find in the grand narrative of noetic sanctification that Origen sets out.

This sense of *aphormē*, then, and not the other Stoic meaning of “aversion,” nor the classical meanings of “means” or “opportunity” is, it seems to me, the sense which Origen intends for his readers in *De Princ.* 3.1.3. If in the previous chapter I have successfully shown that Origen drew heavily from the early Stoics, and from the Stoic-influenced Middle Platonists, in the crafting of his Logos doctrine, the discussion in the present chapter will I hope have shown that the individual Logos, like the Stoic *phūsis*,¹²² produces “inclinations” or “inducements,” that it summons or exhorts the human soul towards proper moral action, and that consequently the human volitional capacity does not begin its decision making processes with a dispositional *tabula rasa*. The exercise of self-determination, for Origen, never occurs in the context of a morally neutral disposition, originating *ex nihilo*, as it were; rather, an individual’s choices

¹²¹ The occurrences in *De Mutatione Nominum* 229 and *De Confusione Linguarum* 68-69 may also share this sense.

¹²² See Alviar 2022: 377-378.

emerge from a context of previously existing moral knowledge and desires, and when they occur they shape the context from which future decisions emerge.

A last turn of phrase in *De Princ.* 3.1.3 worthy of close examination is the peculiarly Stoic description of the location or source of the *aphormai* in *De Princ.* 3.1: they are located, or have their source “in the nature of reason” (ἐν τῇ φύσει τοῦ λόγου). There is more to this ostensibly innocent description, I think, than a *prima facie* reading of the passage would suggest, but to grasp this a further exploration of the Stoic idea of *phūsis* will be necessary.¹²³ For the Stoics, the broad, all-encompassing Nature is coextensive with the divine *pneuma*, and was organized hierarchically on the basis of a *scala naturae*, an idea they inherited from Aristotle (Inwood 1985: 18-24). As Inwood writes, the doctrine of the *scala* issuing from Chryssipus insured the continuity of each level of Nature with the claim that “the forces which give each kind of entity its characteristic powers are all modifications of the same material principle, *pneuma*” (1985: 21). Of course, Origen would seem implicitly to reject the Stoic notion of an all-pervasive *pneuma*, and this makes perfect sense given his commitment to excluding the work of the Holy Spirit strictly to those who “walk in the ways of Jesus Christ” (*De Princ.* 1.3.5). Notwithstanding his rejection of the terminology of “spirit,” however, it is certain that Origen adopts the basic structure of Nature that the Stoics borrowed from Aristotle. In point of fact, Inwood cites Origen (*De Princ.* 3.1.2-3) and Simplicius’s commentary on Aristotle’s *Categories* (*SVF* 2.499) as prime examples of the Stoic version of the *scala naturae*, awarding greater authority to the former (1985: 23-24).

There can be no question that Origen’s adoption of the *scala naturae* into his system is done without any felt obligation on his part to accept that most Stoic of ideas, *viz.* that, “physics,

¹²³ The following borrows heavily from material already cited in the first chapter.

in the final analysis, is theology.”¹²⁴ To make God and creation consubstantial would be to deny the fundamental Christian doctrine of God’s immutability (the presupposition being that the earthy “stuff” of creation *is* subject to change), and is for that reason no better than the Epicurean view that the gods, being composed of atoms, are prone to dissolution (*Contra Celsum* 4.14).¹²⁵ Still, that a “beneficent providence” (Daniélou 1955: 206) oversees each step of the *scala naturae*, creatures rational and irrational alike, that this providence endows each step of the *scala* with a “nature” (*phūsis*) suitable to it, and that in rational beings (*logikoi*) there is an unique presence of the divine Logos through which they are furnished with a rational capacity *and a natural affinity for its proper exercise*, are all propositions with which Origen and the Stoics would agree. It is true that, according to Origen’s cosmic voluntarism, will is determinative of nature and not determined by it, but it is equally true that the rationality of a rational being, which is to say the presence of Logos in a nature, is a fact which predates the first exercise of will in any rational being. Any reading of Origen must be careful to distinguish the sense of

¹²⁴ Long & Sedley 1987: 267 (vol. 1), commenting upon Diog. Laer. 7.148-9: “Zeno says that the whole world and heaven are the substance of god, and likewise Chrysippus in *On Gods* book 1 and Posidonius in *On Gods* book 1 [...]. By ‘nature’ they sometimes mean what sustains the world, and sometimes what makes things on the earth grow: nature is a self-moving tenor, which completes and sustains its products in accordance with seminal principles [...]. Furthermore, it aims at utility and pleasure, as is evident from human craftsmanship.” In their comments on the Greek (vol. 2, p. 264-265), they note how counterintuitive it would seem for a Stoic to avow that nature, “aims at utility and pleasure” (τοῦ συμφέροντος στοχάζεσθαι καὶ ἡδονῆς), but surmise that “ἡδονή can be interpreted as a very general term for gratification or contentment: nature intends that creatures should be pleased with their constitution as well as finding it useful to them. It does not follow from this statement that creatures are designed to make pleasurable feelings one of their primary objectives.” Things with natures, in other words, take pleasure in doing things consistent with their natures. Long & Sedley offer no explanation of the vague comparison with “human craftsmanship” in the passage, but I think it is plausible, bearing in mind the designation of the all-pervasive Nature as a “craftsman-like fire” (πῦρ τεχνικόν) in Diog. Laer. 7.156 and Aetius I.7.33, and a “craftsman of all things” (εἶναι δὲ τὸν μὲν δημιουργὸν τῶν ὅλων) in Diog. Laer. 7.147, to regard the comparison as one between human invention, which has an increase either in utility or in pleasure as its end, and Nature’s productions, which have the same ends but achieve them with differing means according to Nature’s level of refinement. Nature governs humankind as Logos, which is Nature’s highest level of refinement (See Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 9.9), and that means that the rational nature in humankind will strive to produce those things which it takes a natural delight in. The kinship of this idea with what is indicated in Origen’s statement – that there are “stirrings/inclinations/promptings *in the nature of reason*” will have, I trust, become clear to the reader.

¹²⁵ On Origen’s attitude towards the Stoics in the *Contra Celsum*, see Edwards 2022: 283-285. All translations of *Contra Celsum* are from Chadwick (1986).

phūsis which Origen intends when writing, for example, in response to the Valentinian position, and that sense which he intends when writing of the manifold variety of the creation order, after the Stoic fashion.

In summary of the last two chapters, then: we have in *De Princ.* a distinctly theological, indeed Christological, portrayal of the Logos in both its cosmic (macro-) and subjective (micro-) modes of operation. The appellation “logos” designates that function of the Son, the second person of the Trinity, which concerns cosmic order and the intellectual access to that cosmic order by the rational beings in whom the Logos dwells. More to the point of this thesis, however: The Logos conforms all of Creation to itself, and in itself to the Father, so that God might be “all in all” (*De Princ.* 3.6.1-7 and *passim*), but this conformity is achieved on two fronts, the first being a providential arrangement of the cosmos *around* each rational being, the second being an internal exhortation or *paraenesis*, located within each rational faculty, that aims at rational action in the cosmos. The following chapter examines the source and effects of moral failure, i.e. sin, as provided in *De Princ.*, and explores these effects in relation to the possibility of sanctification, or moral improvement, after sin.

Chapter Four: Sin, Hardness of Heart, and the Problem of Noetic Sanctification in *De Principiis* 3.1.

Introduction

In this chapter I have undertaken to provide a clear articulation of what I call “the problem of noetic sanctification” as it emerges in Origen’s thought, though – as in the preceding chapters – I confine myself largely to the *De Princ.*; any venturing outside this work serves mainly to confirm and fill out what already exists nascently in *De Princ.* In order to give an adequate motivation of the problem, it will be necessary to provide a selective exposition of Origen’s doctrine of sin, and to thus bring into full relief the tension that exists between Origen’s radically optimistic soteriology and radically pessimistic hamartiology. The next and final chapter will offer a solution to the problem I set out here that draws upon the material in the earlier chapters of this thesis.

Sin and the Cosmic Drama of Salvation

It is already in the preface to *De Princ.* that Origen first mentions the notion of sin, and it is, most tellingly, defined here in close conceptual relation to the notion of a “rational soul” (*De Princ.* Pr. 5). Sin, in the context of the preface at least, is straightforwardly definable as moral error, where “moral” connotes both voluntariness and a class of choices, thoughts, or actions that is measurable according to an objective standard of good and evil (*bona et mala*) (*De Princ.* Pr. 5). From this definition it follows, quite predictably, that only rational souls can commit sins, since to be rational, as has already been clarified in a previous chapter, means, *inter alia*, both to possess “free will and volition,” and to possess the moral standard with which to judge between good and evil (*De Princ.* Pr. 5).¹²⁶ The possession of a moral conscience and the ability to choose

¹²⁶ There are other characteristics of rational beings, of course. In *Con. Cels.* 4.83-84 and *passim* Origen associates verbal communication with the rational soul.

to act on the basis of it are, in other words, the two necessary conditions for human rationality that Origen provides here.¹²⁷

A second significant hamartiological detail introduced in this brief section of the preface is the notion that actual sins have an effect on the moral agent. There is of course the reward or punishment which one receives after their departure from earthly life: either the “inheritance of eternal life and blessedness,” in the case of exceeding merit, or the deliverance “up to eternal fire and torments, *if the sin of its wicked deeds shall so direct it* [emphasis added]” (*De Princ.* Pr. 5). It is possible to take the Latin underlying this translation, *si in hoc eam scelerum culpa detorserit*, in a purely forensic sense, so that *culpa* (for which Behr provides “sin”) denotes simply that “guilt” which merits punishment as its just desert, and though this is surely a part of what Origen intends,¹²⁸ this would represent a failure to appreciate the multi-faceted view of sin that discloses itself already in the preface. The verb *detorserit*, for instance, is a rather odd choice if Origen means *simply* to convey that sinful actions receive their just desert. There is detectable in Origen’s choice of words, I think, the slightest hinting at a spatiotemporal sense: sinful actions *bring* the rational soul into a new condition or state of being.¹²⁹

Such a locative sense to Origen’s words becomes even more clear when reference is soon made to the “conflict against the devil and his angels, and opposing powers,” and to how they “strive to burden [the rational soul] with sins” (*illi peccatis eam onerare contendant*) (*De Princ.*

¹²⁷ In *De Princ.* 1.3.6 Origen articulates a noticeably Stoic understanding of the “age of reason,” i.e., the age when the seeds of the Logos (the *semina rationis* in Rufinus’ Latin) grow to the level of maturity which yields the fruit necessary for moral and rational action. See on this Martens 2022: 362-363. Of course, the Logos is the Son of God in Origen’s theology, but there is present here again the insistence that the knowledge of good and evil which “implanted reason” (*ratio [...] inserta*) offers up to the knowing subject makes that subject morally responsible for their actions.

¹²⁸ See *Con. Cels.* 3.31.

¹²⁹ Lyman 1993: 68: “Humans must choose their proper being as children of God – that is, recognize their source of existence and dwell continually in relation to God. Those who refuse slide down gradually toward the abyss of non-being.” Lyman then interestingly attributes the distinct emphasis in Origenian theology of “will” (*proairesis*) determining nature to “a blend of Stoic psychology and Platonic metaphysics.”

Pr. 5). Leaving aside the manner in which demons strive against human rational souls,¹³⁰ I would like simply to note that *onerare* introduces a sense of physicality or tangibility, much like *detorserit*, to the effect of sins upon rational souls. So it is a curious fact that Origen's rather forensic-sounding exposition of sin in the preface as a willful violation of the system of morality present, at least in some degree, in each rational soul, includes with it the suggestion of a rather substantial account of sin's effects. But before turning to a more thorough investigation of some of those effects, it behooves me to relate Origen's emphatic reassurance to his readers that, even though "some powers [...] may be able to urge us to sin, and others to help us to salvation [...], we are not, however, compelled by necessity to act either rightly or wrongly" (*De Princ.* Pr. 5). This would seem to imply that those aforementioned attributes which together constitute a soul's rationality survive and remain well-functioning even after the soul has suffered the effects of sin; the moral agent would remain free to choose, and the agent's rational faculty would continue to assign correct moral value to each possible decision.

Origen discusses the nature and effects of sin throughout his writings. One might even say that the effects of sin, if broadly construed, are Origen's primary burden of study, or perhaps the organizing theme of Origen's entire theological corpus (Teichtweier 1958: 40; Koch 1932: 28). Readers of Origen will find very soon after delving into his works that they are thrust into an "epic tale of God's first creation [...] when all rational life was gathered in harmony around the Divine Logos [...]; and thence the long story of the decline from primeval bliss to the condition of embodied souls lamenting their separation from God" (McGuckin 2004: ix). In Origen's cosmology, the whole of the creation order, or *kosmos*, with all its variety and diversity, is

¹³⁰ See *De Princ.* 3.2.4, 3.4.1-5 for their role in temptation.

providentially¹³¹ generated out of a just and loving God's desire to, first, punish the first sins of "sloth" (*desidia*), "weariness of the labour of preserving the good" (*laboris taedium in servando bono*), and "an aversion to and a neglect of better things" (*aversion ac negligentia meliorum*) in his rational creatures before their fall into bodies (*De Princ.* 2.9.2).¹³² This God does by assigning a type of physical embodiment to each rational creature that befits the magnitude of the creature's sin. As Scott (2022) notes in his chapter on Origen's "Cosmic Theodicy,"

Origen attributes the origin of evil to the creaturely misuse of freedom. If that were the extent of his argument, we might not think it very original or illuminating, but Origen transposes this 'free will defence' into a cosmic key. In his theology, the fall occurs in a pre-temporal, pre-cosmic realm, giving rise to the universe with its descending scales of being (p. 399).¹³³

So it is fair to say that for Origen the entire *kosmos*, with all the creaturely diversity, with all the variety of rational creatures (angels, humans, daemons etc.) present therein, is a product or fruit of *sin*. Each rational soul, or *nous*¹³⁴ receives, as its just desert, an embodied existence, the condition and circumstances of which are commensurate with the gravity of its sin.

A second desire, though entirely complementary¹³⁵ to the first, that lay behind God's creation of the *kosmos* is to sanctify his rational creation through an extended process of *paideia*,

¹³¹ That the *kosmos* is arranged *providentially*, without anything being left to chance, is an emphasis of Origen's that is repeated throughout the *De Princ.* A universe governed by chance is as repugnant to him as a universe governed by necessity or divine coercion. See esp. the sections in *De Princ.* 2.1.

¹³² I have confined myself to the description of primeval sin offered by Origen in *De Princ.*, but for some discussion about the "cause of the Fall," see Lyman 1993: 61.

¹³³ Lyman 1993: 58: "the whole shape of existence is therefore an engagement between human freedom and the saving will of God."

¹³⁴ Origen typically refers to the pre-cosmic, unfallen rational creature as a *nous*. See *De Princ.* 2.9.6.

¹³⁵ Scott 2012: 75: "God justly assigns each soul its place in the world based on its precosmic exercise of free will, but God benevolently uses the self-inflicted suffering of each soul to facilitate its return to God. Punitive suffering is *always* remedial, never vengeful, in Origen's view."

to eradicate “all the dregs of the vices” in them, that they might be “utterly swept clean of every cloud of wickedness,” and will “no longer sense [or think, or desire] anything else apart from God” (*De Princ.* 2.10.4-6, 3.6.3; *Con. Cels.* 3.49). In this connection, Scott’s point is duly noted that, though God’s providential justice is on clear display in rendering to each rational soul according to its works, without any concern on God’s part for the redemption of sinful actions, there would be much less in the *kosmos* of God’s benevolence to marvel at. It was, for Origen, quite to the contrary: in Scott’s words, “The cosmos [for Origen] functions as a half-way house for the soul and thus serves benevolent providential ends” (2022: 401). Hal Koch’s *Pronoia und Paideusis* is still an exemplary accounting of Origen’s views on God’s educative providence. To speak of God’s educative providence, in the case of Origen, is to say that God’s providence (*pronoia*) has as its aim the continual and *certain* sanctification of the rational beings which live in the world it governs. Each free and rational being has as its *telos* the “return [...] to the original unity [my trans.]” that it had in the beginning, but if such a *telos* is to be reached *freely*, that being will require a sanctification of character – a growth in virtue and a purification from all vice – that only the divine educational apparatus of providence can achieve (Koch 1932: 26-27). The world itself, and the very bodies in which rational beings live and interact with the world, are carefully designed by God to best facilitate the ascent of those rational beings from the state they received as a consequence of their primordial sin, to the blessed state when God will be “all in all.” Origen therefore goes further than the Stoics in affirming God’s eventual success, as the sovereign pedagogue (*via* his Logos), in rooting out the sins of even the most hardened of hearts, and replacing them with virtues, whether in this life or in the next (Koch 1932: 28-31).

Willing, Knowing, and the Effects of Sin

The preceding discussion has, I hope, given the reader a clear view of just how interconnected sin and its effects are with the grand soteriological drama that Origen sets forth in his writings. Both the punitive and educative aspects of God's providence over the *kosmos* – a providence mediated by the Son in his various *epinoiai*, but primarily in his capacity as the cosmic Logos – are in response to the fact of sin, but are also both illustrative of the tension that is seen to emerge when one holds together – as a charitable interpreter must – the gravity of sin's effects on the rational soul and the radically optimistic eschatology which Origen posits. A more precise examination of the psychological and epistemological effects of sin in *De Princ.* is therefore in order.

To briefly review, in *De Princ.* 3.1.1-2 a corollary of humanity's rational endowment is its possession of "free will," or perhaps more innocently, "self-determination" (*to autexousion*). Human beings, as rational creatures, have "reason" which, in Origen's words "judges the images, rejecting some and accepting others, so that the animal may be led in accordance with them" (*De Princ.* 3.1.2). So, the Logos internal to us makes possible the recognition of a given impression's moral value, and it facilitates the choice of making one impression and not another the basis for our action. It is "up to us" – a phrase that had already been time-worn when Origen wrote – to decide how to respond to the impressions with which we are confronted.

But, and as Albrecht Dihle, Michael Frede and others have emphasized, the situation is not so simple (see Dihle 1982: 107-111; Frede 2011: 110-113). The exercise of self-determination, for Origen, never occurs in the context of a morally neutral disposition, originating *ex nihilo*, as it were. Frede is keen to point out that even in Origen's explanation of the first sin-acts which precipitated the pre-cosmic fall of rational beings there is recourse to

antecedent emotional states.¹³⁶ “Satiety” (*satietas*),¹³⁷ “negligence” (*neglegentia*)¹³⁸ and “laziness” (*desidia et laboris taedium*)¹³⁹ are all offered as possible causes of the free decision to turn from perfect goodness (Frede 2011: 122-123).¹⁴⁰

Moreover, even leaving aside Origen’s understanding of the pre-cosmic “primitive sin” and its causes, there seems to be a considerable interest for Origen in sussing-out the effects of an embodied moral agent’s emotional life on its decision-making. In this area Origen is entirely in agreement with Clement in viewing emotions, or *pathē*, as “unnatural, excessive, and runaway impulses which are disobedient to reason“ (Knuuttila 2004: 117), a definition whose Stoic provenance is transparent enough.¹⁴¹ Origen generally prefers, especially in *De Princ.*, the Stoic psychology as a model for describing the source and effects of *pathē*, according to which *pathē* are not sourced from some non-rational part of the moral agent’s soul, as in Platonic psychology,¹⁴² but emerge as so many lapses, absences, or failures of reason, the capacity for which is located within the soul’s *hegemonikon*.¹⁴³ Origen’s psychology is, however, neither simply Stoic nor Platonic – not *Platonic*, because his psychology is not easily read as tripartite

¹³⁶ I think it is correct to refer to the “emotional states” of pre-cosmic beings, provided that one distinguish between the “passions” (*pathē*) which rational beings experience as a result of their fall into various embodied states, and the emotional experiences of the rational soul, whether pre-cosmic or otherwise. See below for the various negative emotional states that Origen assigns to the latter.

¹³⁷ *De Princ.* 1.3.8.

¹³⁸ *De Princ.* 1.4.1.

¹³⁹ *De Princ.* 2.9.2.

¹⁴⁰ See also *De Princ.* 1.6.2. Towards the end of his chapter on Origen’s theory of will, Frede clarifies that these emotional states stem from the inherent changeability or corruptibility of created things, including the rational souls God created. See also Lyman 1993: 61.

¹⁴¹ For Clement, see *Strom.* 2.13. For Origen, see in addition to the text below, *Com. in Matth.* 13.16 and *Con. Cels.* 1.64, 8.51.

¹⁴² Plato, *Republic* 4.436-439. Cf. *Phaedo* 83d and 94d, where the body, rather than the soul, supplies irrational passions.

¹⁴³ Knuuttila 2004: 47 helpfully juxtaposes the Stoic and Platonic-Aristotelian models of the soul: “Plato and Aristotle thought that there were irremovable emotional dispositions of the soul based on natural capacities which make people sensitive to various objects of emotional response. [On the other hand, ...] the Stoics put forward a radically unitary theory of the human soul as entirely rational and corporeal.” From the standpoint of a psychological model where the *entire* soul is rational, irrational movements of soul are necessarily a *privatio* of reason. Posidonius’ account of human emotion (on which see Harriman 2024: 482-488) is the obvious exception.

(not to mention his preference for Stoic terminology),¹⁴⁴ and not *Stoic*, because the soul is not *entirely* rational, but rather possesses both a “higher element,” or an upward attraction to the things of the Spirit, as well as a “lower element,” or a “downward pull” towards the things of the flesh.¹⁴⁵ For Origen, unruly passions have their source in the “lower element” of the soul, and it is the job of the *hegemonikon*, through its possession of *logos*, to resist these fleshly enticements. All embodied, rational beings have this source of passions in their souls as a condition of their embodiment, which means that each rational being’s volitional context includes, to some degree, the presence of affective inducement. Crouzel thus frames the conflict well: “the soul is torn between the spirit and the attraction of the earthly body, the flesh: of this struggle the soul is both the scene and the stake, and it is the soul, with its free will, that has to decide for one or the other (1989: 92).

Immediately following Origen’s more theoretical exposition of human psychology and self-determination (*De Princ.* 3.1.1-3), Origen provides, as an illustration for the reader of his moral-psychological principles, a concrete example of moral decision-making that is *a propos* of what has been said regarding emotional input, but which also introduces the factor of a moral agent’s level of education in virtue. Quoting Origen at length:

If someone says that that which comes from without is such that it is impossible to resist it, [...] let him turn his attention to his own affections and movements [οὗτος ἐπιστησάτω

¹⁴⁴ Crouzel 1989: 87-92 helpfully clarifies for us the differences between the trichotomies of Origen and Plato: “In defiance of stubborn assertions to the contrary it is not possible to assimilate Origen’s trichotomy to Plato’s: the latter is about the soul alone, the former about the whole man. And the terms are different in each case: in Plato - *nous*, intelligence, *thymos*, anger, *epithymia*, covetousness; in Origen - *pneuma*, the spirit, *psyche*, the soul, *soma*, the body.” Though see Robinson 1995: 119-131, who argues against there having existed a rigid doctrine of a tripartite soul at any point in Plato’s development. It is better, under Robinson’s interpretation, to speak of a plurality of Platonic “models” of the soul designed to suit the author’s varying rhetorical needs.

¹⁴⁵ See *De Princ.* 3.4.3-4. Alviar 2022: 379-380 speaks of a conflict of orientations, i.e., the life of the soul as one of tension between the desires of the flesh or body and the desires of the Spirit; Crouzel 1989: 88-92 opts instead for the language of faculty psychology in speaking of distinct “elements.”

τοῖς ἰδίῳ πάθεσι καὶ κινήμασιν] and see whether the approval [εὐδόκησις] and assent [συγκατάθεσις] and inclination [ρόπή] of the controlling faculty [τοῦ ἡγεμονικοῦ] towards some action is not on account of some specious attractions [τάσδε τὰς πιθανότητας]. To take an example, a woman who has appeared before a man, determined to be chaste and to keep himself from intercourse, and who has incited him to act contrary to his purpose, is not the complete cause of the abandonment of his purpose; for being entirely delighted with the titillation and allure of the pleasure [πάντως γὰρ εὐδοκήσας τῷ γαργαλισμῷ καὶ τῷ λείῳ τῆς ἡδονῆς], neither wishing to resist it nor to strengthen his determination, he commits the licentious act [ἀντιβλέψαι αὐτῷ μὴ βεβουλημένος μηδὲ τὸ κεκριμένον κυρῶσαι, πράττει τὸ ἀκόλαστον]. But someone else, on the other hand, when the same things have happened to him, having received more instruction and disciplined himself [τῶν αὐτῶν συμβεβηκότων τῷ πλείονα μαθήματα ἀνειληφότι καὶ ἡσκηκότι], the titillations and enticements do occur [οἱ μὲν γαργαλισμοὶ καὶ οἱ ἐρεθισμοὶ συμβαίνουσιν], but his reason [ὁ λόγος], as being strengthened to a higher degree and trained by practice and confirmed towards the good by [right] doctrines [...] repels the enticements and weakens the desire [ἄτε ἐπὶ πλεῖον ἰσχυροποιηθεὶς καὶ τραφεὶς τῇ μελέτῃ καὶ βεβαιωθείς τοῖς δόγμασι πρὸς τὸ καλὸν [...], ἀνακρούει τοὺς ἐρεθισμοὺς καὶ ὑπεκλύει τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν]” (*De Princ.* 3.1.4).

I suspect that the “titillations and enticements” which both types of men experience, the chaste and the unchaste, are what Origen calls in another place “pre-passions” (*propatheiai*).¹⁴⁶ The

¹⁴⁶ Frede 2011: 60 and Knuuttila 2004: 123 make the connection between the “titillations” and “enticements” mentioned in the passage quoted above, from *De Princ.* 3.1.4, and Origen’s idea of *propatheia*; though the term itself is absent from this passage, the concept quite clearly underlies all that is said. White 2008: 292 cites the *Tabula of Cebes* 9, where a “titillation” (*gargalimos*) “is understood as a physical effect that enslaves the individual by

concept of *propatheia* is found in the writings of the Roman Stoics¹⁴⁷ and in Philo,¹⁴⁸ though, as Margaret Graver (1999) argues, the concept must have had some currency in earlier Stoic writers owing to its otherwise unexplainable presence in Philo (p. 302-303, 323). Philo’s usage of the term, Graver notes, takes on a “cognitive” sense, in contrast to the more physical sense of “jolt” or the like that one finds in Seneca, Epictetus, and Cicero, so that for Philo it comes to signify something like an intrusive thought (1999: 304).¹⁴⁹ In any event, the *raison d’être* of the term, for the Stoics as for Philo, appears to have been to “explain away apparent exceptions to the posited incompatibility of virtue and emotion” by the interposition of a “theoretical time-lag between impression and assent” (Graver 1999: 304). An “incipient passion,” to use Frede’s preferred translation, is morally neutral, since the affective response has been experienced, but without the assent of the moral agent’s rational faculty (2011: 40, 55). Origen apparently found this concept quite serviceable in a variety of hermeneutical contexts. Where, for instance, Scripture commands anger (Psalm 4:5) or reports that Jesus ostensibly felt the passions of “grief and distress” (Matt. 26:37), Origen felt constrained by his acceptance of the Stoic ideal of *apatheia* to offer up an explanation,¹⁵⁰ and the notion of *propatheia* was found ready at hand (Layton 2000: 265-269).

My central purpose in quoting the above passage was not just to show Origen’s inheritance of the Philonic *propatheia* and his integration of the idea into his psychology, but

stimulating the passions and deluding rational perception, or what would be thought of in modern terms as the enslavement of an addiction.”

¹⁴⁷ See Seneca, *De Ira* 2.1-4 and Epictetus, fr. 9 (Aulus Gellius, *N.A.* 19.1). For discussion of the middle and late Stoic usage and terminology, see Knuuttila 2004: 63-70. Latin terminology for the concept appears to be more diverse, and includes *antepassio*, *primus motus*, and *propassio*. Seneca in *De Ira* 2.2.2 and 2.4.2 speaks of *ictus animi*.

¹⁴⁸ Eg. Philo, *Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesin* 1.79.

¹⁴⁹ For some general discussion of “first movements” in classical Stoicism, see Sellars 2014: 116-117.

¹⁵⁰ See *Con. Cels.* 1.64, 5.57, and 8.51, where clear evidence of Origen’s having read Chrysippus is present. On Origen’s acceptance of *apatheia* as an ideal, see Knuuttila 2004: 121-122.

also, and indeed more importantly, to unfold more of the volitional context that each rational being inhabits, and in this connection one ought not to overlook what enables the chaste man to resist the same *propathēiai* by which the unchaste man was overcome. The chaste man has received “more instruction,” has “disciplined himself,” and his *logos* has, as a result, been strengthened in its capacities, and therefore seeks a better end of its action than that which its temptations would suggest to it. One’s training in virtue, or (what amounts to the same thing) the strengthening of his *logos*, is a crucial part of the volitional context. While not *completely* determinative in a strong intellectualistic sense,¹⁵¹ the strength of an individual’s *logos* does seem, in Origen’s reckoning, to account for much of a moral agent’s success or failure in the arena of human action.¹⁵² These drastic effects of education are further elaborated in *De Princ.* 3.1.5, wherein is evinced Origen’s striking confidence in the power of “formative discourse” (λόγου παιδευτικοῦ) to “take hold of the most intemperate and savage” and, “if they will follow the exhortation” (εἰ τῇ προτροπῇ παρακολουθήσαιεν), to change their moral character for the better.

I have until now focused on the volitional context of rational beings as abstracted from the effects of sin, or at least insofar as one *can* speak, in Origen, of a volition context in rational

¹⁵¹ Limitations of space prevent me from staking a position in the debate about whether Origen’s theory of action is more properly understood either as intellectualistic or voluntaristic. Certainly, voluntary actions emerge from a context which includes the actor’s moral character, education, the strength of his passions etc., but it is unclear as to whether the “possibility to choose otherwise” is always retained, or whether the strength of one’s *logos*, or, what amounts to the same thing, one’s possession of virtue, will eventually grow so strong that vicious actions become impossible. For some discussion sympathetic to a more voluntarist reading, see Koch 1932: 281-291 and Benjamins 1994: 92-127. For readings which challenge the view that free-will in Origen is indeterminate with respect to knowledge, character etc., see Bobzien 1998, Boys-Stones 2007: 489-499 and, of course, Frede 2011: 102-124.

¹⁵² In this respect, I find agreeable the comments of Holliday 2009: 16-23, who writes that, in Origen’s conception, “men who have fallen so far are on a continuous progress [sic] towards wickedness, being possessed by the desire for wickedness, which is an inability to learn and use reason.” Their “natures” (*phuseis*) do not *determine* their actions, for Origen’s argumentative burden throughout *De Princ.* 3.1 is quite evidently to refute the nature-determinism, but it is quite right to say that “natures can become disposed towards good or evil, depending upon the choices one makes,” or, said another way, that “habit [i.e. “second nature,” produced by repeated voluntary action] may influence this choice, but it does not determine it.”

beings untouched by sin. An individual's choices emerge from a context of previously existing moral knowledge and desires, but when they occur – and this is absolutely crucial to the problem I want to set up – *they shape the context from which future decisions emerge*.¹⁵³ Actual sin is not in Origen's thought simply choosing wrongly or immorally. Sin-acts are not discrete events, sealed off from an individual's future self. Rather, sin involves and shapes a rational being's entire life-trajectory, so that, as Alviar (2022) has written, “the exertion of free will over time [...] produces an increasing stability (*stasis*) or fixation of the rational being in good (or Christ) or evil” (p. 381). A certain “crystallization” occurs with respect to the rational soul's virtues or vices, brought on by continued decision-making directed either towards or away from God. Vice becomes increasingly *unnatural* for a life defined increasingly by virtue, and vice versa.¹⁵⁴

Origen hints cautiously, in *De Princ.* 1.6.3, at the possibility of “inveterate wickedness” (*inveterata malitia*) changing, through habitual sin (*ex consuetudine*), into “a kind of nature” (*in naturam quandam*), but that Origen in fact believed this is confirmed throughout his writings.¹⁵⁵

Origen's exegetical treatment of Pharaoh's “hardness of heart” in *De Princ.* 3.1 provides a clear illustration of the “hardening” effects of actual sin upon the noetic faculties.¹⁵⁶ The story

¹⁵³ Frede 2011: 80-81 points out, and quite usefully for my purposes in this chapter, that the Stoics knew *nothing* of a will – though free – without antecedent causes or explanations. The explanation for good and free action “lies in the fact that the agent understands why it would be a good thing to act in this way in this situation and [that] he is utterly attached to the good.” In other words, the cause of a moral agent's good action is the moral agent's knowledge and character. Of course, Origen differs from the Stoics in his insistence that even habituated sinners are not *utterly* enslaved to their sin but can choose what is good in spite of themselves, but it remains to be seen just *how* a sinner can do this, when moral character in Origen is so determinative of an individual's choices.

¹⁵⁴ See the fine discussion Holliday 2009: 5-23. Holliday distinguishes between the mere capacity of a rational creature to will, or to choose, a decision (*to autexousion*), a specific act or movement of the will towards something (*to thelein*; see *De Princ.* 3.1.20), and the “desire” (*epithumia*), either for good or for evil, which passively exists in the soul. Repeatedly choosing morally good or bad actions will, over time, shape the desires of the actor. Holliday considers the case of Satan in Origen's writings, and suggests that while Satan retains his *ability* to choose what is good, his *desires* have been so warped by sin that he is functionally unable to choose goodness. In this way, Satan's condition is like that of Christ's, since his soul, too, has not left behind its free-will but has been habituated unto the Good.

¹⁵⁵ Behr (2017: 117n68) cites in this connection Origen, *Com. Jo.* 20.174 and *Hom. Jer.* 18.1.

¹⁵⁶ On Origen's understanding that “the heart,” in biblical usage, indicates the soul's noetic faculties, see *Com. Rom.* 2.9, *De Princ.* 1.1.9, and *Con. Cels.* 6.69.

appears to have troubled interpreters in Origen's time, "for," writes Origen, motivating the problem for his readers, "if he [i.e. Pharaoh] is hardened by God, and through being hardened sins, he is not in himself the cause of sin; and if so, neither does Pharaoh possess self-determination" (*De Princ.* 3.1.7).¹⁵⁷ To wit, making God the direct cause of Pharaoh's hardness of heart undermines the apostolic doctrine¹⁵⁸ of human free will and makes God the author of sin; in his handling of Pharaoh's "hardening," Origen is careful to set out from the beginning the overriding theological presupposition of God's just nature. However one might read this text, supposing we believe that "the Scriptures are true and that God is just [the interpreter] must necessarily, if he is honest, endeavour to show how God, in using such expressions, may be clearly understood to be just" (*De Princ.* 3.1.9-10). Origen appears to assume that he and his interlocutors¹⁵⁹ share at least this common ground, quipping that, should one "stand, denouncing with uncovered head that the Creator is inclined towards evil, we should need other arguments for him (*De Princ.* 3.1.9).

Origen's first exegetical solution appeals to the parable in Hebrews 6:7-8, where "the wonders done by God are, as it were, the rain, while the differing human wills are, as it were, the cultivated and the neglected earth, both being, as earth, of one nature (*De Princ.* 3.1.10). The upshot of this metaphor is that God can be said to harden Pharaoh's heart whilst remaining just,

¹⁵⁷ There do not appear to be any explicit references to the passages Origen has in mind (Exodus 4:21, 7:3) in Greek literature prior to *De Princ.* Later, (Pseudo-) Athanasius takes up the issue in his *Syntagma ad Quendum Politicum* (28.1401.17), also in connection with the concept of human self-determination. The text of Ezekiel 11:19-20 was evidently set alongside this depiction of Pharaoh in Exodus, since it too seemed to make God, and not the *autexousion*, as the common possession of all rational creatures, the source of habituated moral error and repentance therefrom.

¹⁵⁸ See *De Princ.* Pr. 5.

¹⁵⁹ Origen's description of the views at which he takes aim are found, among other places, in *De Princ.* 3.1.8: "Some of the heterodox use these passages, practically also destroying self-determination themselves by introducing natures which are lost, incapable of being saved, and other natures which are saved, unable to be lost – they say that Pharaoh, being of a lost nature, is on this account hardened by God, who has mercy upon the spiritual but hardens the earthy."

since the “underlying element of evil” (τὸ τῆς κακίας ὑποκείμενον) and *not* God’s direct agency is primarily responsible for the moral imperfection of “hardening”; said another way, God’s sovereign activity *occasions* Pharaoh’s hardening without causing it, and thus constitutes a necessary condition for the hardening, but not a sufficient one (*De Princ.* 3.1.10; Jacobsen 2006: 70).

Origen then launches into a consideration of apparent God-ordained hardenings as expressed in the prophetic literature. Isaiah 63:17-18 and Jeremiah 20:7 are both referenced as passages which, when wrongly understood, might lend credence to the view of God that Origen has been at pains to argue against. When the prophetic voice cries out in dismay, despairing of the way in which God seems to have hardened Israel by withholding punishment and consequent repentance, Origen suggests that such a delay is actually beneficial to the sinner:

He abandons most people not punishing them, in order that, from the things within our power, the character of each may be tested and the better ones may become manifest from the trial applied, while the others, not escaping notice – not from God (for ‘he knows all things before they come to be’), but from the rational beings and from themselves – may later come upon the way of healing, for they would not have known the benefit if they had not condemned themselves (*De Princ.* 3.1.12).¹⁶⁰

God, then, has morally permissible reasons for delaying the softening of a heart, or for allowing a heart to grow harder over time; indeed, such is “not without reason, but because, with regard to the immortality of the soul and the limitless age, it will be for their advantage that they not be too

¹⁶⁰ The meaning of the parenthesis in this quotation is tantalizingly obscure. It is clear that God’s foreknowledge is in view, but the question of *what* exactly “escapes the notice of” *ta logika* (a category which includes but is not, obviously, restricted to humankind) is not easily settled.

quickly assisted to salvation, but be slowly led to it after experiencing many evils,” much like how a physician may choose to heal a patient slowly – even “retain[ing] the patient in inflammation and sickness” – all to the purpose of effecting a more stable condition of health in the patient (*De Princ.* 3.1.13)

Eventually Origen finds occasion to use the parable of the sower (Mk. 4:3-10). The rock upon which seeds fall, sprout, but quickly wither is identified with a human soul (*De Princ.* 3.1.14). This soul, says Origen, is “made stone through its evil; for no one has a stony heart created by God, but it becomes such from wickedness” (*De Princ.* 3.1.14). The advanced “stoniness” of Pharaoh's heart, engendered by volitional sins, makes repentance and volitional righteousness more difficult,¹⁶¹ and though Origen leaves this detail out of his application of the parable to Pharaoh, it is plausible to see the failure of the seeds (of the Logos) to root as an effect of Pharaoh's own sin upon his soul: Pharaoh's moral character gradually worsens with each sin, which means, in turns, a smaller pool of moral resources from which to draw when the next occasion to sin or repent comes along.¹⁶² With each sin Pharaoh's heart becomes harder, which in turn means a more difficult environment for the seeds of the Logos to take root in. Frede (2011) helpfully frames this problem in cognitive terms:

[Assent to a false impression] immediately has the consequence of blurring one's view of the truth, and hence one's ability to see the Good, however minute the blur might be.

Once error has crept in, it is more difficult not to make further mistakes. And as the mistakes pile up, one's view of the truth gets seriously distorted, one's understanding of

¹⁶¹ See also Origen's *Homilies on the Psalms* 37.2.4.

¹⁶² See *Com. Rom.*, 5.5.3-4, where Origen distinguishes between “the sinner,” whose sinning has become habituated, and those who simply sin without thereby habituating themselves to that sin. See also *Homilies on Isaiah* 4.3, and esp. *Con. Cels.* 3.69.

the Good seriously tainted, and as a result the Good seems less and less attractive.

Metaphorically speaking, instead of rising upwards, one sinks downwards (p. 110).

Each sin has the effect of undoing, little by little, the instruction¹⁶³ that he has received at the hands of the *logos*, leaving his ability to resist sinfully-oriented *propatheiai* in a weaker and weaker state (Holliday 2009: 20). To be sure, and as the passage from *De Princ.* 3.1.13 indicates, Origen's eschatology affords him the ability to push Pharaoh's sanctification forward, beyond his death and into the future, a sanctification the future consummation of which, Origen promises, is certain. But whatever explanatory power this move has for Origen, the theological and psychological mechanisms which would enable and accompany such dramatic repentance remain unclear.

This conundrum yielded by Origen's optimistic soteriology and pessimistic hamartiology has been given a unique articulation by Kathleen Gibbons, who writes:

For all his use of the Stoics, unlike them he understands autonomy to require that every human being have available to him or her the motivation to revise radically his or her character, whatever its current state.[...]. Yet, this commitment raises the question about what motivates a person of vicious character, even in worst-case scenarios, to make moral progress (2017: 674).

In other words, a "superlatively vicious person" has apparently exhausted their motivational resources for moral improvement, and for the Stoic this would seem to entail the utter

¹⁶³ Recall from *De Princ.* 3.1.4 the *mathēmata* and the *ascēsis* with which the subjective Logos is said to resist the "titillations and enticements" of the flesh. This instruction, it is important to note, affects both one's desire and understanding (or cognition), since both are functions of the subjective Logos.

enslavement of the vicious person to their passions and the near impossibility of freeing his or herself from them.¹⁶⁴ Origen, however, wants to insist that rational beings *always* retain some vestige of rationality – and with rationality freedom – even after having become habituated to sin,¹⁶⁵ and more than this that each rational being *will*, whether in the present age or in a future one, freely return to its “bridegroom” (Daniélou 1955: 285).

A *start* at a possible answer to this conundrum is already supplied by Origen in his free will treatise. Origen has occasion, again in his discussion of Pharaoh’s hardening, to mention the “innumerable [...] movements and purposes and inclinations and impulses” of rational beings, the administration of which is overseen by “most excellent administrator” (οἰκονόμος ἄριστος) (*De Princ.* 3.1.14). Pharaoh’s hardening was not enacted by God directly, but was brought on by Pharaoh’s own wickedness, which is to say, he failed to make proper use of his in-dwelling *logos* in sifting the moral value of in-coming representations, and instead gave assent to the representations whose impulses lead to evil acts. Pharaoh’s possession of *logos* ensures that his actions are uncoerced, but the characterization of God as an *oikonomos* of *hormai* means that while the internal states of affairs (i.e. the beliefs, desires, the *will*) of an individual are situated firmly within the realm of his or her own freedom,¹⁶⁶ the external states of affairs which illicit psychological impulses are (pre-) determined by God on the basis of his foreknowledge (see *De Princ.* 3.1.17). God, so the argument goes, administers through his cosmic Logos, like a wise physician, the “medicine” of external circumstances to his patients in just the way they need it.

¹⁶⁴ See, on the idea of an enslaved will in Stoicism, Frede 2011: 66-77. By “motivational resources,” Gibbons appears to mean something like the “desire” or “will” to pursue some action or another.

¹⁶⁵ Gibbons 2017: 690 correctly, in my view, situates Origen’s view between an indeterminist account of will, in which “a person’s present motivations are *indeterminate* causes,” and an Augustinian view, in which “God, rather than the human agent, is the absolute cause of moral revision.”

¹⁶⁶ They, in other words, fall under the category of things that are “up to us.” See *De Princ.* 3.1.1. See also the discussion in Kathleen Gibbons 2017: 675-681.

He breaks through the morass of defilement and wickedness that has accumulated through sin, but he does so from *the outside*, since this is the only way for God to enact his providence without violating creaturely free will (leaving things that are “up to us” *up to us*). In Gibbons’ words, God “acts by bringing about the appropriate situations necessary for individual human beings to condemn their present characters [i.e. their hardened hearts],” and, though “[he] does not compel the will, [he] brings about the circumstances such that an individual, given the character that he or she has, will be subject to the motivations that necessitate the will’s revision” (Gibbons 2017: 675).

There are good reasons to think that this response is insufficient on its own, in spite of its being readily on offer throughout Origen’s writings. In my discussion of *De Princ.* 3.1.4-5 given above, I noted that Origen’s comparison between the two men, one successful in staving-off temptation and the other unsuccessful, illustrates the importance of education (a *logos paideutikos*) in forming an individual’s moral character. The (re)formation of virtuous desire in the previously uneducated man provides him with the motivational resources he needs to resist temptation, to choose virtue and not vice. What distinguishes the two cases is not a knowledge of what is right and wrong, since the temptation is clearly experienced *as a temptation* by both types of men, but rather the quality of their moral character, which is to say the strength of their desire for virtue.¹⁶⁷ When this character wanes, an individual’s motivational resources wane, which means, in turn, an increasing inability to be instructed unto virtue.

¹⁶⁷ In *Con. Cels.* 4.24 Origen says of the “rational natures” superior to men, i.e. “the angels of God,” that they are superior for the reason that “the rational element in them [...] has been perfected and endowed with every virtue” (τὸ ἐν αὐτοῖς λογικὸν τετελείωται, καὶ κατὰ πᾶσαν ἀρετὴν πεποιῶται). What defines the moral character of a rational being is the strength of the “rational element” within it. This implies that the weaker the rational element, the less virtue the rational being possesses.

If there were, in Origen's anthropology, discrete parts to the human soul, there would exist the theoretical possibility that certain parts remain unscathed by sin, but, owing to the total integration of the soul's faculties (at least, the essential faculties of reason and will) within a single *logos*,¹⁶⁸ as previous chapters have made clear, a sequestering of sin to, say, the will or to the faculty of reasoning, is a theoretical impossibility.¹⁶⁹ J. José Alviar (2022) writes in this connection that

Origen does not see free will as a neutral faculty or capacity. It is a creational gift that contains a profound meaning, a teleology. The soul indeed moves itself, but its freedom is for choosing the good [...]. If it chooses contrariwise it becomes enslaved - to sin, to the Devil, to irrational passions. If it follows the leading of Christ it becomes truly free (p. 376).

The will is a function of the rational faculty, which is itself a subjective appropriation of the divine Logos, from which it derives its teleological bent.¹⁷⁰

Another concern of Gibbons related to that given above is the question of how a “superlatively vicious” person might come to recognize and accurately diagnose their own moral deformation (2017: 675, 680-681). In *De Princ.* 3.1.12, Origen seems to make the self-awareness of one's moral character a prerequisite to repentance, and indeed this is rather intuitive: one

¹⁶⁸ *De Princ.* 3.1.3: “The rational animal, however, [...] also has reason” (Τὸ μέντοι λογικὸν ζῶον καὶ λόγον ἔχει). Origen occasionally speaks as if there are “parts” to the soul (eg. an appetitive part in *Selecta in Genesim* 125.4 and *Selecta in Psalmos* 54.730, cited in Gibbons 2017: 681-682), but the remarks of Crouzel 1989: 88-89 and Alviar 2022: 379 helpfully clarify that the appetitive part is not actually a part of the *soul* in Origen's thinking, but is rather a contribution to human life which the body makes.

¹⁶⁹ Yet Origen denies that rational creatures can descend into incorrigible depravity (*Con. Cels.* 2.11, 4.25). He even assures his readers in *Con. Cels.* 3.69, in response to a claim of Celsus that “it is very difficult to change a man's nature completely,” that the moral reformation of a depraved person whose character has been corrupted by “upbringing and by perversion and by environment” is a rather trivial matter for the “divine Logos.”

¹⁷⁰ On the teleology of the Logos, see, in addition to earlier chapters of this thesis, Hengstermann 2022: 342-343.

needs to know where he is before he can decide upon how to get to where he needs to go.

Likewise, in *De Princ.* 3.1.15 Origen offers an explanation of the distinction between “stony” and “fleshly” hearts that comes off the back of the discussion of Pharaoh’s hardened heart, and there Origen is transparent that a stony-hearted person is actually capable of “perceiving his own flaws, though he be without learning or education” (...ἐν ἀμαθία καὶ ἀπαιδευσία τυγχάνων, αἰσθανόμενος τῶν ἰδίων κακῶν...), a perception achieved either through the “exhortation of a teacher” (ἐκ προτροπῆς τοῦ διδάσκοντος) or “in some manner by himself” (ἄλλως, ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ).¹⁷¹

A realization of one’s own moral corruption then, a genuine *mea culpa*, seems logically connected to the idea of repentance and consequent moral progress, but Origen’s often stark accounts of sin’s noetic effects in rational creatures seem to undermine the possibility of the self-knowledge required for repentance. In commenting on John 8:51, Origen compares the noetic state of one who has failed to keep the words of Christ – and has thus “beheld death” – to one whose sight has deadened from gazing too long into darkness (*Com. Jn.* 20.376). Sin, i.e. failing to keep the words of Christ, leaves one’s “sight” blinded, “so that”, as Origen says, “the one who opens the eyes of the blind is needed” (*Com. Jn.* 20.376). Again, this time in the context of a homily on Genesis 47:20-21, he writes of the “bondage of the Egyptians,” that it is “nothing other than to become submissive to carnal vices and to be subjected to demons” (*Hom. Gen.* 16.2) This slavery is equivalent to the condition of habituated sin which in *De Princ.* 3.1 is called “hardness of heart,” and is not caused by external “necessity,” but by a “sluggishness of the soul and the lust and pleasure of the body” (*Hom. Gen.* 16.2; see also *Hom. Ex.* 12.4). This kind of noetic blindness or darkening would seem to render all external means of *paideia*, all the sovereign arrangement of the world and of the moral agent’s circumstances that God uses,

¹⁷¹ Gibbons 2017: 685 thus concludes: “For Origen, remedial punishment is only efficacious when it is accompanied by the right self-interpretative activity.” See also (cited by Gibbons) *De oratione* 29.17.

ultimately effete, since external *paideia* presupposes an ability to *interpret* the self and the world of circumstances in which it is providentially set, the very thing which sin-wrought blindness would seem to impair.

Chapter 5: Logos, Light, and Healing a Hardened Heart

Introduction

This last chapter's central purpose is to offer a solution to the problem of noetic sanctification outlined above. Fortunately, a significant portion of the spadework for this section has already been done in the previous chapters. This spadework includes, in the first chapter, my tracing of the historical development of the Logos doctrine in the Stoics, Middle Platonists, and finally in the biblical Platonists of Alexandria, all of which together formed Origen's philosophical and theological network of influences. The second and third chapters demonstrate some of the extent to which the pre-Origenian *Logoslehren* impacted Origen's own theology of the Logos, and one of the central threads of influence – a thread upon which this chapter will tug – is the notion that the Logos operates paraenetically, and therefore non-neutrally, or that it exerts a kind of extra-volitional force upon the decision-making faculty *irrespective* of the character of the moral agent. Connected to this notion was, of course, the conceptual bifurcation of the Logos into its subjective and cosmic aspects or instantiations, the former providing for its possessor the capacities of reason and decision-making, the latter providing the metaphysical structure of the cosmos. The Logos, in its two instantiations, is a metaphysical unity, which means that the

teleological movement effected on the cosmic level has a correlative movement in the domain of the subjective; both movements are entirely consistent and complementary, one to another. In my third chapter, I made an exegetical case, from the text of *De Princ.* 3.1, for the existence of an uninterpreted, pre-volitional source of exhortation, inducement, or paraenesis towards virtue; this source of exhortation, it was shown, is best understood as the inwardly operating, subjective Logos embedded within the rational faculty of each rational creature. What follows, then, is an attempt to apply the material of the first three chapters to the problem articulated in the fourth chapter, and in so doing to vindicate the Stoic-like coherence of Origen's theoretical system.

Hard Hearts, Fleshy Hearts, and Slow-Burning Embers

It is prudent to return once again to Origen's consideration of the "hardened heart." Ezekiel 11:19-20 is referenced in *De Princ.* 3.1.15, an appropriate text inasmuch as it deals with the moral transformation of individuals formerly "hardened" in their sinful disobedience (i.e. the transition from "stony hearts" to "fleshy hearts"). Most straightforwardly, the "taking away of stony hearts" is just the "putting away of evil, by which one is hardened," a description which is immediately after nuanced as "the engendering of a 'fleshy heart'" (τὸ ἐγγενέσθαι καρδίαν σαρκίνην) (*De Princ.* 3.1.15). The metaphor invoked to explain Ezek. 11:19-20 is highly suggestive of Origen's esteem for and understanding of *paideia vis à vis* moral transformation.

Quoting Origen at length:

just as someone who happens to be ignorant [ἀμαθία] or uneducated [ἀπαιδευσία], on perceiving his own flaws, whether by an exhortation from a teacher or otherwise from himself, should give himself over to the one who he thinks is able to guide him in learning [παίδευσις] and virtue [ἀρετή], and, on giving himself over, the teacher promises

to take away his ignorance and to implant learning [ἐξελεῖν τὴν ἀπαιδευσίαν καὶ ἐνθήσειν παιδείαν], [...] in the same way, the divine Word [θεῖος λόγος] promises, to those who draw near, to take away the wickedness, which it calls a ‘stony heart’, not from those who are unwilling, but from those who offer themselves to the Physician of the sick (*De Princ.* 3.1.15).

Origen writes that the “divine Word” of God promises to “implant knowledge [ἐμπούσειν ἐπιστήμην] in those who approach,” and to heal inveterate wickedness (a “stony heart”) in those who willingly offer themselves up to the “physician of the sick,” in the same way that the ignorant, upon the realization of their ignorance, ought to submit themselves to a yoke of instruction. These comments recall Origen’s earlier remarks in *De Princ.* 3.1.5, where it is optimistically maintained that “formative discourse” (λόγος παιδευτικός) can “take hold” of “the most intemperate and savage, *if they will follow the exhortation [emphasis added].*”

Characteristically, Origen lays great stress on the moral agent’s intent to change being a necessary ingredient to their moral transformation, but as has been shown in the previous chapter, the motivational resources required for the formulation of the requisite intent are lacking in individuals hardened by sin. Moreover, the formulation of an intent to change presupposes, on the part of the moral agent, an accurate interpretation both of his own moral character, as against the moral standard which his possession of *logos* affords him, and of his surrounding environment and circumstances as being providentially ordained by God so as to effect his growth in virtue.¹⁷²

¹⁷² This last interpretive presupposition is not as clearly conveyed in the above passage from *De Princ.* 3.1.15, but Origen is quite clear about it elsewhere (*De Princ.* 3.1.12, 3.2.3; *Philocalia* 27.5-8). see Gibbons 2017: 687: “For Origen [...] a certain sort of self-perception is necessary for remedial punishment to have any benefit. For remedial punishment to be efficacious, it must be interpreted by the person who experiences it as punishment, either in the

In the above passage, then, Origen appears to take for granted that hardened individuals, with all the darkening of mind and hardening of heart that they suffer from, have an interpretive capacity that remains sufficient to the tasks of knowing the moral value of their actions, of knowing that they are being corrected by the *paideutic* providence of the Logos, and of desiring what is good. What explains the ease with which Origen sets out these premises, I think, is the existence of a tacit assumption which, when explicitly articulated and held in tandem with the others, facilitates a systematic-theoretical harmony that would be impossible without it.¹⁷³

What is this tacit assumption? The assumption is, I suggest, that there exists an *ever-kindling* ember within the in-dwelling Logos, a constitutive component of the human cognitive faculty which, when fanned into flame by *paideia*, burns with an ever-increasing brightness and efficacy. This “ember” supplies “in-house” the motivational resources – the “promptings” (*aphormai*) – with which a rational creature *may* choose what is good and turn from what is evil, though he is free to reject “what is good and befitting” and turn “aside to the opposite”; of course, in turning aside from what good actions the inducements of the Logos dispose him to, he rather absurdly pits his faculty of reason against itself (*De Princ.* 3.1.3). He sits in the lap of his father, the Logos, only to turn around and slap him in the face.¹⁷⁴

moment or at a later time, when the person is ready—its corrective impact lies in the way that it induces human beings to reflect on the orientation of their *proairesis* and judge it as in need of correction.”

¹⁷³ Because Gibbons 2017: 690 finds in Origen no convincing solution to the problem of “bootstrapping,” i.e. that “certain characters [in virtue of the increasing dearth of motivational resources available to them in their decision-making] are simply not capable of being motivated to develop morally,” despite Origen’s frequent insistence to the contrary. Neither the “sovereign grace” that came to characterize Augustine’s approach to the problem of enslavement to sin, nor the “strongly libertarian approach” (see Long and Sedley 1987: 107 (vol. 1)) of the Epicureans, which posited the atomic “swerve” as a source of indeterminacy, would have been acceptable to Origen. The former, in Origen’s mind, would have threatened the doctrine of human free will (*De Princ.* 3.1 *passim*), and the latter could not have coexisted alongside the more overtly moral-intellectualistic descriptions of his theory of action and would, in effect, have freed the will from antecedent causes only to subordinate it to the undignifying reelings of chance. There is, too, Origen’s generally inhospitable attitude to Epicureanism’s other doctrinal distinctives which one finds on full display in *Con. Cels.* (eg. 1.24, 3.80, 5.61; see Edwards 2022: 281-282).

¹⁷⁴ The image is from Van Til 1964: 147-148, though his application of it is somewhat different.

An important aspect of this source of motivation is its location. It was argued in chapter four that any supposed source of motivation outside an individual's faculty of reason would, given the noetic effects of sin, be prone to misinterpretation, thereby rendering it effete as regards its *paraenetic* ability. A related concern raised by Gibbons was the need for some preexisting moral infrastructure – scaffolding – for the moral agent's volitional context, without which virtuous action would seem unexplainable in a person whose heart has been hardened with sin (Gibbons 2017: 689). Each of these problems is redressed by the presence of an innate *logos* that sources for itself a desire for virtue in place of vice: the constant simmering of the subjective *logos*, even in periods of extreme moral decay, still yields *some* motivational basis for good action, and since the *aphormai* are internal to the very faculty which interprets, there is not the same risk of misinterpretation as there is in the case of external sources of moral exhortation. Said another way, the effect that *aphormai* have in shaping the volitional context of a rational creature is *independent* of that creature's interpretive apparatus and its health because of its priority, logically speaking, to it; the *aphormai* come from behind the "spectacles" and do not, therefore, *directly* depend upon the clarity of the spectacles for their successful function.

The Logos as Light in the Darkness

Some much-needed clarity is gained about just how Origen envisions moral transformation taking place in "hardened" or "darkened" individuals when one reads the morally- and epistemologically-themed discussions of darkness and light with this understanding of the non-neutral Logos in mind. One of Origen's first Christological discussions in *De Princ.* involving the light metaphysics of the Johannine literature is in 1.2.7, where "God is light" (1 Jn. 1:5) and the Son is the "splendour of this light" (Heb. 1:3). The Son *qua* the divine "splendour"

“illuminates the entire creation” (*inluminans universam creaturam*) by “interpreting and making known to the rational creation the secrets of wisdom and the mysteries of knowledge,” so that the creation is said to know the light (i.e., God the Father) by its perception of the divine light’s “splendour” in the Son (*De Princ.* 1.2.7). Not all of the divine light is mediated to each creature at once, or in the same degree; rather, the Son accommodates the amount of light he mediates to the condition (noetic and moral) of his creatures and their specific needs, “presenting itself softly and gently to the frail and weak eyes of mortals, and gradually training [...] and accustoming them to bear the brightness of the light, when it has removed from them everything that clouds and impedes vision” (*De Princ.* 1.2.7). Then again in *Com. Jn.* 1.158-180 Origen explores the Son’s *epinoia* as light, this time making the comparison between the Sun, which is “the light of the world perceived by the senses,” and the “Savior,” who is the “light of the spiritual world [τοῦ νοητοῦ κόσμου ἐστὶ φῶς] because he shines on those who are rational and intellectual [ἐλλάμπων τοῖς λογικοῖς καὶ ἡγεμονικοῖς], that their mind may see its proper visions” (*Com. Jn.* 1.160-161).

The two passages above both exemplify Origen’s symbolic conception of light as a “grace of knowledge”¹⁷⁵ which pushes back the darkness of sin and ignorance to reveal the true, “noetic” reality hidden in the Logos.¹⁷⁶ Implicit in both of them is a view of light common to Parmenides, Plato, and many of the Middle Platonists of the 2nd and 3rd centuries, according to which perception occurs when light emitted from the eye meets both with the light reflected off the object of perception and with the light of the sun that illuminates the air (Hauck 2006:

¹⁷⁵ See Crouzel 1989: 126.

¹⁷⁶ See the general assessment of Berchman 2022: 27: “The theological metaphor of illumination is generally employed by Origen to characterize self-knowledge, subjectivity, and subjective mental states. Reality is known and expressed in and through illuminative mental states which directly grasp the structure of intellect-being – *Logos*.” On the equivalency of immorality and ignorance as “darkness,” see Origen’s comments on 1 Jn. 1:6 and 2:9, 11 in *Com. Jn.* 2.158-170.

562-563). The latter passage from Origen's *Com. Jn.* compares the illuminating powers of the Son with the rays of the Sun, which invites us, if one grants the above theory of vision as a background assumption, to identify the intellectual analogs of each of the three components of physical sight (Hauck 2006: 560-563). Many of the antecedent discussions of divine light *vis à vis* knowledge, especially those in Plato,¹⁷⁷ would have it that the three sources of light (i.e. from the subject, object, and sun) correspond to the knowing subject's mind, the object of knowledge, and the "first principle" of reality that serves as the precondition of knowledge.¹⁷⁸ In Origen's case, both the object and first principle of knowledge are pretty clearly to be identified with the Son in his various *epinoiai*, leaving for us the subjective source of intellectual light.¹⁷⁹ The passages above already indicate that the mind has a kind of intellectual sense of sight by which it "sees" the "spiritual world," or the "rational creation" internal to the Logos, but Origen is actually more precise about this in his comments on Matthew 6:22-23 = Luke 11:34-36, where the "intellect" (*nous*), or, in the terminology of *De Princ.* 3.1, the "governing part" (*hēgemonikon*) is the lamp that enlightens the soul (*psūchē*). Origen writes: "[the mind's] rays can be compared to a lamp with a gleaming flash; the lamp illumines, *but it does not dispel the darkness*. For, illumination from the mind is like a gleaming flash, and the light of the body is like a lamp with gleaming rays [emphasis added]" (*Fr. Luc.* 79; cited in Hauck 2006: 560-562). What Origen appears to be saying here is remarkably consistent with what I have argued his tacit assumptions are regarding the rational faculty's automatic production of "stirrings" toward virtue: there is an intellectual part of the soul which, by its "gleaming flashes," can illumine the soul, darkened though it is by fleshly passions and appetites (Hauck 2006: 568-573).

¹⁷⁷ The most important text, in this respect, is undoubtedly *Republic* 508-509.

¹⁷⁸ For Plato in *Republic* 508d-e, the "Form of the Good" (τὴν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέαν).

¹⁷⁹ See, in this connection *Com. Jn.*, 2.172-174; cf. *Com. Rom.* 3.8.5, where the Logos is the place of "treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3), and the soul of Christ is always perfectly irradiated by the Logos.

Origen's recasting of the problem of knowledge into the mold of contemporary extramissive theories of vision highlights the importance of the subjective input ("the eye") being conjoined with the divine input ("the sun") to produce sight. The mind is unable on its own to gain knowledge and "dispel the darkness," though its contribution is clearly a necessary one; it is only when the mind's light is met with the divine, mediatorial light of the Son that growth in knowledge and virtue is possible, so that, by gradual and persistent training the Logos might effect in the moral agent's soul a habituation unto virtue rather than vice (*De Princ.* 1.2.7). More interesting still is the darkening of the mind which God is said to effect in those who obdurately "rage against him" in their sin (*Com. Matt.* 11.11). God repays this impassioned madness, it seems, by removing their ability to see his light for a time; he will at times diminish *his* light with a view towards allowing a madness wrought in sin to take hold of the individual, but only so that they might eventually "become satiated by long exposure to evil, and by being filled with the sin they desire may so perceive the harm they have taken" (*De. Orat.* 29.13; See Scott 2022: 403-404). God never totally withholds his contribution of light, but he sees fit to allow at times, Origen thinks, so great a darkening in the soul that the smoldering embers of the Logos within would by their relative brightness beckon the soul back to communion with the Logos.

Logos, Light, and "Moral Psychagogy"

In a very interesting chapter entitled "Moral Pathology: Passions, Progress, and Protreptic in Clement of Alexandria," L. Michael White explores the manner in which Clement of Alexandria's *Quis Dives Salvetur* draws upon and exhibits the "moralist tradition and its medical assumptions regarding passions and progress" (2008: 284). Clement assumes the role of a "physician of souls" for the rich men in his hearing with the hope that he, through his rhetoric,

might cure them of their underlying issue: inflamed passions (White 2008: 290-291). White observes that the “moralist philosophers” of Late Antiquity – Clement evidently included – operated within a medical *topos* constituted by three “interrelated components”: first, that “passions and vices are diseases of the soul,” that “the philosopher is the doctor of the soul,” and that “reason or philosophical instruction is the medicine or cure” (White 2008: 292). When an individual beset with passions and therefore darkened in their mind’s judgments receives an exhortation to “quietness” (*hēsūchia*) from a skilled philosopher, a doctor of souls, his soul quiets its passions and may, with enough practice, attain to the ideal – for the Stoics as for Clement and Origen – of *apatheia* (White: 2008: 293, 301-303; see also Knuuttila 2004: 113-127).

“Ultimately,” says White, bringing the matter more fully to bear upon my purpose here, “it is the *Logos* that cures the passions of the soul, and thus brings about perfection, incorruption, and salvation” (White 2008: 301.) For Clement and Origen,¹⁸⁰ the *true* doctor of the soul was Christ, who could adapt his persuasive means to the moral and intellectual condition of his hearer. “There are some characteristics in the divine nature of the *Logos*,” Origen reminds us, “which help to cure those who are sick [τὰ θεραπευτικὰ τῶν κακῶς ἐχόντων βοηθήματα]” (*Con. Cels.* 3.61). Christians who are more advanced in their sanctification are called upon to “bind up” with the Word the “wounds” of those who still suffer under the grips of sin, “and [to] pour the medicines of Word upon the soul festering with evils [ἐπιχέη τῆ φλεγμαινούση ἐν κακοῖς ψυχῇ τὰ ἀπὸ τοῦ λόγου φάρμακα]” (*Con. Cels.* 3.61; trans. Chadwick (modified)). Human pedagogues and philosophers may achieve some measure of success in their “patients,” but in the end, the efficacy of philosophy as a medicine for darkened minds is crucially dependent on correctly

¹⁸⁰ On the Son as “physician,” in Origen, see *De Princ.* 3.1.15.

adjusting the dose to the patient’s needs, and only the divine Logos can know with exact precision the needs of each patient.¹⁸¹

Origen’s confidence in the success of the educative providence of the Logos, perfectly coordinated with itself as it operates within and without each rational being, is rooted in the notion that the embers of virtuous desire remain ever-kindling and thus receptive to the Son’s careful administration of his light (*Con. Cels.* 4.25). Confidence indeed is what Origen’s comments in *Con. Cels.* 3.69 evince: in the face of Celsus’ mistaken pessimism about the difficulty of “changing a man’s nature completely” (φύσιν ἀμεῖψαι τελέως παγγάλεπον), Origen maintains that “for the divine Logos to change evil which has become second nature is not only not impossible, but is not even very difficult,” though on the condition that a man admit “that he must trust himself to the supreme God and do every action by reference to His good pleasure. As I have already shown, there is more involved in this admission than Origen’s comments here would suggest, though elsewhere in *Con. Cels.* he is more forthright about the preconditions of repentance:

And yet, whatever is the nature of the rational being, it would not be reasonable to compare it to a worm, since it possesses tendencies towards virtue [ἀφορμὰς ἔχον πρὸς ἀρετήν]. These general inclinations towards virtue prohibit us from comparing with a worm those who potentially possess virtue [τοὺς δυνάμει ἔχοντας τὴν ἀρετήν], and who cannot entirely destroy its seeds [τὰ σπέρματα αὐτῆς πάντα ἀπολέσαι οὐ δυναμένους]. It therefore appears that men, taken as a whole, cannot be mere worms in comparison with

¹⁸¹ White 2008: 303 cites Galen, *De affect. dig.* 10.2-4, a passage which is reminiscent of *De Princ.* 3.1.15: “But if there is anyone who still is enslaved in any measure to the passions yet who is able to gain knowledge of them from the foregoing words, [...] let him appoint for himself someone as mystagogue and paedagogue, who will, as the occasion arises, remind, scold, exhort, and urge him to be better, even as he offers himself in everything as a model of what he both says and exhorts, and shall thus prepare him with reason to be both free and good in soul [trans. White].”

God. For the reason, which originates from the Logos of God [ὁ γὰρ λόγος, τὴν ἀρχὴν ἔχων ἀπὸ τοῦ παρὰ Θεοῦ λόγου], does not allow the rational being to be regarded as entirely alienated from God. [...] If the nature of the reason [ἡ τοῦ λόγου φύσις]¹⁸² does not allow us to accept this, clearly we shall not insult human nature which has been made for virtue [τὴν πρὸς ἀρετὴν κατεσκευασμένην ἀνθρωπίνην φύσιν], even if it sins through ignorance (*Con. Cels.* 4.25).

In what might be the most illuminating passage from *Contra Celsum* on Logos, nature (*phūsis*), and the *aphormai* of human reason, Origen clarifies for his readers that the necessary precondition for repentance in response to external exhortation is some base-line of self-knowledge and desire for change. His theological solution on display here is predicated on a coordinated effort between the subjective and cosmic instantiations of the Logos. Housed within the human rational faculty (“the reason, which originates from the Logos of God”) are undying “seeds of virtue,” “inclinations” (*aphormai*), and the perdurance of these seeds prevents the sin-wrought moral and intellectual degradation which would otherwise, given enough time, create worms of us.

Conclusion

If the argument of this thesis has been successful, then Origen has more to offer the history of philosophy and theology than merely another question mark over the problem of God’s grace and

¹⁸² See chapter three for some discussion of “the nature of reason” in *De Princ.* 3.1.3.

humanity's freedom. It is quite right, as Gibbons concludes, that Origen's "theory of autonomy and motivation rais[es] the kinds of questions about the relationship between grace and free will with which authors like Augustine would later wrestle" (Gibbons 2017: 690). It is more certain to my readers, I hope, than it is to Gibbons that Origen's bequeathal to intellectual history consisted in more than a compelling theological problem to be taken up by worthy heirs.

In the first and second chapters of this thesis, I attempted to selectively chart the course of the Logos-doctrine through Origen's most likely intellectual influences, and to then highlight the presence of specific seeds of influence in Origen's own views as he unfolds them in *De Princ.* This foundation, when set underneath the exegetical work of chapter three, gave added strength to that chapter's conclusions by leading readers of *De Princ.* 3.1 to expect a psychological mechanism that can provide pre-volitional exhortation to the moral agent. Chapter four served the purpose of motivating what I have called the problem of noetic sanctification, according to which three of the primary contentions of Origen's theological system lay in significant tension. These contentions were, first, that sin negatively affects the human rational faculty; second, that the human rational faculty is determinative of decision-making; and third, that *every* rational creature will find salvation, however eventual, by means of their own volitional powers. The last chapter drew together the first three chapters in order to offer up, on Origen's behalf, a solution to the problem of noetic sanctification, and ultimately to make more explicit just how, on a psychological level, the harmony of "God's grace and humanity's freedom come [...] to be expressed through [the] Logos' guidance and persuasion of each individual" (Jacobsen 2006: 71).

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