

STUDIA PATRISTICA

VOL. LXXXIV

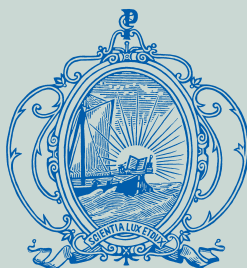
Papers presented at the Seventeenth International Conference
on Patristic Studies held
in Oxford 2015

Edited by
MARKUS VINZENT

Volume 10:
Evagrius between Origen, the Cappadocians, and Neoplatonism

Edited by
ILARIA RAMELLI

With the collaboration of
KEVIN CORRIGAN, GIULIO MASPERO and MONICA TOBON



PEETERS

LEUVEN – PARIS – BRISTOL, CT

2017

STUDIA PATRISTICA

VOL. LXXXIV

STUDIA PATRISTICA

Editor:

Markus Vinzent, King's College London and Max Weber Centre,
University of Erfurt

Board of Directors (2015):

Professor Emerita Gillian Clark, University of Bristol (Chair)

Dame Averil Cameron, University of Oxford

Professor Mark Edwards, University of Oxford

Dr Thomas Graumann, University of Cambridge

Professor Carol Harrison, University of Oxford

Dr Neil McLynn, University of Oxford

Professor Josef Lössl, Cardiff University

Professor Morwenna Ludlow, University of Exeter

Dr Yannis Papadogiannakis, King's College London

Dr David Taylor, University of Oxford

Professor Markus Vinzent, King's College London and Max Weber Centre,
University of Erfurt

Professor Theodore de Bruyn, University of Ottawa (AIEP)

Professor Susanna Elm, University of California, Berkeley (NAPS)

STUDIA PATRISTICA

VOL. LXXXIV

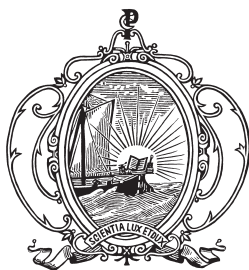
Papers presented at the Seventeenth International Conference
on Patristic Studies held
in Oxford 2015

Edited by
MARKUS VINZENT

Volume 10:
Evagrius between Origen, the Cappadocians, and Neoplatonism

Edited by
ILARIA RAMELLI

With the collaboration of
KEVIN CORRIGAN, GIULIO MASPERO and MONICA TOBON



PEETERS

LEUVEN – PARIS – BRISTOL, CT

2017

© Peeters Publishers — Louvain — Belgium 2017
All rights reserved, including the right to translate or to
reproduce this book or parts thereof in any form.

D/2017/0602/145
ISBN: 978-90-429-3580-8
eISBN: 978-90-429-5639-1

A catalogue record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

Printed in Belgium by Peeters, Leuven

Table of Contents

Ilaria RAMELLI	
Introduction	1
Samuel FERNÁNDEZ	
The Pedagogical Structure of Origen's <i>De principiis</i> and its Christology	15
Martin C. WENZEL	
The Omnipotence of God as a Challenge for Theology in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa.....	23
Miguel BRUGAROLAS	
Theological Remarks on Gregory of Nyssa's Christological Language of 'Mixture'	39
Ilaria VIGORELLI	
Soul's Dance in Clement, Plotinus and Gregory of Nyssa.....	59
Giulio MASPERO	
<i>Isoangelia</i> in Gregory of Nyssa and Origen on the Background of Plotinus	77
Ilaria RAMELLI	
Response to the Workshop, "Theology and Philosophy between Origen and Gregory of Nyssa"	101
Mark J. EDWARDS	
Dunamis and the Christian Trinity in the Fourth Century	105
Kevin CORRIGAN	
Trauma before Trauma: Recognizing, Healing and Transforming the Wounds of Soul-Mind in the Works of Evagrius of Pontus.....	123
Monica TOBON	
The Place of God: Stability and Apophasis in Evagrius	137
Theo KOBUSCH	
Practical Knowledge in 'Christian Philosophy': A New Way to God .	157
Ilaria RAMELLI	
Gregory Nyssen's and Evagrius' Biographical and Theological Relations: Origen's Heritage and Neoplatonism.....	165

Abbreviations

AA.SS	see ASS.
AAWG.PH	Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen Philologisch-historische Klasse, Göttingen.
AB	Analecta Bollandiana, Brussels.
AC	Antike und Christentum, ed. F.J. Dölger, Münster.
ACL	Antiquité classique, Louvain.
ACO	Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum, ed. E. Schwartz, Berlin.
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers, ed. J. Quasten and J.C. Plumpe, Westminster (Md.)/London.
AHDLMA	Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge, Paris.
AJAH	American Journal of Ancient History, Cambridge, Mass.
AJP	American Journal of Philology, Baltimore.
AKK	Archiv für katholisches Kirchenrecht, Mainz.
AKPAW	Abhandlungen der königlichen Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin.
ALMA	Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi (Bulletin du Cange), Paris/Brussels.
ALW	Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft, Regensburg.
AnalBoll	Analecta Bollandiana, Brussels.
ANCL	Ante-Nicene Christian Library, Edinburgh.
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers, Buffalo/New York.
ANRW	Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt, ed H. Temporini <i>et al.</i> , Berlin.
AnSt	Anatolian Studies, London.
AnThA	Année théologique augustinienne, Paris.
APOT	Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English, ed. R.E. Charles, Oxford.
AR	Archivum Romanicum, Florence.
ARW	Archiv für Religionswissenschaft, Berlin/Leipzig.
ASS	Acta Sanctorum, ed. the Bollandists, Brussels.
AThANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments, Zürich.
Aug	Augustinianum, Rome.
AugSt	Augustinian Studies, Villanova (USA).
AW	Athanasius Werke, ed. H.-G. Opitz <i>et al.</i> , Berlin.
AZ	Archäologische Zeitung, Berlin.
BA	Bibliothèque augustinienne, Paris.
BAC	Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid.
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, New Haven, Conn.
BDAG	A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 3rd edn F.W. Danker, Chicago.
BEHE	Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, Paris.
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium, Louvain.
BGL	Benedictinisches Geistesleben, St. Ottilien.
BHG	Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca, Brussels.
BHL	Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina Antiquae et Mediae Aetatis, Brussels.

BHO	Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalis, Brussels.
BHTh	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie, Tübingen.
BJ	Bursians Jahresbericht über die Fortschritte der klassischen Altertums- wissenschaft, Leipzig.
BJRULM	Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, Manchester.
BKV	Bibliothek der Kirchenväter, ed. F.X. Reithmayr and V. Thalhofer, Kempten.
BKV2	Bibliothek der Kirchenväter, ed. O. Bardenhewer, Th. Schermann, and C. Weyman, Kempten/Munich.
BKV3	Bibliothek der Kirchenväter. Zweite Reihe, ed. O. Bardenhewer, J. Zel- linger, and J. Martin, Munich.
BLE	Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique, Toulouse.
BoJ	Bonner Jahrbücher, Bonn.
BS	Bibliotheca sacra, London.
BSL	Bolletino di studi latini, Naples.
BWAT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten Testament, Leipzig/Stuttgart.
Byz	Byzantion, Leuven.
BZ	Byzantinische Zeitschrift, Leipzig.
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, Berlin.
CAr	Cahiers Archéologique, Paris.
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Washington.
CChr.CM	Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis, Turnhout/Paris.
CChr.SA	Corpus Christianorum, Series Apocryphorum, Turnhout/Paris.
CChr.SG	Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca, Turnhout/Paris.
CChr.SL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, Turnhout/Paris.
CH	Church History, Chicago.
CIL	Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, Berlin.
CP(h)	Classical Philology, Chicago.
CPG	Clavis Patrum Graecorum, ed. M. Geerard, vols. I-VI, Turnhout.
CPL	Clavis Patrum Latinorum (SE 3), ed. E. Dekkers and A. Gaar, Turnhout.
CQ	Classical Quarterly, London/Oxford.
CR	The Classical Review, London/Oxford.
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Louvain. Aeth = Scriptores Aethiopici Ar = Scriptores Arabici Arm = Scriptores Armeniaci Copt = Scriptores Coptici Iber = Scriptores Iberici Syr = Scriptores Syri Subs = Subsidia
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, Vienna.
CSHB	Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae, Bonn.
CTh	Collectanea Theologica, Lvov.
CUF	Collection des Universités de France publiée sous le patronage de l'Asso- ciation Guillaume Budé, Paris.
CW	Catholic World, New York.
DAC	Dictionary of the Apostolic Church, ed. J. Hastings, Edinburgh.

DACL	see DAL
DAL	Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie, ed. F. Cabrol, H. Leclercq, Paris.
DB	Dictionnaire de la Bible, Paris.
DBS	Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément, Paris.
DCB	Dictionary of Christian Biography, Literature, Sects, and Doctrines, ed. W. Smith and H. Wace, 4 vols, London.
DHGE	Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastique, ed. A. Baudrillart, Paris.
Did	Didaskalia, Lisbon.
DOP	Dumbarton Oaks Papers, Cambridge, Mass., subsequently Washington, D.C.
DOS	Dumbarton Oaks Studies, Cambridge, Mass., subsequently Washington, D.C.
DR	Downside Review, Stratton on the Fosse, Bath.
DS	H.J. Denzinger and A. Schönmetzer, ed., Enchiridion Symbolorum, Barcelona/Freiburg i.B./Rome.
DSp	Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, ed. M. Viller, S.J., and others, Paris.
DTC	Dictionnaire de théologie catholique, ed. A. Vacant, E. Mangenot, and E. Amann, Paris.
EA	Études augustinienes, Paris.
ECatt	Enciclopedia Cattolica, Rome.
ECQ	Eastern Churches Quarterly, Ramsgate.
EE	Estudios eclesiasticos, Madrid.
EECh	Encyclopedia of the Early Church, ed. A. Di Berardino, Cambridge.
EKK	Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, Neukirchen.
EH	Enchiridion Fontium Historiae Ecclesiasticae Antiquae, ed. Ueding-Kirch, 6th ed., Barcelona.
EO	Échos d'Orient, Paris.
EtByz	Études Byzantines, Paris.
ETL	Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses, Louvain.
EWNT	Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum NT, ed. H.R. Balz <i>et al.</i> , Stuttgart.
ExpT	The Expository Times, Edinburgh.
FC	The Fathers of the Church, New York.
FGH	Fragmente der griechischen Historiker, Berlin.
FKDG	Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte, Göttingen.
FRL	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments, Göttingen.
FS	Festschrift.
FThSt	Freiburger theologische Studien, Freiburg i.B.
FTS	Frankfurter theologische Studien, Frankfurt a.M.
FZThPh	Freiburger Zeitschrift für Theologie und Philosophie, Freiburg/Switzerland.
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller, Leipzig/Berlin.
GDV	Geschichtsschreiber der deutschen Vorzeit, Stuttgart.
GLNT	Grande Lessico del Nuovo Testamento, Genoa.
GNO	Gregorii Nysseni Opera, Leiden.

GRBS	Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies, Cambridge, Mass.
GWV	Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht, Offenburg.
HbNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament. Tübingen.
HDR	Harvard Dissertations in Religion, Missoula.
HJG	Historisches Jahrbuch der Görresgesellschaft, successively Munich, Cologne and Munich/Freiburg i.B.
HKG	Handbuch der Kirchengeschichte, Tübingen.
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, Tübingen.
HO	Handbuch der Orientalistik, Leiden.
HSCP	Harvard Studies in Classical Philology, Cambridge, Mass.
HTR	Harvard Theological Review, Cambridge, Mass.
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies, Cambridge, Mass.
HZ	Historische Zeitschrift, Munich/Berlin.
ICC	The International Critical Commentary of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, Edinburgh.
ILCV	Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres, ed. E. Diehl, Berlin.
ILS	Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae, ed. H. Dessau, Berlin.
J(b)AC	Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum, Münster.
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature, Philadelphia, Pa., then various places.
JdI	Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Berlin.
JECS	Journal of Early Christian Studies, Baltimore.
JEH	The Journal of Ecclesiastical History, London.
JJS	Journal of Jewish Studies, London.
JLH	Jahrbuch für Liturgik und Hymnologie, Kassel.
JPTh	Jahrbücher für protestantische Theologie, Leipzig/Freiburg i.B.
JQR	Jewish Quarterly Review, Philadelphia.
JRS	Journal of Roman Studies, London.
JSJ	Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period, Leiden.
JSOR	Journal of the Society of Oriental Research, Chicago.
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies, Oxford.
KAV	Kommentar zu den apostolischen Vätern, Göttingen.
KēTh	Kerk en Theologie, 's Gravenhage.
KJ(b)	Kirchliches Jahrbuch für die evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, Gütersloh.
LCL	The Loeb Classical Library, London/Cambridge, Mass.
LNPF	A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, ed. P. Schaff and H. Wace, Buffalo/New York.
L(O)F	Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church, Oxford.
LSJ	H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, new (9th) edn H.S. Jones, Oxford.
LThK	Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche, Freiburg i.B.
MA	Moyen-Âge, Brussels.
MAMA	Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua, London.
Mansi	J.D. Mansi, Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio, Florence, 1759-1798. Reprint and continuation: Paris/Leipzig, 1901-1927.
MBTh	Münsterische Beiträge zur Theologie, Münster.

MCom	Miscelanea Comillas, Comillas/Santander.
MGH	Monumenta germaniae historica. Hanover/Berlin.
ML	Mediaevalia Lovaniensia, Louvain.
MPG	See PG.
MSR	Mélanges de science religieuse, Lille.
MThZ	Münchener theologische Zeitschrift, Munich.
Mus	Le Muséon, Louvain.
NGWG	Nachrichten der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen.
NH(M)S	Nag Hammadi (and Manichaean) Studies, Leiden.
NovTest	Novum Testamentum, Leiden.
NPNF	See LNPF.
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version.
NRTh	Nouvelle Revue Théologique, Tournai/Louvain/Paris.
NTA	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen, Münster.
NT.S	Novum Testamentum Supplements, Leiden.
NTS	New Testament Studies, Cambridge/Washington.
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis, Freiburg, Switz.
OCA	Orientalia Christiana Analecta, Rome.
OCP	Orientalia Christiana Periodica, Rome.
OECS	Oxford Early Christian Studies, Oxford.
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, Louvain.
OLP	Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica, Louvain.
Or	Orientalia. Commentarii editi a Pontificio Instituto Biblico, Rome.
OrChr	Oriens Christianus, Leipzig, then Wiesbaden.
OrSyri	L'Orient Syrien, Paris.
PG	Migne, Patrologia, series graeca.
PGL	A Patristic Greek Lexicon, ed. G.L. Lampe, Oxford.
PL	Migne, Patrologia, series latina.
PLRE	The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire, ed. A.H.M. Jones <i>et al.</i> , Cambridge.
PLS	Migne, Patrologia, series latina. Supplementum ed. A. Hamman.
PO	Patrologia Orientalis, Paris.
PRE	Paulys Realencyklopädie der classischen Alterthumswissenschaft, Stuttgart.
PS	Patrologia Syriaca, Paris.
PTA	Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen, Bonn.
PTHr	Princeton Theological Review, Princeton.
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien, Berlin.
PW	Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft, ed. G. Wissowa, Stuttgart.
QLP	Questions liturgiques et paroissiales, Louvain.
QuLi	Questions liturgiques, Louvain
RAC	Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana, Rome.
RACH	Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum, Stuttgart.
RAM	Revue d'ascétique et de mystique, Paris.
RAug	Recherches Augustiniennes, Paris.
RBen	Revue Bénédictine, Maredsous.
RB(ibl)	Revue biblique, Paris.

RE	Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche, founded by J.J. Herzog, 3e ed. A. Hauck, Leipzig.
REA(ug)	Revue des études Augustiniennes, Paris.
REB	Revue des études byzantines, Paris.
RED	Rerum ecclesiasticarum documenta, Rome.
RÉL	Revue des études latines, Paris.
REG	Revue des études grecques, Paris.
RevSR	Revue des sciences religieuses, Strasbourg.
RevThom	Revue thomiste, Toulouse.
RFIC	Rivista di filologia e d'istruzione classica, Turin.
RGG	Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, ed. Gunkel-Zscharnack, Tübingen
RHE	Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique, Louvain.
RhMus	Rheinisches Museum für Philologie, Bonn.
RHR	Revue de l'histoire des religions, Paris.
RHT	Revue d'Histoire des Textes, Paris.
RMAL	Revue du Moyen-Âge Latin, Paris.
ROC	Revue de l'Orient chrétien, Paris.
RPh	Revue de philologie, Paris.
RQ	Römische Quartalschrift, Freiburg i.B.
RQH	Revue des questions historiques, Paris.
RSLR	Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa, Florence.
RSPT, RSPH	Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques, Paris.
RSR	Recherches de science religieuse, Paris.
RTAM	Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale, Louvain.
RthL	Revue théologique de Louvain, Louvain.
RTM	Rivista di teologia morale, Bologna.
Sal	Salesianum, Roma.
SBA	Schweizerische Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft, Basel.
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien, Stuttgart.
ScEc	Sciences ecclésiastiques, Bruges.
SCh, SC	Sources chrétiennes, Paris.
SD	Studies and Documents, ed. K. Lake and S. Lake. London/Philadelphia.
SE	Sacris Erudiri, Bruges.
SDHI	Studia et documenta historiae et iuris, Roma.
SH	Subsidia Hagiographica, Brussels.
SHA	Scriptores Historiae Augustae.
SJMS	Speculum. Journal of Mediaeval Studies, Cambridge, Mass.
SM	Studien und Mitteilungen zur Geschichte des Benediktinerordens und seiner Zweige, Munich.
SO	Symbolae Osloenses, Oslo.
SP	Studia Patristica, successively Berlin, Kalamazoo, Leuven.
SPM	Stromata Patristica et Mediaevalia, ed. C. Mohrman and J. Quasten, Utrecht.
SQ	Sammlung ausgewählter Quellenschriften zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte, Tübingen.
SQAW	Schriften und Quellen der Alten Welt, Berlin.
SSL	Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, Louvain.

StudMed	Studi Medievali, Turin.
SVigChr	Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, Leiden.
SVF	Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta, ed. J. von Arnim, Leipzig.
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Grand Rapids, Mich.
TE	Teologia espiritual, Valencia.
ThGl	Theologie und Glaube, Paderborn.
ThJ	Theologische Jahrbücher, Leipzig.
ThLZ	Theologische Literaturzeitung, Leipzig.
ThPh	Theologie und Philosophie, Freiburg i.B.
ThQ	Theologische Quartalschrift, Tübingen.
ThR	Theologische Rundschau, Tübingen.
ThWAT	Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament, Stuttgart.
ThWNT	Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, Stuttgart.
ThZ	Theologische Zeitschrift, Basel.
TLG	Thesaurus Linguae Graecae.
TP	Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association, Lancaster, Pa.
TRE	Theologische Realenzyklopädie, Berlin.
TS	Theological Studies, New York and various places; now Washington, D.C.
TThZ	Trierer theologische Zeitschrift, Trier.
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen, Leipzig/Berlin.
USQR	Union Seminary Quarterly Review, New York.
VC	Vigiliae Christianae, Amsterdam.
VetChr	Vetera Christianorum, Bari (Italy).
VT	Vetus Testamentum, Leiden.
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary, Waco.
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, Tübingen.
WZKM	Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, Vienna.
YUP	Yale University Press, New Haven.
ZAC	Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum, Berlin.
ZAM	Zeitschrift für Aszese und Mystik, Innsbruck, then Würzburg.
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, Giessen, then Berlin.
ZDPV	Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins, Leipzig.
ZKG	Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte, Gotha, then Stuttgart.
ZKTh	Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie, Vienna.
ZNW	Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche, Giessen, then Berlin.
ZRG	Zeitschrift für Rechtsgeschichte, Weimar.
ZThK	Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, Tübingen.

Introduction

Ilaria RAMELLI

This fascicle collects the thoroughly revised and expanded versions of the papers, with the relevant response, presented at two interrelated workshops at the 2015 Oxford Patristics Conference, on theology and philosophy between Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, and on theology in Evagrius Ponticus between Origen, the Cappadocians, and Neoplatonism. This volume contributes innovative research into core theological issues in Evagrius and the Cappadocians, also against the backdrop of Origen's thought and contemporary Neoplatonism. A profound continuity emerges between Evagrius' theology and the theology of Origen and the Cappadocians, with particular attention paid to Gregory of Nyssa. The latter's influence on Evagrius' thought still needs to be investigated systematically; a substantial contribution towards this important *desideratum* is hopefully offered in the present volume. Thanks also to the research offered in this volume, Evagrius' theology emerges more and more as part and parcel of Cappadocian theology, within the Origenian line, and thus in relation to Neoplatonism ('pagan' and Christian). In this connection, pointing out the so far overlooked link between Nyssen and Evagrius is crucial.

Already during the 13th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Rome 2015), the organisers were able to see how the strong development of patristic studies in the last few decades is leading to the possibility of new narratives, previously precluded by a historicist and reductionist approach. This effect emerges with particular force in the studies concerning Gregory, which can boast the rare privilege of having available the practically complete edition of his works (GNO, Leiden, 1958-), an encyclopedic Lexicon of the most used terms (*Lexicon Gregorianum* [Leiden, 1999-]), a Dictionary (L.F. Mateo-Seco and G. Maspero, *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa* [Leiden, 2009]), and the Proceedings of the conferences that, from the first one held in 1969 in Chevetogne, are regularly dedicated to different aspects of the thought and writings of Gregory of Nyssa. Thus, immediately after the end of the Colloquium, Giulio Maspero, Miguel Brugarolas, and Ilaria Vigorelli have noted how some elements attract the attention of the observer who looks back to all of the studies presented at the conference; these can be broken down into three main elements:

- 1) The importance of the relationship between the theological thought of Gregory and his philosophical sources;

- 2) The role, which still needs further research, of what Gregory inherits from Origen and in general from the Alexandrian tradition;
- 3) The spiritual dimension underlying these two previous questions.

Evidently we are dealing with elements that are already analysed by research, even in an extensive way, but what seems new is the consideration of these elements in light of a non-reductionist epistemological approach. For example, if for a long time there had been an attempt to identify the philosophical parallelisms present in Gregory's work, considering just their presence in the underlying lexicon or the imaginative resonances, now there is a new demand for delving deeper into how far the bishop of Nyssa modified the instruments at his disposal, as well as how much this influenced the philosophical discussion contemporaneous with him. Thus, this clearly relates to the inheritance that he has received, and therefore to what extent Origen's dialogue with the intellectual world of his time was effective. After all, both the position of Porphyry in the *Contra Christianos*, as well as the request to the emperor to revive the persecutions against the Christians on the part of the Neoplatonic philosophers in Nicomedia in 302/303, indicate the relevance and extremely significant dimension that the confrontation between pagan philosophy and Christian theology must have reached. Along this line, it seems one could place the pagan restoration of Julian, in the fourth century, with the importance assumed by Iamblichus at his court and the growing role of the religious component in Neoplatonism itself. For the sake of such considerations, after the Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa in Rome in 2014 (the Proceedings of which are forthcoming in Brill and, for the section on eschatology and mystical soteriology, in *Studia Patristica*, Peeters), there arose the project of dedicating a workshop to a deeper understanding of the relationship between philosophy and theology in the crucial junction that connects the bishop of Nyssa to Origen. The eminently spiritual dimension and the influence that the Alexandrian exerted on Evagrius have then suggested the fittingness of connecting the workshop to those dedicated to the relationship between Evagrius and the Cappadocians – and especially Gregory of Nyssa – and the choice of *Ilaria Ramelli* as respondent.

The first contribution is by *Samuel Fernández*, who, having just finished a new critical edition of *De principiis*, offers an explanation of the *vexata quaestio* concerning the structure of this work. Fernández brings out well how the artificial division into chapters along with the title had hidden the pedagogical intention of Origen, who writes with the explicit intention of simplifying the access to the Christian mystery for those who knew Greek philosophy. This happens through a first step, in which the Alexandrian carries out a *krisis* in order to dissolve those contrasts that are only apparent, because philosophical understanding does not truly clash with the content of faith, but only with a mistaken understanding of the latter: something very common at the popular

level. Examples of this include those conceptions that link God and the generation of the Son to corporality. At the same time, however, Origen carries out a *krisis* with respect to those elements in which there is manifest a real contrast with philosophical thought, as is the case, for example, with the incarnation of the Logos. In this way, the contribution of Samuel Fernández shows the explicitly dialogical character of the theological work of Alexandrian, who manages to hold up together the pole of faith and that of reason, over and beyond any dialectical conception of their relationship. For this reason, an approach to the thought of Origen that remained marked by such dialectics could not grasp its deepest meaning and its explicit *intentio*.

The relation between Origen and Gregory is analyzed by *Martin Wenzel*, who offers a study on how the two authors address the formidable question of divine omnipotence, in particular with regard to its confrontation with evil. The question is, obviously, common to philosophical research, as can be seen by its treatment in the *De principiis*. Here the possibility that this divine attribute was limited by evil is excluded precisely for philosophical reasons, while at the same time the exercise of divine omnipotence is linked to the Son and, therefore, connected to the Christological dimension. In the *Oratio catechetica* of Gregory, omnipotence is re-semanticised at the relational level, so as to show a step forward with respect to the theological research of the Alexandrian, insofar as theological thought not only starts from philosophical knowledge, but returns to it and modifies it at the ontological level.

Such a movement is also present in the contribution by *Giulio Maspero*, dedicated to the *isoangelia* in Origen and Gregory, against the background of Neoplatonic thought. While for Plotinus the soul must perfect itself by tending toward the One and abandoning any material dimension, for Porphyry the angelic condition would simply indicate the immortal gods. Iamblichus, on the other hand, speaks explicitly of *isoangelia*, recognising an ontological difference between humans and angels. This distinction is not yet so present in Origen, for whom only God is totally free of the corporeal dimension. The *isoangelia* is for him, thus, the condition of original perfection that the soul must recover. We hear in the background the limitations of the metaphysical tools that the Platonic tradition, already starting from Philo, placed at his disposal. But Gregory of Nyssa can distinguish the human creature from the angelic one based on a strong conception of *physis*, which allows him to identify the *isoangelia* with impassibility in the dynamic, and not the static, sense. Perfection is given, in fact, in the continuous tendency towards God, in being directed toward Him in an indefectible way like the angels themselves. Similarly to what emerges from Wenzel's contribution, here in the transition from Origen to Gregory there is an ontological novelty that comes into play, which allows for a relational articulation between perfection and dynamicity.

Thus, Maspero provides a series of illuminating insights into the dialogue between philosophy and theology in pagan thought and especially in the

Fathers. In the case of Origen, the state of *isoangelia* is a disposition (*diathesis*) in which the perfection of all souls consists, a disposition that consists in being turned toward the Father like the angels. Against a Gnostic subdivision of beings into different ontological degrees fixed by nature, the distinction of the angelic orders is, instead, arranged by God on the basis of acquired merits, that is, on the use of freedom, and not fixed by nature. This is also true in the case of demons, who were not created ontologically as demons but have become demons through their actions and their procession toward evil. And in the case of the third order of beings, that is, the souls of human beings, in the same way freedom is crucial in that those who pursue the beatitudes are even assumed into the angelic order because of their progress. The key issue is that the condition of the soul's affinity with the angels is original, because the critique of Gnosticism leads Origen to express the difference between the various angelic orders and, in a certain sense, also between angels and human beings on an accidental level, since both are substantially souls.

In the case of Gregory of Nyssa, while God, angels, and humans are ontologically distinct, even the angels themselves are similar to human beings in their power to know God through the Incarnation and through the Body that is the Church. Union with God does not require eliminating the material dimension, as philosophical presuppositions seemed to require, but rather this is *in* and *through* the body, to the extent that even the angels enter into relationship with Him through the Incarnation and the Church. Salvation no longer consists only in knowledge, then, but in directing thought, with the will, toward Christ in a stable way, as do the angels. And so in Gregory's theology the overcoming of intellectualism is definitive, for Maspero, and he suggests finally that it is the ontology of relation that provides a better understanding than any static view of the dynamic quality of Gregory's thinking (and Origen's, one might add) and that a study of the ontological work developed by the Fathers in dialogue with the philosophers of their time can open up new perspectives to untie hermeneutic knots and further horizons for our knowledge of their thought. Further comments along these lines will be provided below in the response by Ilaria Ramelli (who has deliberately kept it relatively short, to balance the length of her own essay and thus avoid monopolising the volume).

Ilaria Vigorelli diachronically analyses the origin of this re-semanticisation of relation, comparing in Plotinus and in Gregory the *fil rouge* of deification, depicted through the Platonic metaphor of the dance of the soul conducted by the coryphaeus. In such a path the diverse conceptions of the assimilation to the divine are read against the background of different ontologies that underlie the interpretations of the metaphor in the analyzed authors. From this emerges the importance of the ontological work of Clement, who seems to overcome the necessary connections between the assimilation to God and the cessation of plurality and personal individuation. It is precisely *skhesis* that allows for appreciating the Christological reinterpretation of the metaphor of

the coryphaeus carried out by Gregory of Nyssa, on the basis of which, thanks to the incarnation, assimilation is possible in Christ, who relationally reunites in himself the human and the divine. A new Christian emphasis and re-semantisation of older categories emerge indeed in the use of a famous image from Plato's *Theaetetus* 173cff., the image of the coryphaeus and the dance, that also involves the 'likeness to God' (176b) and the chorus that participates happily in the life of the gods (cf. 175e-176a). The *Theaetetus* image is interwoven casually, as it were, into a contrast between philosophers (called *koryphaioi* at 173c6-7), who lead the dance as free self-dependent performers, and the rest of humankind who depend, often slavishly, upon the dance leaders. The image is reprised by Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Plotinus and Gregory of Nyssa, among others, and undergoes significant transformation. In Plato, the philosopher flees from evil and is raised up in assimilation to God 'as far as is possible' (*Theaetetus* 176b1-2). In Clement, the true gnostic or Christian is lifted into the realm of ideas 'like the coryphaeus' to live 'with Christ' in a significant reshaping of the image: unlike the necessary flight from evils, this is framed as a free offering in an essentially good world, and union with Christ is reconfigured as living like an angel (*isoangelia*). Here, the will – the divine will and our voluntary assent – is prominent, not simply the ascent of intellect; and assimilation to God is instead the *deification* of man. When we come to Plotinus by contrast, we find an apparent continuity but a different ontology. Whereas the relation of the soul to the Good in Plotinus is described in a similar way to the union between Christ and the faithful in Clement, nonetheless, in Plotinus the relational bond is governed by necessity and the soul is not really free or self-determining and, thus, cannot have value as an expression of individuality and uniqueness as it does in the case of the faithful in relation to Christ in the metaphor of Clement. There is therefore no *real* relation between the soul and the Good in Plotinus as there is in Clement, according to Vigorelli's cross-readings of these texts. Finally, this apparent lack of real relation in the pagan tradition becomes even more evident in Gregory of Nyssa's transformation of the Platonic image in two works (*In inscriptiones Psalmorum* and *De virginitate*), where it becomes less an interesting philosophical image and more the expression of a concrete and historical reality: the coryphaeus, with Gregory, is, in fact, the person of the incarnate Son, and the chorus comes about by its voluntary personal relationship with Him who freely constitutes the Church with all the strength of the incarnation in the womb of the Virgin Mary – a very different conception from the 'centrology' of Plotinus. Moreover, instead of separation from the multiplicity and corporeality of the world in Plotinus, in Gregory there is separation from sin. The ascent then becomes asceticism, in the sense of a personal ethical commitment.

The path is concluded by *Miguel Brugarolas*, who tackles the difficult question of the use of the terminology of *mixis* in a Christological ambit in Gregory of

Nyssa. As in the preceding examples, it is once again the serious consideration of the philosophical and, more precisely, ontological intention of the bishop of Nyssa that allows one to avoid anachronistically projecting a negative judgment dictated by a post-Chalcedonian viewpoint. In fact the re-semanticisation carried out on the philosophical categories obeys a very precise *akolouthia*, which connects creation, incarnation, and eschatological restoration, while preserving the divine transcendence and never falling into dualism.

In summary, these articles seek to showcase a concrete path in the articulation of the relation between the theology and philosophy of Origen and Gregory, who are both guided in their research by a profound sensitivity that is both spiritual and ontological. In the proposed reconstruction, such twofold sensibility is not contradictory, but it is precisely the profound perception of the scope of Christian revelation and of the authentic yearning present in ‘pagan’ philosophical thought that lead Origen and Gregory to a reformulation of the categories and of the classical images, which acquire a new ontological value through a relational interpretation. Consistently with all of this, they pursue a dialogue and authentic synthesis of philosophy and theology.

The dynamic dimension that Maspero highlights in Gregory of Nyssa’s thought is also investigated, from a different angle, in papers from the workshop on Evagrius between Origen, the Cappadocians, and Neoplatonism – especially by *Mark Edwards* in his essay on *Dynamis* in a Trinitarian context in fourth-century theology, from Marcellus of Ancyra, Eusebius, and Athanasius, through Marius Victorinus and the relation of his ideas to the ‘Gnostic’ treatises of the Nag Hammadi Codices, and culminating with Gregory of Nyssa in his polemic against Eunomius and the latter’s relation to Neoplatonism. The focus is on the Son as *dynamis* of God, the relation between *dynamis* and *energeia*, and Gregory’s description of the *dynameis* of God. This investigation, which shows very well Gregory working between philosophical speculation and Christian revelation around the notion of *dynamis*, is particularly enlightening if read both within the present set of essays about Origen’s and the Cappadocians’ philosophical theology and Neoplatonism, and along with a couple of other essays in a recent volume devoted to *Divine Powers in Late Antiquity* (ed. Anna Marmodoro and Irini Fotini Viltanioti [Oxford, 2017]): ‘Divine Power in Origen of Alexandria: Sources and Aftermath’, by Ilaria Ramelli, where Origen’s aftermath is explored mainly in Gregory of Nyssa and his concept of divine *dynamis* in relation to the Son and soteriology, and ‘Gregory of Nyssa on the Creation of the World’ by Anna Marmodoro, where the aspect of the divine *dynamis* investigated is the creative one.

The contributions by Edwards, Vigorelli, and Maspero relate closely to that by *Theo Kobusch*, which argues strongly for a new, more practical, rather than theoretical, and more inclusive or comprehensive, rather than abstractive, kind of thought that gradually comes to characterise Christian philosophy and theology. ‘Pagan’ thought from Plato and Aristotle onwards, for instance, tends

to emphasize the primacy of theoretical understanding over practical intelligence or other practical ways of knowing and to possess a confidence that we can know not only the essences of things, but even the Divine Essence itself. Moreover, Plato and the later Platonic tradition stress the need for the soul to separate from the body and to leave the body behind in the soul's ascent to the Divine; and, indeed too, however important someone like Plotinus may be for our understanding of later Christian developments, nonetheless much of his thought is different from the later Cappadocian Fathers, not possessing any strong bond such as the centrality of the position of Christ to link souls or the Church's faithful concretely and dynamically to God, and expressing the relation of the One or Intellect to souls in terms more of necessity than of will or freedom. Accordingly, Kobusch argues that there is a decisive shift in the Cappadocians away from the possibility of theoretical thought to a new emphasis upon a practical path to God. For Kobusch, each of the Cappadocians downplays or rejects the Aristotelian confidence in the natural capacity of the theoretical mind to know the essences of even material things. According to Gregory of Nyssa, for instance, to seek knowledge of material essences is pointless; when we abstract from their characteristics there is nothing left to know; therefore, we 'neither come to know them, nor do we suffer any harm if we do not know them'. Gregory designates this form of mind or reason 'curiosity' (*polypragmosynê*) and contrasts it with the 'mystical', as another variety of the metaphysical. If this *curiously inquiring reason* is not capable of grasping what the objects of the life-world or creation are in their essences, how could it then grasp the nature of what lies beyond this world? What we can know of God is not His essence, but only His activities. Kobusch, therefore, sees Gregory as the 'John Locke of Ancient Philosophy' in relation to physical substances and an important forerunner of Kantian Critical Philosophy in so far as he sets strict limits upon our capacity to know Immaterial Essence: 'In the realm of the transcendent, created human reason cannot be permitted to exceed its own boundaries'.

For Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus likewise, the God of Christianity is in no way theoretically knowable, but is only accessible through the pursuit of virtue or, in other words, in the realm of practical knowledge. To 'know' God, simply means to fulfill his commandments, for Basil. For Gregory, it is not possible to know the 'naked truth' of things: if we cannot count the grains of sand on the seashore, how can we even penetrate the depths of the Godhead? By contrast with 'pagan' philosophy generally, therefore, the Cappadocians introduce a new emphasis on Christian practical philosophy and upon the need for the practice of virtue rather than the ascent to God through contemplation. The article by Kobusch, like those by Maspero and Vigorelli, provides challenging ways of cross-reading 'pagan' and Christian texts with the ultimate aim of showing the new views that become possible with the emergence of Christianity and the gradual advent of a Christian philosophy. One may well argue, by contrast, that

virtue as a practical path to God is part of the legacy of all ancient thought, pagan and Christian, or that *polypragmosynê*, a term characteristic of Plato's *Republic*, above all, and one employed with similar valences in several places by Plotinus, is not equivalent to the Aristotelian theoretical intellect; or again, that the theoretical intellect is not a prying, busy-body kind of entity, but an energy that is at once lofty and yet intimate. One may also argue that while VI 9, 8-9 do not emphasize either the divine will or the voluntary will of individual souls or human beings, other passages in the *Enneads* certainly do so – and these too have to be taken into account. Nonetheless, the articles by Kobusch, Maspero, and Vigorelli have the great value of highlighting a significant movement in Christian thought and the radical changes that were brought to birth in that thought as a result of the dialogue between philosophy and theology, pagan and Christian, over the course of these early centuries of our era. They therefore challenge us to enter the thought of these centuries with fresh eyes alert to the nuances of different suns.

By exploring the significance of the dialectic of theoretical reason (limited by apophasis itself) and practical reason (as the real way to God) in the Cappadocians, Kobusch at the same time introduces an important element of continuity with Evagrius' thought. This dialectic, indeed, is a prominent feature in Evagrius' philosophical theology too. As Kobusch notes, in 'Christian Philosophy', which is the term by which the Christian authors themselves describe their way of thinking, we can discern a certain tendency which reached its final and massive breakthrough with the Cappadocian Fathers. This tendency consisted in circumscribing the divine essence, which according to Neoplatonism and negative theology is unknowable for theoretical reason, by increasingly making use of ethical categories. We find a first indication of this already in the circle of Gregory of Nyssa (Ps.-Gregory, *De creatione hominis*) where the answer to the question what Christianity is has ethical implications: *Homoiosis Theo*. The clearest example of this tendency is then provided by Gregory of Nyssa himself who quite often calls God the *aretê pantelês*. This, however, is possible only if the sense of the word *aretê* is uniform, *i.e.* the meaning of moral expressions is the same when applied to God and to man – an idea that was already formulated by Origen and Gregory Thaumaturgus in the wake of the Stoics. According to this notion, which is present in Origen and the Cappadocian Fathers, the human being is able to come closer to God by a practical knowledge of himself as it is mentioned in the commentaries to the *Song of Songs*. This is, for example in Gregory of Nyssa, illustrated by the metaphor of the mirror of the soul. According to this metaphor, it is the proper task of practical reason (*phronesis*) to gain practice in order to see divine reason in itself as in a mirror and to examine whether it is worthy of this communion and may thus enter the 'inexpressible way of deification'. In this way for the Cappadocian Fathers subsequent to Origen, the way to God seems to be blocked for theoretical reason. Practical reason, however, does open a new way here.

Now this provides an illuminating background for Evagrius' own dialectic of apophasis.

Apophasis is integral to Evagrius' spiritual theology and in practical terms closely linked to stability on both the psychological and spiritual levels. Yet in the emergent Latin tradition the connection between apophasis and stability receded from view as they became defining features of two distinct tributaries of their Evagrian source, the Dionysian and the Benedictine respectively. *Monica Tobon's* article explores the meanings of apophasis and stability, and the relationship that obtains between them, in Evagrius' understanding of the spiritual life.

Apophasis characterises the highest form of prayer. The *nous* is the place of God, understood by Evagrius as referred to under the figure of Mount Sinai at *Exod.* 24:10. God 'comes to his place' when the *nous* comes to God by emptying itself of all that is not-God in order to become fully receptive to him, which is to say, fully present to him. This receptivity or nakedness is one of the primary meanings of apophasis in Evagrius. Its other primary meaning relates to the infinity of God, the divine 'impossibility to satiate' which through a 'supreme *erōs*' draws the *nous* ever more deeply into participatory gnosis of God, beyond which there will nonetheless always remain an 'infinite ignorance' of God. The eternal progression of the *nous* into God is experienced as 'unspeakable peace' because it is perfectly stable. Psychological stability in the form of *apatheia* is a prerequisite of such prayer, since without it the *logismoi*, the thoughts of the 'old human', will continually intrude and distract. *Apatheia* represents the interiorisation of the 'exterior apophasis' constituted by the stillness or *hesychia* of the desert. It is the flowering of the ascetic life, attained through the mercy of Christ. From these primary senses of pure prayer and *apatheia* respectively apophasis and stability reverberate throughout the spiritual life, always in reciprocal relationship mediated by the *nous* as the place of God. Taking Evagrius' 'Gnostic Trilogy' as the definitive representation of his spiritual system and assuming that his other writings can be interpreted in terms of it, Tobon traces this relationship as it unfolds from the beginning of the monastic life to its fruition in knowledge of God. She shows how apophasis is a ubiquitous presence (or 'absence') throughout what turns out to be an ascent from the exterior apophasis of the desert through the interior apophasis of *apatheia* into the superior apophasis of pure prayer and union with God; how Evagrius' apophaticism is closely related to his anthropology and eschatology, and how, far from betraying a deficient engagement with the reality of the Incarnation (and in striking contrast to Plotinus' understanding of the metaphysical significance of the ascent into apophasis), it enables Evagrius' spirituality to be embodied, and thus incarnational, in an especially profound and full sense.

In clarifying the nature of Evagrian apophasis and its relationship to stability, Tobon sheds light both on the meaning of Christian apophasis *per se* and on the compatibility of Evagrius' apophasis with the desert tradition in which he

was located. Evagrius' teachings on prayer situate him within the tradition of Christian apophasis whose clearest patristic roots are to be found in Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Moses* – a derivation that is pointed out and contextualised by Ilaria Ramelli in her essay here – and whose subsequent witnesses include Dionysius the Areopagite, the *Cloud of Unknowing*, John of the Cross and, more recently, Thomas Merton. The vigour of this tradition notwithstanding, the very notion of Christian apophasis remains controversial, suspected by its critics of failing properly to grasp the significance of the Incarnation. Yet as Peter Brown notes concerning late antique desert monasticism, 'seldom, in ancient thought, had the body been seen as more deeply implicated in the transformation of the soul; and never was it made to bear so heavy a burden. For the Desert Fathers, the body was not an irrelevant part of the human person that could, as it were, be "put in brackets". It could not enjoy the distant tolerance that Plotinus and many pagan sages were prepared to accord it, as a transient and accidental adjunct to the self'.¹ Rather, it was, in the words of Pachomius' disciple Horsiesius, 'a field to cultivate, where I might work and become rich'.² Tobon shows how Evagrius epitomises this aspect of the desert tradition, and how, accordingly, apophasis might be part of a fully incarnational spirituality.

Kevin Corrigan's essay is in full continuity with Tobon's. In the desert the monk has nowhere to hide from the contents of his unconscious, and Corrigan investigates Evagrius' and Gregory Nyssen's innovative medical psychology, situated within a much broader theology in order to recognize, heal and allow for the transformation of wounds (*traumata*); the focus is on the concepts of wounds, scars, afflictions, cuts, forgetfulness and memory/mindfulness in Evagrius and Gregory. Despite some scholarly recognition of a broader pre-history of trauma, a significant set of contemporary views holds that trauma is an inescapably 19th-Century phenomenon. In the last 10-20 years, at least three variants of this thesis have been maintained: first, that before the late nineteenth century, concepts of psychic trauma may well have existed, but that there was no notion of a 'forgotten trauma'; second, that the expansion of the concept of trauma from physical to 'mental and psychological phenomena' was 'simultaneously responsive to and constitutive of modernity': in our secular society, which endows science with ultimate explanatory authority, the concept of human psychological trauma has emerged as one means of making sense of this century of mass mortality and engineered apocalypses'; and third, most radical of all, that not only did no notion of post-traumatic stress exist before

¹ Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York, 1988), 236.

² *Instructions of Horsiesius* 1.6, in Armand Veilleux (translation and introduction), *Pachomian Koinonia, Volume Three: Instructions, Letters and Other Writings of Saint Pachomius and His Disciples* (Kalamazoo, 1983), 138, cited at P. Brown, *The Body and Society* (1988).

the late nineteenth century, but that it would even be impossible to experience trauma, as we understand it today, before that moment in history.

Corrigan does not wish to argue that ‘trauma’ might not differ from period to period or even from decade to decade or year to year. Instead, he argues that the three variants of the 19th Century hypothesis articulated above are plainly false – and can be shown to be false from an appreciation of the complexity of the medical psychology and theology we find in two great 4th-Century practitioner/thinkers, Evagrius of Pontus and Gregory of Nyssa. Of course, it goes almost without saying that the ancient world knew a great deal about trauma, as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* vividly illustrate, and much too about post-traumatic distress syndrome as Sophocles’ Ajax and Exekias’ famous vase painting of Ajax ‘contemplating suicide’ tend to confirm. The Greeks were also deeply invested in diagnosing and attempting to heal ancient buried wounds, curses and plagues, as we can see so deeply represented in Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*. But Corrigan’s focus is not on early antiquity, but on the later Christian period that developed a new medical psychology situated within a much broader theology in order to recognize, heal and allow for the transformation of traumata.

Corrigan therefore focuses on the concepts of wounds, scars (*stigmata*), afflictions (*thlipseis*), cuts (*tomai*, etc.), forgetfulness and memory/mindfulness in Evagrius, primarily, but also in Gregory of Nyssa’s treatment of the scar-sign on his sister’s body as a sign of divine healing of a malignant ‘mass’. Freud’s (in some respects) necessary restriction of the psychic field to uncover repressed traumas led inevitably to the conflicted afterlife of ‘Freudian’ psychotherapy – even to the opening up of moral, religious, spiritual and mystical dimensions in the following 100 years of practical research. In the 4th Century already, the development of a medical psychotherapy included those many dimensions, and it was already linked – as we can see occasionally in Evagrius – to a practical, very down-to-earth neurology. This linking of psychology and neurology is thought to be characteristic only of modernity, but in fact it is part of the medical legacy that Evagrius and the Cappadocians inherit from Galen and others.

Corrigan’s major object, however, is to lay the groundwork for a broader argument. Trauma as the uncovering and repetition of a repressed event, in his view, runs the risk of endless repetition, however temporarily purgative, or of the kind of ritual in which either analyst or analysand or both pick over the bones of an event that cannot be digested, revisited or redeemed. In fact, ‘redemption’ is inevitably excluded a priori as too distasteful for any truly scientific practice or as simply the receding afterglow of theories that should be long dead. With Evagrius and Gregory, Corrigan argues, we have for the first time in this form a much broader theory: the wounds of the soul-mind – together with its afflictions, disastrous fortunes, malignant growths etc. – first, have to be remembered, for forgetfulness of the cuts and wounds in the soul, condemns us not only to relive them but to inscribe their painfulness more and

more deeply; second, they have to be healed by a psychosomatic process that must be imbued with a proper theology, for without theology there is no possibility of a cosmos; and third, they have to be brought back not simply as traumas but as scars (*stigmata*) and signs (*sēmeia*) of that theological cosmos at work already in the parts of the cosmos, lifting and inscribing the redemptive effects of affliction, pain and sorrow already here and now into the individual and collective resurrected body. Corrigan's thesis then is this: trauma in the 4th Century before trauma in the late 19th Century has something valuable to recall to us even today.

The association of Evagrius with Gregory of Nyssa is also the focus of the last essay, by *Ilaria Ramelli*. New insights are offered here concerning the crucial relationship between Evagrius and the Cappadocians, especially Nyssen, whose influence on Evagrius' theology – Ramelli argues – seems to have been largely underestimated so far. Evagrius is shown to be, like Nyssen, authentically Origenian, and not radically Origenistic, as he has often been depicted on the basis of the identification of the Origenistic tenets condemned under Justinian with Evagrius' ideas. Ramelli also offers a new interpretation of Evagrius' Christology that points to a correction of the common presumption of subordinationism attached to it, bringing Evagrius' Christology more in line with those of Origen and Gregory Nyssen.

Ramelli's essay preliminarily revisits biographical links between Nyssen and Evagrius, suggesting a closer relationship than usually assumed, and then focuses on some major theological and philosophical points that suggest a significant influence of Gregory's thought on Evagrius. For instance, Evagrius' characteristic doctrine of the subsumption of body into soul and soul into intellect, related to his doctrine of the unified *nous*, is traced by Eriugena (who, like Maximus the Confessor, followed it) back to Nyssen. Ramelli argues that Eriugena was right with respect to this, and that many other cases can be detected of theological influence of Gregory Nyssen on Evagrius, including the *apokatastasis* doctrine that both Gregory and Evagrius supported in a radical form, although it was becoming more and more controversial in their time.

Allusions to Gregory may also lurk behind several of Evagrius' references to his teachers. Not only does Evagrius' Christology, often misunderstood as subordinationistic, reveal itself as Nyssian and Origenian, as mentioned, but also, Evagrius' dynamic notions of the protological and eschatological unity are in line with Origen's and Nyssen's, and have nothing to do with pantheism and the views condemned under Justinian. Even Evagrius' anthropology emerges as consistent with Origen's and Gregory's anthropology: none of them probably maintained the preexistence of bare souls, often attached to Origen as well as to Evagrius (under the unwarranted assumption that Nyssen rejected Origen's theory – in fact, Nyssen did refute this doctrine, but it was not *Origen's* doctrine). A painstaking reassessment of the relation of Evagrius' thought to Nyssen's, in every facet of their philosophical theology, shows that Evagrius was, like

Nyssen, authentically Origenian, and not radically Origenistic, as he has often been depicted on the basis of the identification of the Origenistic tenets condemned under Justinian with Evagrius' ideas (a trend prominently represented by Guillaumont).

From the research presented in this volume, Evagrius' philosophical theology clearly emerges as part and parcel of Cappadocian theology within the Origenian line, and thus in relation to Neoplatonism. Pointing out the overlooked link between Gregory of Nyssa and Evagrius (which flanks, without replacing, that between Nazianzen and Evagrius) is pivotal in this connection, and it is to be hoped that further investigation will be devoted to this remarkable issue. This will also help to further the study of Evagrius' thought in a holistic way, beyond the longstanding split between his 'theoretical' and his 'spiritual' works – just as both Origen's theology and Nyssen's are comprised of theoretical and spiritual facets that cannot be separated from one another (this is true of patristic philosophical theology in general, as remarked by Anna Williams,³ and in particular of the Origenian line). The close intellectual relationship between Evagrius and Origen and, especially, Nyssen impacts most aspects of their theology and philosophy. This is a remarkable path of investigation and is yielding results that appear to be among the most significant in the field of patristic philosophical theology, and in particular within that quintessential patristic philosophical theology which is the Origenian tradition.

In sum, from Athens to Alexandria to Cappadocia to Egyptian desert monasticism in dialogue with all three; from Origenian pedagogy and Christology to Cappadocian theology, Christology and spiritual anthropology, to the birth of Christian spiritual theology together with a profound and subtle psychology of trauma and its healing, the essays in this collection are a soul's dance through some of the most seminal thinking to emerge from the world of Late Antiquity. We are grateful to the Directors of the Oxford Patristics Conference, to Markus Vinzent and Peeters Publishers, to all contributors, and to each other, for making this possible, and we commend this work to you, our readers, in the hope that it will help you to follow *hopou logos agei*.

³ Anna Williams, *The Divine Sense: The Intellect in Patristic Theology* (Cambridge, 2007), 1, 7, and *passim*.

The Pedagogical Structure of Origen's *De principiis* and its Christology

Samuel FERNÁNDEZ, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Chile

ABSTRACT

Origen's *De principiis* is structured by successive developments of the same subject under different perspectives. This article tries to show that the disposition of the chapters about the Son of God is guided by a particular conviction about the relationship between Hellenistic thought and biblical revelation. That is to say, that the treatise is structured according to a precise pedagogical path, designed to introduce the Christian novelty into Greek thought, particularly the novelty of Incarnation.

1. Introduction

There are many different theories about the structure of Origen's *De principiis*. Its division into four books misled the first scholars who tried to resolve this problem, because they supposed that the division into four books corresponded to a work divided into four parts. It was Basil Steidle who, in an important article of 1942, established that the division into four books – even though original – did not correspond to the plan of a work divided into four parts, but to the material requirements of a work written in scrolls. That is to say, the four books correspond to four scrolls, simply because of the length of the work, and not because of the subjects.

Once freed from the idea of a four parts structure, Steidle showed that the contents of the treatise should be divided into three cycles dealing, successively, with God, the rational creatures and the world; first in a synthetic vision (*Prin.* I 1-II,3), then in a more analytical one (*Prin.* II 4-IV 3), and lastly in a recapitulation (*Prin.* IV 4).¹

Over fifty years ago, Marguerite Harl gave in Oxford an interesting paper showing the irregularity of the division into chapters of *De principiis* in the Latin manuscript tradition,² and pointed out the necessity of studying the titles and divisions of Rufinus' Latin version. Later contributions have greatly helped

¹ See B. Steidle, 'Neue Untersuchungen zu Origenes' Περὶ ἀρχῶν', *ZNW* 40 (1941), 236-43.

² See M. Harl, 'Recherches sur le Περὶ ἀρχῶν d'Origène en vue d'un nouvelle édition: la division en chapitres', *SP* 3 (1961), 57-67.

further reflection on the structure of the work,³ but only from the internal evidence of its text, without going systematically into the study of titles and divisions present in the Latin manuscript tradition.

The preparation of a new critical edition of *De principiis* has given me the chance to do this work, that is to say, to make an exhaustive study of the titles and divisions of Rufinus' version in Latin manuscripts.⁴

The main conclusion of this study is that many titles and divisions do not correspond to the contents of the treatise, that is, they are artificial. Indeed, sometimes they cause confusion and misunderstanding of the real structure of the book. This conclusion does not resolve the problem, but at least, on the one hand, helps to avoid some obstacles and, on the other, freed from some artificial divisions and titles, it is possible to reconsider the structure of *De principiis*.

2. The pedagogical structure of *De principiis*

Returning to previous theories, it is possible to divide them into different groups: some scholars try to find the solution by supposing that the structure of *De principiis* corresponds to a particular Greek literary form.⁵ Some others think that its structure is related to a pedagogical plan, which starts with a general treatment and then goes on to more difficult and specific matters.⁶ These theories have in common that they both distinguish a first more general presentation of the Christian doctrine, and then, another deeper and more speculative treatment. The problem with both solutions is that the first part of *De principiis* is more difficult and speculative than the second, which seems to be easier and more understandable.

³ See M. Simonetti, 'Osservazioni sulla struttura del De Principiis di Origene', *Rivista di Filologia e d'Istruzione Classica* 40 (1962), 273-90; 372-93; P. Kübel, 'Zum Aufbau von Origenes' *De principiis*', *VC* 25 (1971), 31-9; M. Harl, 'Structure et cohérence du Peri Archôn', in H. Crouzel *et al.* (eds), *Origeniana*, Quaderni di Vetera Christianorum 12 (Bari, 1975), 11-32; G. Dorival, 'Remarques sur la forme du Peri Archôn', in *ibid.* 33-45; J. Rius-Camps, 'Los diversos estratos redaccionales del Peri Archôn de Orígenes', *RechAug* 22 (1987), 5-65; G. Dorival, 'Nouvelles remarques sur la forme du Traite des Principes d'Origene', *RechAug* 22 (1987), 67-108; Ch. Kannengisser, 'Origen, Systematician in De Principiis', in R. Daly (ed.), *Origeniana quinta*, BETL 105 (Louvain, 1992), 935-45; L. Lies, *Origenes' Peri Archôn. Eine undogmatische Dogmatik* (Darmstadt, 1992), 15-21; M. Simonetti, 'Agl'inizii della filosofia cristiana: il De principiis di Origene', *Vetera Christianorum* 43 (2006), 157-73.

⁴ See Orígenes, *Sobre los principios*. Introducción, texto crítico, traducción y notas de Samuel Fernández, Fuentes Patristicas 27 (Madrid, 2015); S. Fernández, 'Division and Structure of *De principiis*. Towards a New Critical Edition', in A.-C. Jacobsen (ed.), *Origeniana Undecima*, BETL 279 (Louvain, 2016), 323-36.

⁵ See P. Kübel, 'Zum Aufbau von Origenes' *De principiis*', *VC* 25 (1971), 31-9; G. Dorival, 'Remarques sur la forme du Peri Archôn', in H. Crouzel *et al.* (eds), *Origeniana* (1975), 33-45.

⁶ See B. Steidle, 'Neue Untersuchungen zu Origenes' Περὶ ἀρχῶν' (1941); M. Harl, 'Structure et cohérence du Peri Archôn' (1975).

Other scholars intend to explain the treatise's structure by assuming that, due to different situations, the work was written in phases.⁷ For example, according to Rius-Camps, the second part was written first, and the first part, second. Even if I think that there are few good reasons to accept this theory, it is very interesting because it shows that different parts have different purposes. By studying the different purposes of the different sections, it is possible to understand the meaning of the work's structure.

In a previous article, I tried to show that *De principiis* has a particular pedagogical structure.⁸ In my opinion, the aim of this work would be to introduce educated Greek people to the novelty of the Gospel. That is, the program of Origen's book would be making accessible the historical Revelation of the Scripture to educated Greek people, who were not disposed to renounce Greek wisdom and who were attracted by Gnostic doctrine.

Therefore Origen needed different cycles, because these Greeks needed to proceed step by step. Not from simple things to more complicated ones, but from the elements which were more in continuity with Greek Philosophy, to the points harder to accept for those accustomed to traditional Greek wisdom.

The challenge of Origen's program was to show the continuity between reason and faith without denying the novelty of the Gospel. The risk of this program was the possible sacrifice of one of the two poles of the problem. That is, the sacrifice of the novelty of the historical Revelation in order to present a Christian doctrine that has no conflict with Greek reason; or the sacrifice of reason in order to support a Christian doctrine that accepts literally the data provided by historical Revelation.

Origen's program is not one-sided, but aims to accept the complexity of the problem. He is aware that there is continuity and discontinuity. Sometimes, Greek wisdom judges the biblical data; and sometimes the biblical data correct Greek wisdom. In the *Homilies on Genesis*, there is an important statement:

Abimelech represents the learned and wise of the world, who have comprehended many things even of the truth, through the learning of philosophy, you can understand how he can be neither always in dissension nor always at peace with Isaac, who represents the Word of God in the Law. For philosophy is neither opposed to everything in the Law of God, nor in harmony with everything (*HGn.* XIV 3).

Sometimes philosophy is at peace with Christian Revelation, sometimes it is in disagreement. But, the disagreements have different motives. Some of them come from a wrong understanding of the Christian faith; others come from the authentic novelty of biblical historical Revelation. So, the first step is clarifying

⁷ See J. Rius-Camps, 'Los diversos estratos redaccionales del Peri Archon de Orígenes' (1987); M. Simonetti, 'Agl'inizii della filosofia cristiana' (2006).

⁸ See S. Fernández, 'El propósito de la estructura del De principiis de Orígenes', *Teología y Vida* 55 (2014), 243-61.

the authentic contents of Christian faith, after which, it is possible to go into the real disagreements between philosophical tradition and Christian faith. That is to say, Origen wants to distinguish between apparent and true disagreements.

For example, the first thing done by Origen in *De principiis*, is to clarify that the authentic Christian faith does not affirm that God is corporeal (*Prin.* I 1). Almost the entire first chapter of the first book is devoted to showing that even though the Scripture seems to affirm a corporeal God, the authentic Christian doctrine does not accept a corporeal view of God (which corresponds to the *fides simpliciorum*).⁹ In this case, there seems to be a disagreement between reason and faith, but it is not real. In this case, the real conflict, according to Origen, is between philosophy and a wrong understanding of faith. The same situation is to be observed in the doctrine on resurrection and punishment, ‘particularly because some make this objection to the faith of the church, that our beliefs about the resurrection are altogether foolish and silly’ (*Prin.* II 10,1). These words reveal one of the main aims of Origen’s *De principiis*. That is, to show that Christian faith is not ‘foolish and silly’.

But the disagreements are not only apparent; there are also real disagreements between Greek philosophy and Christian faith. For example, Origen says: ‘Philosophy disagrees with us [believers] when it says matter is coeternal with God’ (*HGn.* XIV 3). In *De principiis*, Origen clearly says that the world is not coeternal with God, even if the whole Greek philosophical tradition sustains the opposite. Here, the disagreement is not merely apparent, as in other cases, but actually real (*Prin.* III 5,1). This attitude of Origen shows that he is not enslaved to Greek philosophy.

3. Origen’s theology of incarnation

Coming to the specific subject of this article: How does Origen tackle Christology? How does he relate faith and reason, or historical Revelation and philosophy, when speaking about Christ?

The main treatments of Christology are in the second chapter of the first book, and in the sixth chapter of Book Two. These both are complementary: the first speaks about the divinity of the Son, and the second about his humanity.

The first one (*Prin.* I 1) insists that the Son of God is incorporeal, and that his generation is completely non-material. These insistences correspond to Origen’s program to introduce Greek educated people into Christian faith. That’s why he strives to show that Christian doctrine doesn’t affirm that the Son of God is material or that his generation is corporeal. In this section,

⁹ See G. Hällström, *Fides Simpliciorum according to Origen of Alexandria*, Societas Scientiarum Fennica (Helsinki, 1984).

Origen shows the continuity between Christian faith and Greek wisdom and avoids speaking about incarnation, which is more difficult for Greek philosophy to accept, because he is trying to show that the Christian faith is not 'foolish and silly'.

The second treatment of Christology develops the doctrine of the humanity of the Son of God. This is the more interesting chapter for the subject of this paper, because Origen is aware of the great disagreement between Greek wisdom and the Christian doctrine of the Son of God made man. That is why he doesn't speak about incarnation, in the first cycle, but in the second one.

Origen knows that this is not a merely apparent disagreement, but a real one. And he also knows that he cannot avoid the problem by the sacrifice of reason, because the Son of God is the Λόγος. That is why the incarnation is one of the most interesting points in which it is possible to study the relationship between reason and faith – philosophy and theology – according to Origen, who is aware that, for Greek traditional wisdom, the incarnation of the Son of God is a scandal. Actually, in a homily he affirms that when you say to a non-Christian that the Son of God, who 'descended from heaven', is a son of man and was crucified, "how winding these things appear and how difficult!" (*Hex.* V 3).

In this cultural context, when Origen treats the humanity of the Son of God, he must insist, this time, on the novelty of the Gospel and not, as in the first cycle, on the continuity between Christian doctrine and Greek traditional wisdom.

The first paragraphs of the section on the Incarnation contain numerous expressions of amazement concerning the Son of God made man. These expressions try to communicate to Origen's audience the shocking novelty of the Gospel. Let us read and comment these expressions:

When, therefore, we consider these great and marvelous things about the nature of the Son of God, we are lost in the deepest amazement (*obstupescimus*) that this nature, which surpasses all, 'emptying himself' of his majestic condition, become man and dwelt among men.¹⁰

Origen is aware of the tension between the philosophical idea of God and the Christian one. Here there is not a mere apparent tension, but a real one. And, as he is not disposed to abandon evangelical data, he highlights his amazement. The text continues:

But of all the marvelous and splendid things [of the Son of God], the [incarnation] exceeds completely the astonishment of the human mind, and the weakness of mortal intelligence does not find how it could be possible to think of (*sentire*) or to understand

¹⁰ *De principiis* II 6,1 (= *Prin.*): *His igitur tantis ac talibus de natura filii dei consideratis, cum summa ammiratione obstupescimus quod eminens omnium ista natura exinaniens se de statu maiestatis suae homo factus sit et inter homines conversatus sit*, Orígenes, *Sobre los principios*, FuP 27 (Madrid, 2015), 414 (trans. Butterworth, p. 109, modified).

(*intellegere*) that this mighty Power of the divine majesty, the very Word of the Father and the Wisdom of God [...] can be believed to have existed within the limits of this man who appeared in Judea.¹¹

The text underlines and emphasizes admiration regarding this wonder, precisely because Origen, aware of the discontinuity, wants to maintain both poles of the problem. He is not disposed to abandon either biblical data or reason: he tries to think of (*sentire*) and he tries to understand (*intellegere*). The chapter continues:

When, therefore, we see (*videamus*) in him some things so human that they appear in no way to differ from the common fragility of mortals, and some things so divine that they are appropriate to nothing else but the primal and ineffable nature of deity, the narrowness of human understanding is perplexed; and, struck with amazement at so mighty a wonder, knows not what to avoid, what to keep, and whither to turn about (*quo declinet, quid teneat, quo se convertat*). If [human understanding] perceives God (*si deum sentiat*), it sees a mortal man; if it considers a man (*si hominem putet*), it recognises one returning from the dead with spoils after conquering the kingdom of death.¹²

This text is extremely rich. First, it shows that the starting point of Origen's reflection is the very history of Jesus, transmitted by Scripture. That is why he starts by saying "When we see" (*Cum ergo ... videamus*). Origen's theological mind, on the one hand, doesn't want to reject historical Revelation nor, on the other, to reject reason. That is why human understanding remains perplexed. The Master of Alexandria, in a meaningful sentence, says that in this situation 'human understanding knows not what to avoid, what to keep, and whither to turn about'. This is the centre of the problem: human reason, reading the Holy Scripture, has to discern 'what to avoid', 'what to keep' and 'what to modify'.

Human reason has to recognize 'what to avoid' and 'what to keep' of the biblical narratives. On the one hand, sometimes, it is easy to recognise what to refuse: For example, it is not possible to accept that first, the second and the third day existed without the sun; or that 'God walked in paradise in the

¹¹ *Prin.* II 6,2: *Verum ex omnibus de eo miraculis et magnificis illud penitus ammirationem humanae mentis excedit, nec invenit mortalis intelligentiae fragilitas, quomodo sentire vel intellegere possit quod tanta illa potentia divinae maiestatis, ipsum illud patris verbum atque ipsa sapientia dei, in qua creata sunt omnia visibilia et invisibilia, intra circumscriptionem eius hominis, qui apparuit in Iudaea*, FuP 27, 416 (trans. Butterworth, p. 109, modified).

¹² *Prin.* II 6,2: *Cum ergo quaedam in eo ita videamus humana, ut nihil a communi mortalium fragilitate distare videantur, quaedam ita divina, quae nulli alii nisi illi primae et ineffabili naturae convenient deitatis, haeret humani intellectus angustia et tantae ammirationis stupore percussa, quo declinet, quid teneat, quo se convertat, ignorat. Si deum sentiat, mortalem videt; si hominem putet, devicto mortis regno cum spoliis redeuntem a mortuis cernit*, FuP 27, 418 (trans. Butterworth, p. 109, modified).

cool of the day' (see *Prin.* IV 3,1). On the other hand, it is clear, for Origen, that he has to 'maintain', for example, that matter is created by God and is not coeternal with him, as the whole Greek philosophical tradition affirms (see *Prin.* III 5,1).

But sometimes, such discernment is extremely difficult. In fact, on another page of *De principiis*, Origen says: 'The exact reader will hesitate in regard to some passages, finding himself unable to decide without deep investigation whether a particular incident, believed to be history, actually happened or not'.¹³ Scripture makes us recognize Christ's human nature as well as the divine. The text continues:

For this reason we must pursue our contemplation with all fear and reverence, as we seek to prove how the reality of each nature is shown (*demonstretur*) in one and the same [person], in such a way that nothing unworthy or unfitting may be thought to reside in that divine and ineffable substance, nor, on the other hand, may the events [of Christ's life] be supposed to be false illusions.¹⁴

Once again, it is history that provokes this reflection: divine and human nature have been manifested (*demonstretur*) in Christ. It is this fact that pushes Origen to go deeper into this subject. He cannot reject the data; he has to consider the fact, in such a way that both natures have to be fully admitted. Origen's question is not 'if' both natures are present in Christ, but 'how' they are present in the one and the same person of Christ. In this context, fear and reverence means not to abandon reason, because of faith, but to open reason to the Scripture.

One temptation, very strong indeed, was to deny the humanity or the divinity of Christ, in order to resolve the scandal of the incarnation. Another temptation, also very strong, was to declare that this mystery has no rational explanation, which is close to literalism. Origen maintains humanity and divinity of Christ, and affirms that there is an explanation of this mystery (*sacramenti istius explanatio*);¹⁵ this mystery is not *ἄλογος*, even though the full explanation is far beyond human capacity. In fact, the rest of the chapter, centred on the mediator soul of Christ, is an attempt to explain the mystery of incarnation.

¹³ *Prin.* IV 3,5: 'Ο μέντοι γε ἀκριβῆς ἐπὶ τινῶν περιελκυσθήσεται, χωρὶς πολλῆς βασάνου μὴ δυνάμενος ἀποφύνασθαι, πότερον ἦδε ἢ νομιζομένης ἱστορίας γέγονε κατὰ τὴν λέξιν ἢ οὐ, FuP 27, 886 (trans. Butterworth, p. 296, modified).

¹⁴ *Prin.* II 6,2: *Propter quod cum omni metu et reverentia contemplandum est, ut in uno eodemque ita utriusque naturae veritas demonstratur, ut neque aliquid indignum et indecens de divina illa et ineffabili substantia sentiat, neque rursum quae gesta sunt falsis inclusa imaginibus aestimentur*, FuP 27, 418 (trans. Butterworth, pp. 109-10, modified).

¹⁵ *Prin.* II 6,2: *Quae quidem in aures humanas proferre et sermonibus explicare, longe vires vel meriti nostri vel ingenii ac sermonis excedit. Arbitror autem quia etiam sanctorum apostolorum supergrediatur mensuram; quin immo fortassis etiam totius creaturae caelestium virtutum eminentior est sacramenti istius explanatio*, FuP 27, 418.

4. Some conclusions

The structure of *De principiis* is a pedagogical one. It tries to introduce educated Greek people into the Christian faith. The pedagogical character of the structure and the extreme difficulty that the humanity of the Son of God represents for Greek philosophy explains why Christ's humanity is virtually absent in the first cycle, and it is developed only in the second cycle of Origen's work.

Origen belongs to Greek philosophical tradition. He forms a part of it. But he is not enslaved to a particular philosophical tradition. *De principiis* witnesses to Origen's freedom from Greek philosophy. He accepts, rejects, or modifies elements from very different philosophical schools with freedom.

In the chapter on the incarnation, Origen is not disposed to abandon either biblical data or reason. Even though there is a great conflict between Greek philosophy and incarnation doctrine (not a mere misunderstanding, but a real conflict), Origen does not reject the novelty of the Gospel, that is to say, the Son of God made man. But, while accepting the novelty of the Gospel, Origen does not reject reason. Because, for him, something which is *ἄλογος* it is not worthy of faith.

The Omnipotence of God as a Challenge for Theology in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa

Martin C. WENZEL, Göttingen, Germany

ABSTRACT

The notion of omnipotence commonly attributed to God has been a challenge for Christian theology right from the beginning, considering for example the life and death of Christ, the fall of humankind, or the problem of evil. This article explores the ways in which Origen and Gregory of Nyssa employ, transform and communicate this concept. Starting from their most systematic works, Origen's *On First Principles* and Gregory's *Catechetical Oration*, my study looks for the respective descriptions of the attributes of God and the underlying ideas of divine fittingness and dignity. In the light of philosophical and theological discussions at that time, it seeks to investigate the transformation and function of the notion of divine omnipotence in cosmological, christological and eschatological contexts. Furthermore, this article examines the communication strategies and asks how the concept of omnipotence influences the practice of faith and facilitates the formation of human conduct.

In early Christian creeds, omnipotence has a prominent position. It is the only attribute of God which is mentioned explicitly in the *Creed of Nicea* (*Credimus in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem*).¹ In the *Apostle's Creed*, which reads furthermore *sedet ad dexteram Dei, Patris omnipotentis*, the omnipotence of God is 'double safeguarded'.² This pre-eminence led to claims that in early Christian creeds, omnipotence is *the* characteristic (and originally the only) predicate,³ or it is seen as the epitome of all other attributes of God and their compendium.⁴

The relevance of the omnipotence of God in early Christian creeds is somehow in tension to the challenges posed by the notion itself. Resulting partly from the historical development of the term,⁵ right from the beginning 'omnipotence'

¹ See Gijsbert van den Brink, Art. 'Allmacht', *RGG*⁴ 1 (1998), 319-20, 319.

² Michael Bachmann, *Göttliche Allmacht und theologische Vorsicht: Zu Rezeption, Funktion und Konnotationen des biblisch-frühchristlichen Gottesepithetons pantokrator* (Stuttgart, 2002), 13: 'Die Redeweise von Gott als dem „Allmächtigen“ ist hier also, wenn man so will, doppelt abgesichert'.

³ See Karl Rahner, Art. 'Allmacht Gottes', *LThK*² 1 (1957), 353-5, 353.

⁴ See Karl Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik* II/1 (Zürich, ³1948), 587.

⁵ Concerning the biblical background, see M. Bachmann, *Allmacht* (2002), 113-95; Reinhard Feldmeier, 'Nicht Übermacht noch Impotenz: Zum biblischen Ursprung des Allmachtsbekenntnisses',

has been a challenge for Christian theology. Nevertheless, it is not the development of the term or the most complex process of the formation of the creeds that this article seeks to address. Instead, it focuses on Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, and explores the ways in which they employ, transform and communicate the concept of God's omnipotence.⁶ In order to shed light on the inner-theological relations this article concentrates on Origen's and Gregory's most systematic works, *De principiis* and the *Oratio catechetica*, which resemble the creeds in their attempt to take into view the entirety of Christian faith.⁷

1. Origen

Although Origen is often seen as a standard witness for the limitation or even the negation of the omnipotence of God, he should not be limited to this view, as he refers to the concept positively as well. I will nevertheless take a start in dealing with passages in which he seeks to set boundaries to God's omnipotence.⁸

1.1. *Omnipotence within limits*

Dealing with the creation of the world in *De principiis* II 9, Origen states that in the beginning God created only a limited number of intelligent beings. His explanation reads as follows:

For we must say that the power of God is finite, and not, under pretence of praising Him, take away His limitation. For if the divine power be infinite, it must of necessity be unable to understand even itself, since that which is naturally illimitable is incapable of being comprehended.⁹

in Werner H. Ritter *et al.* (eds), *Der Allmächtige: Annäherungen an ein umstrittenes Gottesprädikat* (Göttingen, 2019), 13-42. Regarding the patristic period, see Jean-Pierre Batut, *Pantocrator: 'Dieu le Père tout-puissant' dans la théologie pré-nicéenne* (Paris, 2009); Gijsbert van den Brink, *Almighty God: A Study of the Doctrine of Divine Omnipotence* (Kampen, 1993), 46-67; Hildebrecht Hommel, 'Pantokrator', *Theologia Viatorum* 5 (1953/54), 322-74; Carmelo Capizzi, *ΠΑΝΤΟΚΡΑΤΩΡ: Saggio d'esegesi letterario-iconografica* (Rome, 1964), 51-81.

⁶ My approach is to focus not only terminologically on the terms of παντοκράτωρ or παντοδύναμος in the work of these two theologians, but also to refer to passages which deal with the idea of omnipotence in other words, taking into account the semantic field the concept of omnipotence draws on.

⁷ In addition selected passages from other works will be drawn into attention when suitable.

⁸ Concerning Origen, see J.-P. Batut, *Pantocrator* (2009), 368-450; Jean Pépin, 'Celse, Origène, Porphyre sur les limites de la *Theia Dunamis*', in Francesco Romano and Loredana R. Cardullo (eds), *Dunamis nel Neoplatonismo: Atti del II Colloquio Internazionale del Centro di Ricerca sul Neoplatonismo* (Università degli Studi di Catania, 6-8 ottobre 1994) (Firenze, 1996), 31-61, 31-44.

⁹ *De princ.* II 9,1 (164,3-6 Koetschau = frg. 24, Justinian, *Ep. ad Menam* [190,9-12 Schwartz]): πεπερασμένην γὰρ εἶναι καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ θεοῦ λεκτέον καὶ μὴ προφάσει εὐφημίας

The reason for the limitation of God's power is to be found in Origen's understanding of the thinking process. For Origen human reasoning is dependent on the finite to come to a de-finition which includes the object.¹⁰ Origen transfers this analogously to God, who, as well as humans, can only think of finite things. Otherwise, if God were omnipotent, he would not be able to think of himself. Furthermore, Origen repudiates even supposedly pious thoughts as seemingly advantageous arguments for the limitlessness of God's power.¹¹

The limitation of God's power is underlined by Origen in *De principiis* IV 4, where he employs a slightly modified argumentation:

Let no one take offence at the saying, if we put limits even to the power of God. For to encompass things that are endless is by nature an impossibility. But when once the things, which God himself grasps, have been bounded, necessity suffices as a boundary until the right number of things has been bounded.¹²

Here Origen argues for the limitations of God's power out of the nature of the infinite, which by its very nature can not be encompassed. God, who is bound to the (self-created) laws of nature can therefore enclose only finite things, in the course of this his power must reach its limits. So the limitation of God's power is caused by the unfathomable nature of the infinite.¹³

As arguments for the limitation of the power of God, Origen not only puts forward the grasping and the nature of the infinite, but also God's very nature. In *Contra Celsum* III 70, Origen argues: 'In our opinion God is able to do everything which He can do without abandoning His position as God, and as good, and as wise'.¹⁴ Does Origen adhere to the idea that the divinity of God

τὴν περιγραφὴν αὐτῆς περιαιρετέον. Ἐὰν γὰρ ἄπειρος ἡ θεία δύναμις, ἀνάγκη αὐτὴν μηδὲ ἕσπετον νοεῖν· τῇ γὰρ φύσει τὸ ἄπειρον ἀπερίληπτον.

The text follows *Origenes Werke V. De principiis*, ed. Paul Koetschau, GCS 22 (Leipzig, 1913). All translations (unless otherwise indicated) taken from Ante-Nicene Fathers 4.

¹⁰ As Ekkehard Mühlenberg, *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa: Gregors Kritik am Gottesbegriff der klassischen Metaphysik* (Göttingen, 1966), 81 has pointed out.

¹¹ While explicitly Origen only talks of the limits of God's power, consequently he would have to imply that God is of limited being, which he flinches from, see Werner Elert, *Der Ausgang der altkirchlichen Christologie: Eine Untersuchung über Theodor von Pharan und seine Zeit als Einführung in die alte Dogmengeschichte* (Berlin, 1957), 39-40; Hal Koch, *Pronoia und Paideusis: Studien über Origenes und sein Verhältnis zum Platonismus* (Berlin, 1932), 22.

¹² *De princ.* IV 4,8 (359,16-19 Koetschau = frg. 38, Justinian, *Ep. ad Menam* [209,7-10 Schwartz]): Μηδεὶς προσκοπτέτω τῷ λόγῳ, εἰ μέτρα ἐπιτίθεμεν καὶ τῇ τοῦ θεοῦ δυνάμει. ἄπειρα γὰρ περιλαβεῖν τῇ φύσει ἀδύνατον τυγχάνει. ἅπαξ δὲ πεπερασμένων ὄντων, ὧν περιδράττεται αὐτὸς ὁ θεός, ἀνάγκη ὅρον εἶναι μέχρι πόσων πεπερασμένων διαρκεῖ. (translation: G.W. Butterworth).

¹³ Concerning the philosophical background, E. Mühlenberg, *Unendlichkeit* (1966), 80 locates Origen with this line of argument in the peripatetic tradition. See also W. Elert, *Ausgang* (1957), 37-43.

¹⁴ *C. Cels.* III 70 (262,24-6 Koetschau): Δύναται δὲ καθ' ἡμᾶς πάντα ὁ θεός, ἅπερ δυνάμενος τοῦ θεοῦ εἶναι καὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ εἶναι καὶ σοφὸς εἶναι οὐκ ἐξίσταται (translation: H. Chadwick).

corresponds to his omnipotence, he however sees the omnipotence of God limited by his nature:

For the power to do wrong contradicts His divinity and all His divine power. If there is anything in existence which can do wrong and which has a natural tendency to do so, the reason why it can do wrong is that in its nature there is nothing at all which excludes this possibility.¹⁵

As central characteristics of God's nature Origen names godhead, goodness and wisdom, whereas he excludes injustice.¹⁶

This argumentation is found more frequently in *Contra Celsum* V. Here, Celsus argues at first that Christians, asked for the resurrection of the body, in absence of an answer 'escape to a most outrageous refuge by saying that "anything is possible to God"'.¹⁷ Celsus himself precludes indecent and unnatural things of God's sphere of power and does not see God as 'the author of sinful desire or of disorderly confusion, but of what is naturally just and right'.¹⁸

In the following,¹⁹ Origen too rejects retreat to the omnipotence of God, arguing with the existence and the thinking ability of the things as a counterpart. He then agrees with the reasoning of Celsus that 'God cannot do what is shameful since then God could not possibly be God', referring to a saying of

¹⁵ *C. Cels.* III 70 (262,32-263,2 Koetschau): ἐναντίον γάρ ἐστιν αὐτοῦ τῇ θειότητι καὶ τῇ κατ' αὐτὴν πάσῃ δυνάμει ἢ τοῦ ἀδικεῖν δύναμις. Εἰ δέ τι τῶν ὄντων δύναται ἀδικεῖν τῷ καὶ πρὸς τὸ ἀδικεῖν πεφυκέναι, δύναται ἀδικεῖν οὐκ ἔχον ἐν τῇ φύσει τὸ μηδαμῶς δύνασθαι ἀδικεῖν (translation: H. Chadwick).

¹⁶ See Christoph Bruns, *Trinität und Kosmos: Zur Gotteslehre des Origenes* (Münster, 2013), 49-50.

¹⁷ *C. Cels.* V 14 (15,12-4 Koetschau): οὐδὲν ἔχοντες ἀποκρίνασθαι καταφεύγουσιν εἰς ἀτοπωτάτην ἀναχώρησιν, ὅτι πᾶν δυνατόν τῷ θεῷ.

¹⁸ *C. Cels.* V 14 (15,14-9 Koetschau): Ἀλλ' οὐτι γὰρ τὰ αἰσχρὰ ὁ θεὸς δύναται οὐδὲ τὰ παρὰ φύσιν βούλεται· οὐδ' ἂν σὺ τι ἐπιθυμήσῃς κατὰ τὴν σαντοῦ μοχθηρίαν βδελυρόν, ὁ θεὸς τοῦτο δυνήσεται, καὶ χρὴ πιστεύειν εὐθὺς ὅτι ἔσται. Οὐ γὰρ τῆς πλημμελοῦς ὀρέξεως οὐδὲ τῆς πεπλανημένης ἀκοσμίας ἀλλὰ τῆς ὀρθῆς καὶ δικαίας φύσεως ὁ θεὸς ἐστὶν ἀρχηγέτης ('But, indeed, neither can God do what is shameful nor does He desire what is contrary to nature. If you were to desire something abominable in your wickedness, not even God would be able to do this, and you ought not to believe at all that your desire will be fulfilled. For God is not the author of sinful desire or of disorderly confusion, but of what is naturally just and right' [translation: H. Chadwick]).

¹⁹ *C. Cels.* V 23 (24,11-6 Koetschau): Καὶ οὐκ εἰς ἀτοπωτάτην γὰρ ἀναχώρησιν ἀναχωροῦμεν λέγοντες ὅτι πᾶν δυνατόν τῷ θεῷ· οἶδαμεν γὰρ ἀκούειν τοῦ πᾶν οὐκ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀνυπάρκτων οὐδ' ἐπὶ τῶν ἀδιανοήτων. Φαμέν δὲ καὶ ὅτι οὐ δύναται αἰσχρὰ ὁ θεός, ἐπεὶ ἔσται ὁ θεὸς δυνάμενος μὴ εἶναι θεός· εἰ γὰρ αἰσχρόν τι δρᾷ θεός, οὐκ ἔστι θεός ('And we do not escape to a most outrageous refuge by saying that anything is possible to God. We know that we may not understand the word "anything" of things which do not exist or which are inconceivable. But we do say that God cannot do what is shameful, since then God could not possibly be God. "For if God does anything shameful He is not God."' [translation: H. Chadwick]).

Euripides: 'For if God does anything shameful He is not God'.²⁰ Origen later expands his criteria for divinity to take account of this.²¹

1.2. *Omnipotence in relation*

But besides these often cited negative delimitations, the concept of God's omnipotence can also be found in positive use in Origen, namely in *De principiis* I 2. Within a larger christological context, Origen interprets the phrase that wisdom is 'the purest efflux of the glory of the Almighty', taken from *Wisd.* 7:25. In the first instance Origen notes that the attributes of God have to be understood realistically:

As no one can be a father without having a son, nor a master without possessing a servant, so even God cannot be called omnipotent unless there exist those over whom He may exercise His power; and therefore, that God may be shown to be almighty, it is necessary that all things should exist.²²

For Origen, it follows from the predicate of omnipotence that the existence of an object, which the omnipotence is directed at, is necessary.²³ The mere existence is not enough though, it is necessarily an object of eternal existence:

²⁰ Following Mark W. Elliott, *Providence Perceived: Divine Action from a Human Point of View* (Berlin, 2015), 21, this poses a contrast to Neoplatonism: 'God is not almighty in the sense that he can do anything; in Origen's scheme God is not above the good-evil distinction as in the Neoplatonists'. Regarding the philosophical background of this argument, E. Mühlberg, *Unendlichkeit* (1966), 79 states (referring to Cicero, *De natura deorum* III 92): 'Schon die Stoiker hat man mit dem Argument bekämpft, daß Gott nicht allmächtig genannt werden dürfe, so daß er willkürlich alles durchführen könne. Nicht nur die Menschen müssen die Zweckursachen ihres Handelns vorher durchdenken, sondern auch Gott ist an sie gebunden, und deswegen ist seine Macht eo ipso begrenzt'.

²¹ Origen applies this 'moral' criterion to Christ as well: even Christ can perform nothing but just acts, see J.-P. Batut, *Pantocrator* (2009), 373 note 124. See also Ilaria Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena* (Leiden, 2013), 245 note 577: 'This argument of God's omnipotence, however, is not absolute and anti-Platonic: in CC 5,23 Origen precisely rejects Celsus's accusation (CC 5,14) that the Christians have recourse to the ἀποκατάτη ἀναχώρησις of God's omnipotence, because, Origen explains, when he claims that everything is possible to God, he understands "everything" without including in it what does not exist and what is inconceivable. God cannot do anything evil, otherwise God would not be God. God wants nothing contrary to nature, nothing evil, nothing contrary to the logos. This point was especially sensitive for Porphyry as well, who was acquainted with Origen's work. In fragments from his work against the Christians preserved by Didymus (*Comm. in Iob* 3,7-11) and by Macarius (*Apocr.* 4,24) Porphyry insisted that there are things that are impossible even for God, e.g. the resurrection of bodies'.

²² *De princ.* I 2,10 (41,11-42,3 Koetschau): *Quemadmodum pater non potest esse quis si filius non sit, neque dominus esse quis potest sine possessione vel servo: ita ne omnipotens quidem deus dici potest, si non sint in quos exercent potentatum; et ideo ut omnipotens ostendatur deus, omnia subsistere necesse est.*

See André de Halleux, 'Dieu le Père tout-puissant', *RTL* 8 (1977), 401-22, 419 note 126, who states that Origen understands omnipotence 'dans un sens réel'.

²³ Anthony Meredith, *Gregory of Nyssa* (London, 1999), 136 speaks of 'relational necessity' in this context.

But if there never was a time when He was not omnipotent, of necessity those things by which He receives that title must also exist; and He must always have had those over whom He exercised power, and which were governed by Him either as king or prince.²⁴

The object in its existence and eternity does not merely appear as an implication of omnipotence, but rather as its condition, speaking of the things as of those 'by which' (ὅτι ᾧ) God is Pantocrator.²⁵

In the continuation of the argument on *Wisd.* 7:25, Origen arrives at speaking on the relationship of various predicates of God, in particular on 'almighty' and 'father'. Following Origen, no one 'should think that the title of Omnipotent was anterior in God to the birth of Wisdom, through whom He is called Father, seeing that Wisdom, which is the Son of God, is the purest efflux of the glory of the Almighty'.²⁶ By reference to scriptural passages (*Ps.* 103:24 [LXX]; *John* 1:3) which speak of a mediation of creation through wisdom, Origen concludes that 'the title of Omnipotent in God cannot be older than that of Father; for it is through the Son that the Father is almighty'.²⁷ While at the beginning this creative relationality of omnipotence was applied *ad extra* to the relationship between God and world, Origen now interprets the term as well *ad intra* to the relationship between God the Father and the Son. This has, according to the nature of this relationship, effects on the Son, because he has a share in it. For this purpose Origen interprets the word 'efflux' from *Wisd.* 7:25 as participation.²⁸

This is highlighted explicitly in the next paragraph, in which omnipotence is understood analogously to divinity. What holds true of the divinity of both Father and Son, also does for their omnipotence: 'since the Father is called omnipotent, no one ought to be offended that the Son of God is also called omnipotent'.²⁹

²⁴ Koetschau 42,12-4 = frg. 5, Justinian, *Ep. ad Menam* (210, 23-4 Schwartz): εἰ δὲ οὐκ ἔστιν ὅτε παντοκράτωρ οὐκ ἦν, ἀεὶ εἶναι δεῖ ταῦτα, δι' ᾧ παντοκράτωρ ἐστί, καὶ ἀεὶ ἦν ὑπ' αὐτοῦ κρατούμενα, ἄρχοντι αὐτῷ χρώμενα.

²⁵ The argument encounters in similar form in *De principiis* III 5,3 where Origen, to the question of God's action before the creation of the world, argues for the eternity of the omnipotence of God which always exercised power: *Otiosam enim et immobilem dicere naturam dei impium est simul et absurdum, vel putare quod bonitas aliquando bene non fecerit et omnipotentia aliquando non egerit potentatum* (272,23-6 Koetschau).

²⁶ *De princ.* I 2,10 (42,25-7 Koetschau): *ne videatur alicui anterior esse in deo omnipotentis appellatio nativitate sapientiae, per quam pater vocatur, quoniam dicta est 'aporrhoea omnipotentis gloriae purissima' esse sapientia, quae est filius dei.*

²⁷ *De princ.* I 2,10 (43,3-4 Koetschau): *quia non potest antiquior esse in deo omnipotentis appellatio quam patris; per filium etenim omnipotens est pater.*

²⁸ *De princ.* I 2,10 (43,5-7 Koetschau): *Sed quoniam gloriam dixit esse 'omnipotentis', cuius 'gloriae aporrhoea' est sapientia, hoc intellegi datur, quod etiam in omnipotentiae gloria societatem habeat sapientia, per quam deus omnipotens dicitur.*

²⁹ *De princ.* I 2,10 (43,14-7 Koetschau): *Et sicut nemo debet offendi, cum deus sit pater, quod etiam salvator 'deus' est: ita et cum 'omnipotens' dicitur pater, nullus debet offendi, quod etiam filius dei 'omnipotens' dicitur.* May this possibly be taken as a parenthesis by Rufinus, one can

What is striking in Origen's argumentation is that he assumes omnipotence to be a reciprocal concept: 'God has power over all things, not only by the authority of a ruler, but also by the voluntary obedience of subjects'.³⁰ Omnipotence needs both, ruler and ruled, it depends not only on authority but also on the existence of obedience.

Origen finally employs the concept of omnipotence not only with regard to the beginning of God's creation, but also to its end, where this reciprocity can be found as well. In *De principiis* III 6, Origen explains that the idea of the 'destruction of the last enemy' is not to be understood as a destruction of its substance 'which was formed by God', but as a destruction of 'its mind and hostility, which came not from God, but from itself'. Origen then proceeds: 'Its destruction, therefore, will not be its non-existence, but its ceasing to be an enemy, and (to be) death. For "nothing is impossible" (see *Job* 42:2) to the Omnipotent, nor is anything incapable of restoration to its Creator'.³¹ At first sight, Origen seems to interpret omnipotence as unlimited, pure potentiality, which comes as no surprise bearing in mind that he is dealing with the question of the salvation of Satan, which (until today) seems to be impossible for some. In the second half of this sentence, however, Origen turns towards the object of restoration, speaking of the capability of restoration as a necessary condition. This two-sided perspective shows that in the process of restoration, omnipotence appears as being reciprocal as well.

2. Gregory of Nyssa

In contrast to Origen's struggles with limitlessness, which inform his concept of the limitation of God's power, Gregory of Nyssa, generally speaking, has a positive understanding of infinity. Concerning the relationship between the concept of infinity and of omnipotence, his controversy with Eunomius of Cyzicus,

find the same usage of omnipotence to Father and Son in Origen's *In Selecta in Psalmos* 23:10, where he uses *παντοκράτωρ* for both Father and Son, see Alois Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche: Band 1: Von der Apostolischen Zeit bis zum Konzil von Chalcedon (451)* (Freiburg i. Br., ³1990), 95. This indicates that the title was applied to the Son even before the debates in the 4th century, see Rainer Warland, Art. 'Pantokrator II: Historisch-theologisch', *LThK*³ 7 (1998), 1320-1, 1320 (contra Per Beskow, *Rex Gloriarum: The Kingship of Christ in the Early Church* [Stockholm, 1962], 295-7).

³⁰ *De princ.* I 2,10 (43,8-10 Koetschau): *Per sapientiam enim, quae est Christus, tenet deus omnium potentatum, non solum dominantis auctoritate, verum etiam subiectorum spontaneo famulatu.*

³¹ *De princ.* III 6,5 (287,2-5 Koetschau): *'Destructur' ergo, non ut non sit, sed ut 'inimicus' et 'mors' non sit. 'Nihil' enim omnipotenti 'impossibile est', nec insanabile est aliquid factori suo; propterea enim fecit omnia, ut essent; et ea, quae facta sunt, ut essent, non esse non possunt.* See I. Ramelli, *Apokatastasis* (2013), 510.

in which Gregory arrived at the notion of God as infinite,³² will be taken as a starting point. Subsequently the connections between the concept of omnipotence and other theological topics come into focus through a detailed analysis of the *Catechetical Oration*, not only as a chronologically posterior opus, but as Gregory's attempt to compile Christian belief in its entirety for catechetical instruction.³³

2.1. *Contra Eunomium*

While in their discussion Eunomius is trying to bring forward God's majesty in the notion of his ingenerateness (*ἀγεννησία*), Gregory argues, however, that God's essential property is the infinite. Generally speaking the omnipotence of God is thereby queued in the line of the other attributes such as goodness, wisdom and justice.³⁴ Following Gregory, as one of the 'reverent ideas' one has to speak 'of him who governs the universe as "almighty"'.³⁵ But in contrast to Eunomius, Gregory insists that the sole use of the title *παντοκράτωρ* is no guarantee for the right faith. Rather, he puts Eunomius in the vicinity of Jewish ideas and statements of Plato if he acknowledges God as the Almighty, but not as the Father:

As then in the case of the Jewish and Platonic opinions he who does not believe in God the Father is not a Christian, even though in his creed he asserts an Almighty God, so Eunomius also falsely pretends to the name of Christian, being in inclination a Jew, or asserting the doctrines of the Greeks while putting on the guise of the title borne by Christians.³⁶

³² See E. Mühlenberg, *Unendlichkeit* (1966), 92: 'Gregor entwickelt in der Auseinandersetzung mit Eunomius seinen eigenen Gottesbegriff. Ja, es ist durchaus möglich, daß er ihn erst im Gegenüber zur eunomianischen Theologie gefunden hat. *Gott ist unendlich!* Das ist eine Aussage, die die negative Theologie der älteren Väter nie gemacht hat'.

³³ Selected findings from other writings are supplemented. Gregory uses the term *παντοκράτωρ* only in his discussion with Eunomius. The Greek text follows the editions by Werner Jaeger (*Gregorii Nysseni Opera* [GNO] I, Berlin, 1921; GNO II, Berlin, 1921). All translations (unless otherwise indicated) are taken from Gregory of Nyssa, *Dogmatic Treatises: Select Writings and Letters*, ed. by P. Schaff, H. Wace, trans. by W. Moore, H.A. Wilson, NPNF II/5 (Grand Rapids/MI, 1893).

³⁴ See Anthony Meredith, 'God-Fittingness in Gregory of Nyssa', *SP* 18/3 (1990), 507-15, 509.

³⁵ *Eun.* II 147 (GNO I, 268,6-17 Jaeger): εἰ δὴ τις τὰς τοιαύτας ἐννοίας ὀνόμασι διαλαμβάνειν ἐθέλοι, ἀνάγκη πᾶσα τὸ μὲν μὴ προσιέμενον τὴν πρὸς τὸ χεῖρον τροπὴν ἄτρεπτόν τε καὶ ἀναλλοίωτον ὀνομάσαι, τὸ δὲ πρῶτον αἴτιον τοῦ παντὸς ἀγέννητον προσειπεῖν, ἄφθαρτον δὲ τὸ φθορᾶς ἀνεπίδεκτον, τὸ δὲ εἰς μηδὲν καταλήγον πέρας ἀθάνατόν τε καὶ ἀτελεύτητον, παντοκράτορα δὲ τὸν τοῦ παντὸς ἐξηγούμενον, καὶ οὕτω τᾶλλα πάντα κατὰ τὰς εὐσεβεῖς ὑπολήψεις ὀνοματοποιούντες ταῖς τῶν ἐπινειῶν διαφοραῖς ἄλλως καὶ ἄλλως προσαγορεύομεν, ἢ δύναμιν ἢ κράτος ἢ ἀγαθότητα ἢ τὸ μὴ ἐξ αἰτίου εἶναι ἢ τὸ εἰς αἰὶ διαμένειν διὰ τῶν ὀνομάτων σημαίνοντες (translation: S.G. Hall).

³⁶ *Ref. Eun.* 49 (GNO II, 332,8-14 Jaeger): ὥσπερ οὖν ἐν τοῖς Ἰουδαϊκοῖς καὶ Πλατωνικοῖς δόγμασιν ὁ τὸν πατέρα μὴ παραδεχόμενος Χριστιανὸς οὐκ ἔστιν, κἂν παντοκράτορά τινα πρεσβεύῃ ἐπὶ τοῦ δόγματος, οὕτω καὶ ὁ Εὐνόμιος καταψεύδεται τοῦ ὀνόματος, ἰουδαῖζων μὲν τῷ φρονήματι ἢ τὰ τῶν Ἑλλήνων πρεσβεύων, τὴν δὲ τῶν Χριστιανῶν προσηγορίαν ὑποδύμενος.

The term omnipotence is seen by Gregory as defined through its characteristic relationality to others:

Those then who enquire precisely into the meaning of the term ‘Almighty’ will find that it declares nothing else concerning the Divine power than that operation which controls created things and is indicated by the word ‘Almighty’, stands in a certain relation to something. For as He would not be called a Physician, save on account of the sick, nor merciful and gracious, and the like, save by reason of one who stood in need of grace and mercy, so neither would He be styled Almighty, did not all creation stand in need of one to regulate it and keep it in being.³⁷

Naming God παντοκράτωρ requires the need of the whole creation for regulation and maintenance in being. Omnipotence, then, is understood as all-sustaining, *omnipotens* as *omnitenens*, which is underpinned by Gregory with biblical quotations:

Accordingly, when we hear the name ‘Almighty’, our conception is this, that God sustains in being all intelligible things as well as all things of a material nature. For this cause He sitteth upon the circle of the earth, for this cause He holdeth the ends of the earth in His hand, for this cause He ‘meteth out leaven with the span, and measureth the waters in the hollow of His hand’; for this cause He comprehendeth in Himself all the intelligible creation, that all things may remain in existence controlled by His encompassing power.³⁸

Finally, according to his intention to defend the divinity of the Son against Eunomius, Gregory does not only apply the concept of omnipotence to God the Father and his relation to creation, but to the Son as well. He does so interestingly not by deduction from the properties of the Father, but by inference from the actions of Christ:

Does what has been said leave us any longer in ignorance of Him Who is ‘God over all’, Who is so entitled by S. Paul, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, as He Himself says, holding in His hand ‘all things that the Father hath’, assuredly grasps all things in the all-containing hollow of His hand and is sovereign over what He has grasped, and no

³⁷ *Ref. Eun.* 125 (GNO II, 365,20-366,3 Jaeger): τὸ τοίνυν τοῦ παντοκράτορος ὄνομα τοῖς ἀκριβῶς ἐξετάζουσιν εὐρίσκεται μὴ ἄλλο τι σημαῖνον ἐπὶ τῆς θείας δυνάμεως ἢ τὸ πρὸς τί πως ἔχειν τὴν κρατητικὴν τῶν ἐν τῇ κτίσει θεωρουμένων ἐνέργειαν, ἣν ἡ τοῦ παντοκράτορος ἔμφασις ὑποδείκνυσιν. ὥσπερ γὰρ οὐκ ἂν ἱατρός ἦν, εἰ μὴ τῶν νοσούντων χάριν, οὐδ’ ἂν ἐλεήμων τε καὶ οἰκτίρμων καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα κατ’ωνομάζετο, εἰ μὴ διὰ τὸν οἰκτιρμοῦ τε καὶ ἐλέου δεόμενον, οὕτως οὐδὲ παντοκράτωρ, εἰ μὴ πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις τὸν περικρατοῦντος αὐτὴν καὶ ἐν τῷ εἶναι συντηροῦντος ἐδέετο.

³⁸ *Ref. Eun.* 126 (GNO II, 366,9-16 Jaeger): οὐκοῦν ὅταν τῆς παντοκράτωρ φωνῆς ἀκούσωμεν, τοῦτο νοοῦμεν, τὸ πάντα τὸν θεὸν ἐν τῷ εἶναι συνέχειν, ὅσα τε νοητὰ καὶ ὅσα τῆς ὕλικῆς ἐστὶ κτίσεως. διὰ τοῦτο γὰρ κατέχει τὸν γῦρον τῆς γῆς (see Isa 40:22), διὰ τοῦτο ἔχει ἐν τῇ χειρὶ τῆς γῆς τὰ πέρατα (see Ps 94:4), διὰ τοῦτο περιλαμβάνει τὸν οὐρανὸν τῇ σπιθαμῇ (see Isa 40:12), διὰ τοῦτο περιμετρεῖ τῇ χειρὶ τὸ ὕδωρ (see Isa 40:12), διὰ τοῦτο τὴν νοητὴν πᾶσαν κτίσιν ἐν ἑαυτῷ περιέχει, ἵνα πάντα ἐν τῷ εἶναι μένη, τῇ περιεκτικῇ δυνάμει περικρατούμενα.

man taketh from the hand of Him Who in His hand holdeth all things? If, then, He hath all things, and is sovereign over that which He hath, why is He Who is thus sovereign over all things something else and not Almighty?³⁹

2.2. *Oratio catechetica*

The question why God has carried out his salvific work just by incarnation and not by a powerful command forms the *cantus firmus* in the main chapters of the *Catechetical Oration*. In the course of these chapters the omnipotence of God plays a major role in defending the incarnation against opposing objections.⁴⁰ After fruitless attempts to deal with this objection both from human nature and from historical events following the life of Jesus, Gregory makes another try at explaining the incarnation from the notion of God itself in chapters 19-26.

At first he emphasizes that no attribute of God should be isolated, but always has to be connected with the other predicates of God.⁴¹ Concerning power

³⁹ *Ref. Eun.* 127 (GNO II, 366,20-367,3 Jaeger): ἄρα ἀγνοοῦμεν ἔτι διὰ τῶν εἰρημένων τὸν ἐπὶ πάντων θεὸν τὸν ὑπὸ τοῦ Παύλου οὕτως ὀνομαζόμενον (see Rom 9:5), τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν τὸν Χριστόν, ὃς πάντα ἐν τῇ χειρὶ τὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ἔχων, καθὼς αὐτὸς φησι (see John 16:15), περιδέδραται πάντως διὰ τῆς πολυχώρου αὐτοῦ παλάμης τῶν πάντων καὶ κρατεῖ τῶν περιδεδραγμένων καὶ οὐδεὶς αἶρει ἐκ τῆς χειρὸς αὐτοῦ τοῦ κρατοῦντος τῇ χειρὶ τῶν πάντων (see John 10:28); εἰ οὖν πάντα ἔχει καὶ κρατεῖ ὃν ἔχει, τί ἄλλο καὶ οὐχὶ παντοκράτωρ πάντως ἐστὶν ὁ κρατῶν τῶν πάντων;

⁴⁰ At the beginning of the *Catechetical Oration*, in the context of the doctrine of God, Gregory already grants the Logos omnipotence, arguing that he has a share in the Father's properties, see *Or. cat.* c.2 (GNO III/4, 12,20-6 Mühlenberg): ἀλλ' ὥς θεοῦ λόγον ἀκούσαντες οὐκ ἀνυπόστατόν τι πρᾶγμα τὸν λόγον φήθημεν οὐδὲ ἐκ μαθήσεως ἐγγινόμενον οὔτε διὰ φωνῆς προφερόμενον οὔτε μετὰ τὸ προενεχθῆναι διαλυόμενον οὐδὲ ἄλλο τι πάσχοντα τοιούτων, οἷα περὶ τὸν ἡμέτερον λόγον θεωρεῖται πάθη, ἀλλ' οὐσιωδῶς ὕφεστώτα, προαιρετικόν τε καὶ ἐνεργὸν καὶ παντοδύναμον ('but when we think of God's Word we do not deem the Word to be something unsubstantial, nor the result of instruction, nor an utterance of the voice, nor what after being uttered passes away, nor what is subject to any other condition such as those which are observed in our word, but to be essentially self-subsisting, with a faculty of will ever-working, all-powerful'). But at this point Gregory does not draw any further conclusions.

The Greek text follows the edition by Ekkehard Mühlenberg (GNO III/4 [Leiden, 1996]). As it is not given by this edition, I will additionally refer to the commonly used subdivision into 40 chapters. All translations (unless otherwise indicated) are taken from Gregory of Nyssa, *Dogmatic Treatises: Select Writings and Letters*, ed. by P. Schaff, H. Wace, trans. by W. Moore, H.A. Wilson, NPNF II/5 (Grand Rapids/MI, 1893).

⁴¹ Following Lucas Francisco Mateo-Seco, *Estudios sobre la cristología de San Gregorio de Nisa* (Pamplona, 1978), 147, these four characteristics goodness and power, wisdom and justice serve to identify something as God's work. In the sermon *In Sanctum Pascha* the cognoscibility of God forms the centre in addressing the notion of the omnipotence of God. Gregory lays emphasis on the thought that a human being can only perceive effects of God but can never seize his nature. Nevertheless, it is possible for humans to infer God's omnipotence from the effect God makes, e.g. Gregory sees resurrection of the dead as a proof of God's omnipotence (GNO IX,

Gregory states that ‘neither is power, when disjoined from the principle of justice and of wisdom, to be considered in the light of virtue; such species of power is brutal and tyrannous’.⁴² Gregory understands the concept of power as well as all the other concepts attributed to God by human standards: Even the greatest power of God has to observe human principles, otherwise it would be judged unfair and tyrannical.⁴³

After having devoted himself to the definition of justice, in chapter 24 Gregory considers the question where the power of God shows up in the event of the incarnation.⁴⁴ He starts his answer programmatically: ‘In the first place, then, that the omnipotence of the Divine nature should have had strength to descend to the humiliation of humanity, furnishes a clearer proof of that omnipotence than even the greatness and supernatural character of the miracles’.⁴⁵

This argument of Gregory appears as a novelty: The descent to the lowliness and humiliation of human nature builds a surer evidence of God’s omnipotence than any of the great and wonderful miracles. Looking like a paradox, Gregory grounds this argumentation in the nature of God itself:

For that something pre-eminently great should be wrought out by Divine power is, in a manner, in accordance with, and consequent upon the Divine nature; nor is it startling to hear it said that the whole of the created world, and all that is understood to be beyond the range of visible things, subsists by the power of God, His will giving it existence according to His good pleasure.⁴⁶

Gregory interprets the concept of omnipotence in a most radical way: For him, the omnipotent nature of God shows up right in the fact that God can act

256,26-257,13), see Jochen Rexer, ‘Die Bedeutung der Epinoiai in den Predigten Gregors von Nyssa’, in Lenka Karfíková, Scot Douglass and Johannes Zachhuber (eds), *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium II: An English Version with Supporting Studies: Proceedings of the 10th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Olomouc, September 15–18, 2004)* (Leiden, 2007), 505-14, 512.

⁴² *Or. cat.* c.20 (GNO III/4, 53,18-21 Mühlenberg): οὕτε ἡ δύναμις τοῦ δικαίου τε καὶ σοφοῦ κεχωρισμένη ἐν ἀρετῇ θεωρεῖται (θηριῶδες γὰρ ἐστὶ τὸ τοιοῦτον καὶ τυραννικὸν τῆς δυνάμεως εἶδος).

⁴³ See *Or. cat.* c.22 (GNO III/4, 57,10-58,4 Mühlenberg).

⁴⁴ *Or. cat.* c.24 (GNO III/4, 60,24-61,1 Mühlenberg): Ἀλλ’ ἐπιζητεῖν εἰκὸς τὸν τῇ ἀκολουθίᾳ τῶν εἰρημένων προσέχοντα, ποῦ τὸ δυνατὸν τῆς θεότητος, ποῦ ἡ ἀφθαρσία τῆς θείας δυνάμεως ἐν τοῖς εἰρημένοις ὁράται.

⁴⁵ *Or. cat.* c.24 (GNO III/4, 61,4-8 Mühlenberg): πρῶτον μὲν οὖν τὸ τὴν παντοδύναμον φύσιν καὶ πρὸς τὸ ταπεινὸν τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος καταβῆναι ἰσχύσαι πλείονα τῆς δυνάμεως τὴν ἀπόδειξιν ἔχει ἢ τὰ μέγала τε καὶ ὑπερφυῖ τῶν θαυμάτων.

⁴⁶ *Or. cat.* c.24 (GNO III/4, 61,8-13 Mühlenberg): τὸ μὲν γὰρ μέγα τι καὶ ὑψηλὸν ἐξεργασθῆναι παρὰ τῆς θείας δυνάμεως κατὰ φύσιν πῶς ἐστὶ καὶ ἀκόλουθον καὶ οὐκ ἂν τινα ξενισμὸν ἐπάγοι τῇ ἀκοῇ τὸ λέγειν πᾶσαν τὴν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ κτίσιν καὶ πᾶν, ὅτιπερ ἔξω τῶν φαινομένων καταλαμβάνεται, ἐν τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ θεοῦ συστήναι, αὐτοῦ τοῦ θελήματος πρὸς τὸ δοκοῦν οὐσιωθέντος.

against all divine expectations and assumptions.⁴⁷ The exercise of God's power is not limited even by what is opposed to nature.⁴⁸

Gregory explains this by comparison with a flame of fire. For it is the 'peculiar property of the essence of fire to tend upwards', no one would see this natural operation as wonderful: 'But should the flame be seen to stream downwards, like heavy bodies, such a fact would be regarded as a miracle; namely, how fire still remains fire, and yet, by this change of direction in its motion, passes out of its nature by being borne downward'.⁴⁹ For Gregory, in like manner, the superior power of God is not displayed by cosmological phenomena like 'the vastness of the heavens, the bright shining of its constellations, the order of the universe and the unbroken administration over all existence', which Gregory lists as divine matters of course.⁵⁰ Rather, the omnipotence of God can nowhere be seen so clearly as in his condescension (συγκατάβασις) to the weakness of human nature: How that, 'what is lofty, appears in what is lowly and appears there without sacrificing its loftiness', how the deity is mingled with human nature, becoming human and yet still being God (καὶ τοῦτο γίνεται καὶ ἐκεῖνό ἐστιν).⁵¹

⁴⁷ See Reinhard Jakob Kees, *Die Lehre von der Oikonomia Gottes in der Oratio Catechetica Gregors von Nyssa* (Leiden, 1995), 115: 'Im Ansatz nimmt Gregor die hier geforderte Korrektur aber doch vor und zeigt damit, wie konsequent er die allgemein anerkannten, metaphysischen Eigenschaften Gottes vom Christusgeschehen her neu durchdenkt. Die Korrektur liegt darin, daß Gregor den Allmachtsbegriff, der alle Niedrigkeit und jegliche Ohnmacht von Gott fernhält, neu definiert. Für ihn findet Gottes Macht auch an der Niedrigkeit keine Grenze. Sie ist auch zur Ohnmacht fähig. Insofern ist die Aussage nicht zwingend, daß Gott sich gegen seine Natur verhält, da das Hinabsteigen in die Niedrigkeit als eine naturgemäße Betätigung seiner Allmacht angesehen werden kann. Insofern kann man nur, wenn man es oberflächlich betrachtet, sagen, Gott habe sich gegen seine Natur verhalten. Korrekter müßte gesagt werden, er hat nicht der von den Gesprächspartnern als nicht zur Ohnmacht fähig angenommenen Natur entsprochen, wohl aber seiner eigenen Allmacht. Es muß bei diesen Überlegungen nämlich bedacht werden, daß Gott in der Niedrigkeit seine Allmacht nicht eingebüßt hat. Hat er doch bei der Auferstehung gerade durch seine Macht das durch den Tod Getrennte wieder zu unlöslicher Einheit zusammengeschlossen und damit das ihm Eigentümliche, das seiner Natur Gemäße, getan. Darauf verweist Gregor in der die Argumentation zu den Gotteseigenschaften abschließenden Zusammenfassung'.

⁴⁸ *Or. cat.* c.24 (GNO III/4, 61,13-5 Mühlenberg): ἡ δὲ πρὸς τὸ ταπεινὸν κάθοδος περιουσία τίς ἐστι τῆς δυνάμεως οὐδὲν ἐν τοῖς παρὰ φύσιν κωλυομένης ('But this His descent to the humility of man is a kind of superabundant exercise of power, which thus finds no check even in directions which contravene nature').

⁴⁹ *Or. cat.* c.24 (GNO III/4, 61,15-22 Mühlenberg): ὥς γὰρ ἰδίον ἐστι τῆς τοῦ πυρὸς οὐσίας ἡ ἐπὶ τὸ ἄνω φορὰ καὶ οὐκ ἂν τις θαύματος ἄξιον ἐπὶ τῆς φλογὸς ἡγήσαιοτο τὸ φυσικῶς ἐνεργούμενον, εἰ δὲ ῥέουσιν ἐπὶ τὸ κάτω καθ' ὁμοιότητα τῶν ἐμβριθῶν σωμάτων ἴδοι τὴν φλόγα, τὸ τοιοῦτον ἐν θαύματι ποιεῖται, πῶς τὸ πῦρ καὶ διαμένει πῦρ ὃν καὶ ἐν τῷ τρόπῳ τῆς κινήσεως ἐκβαίνει τὴν φύσιν ἐπὶ τὸ κάτω φερόμενον.

⁵⁰ *Or. cat.* c.24 (GNO III/4, 61,22-5 Mühlenberg): οὕτω καὶ τὴν θεῖαν τε καὶ ὑπερέχουσιν δυνάμιν οὐκ οὐρανῶν μεγέθη καὶ φωστήρων αὐγαὶ καὶ ἡ τοῦ παντός διακόσμησις καὶ ἡ διηλεκτής τῶν ὄντων οἰκονομία τοσοῦτον.

⁵¹ *Or. cat.* c.24 (GNO III/4, 61,25-62,3 Mühlenberg): ὅσον ἡ ἐπὶ τὸ ἀσθενὲς τῆς φύσεως ἡμῶν συγκατάβασις δείκνυσσι, πῶς τὸ ὑψηλὸν ἐν τῷ ταπεινῷ γεγόμενον καὶ ἐν τῷ ταπεινῷ

So, as characteristics of God's omnipotence, Gregory does not only see the possibility of God in general to descend to the lowliness of humanity, but also the simultaneity of being at the lofty and the lowly at the same time, which Gregory himself interprets as the coincidence of change and changelessness, of becoming and being in the course of the incarnation process.

Finally, the concept of omnipotence can also be found a few chapters later in the *Catechetical Oration*, when Gregory answers the objection that the propagation of the faith is not all-encompassing. Gregory replies: 'For He Who holds the sovereignty of the universe, out of the excess of this regard for man, permitted something to be under our own control, of which each of us alone is master. Now this is the will, a thing that cannot be enslaved, and of self-determining power, since it is seated in the liberty of thought and mind'.⁵² Following Gregory, God limits his omnipotent power out of esteem for human kind and equips them with the ability of free choice (προαίρεσις), over which only human being itself has power.⁵³ This self-limitation of God enables human freedom and self-determination and allows as a result human beings to lead a virtuous life; otherwise virtue would not exist and 'life would lose its value'.⁵⁴

3. Conclusion

Origen faces the challenge of the omnipotence of God on the one hand with the philosophical tools of his time, through which he arrives at a limitation of God's power, which he justifies epistemologically, philosophically and morally. In these rather theoretical and abstract reflections, Origen repudiates even supposedly pious thoughts as seemingly advantageous arguments for the

καθορᾶται καὶ οὐ καταβαίνει τοῦ ὕψους, πῶς θεότης ἀνθρωπίνη συμπλακεῖσα φύσει καὶ τοῦτο γίνεται καὶ ἐκεῖνό ἐστιν. (translation: A. Meredith).

⁵² *Or. cat.* c.30 (GNO III/4, 75,13-7 Mühlenberg): ὁ γὰρ τοῦ παντὸς τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἔχων δι' ὑπερβολὴν τῆς εἰς τὸν ἄνθρωπον τιμῆς ἀφῆκε τι καὶ ὑπὸ τὴν ἡμετέραν ἐξουσίαν εἶναι, οὗ μόνος ἕκαστός ἐστι κύριος· τοῦτο δὲ ἐστὶν ἡ προαίρεσις, ἀδούλωτόν τι χρῆμα καὶ αὐτεξούσιον ἐν τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ τῆς διανοίας κείμενον.

⁵³ This is evident through the use of ἐξουσία referring to God (ὁ γὰρ τοῦ παντὸς τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἔχων) and humans (τι καὶ ὑπὸ τὴν ἡμετέραν ἐξουσίαν εἶναι) respectively. See also Francisco Bastitta Harriet, 'Does God "Follow" Human Decision? An Interpretation of a Passage from Gregory of Nyssa's *De vita Moysis* (II 86)', *SP* 67 (2011), 101-12, 104: 'The text is extremely rich in meaning. It implies that God almighty has given a portion of his own authority to each individual, though not as a participated essential power, necessarily subordinate to his own, supreme and absolute. It seems as if God himself had confined his own sphere of dominion and had "let loose" or "let fall" – two possible meanings of ἀφίημι – a share of that lordship to human persons. That is why each one is called the "lord" of their decisions in an exclusive way (μόνος ἕκαστός ἐστι κύριος)'.

⁵⁴ *Or. cat.* c.31 (GNO III/4, 76,18-21 Mühlenberg): ἀρετῆς δὲ μὴ οὐσίας, ὁ βίος ἡτίμωται, ἀφήρηται τῶν κατορθούντων ὁ ἔπαινος, ἀκίνδυνος ἡ ἁμαρτία, ἄκριτος ἡ κατὰ τὸν βίον διαφορά.

limitlessness of God's power.⁵⁵ On the other hand, Origen takes the challenge of omnipotence, posed by biblical texts such as *Wisd.* 7:25, as an occasion to analyse the term itself. He thereby shows a realistic concept of language and sees in this term the relation between the active exercise of power and the passive experience of power creatively posited. Following Origen, the omnipotence of God is constituted on two levels of relationship: *ad extra* related to the creation, and *ad intra* related to the Son. While it seems at first glance that the eternity of the world is implied, the argument actually aims at Christ and his eternal pre-existence. But these two levels are closely intertwined, in so far as it is the Son, through whom the Father exercises his omnipotence. Understanding thus omnipotence not merely abstract and theoretical, but rather in its inherent relationality to others, Origen arrives at a positive understanding of omnipotence.

For both Origen and Gregory, the positive usage of the term omnipotence is per se connected with the relationship to God. In this both prove to be biblical theologians, for in biblical texts the notion of omnipotence comes up in concrete situations of experienced rescue, attributed to God.⁵⁶ The passages where Origen is in theoretical struggle with the concept of omnipotence can perhaps be seen as a foretaste of the later medieval speculations.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ See E. Mühlberg, *Unendlichkeit* (1966), 136: 'Origenes hatte ja zeigen wollen, daß die Welt begrenzt sein muß. Seine philosophische Bildung ließ ihm gegen alles vulgär-christliche Gerede nur die eine Aussage sinnvoll erscheinen, daß die Macht Gottes selbst begrenzt ist. Die Schöpfermacht verwirklicht sich ganz in den geschaffenen Dingen. Weil die Schöpfermacht in sich selbst begrenzt ist, deswegen können auch die geschaffenen Dinge in ihrer Gesamtheit begrenzt sein. Die Notwendigkeit des Gedankens liegt für Origenes darin, daß Gott seine Schöpferkraft und damit das aus ihr Gewordene muß denkend umfassen können. Die Vernunft aber kann nur Begrenztes ergreifen. Insofern Gott sich auch selbst denkt, ist sein ganzes Wesen begrenzt. Gregor dagegen sieht gar kein Problem darin, daß Gott die erschaffene Welt umgreift'.

⁵⁶ See R. Feldmeier, 'Ursprung' (1997), 37: 'Die Rede vom "Allmächtigen" wird immer dann falsch, wenn man sie von der Gottesbeziehung isoliert'; M. Bachmann, *Allmacht* (2002), 197-8: 'Man hat es mit einem Epitheton und einem Namenselement zu tun, das vor allem Ausdruck kontrafaktischer Hoffnung ist – aufgrund früher erfahrener Rettungen und angesichts entgegenstehender Mächte'.

⁵⁷ J.-P. Batut, *Pantocrator* (2009), 374 note 125 states: 'la notion de *potentia absoluta* est une invention médiévale'. Concerning the difference between *potentia absoluta* and *potentia ordinata*, see *ibid.* 373-4: 'Dans le cas de la *potentia absoluta*, la puissance, en tant qu'absolue, n'est reliée à rien; dans celui de la *potentia ordinata*, elle est reliée à notre rationalité; mais lorsqu'il est question de la Sagesse au sens biblique, la puissance n'est autre que ce qui relie Dieu à Dieu'. Therefore one has to be aware of not falling unconsciously into these categories when speaking about earlier times. That seems to be the case in Bernard McGinn's EBR-Article on 'Almighty', speaking of 'absolute omnipotence' characterizing all three persons of the Trinity as the outcome of doctrinal development in the 4th century, Bernard McGinn, Art. 'Almighty: III. Christianity', *EBR* 1 (2009), 820-2, 820. Maybe quite the contrary is the case: If one were to classify Origen's and Gregory of Nyssa's notion of omnipotence in this medieval scheme, it appears that the balance is tipped to the side of the *attributiva ordinata* than of the *attributiva absoluta*.

This understanding of omnipotence as defined through its characteristic relationality can be seen in Gregory's discussion with Eunomius, too. It holds true for Gregory as well that the Almighty requires necessarily an object, which is in need of his ruling or sustaining power. In the *Catechetical Oration*, Gregory arrives at a reformulation of the notion of omnipotence. Following Gregory, God shows his omnipotence in particular in being capable of doing the allegedly un-Godly. God exceeds the common notion of God and pushes traditional boundaries: Not in spectacular miracles, but in humiliation is true greatness and power shown.⁵⁸ In this figure a connection between the infinity of God and incarnation might be seen, as a philosophical bridge to the biblical roots of this paradox. Generally speaking, God's omni-potence is capable of im-potence, and particularly in powerlessness his power can be seen *sub contrario*.

In reformulating the God-fittingness from the process of salvation in Jesus Christ,⁵⁹ Gregory implies that the unbefitting cannot be judged on the face of it: Not the outward appearance, such as the humiliation of the fallen mankind, is decisive, but the underlying motivation of that descent. The God-fittingness does not show outwardly, but inwardly. Gregory emphasizes the reason for the incarnation of God right at the beginning of his consideration of it in the *Catechetical Oration*: it is God's love for humankind, his φιλανθρωπία.⁶⁰ This love forms the crucial point even and especially for the understanding of omnipotence: The kenosis of God's omni-potence to im-potence can only be understood as a decisive factor of God's sovereignty, if the notion of power is interpreted as love.⁶¹

This is evident precisely in the course of Gregory's argument in the *Catechetical Oration*: Towards Satan, God relinquishes a demonstration of his power, showing thereby his respect and esteem against his own creature.

⁵⁸ This does not mean that the omnipotence of God is 'at discount', rather at its heights – contra A. Meredith, 'God-Fittingness' (1990), 512, who claims: 'In this process God becomes a very reasonable, value directed reality but hardly one who can transcend our idea of order and right. In such a vision omnipotence seems to be at a discount'.

⁵⁹ Khaled Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, 2011), 203 sees in the manifestation of divine power in sharing the lowliness of the human condition the culmination of 'Gregory's project of a christological reconstruction of divine transcendence'.

⁶⁰ *Or. cat.* c.15 (GNO III/4, 43,15-8 Mühlenberg): εἰ οὖν ἴδιον γνῶρισμα τῆς θείας φύσεως ἢ φιλανθρωπία, ἔχεις ὃν ἐπεξήγησας λόγον, ἔχεις τὴν αἰτίαν τῆς ἐν ἀνθρώποις τοῦ θεοῦ παρουσίας ('If, then, love of man be a special characteristic of the Divine nature, here is the reason for which you are in search, here is the cause of the presence of God among men').

⁶¹ James Herbert Srawley, *The Catechetical Oration of Gregory of Nyssa* (Cambridge, 1903), 91 states: 'Gregory maintains that the power of God can only be considered in conjunction with the purpose of love to which it was directed. The love of God for man provided the most splendid occasion for the exercise of His omnipotence. All through this treatise Gregory emphasizes the moral glory exhibited in the creation and redemption of man'.

This illustrates to what extent Gregory interprets God's power as an expression of his love. 'Only love can thus exert power, that others will not be disempowered, but empowered'⁶² – empowered to eternal communion with God.

⁶² Concerning God's power, R. Feldmeier, 'Ursprung' (1997), 39 states: 'Die Hingabe und Ohnmacht des Gekreuzigten muß als entscheidendes Moment von Gottes Herrschaft verstanden werden. Dies aber ist nur möglich, wenn man den Gedanken der Macht durch den der Liebe interpretiert. Nur die Liebe vermag so Macht auszuüben, dass dadurch andere nicht ent-mächtigt, sondern zum eigenen Personsein er-mächtigt werden'.

Theological Remarks on Gregory of Nyssa's Christological Language of 'Mixture'

Miguel BRUGAROLAS, Universidad de Navarra, Pamplona, España

ABSTRACT

Gregory of Nyssa's Christological language of mixture received a long criticism for its technical deficiency. However, despite its lack of precision and its limits, Gregory seems to use the language of *mixture* in a coherent way. From the perspective of the internal *akolouthia* of Gregory's thought, his theological use of *mixture* vocabulary seems to refer to a kind of ineffable union closely related with two main principles of his doctrine: the infinite transcendence of God and his real presence through his *economy*. The Christological sense of *mixture* is used in a way that, preserving God's transcendence, represents an effort to avoid the deficient economy of salvation that is behind the conception of the Incarnation in both the Arian subordinationism and the Apollinarian Christology. This article deals, through the analysis of some selected texts, with the unity and distinction of *theology* and *economy* seen from the perspective of Gregory's Christological language. Our aim is to point out that Gregory's Christology, expressed on a non-technical vocabulary, bears an internal theological sense that is consistent with his wide comprehension of creation, restoration and spiritual life.

Introduction

Even though Gregory of Nyssa's Christological vocabulary, seen from the standpoint of *Dogmengeschichte*,¹ has been seen as an early, non-technical, and to some extent puzzling contribution,² when considered in the context of Gregory's entire thought, Christology appears to be a coherent cornerstone that to

¹ Especially when compared with the fifth century Christological developments. See Brian E. Daley, 'Divine Transcendence and Human Transformation: Gregory of Nyssa's Anti-Apollinarian Christology', *SP* 32 (1997), 87-95, 95.

² Frequently the lack of precision in Gregory's technical Christological vocabulary has been a source of criticism of his Christology, which has been described both as monophysite and diophysite. A common point of departure in the debate on Gregory's Christology is J. Tixeront's criticism of Gregory's Christological language. See Joseph Tixeront, *Histoire des dogmes dans l'antiquité chrétienne. II: De Saint Athanase à Saint Augustin (318-430)* (Paris, 1931), 128-9; John Norman D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York, 1978), 298-300; Alois Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche. Band 1: Von der Apostolischen Zeit bis zum Konzil von Chalcedon (451)* (Freiburg, 1979), 539-47. Regarding recent critical interpretations of Gregory's Christology see Morwenna Ludlow, *Gregory of Nyssa, Ancient and (Post)modern* (Oxford, 2007), 97-9.

a certain degree determines the character of his entire theology.³ For this reason the assessment of his Christological language, which might not have otherwise been recognized, takes on importance in the study of his entire theology. In fact, Gregory's challenging way of dealing with the formidable question of the relation between the divine and the human in Christ as well as its reflections concerning the complexity of his Christological language continue to be a matter of great theological interest.

Hence, it is a worthwhile venture to delve into Gregory's use of *mixture* language⁴ regarding the union and relationship between the divine and the human in the economy of the Incarnation. This has been the object of serious studies in recent decades and is still under discussion among scholars.⁵ This article specifically addresses the unity of the divine theology and economy seen from the perspective of Gregory's Christological language. The Christological use of *mixture* vocabulary, viewed within the context of the internal coherence of Gregory's thought, seems to refer to a kind of ineffable union closely related to two main principles of his doctrine: the infinite transcendence of God and his real presence to humanity and creation through his *economy*. In what follows, I aim to show how Gregory's multi-faceted use of *mixture* can be considered a valuable effort to preserve God's transcendence and his true presence to humanity in Christ.

³ A considerable number of scholars argued that Gregory of Nyssa's thought is primarily Christocentric. See Anthony Meredith, 'Origen's *De Principiis* and Gregory of Nyssa's *Oratio catechetica*', *Heythrop Journal* 36 (1996), 1-14; Jean Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique* (Paris, 1944), 252-8, 309; Walther Völker, *Gregor von Nyssa als Mystiker* (Wiesbaden, 1955), 269-74; Elias D. Moutsoulas, 'The person of Jesus Christ in St. Gregory of Nyssa', in *id.*, *Jesus Christ in St. Gregory on Nyssa's Theology* (Athens, 2005), 102-13, 107; Lucas F. Mateo-Seco, 'Christology', in *id.* and Giulio Maspero (eds), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa* (Leiden, 2010), 139-52, 139.

⁴ Especially the terms 'μῖξις', 'κρῶσις' and their compounds, as well as the prominent image of the drop of vinegar mingled with the ocean.

⁵ The studies of J.-R. Bouchet continue to be a point of reference: See Jean-René Bouchet, 'Le vocabulaire de l'union et du rapport des natures chez Grégoire de Nysse', *RThom* 68 (1968), 533-82; *id.*, 'A propos d'une image christologique de Grégoire de Nysse', *RThom* 67 (1967), 584-88. Among the many contributions to this field, the following are noteworthy: Jean Daniélou, *L'être et le temps chez Grégoire de Nysse* (Leiden, 1970), 116-32; Christopher Stead, 'Ontology and Terminology in Gregory of Nyssa', in Heinrich Dörrie, Margarete Altenburger and Uta Schramm (eds), *Gregor von Nyssa und die Philosophie* (Leiden, 1976), 107-27; Lucas F. Mateo-Seco, 'Notas sobre el lenguaje cristológico de Gregorio de Nisa', *ScrTh* 35 (2003), 89-112; Sarah Coakley, "'Mingling'" in Gregory of Nyssa's Christology: A Reconsideration', in Andreas Schuele and Günter Thomas (eds), *Who is Jesus Christ for us Today? Pathways to Contemporary Christology* (Louisville, 2009), 72-84; Morwenna Ludlow, *Gregory of Nyssa, Ancient and (Post)-modern* (2007), 98-100; Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, 'Contra Eunomium III 3', in Johan Leemans and Matthieu Cassin (eds), *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium III. An English Translation with Commentary and Supporting Studies. Proceedings of the 12th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Leuven, 14-17 September 2010)* (Leiden, 2014), 293-312; Johannes Zachhuber, 'Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium III 4', in J. Leemans and M. Cassin, *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium III* (2014), 313-34.

The following pages are divided into three parts and a final conclusion. They begin with a brief general approach to Gregory's mixture terminology and the assessment it has received in recent research, which will serve as a framework for our investigation. The second section then addresses the economic character that characterizes Gregory's Christology, while the third section, entitled 'The unity of *theology* and *economy*', underscores some important aspects of Gregory's understanding of the unity of the divine and the human in Christ. Finally, the conclusion points out very briefly how Gregory's Christology in his essential economic character leads directly to Pneumatology. The paschal transformation of human nature through the economy of the flesh cannot be understood without considering the intimate bond between the Son and the Holy Spirit both in the immanent Trinity and in his economy of salvation.⁶

I. Gregory's Christological language

At the time of Gregory's writings, the Christological language concerning the unity of Christ was still imprecise and yet to be determined. For this reason, from Gregory's description of the union of the incarnate Logos with his own humanity by means of *mixture of natures*, it does not automatically follow that his Christology bears a similarity to later monophysitism, nor can it be deduced that he is not concerned with the principal Christological questions.⁷ As many scholars maintain, Gregory's terminology – especially those expressions that seems to be more obscure – should be interpreted in the context of Gregory's entire theology and spiritual doctrine.⁸ From this perspective, Gregory's dealing with the core questions of Christology seems to reach a laudable height in its content despite the unfixed form of his terminology.

⁶ See Miguel Brugarolas, 'Anointing and Kingdom: Some Aspects of Gregory of Nyssa's Pneumatology', *SP* 67 (2013), 113-9; *id.*, 'The Holy Spirit as the Glory of Christ: Gregory of Nyssa on John 17:22', in Nicu Dumitrescu (ed.), *The Ecumenical Legacy of the Cappadocians* (London, 2015), 247-63.

⁷ B. Daley, who has rightly stressed the fundamental soteriological dimension of Gregory's Christology, observes that Gregory is not concerned with elaborating a speculative Christology regarding the union of natures in Christ. For Daley, Gregory does not go into the identification of what in Christ is one and what is distinct (see Brian E. Daley, 'Divine Transcendence and Human Transformation: Gregory of Nyssa's Anti-Apollinarian Christology' [1997], 95). However, what seems clear is that for Gregory the soteriological focus that shapes his Christology is not only spiritual but also speculative; Christology and Soteriology cannot be divided in Gregory's thought, which is characterized by its blending of dogmatic and mystical theology.

⁸ In this regard, E. Moutsoulas, comments: 'Attention is necessary not to be led to false conclusions from certain phrases of Gregory in reference either to the Divine or the human nature. Therefore, it becomes necessary that we always have in mind his overall teaching about the relationship between the two natures', Elias D. Moutsoulas, *The Incarnation of the Word and the Theosis of Man according to the Teaching of Gregory of Nyssa* (Athens, 2000), 217.

Gregory often concerns himself with terminology and the exactitude of theological statements not only regarding the Trinitarian doctrine but also when dealing with Christological matters. We see this, for example, in the beginning of the *Antirrheticus* in which Gregory blames Apolinarius for his intentional use of the term σάρκωσις;⁹ or his arguments against the existence of ‘two Sons’ or ‘two Christs’;¹⁰ or even his commentary of 1Cor. 15:28, dedicated entirely to explain the true sense of the ‘submission’ (ὕποταγή) of the Son.¹¹ Moreover, Gregory is not only concerned with the precision of language but also – and this is very important – with the congruous connexion of the various statements of Christian faith. This is the concatenation (*akolouthia*) of the mysteries that permeates Gregory’s writings and leads him to defend the ‘doctrine of piety’ in its totality.¹² Gregory’s caution and care are apparent, for instance, when he writes about the Incarnation in order to avoid jeopardizing the divine attributes – *i.e.* eternity, immutability, *etc.* – and reducing the full import of the divine economy of salvation, which is a *philanthropic* economy of the birth, death and resurrection of Christ. Therefore, even though naturally Gregory does not situate his Christology on the technical distinction of *hypostasis* and *physis*, it is reasonable to consider his frequent and varied descriptions of the Incarnation as a serious expression of his deep theological convictions about the mystery of Christ.

Behind the variability of his language, Gregory takes an apophatic approach to the ‘great mystery of the divine Incarnation’.¹³ The union of the divine and the human in Christ is an ineffable (ἄρρητον) and inexpressible (ἀνέκφραστον)¹⁴ mystery. Gregory, recognizing the importance of history,¹⁵ closely follows the narrative of the New Testament¹⁶ and distinguishes the indisputable fact of the Incarnation – which is attested by the miracles of

⁹ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Antirrheticus adversus Apolinarium*, ed. Fridericus Mueller, GNO III/1 (Leiden, 1958), 132-5.

¹⁰ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Theophilum adversus Apolinaristas*, ed. Fridericus Mueller, GNO III/1 (Leiden, 1958), 120-1; 128; *Contra Eunomium* III 3, ed. Wernerus Jaeger, GNO II (Leiden, 1960), 107-33.

¹¹ See Gregory of Nyssa, *In illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*, ed. J. Kenneth Downing, GNO III/2 (Leiden, 1987), 3-28.

¹² Gregory uses the term εὐσέβεια to allude to the faith and the orthodox doctrine about God, specifically in the scope of Christology and Pneumatology. See Javier Ibáñez and Fernando Mendoza, ‘Naturaleza de la «eusebeia» en Gregorio de Nisa’, in H. Dörrie, M. Altenburger and U. Schramm (eds), *Gregor von Nyssa und die Philosophie* (1976), 261-77.

¹³ Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica*, ed. Ekkehardus Mühlenberg, GNO III/4 (Leiden, 1996), 67: τὸ μέγα μυστήριον τῆς θείας ἐνανθρωπήσεως.

¹⁴ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica*, ed. E. Mühlenberg, GNO III/4, 48.

¹⁵ See James H. Strawley, *The Catechetical Oration of Gregory of Nyssa* (Cambridge, 1903), xxviii-xxix.

¹⁶ It is significant, for example, how Gregory of Nyssa’s Christology seems to be deeply shaped by the hymn of *Phil* 2:6-9 and the prologue of *John*, see Lucas F. Mateo-Seco, *Estudios sobre la cristología de Gregorio de Nisa* (Pamplona, 1978), 29-77.

Christ,¹⁷ primarily the Virgin birth¹⁸ and the Resurrection¹⁹ – from the manner of the Incarnation that is inscrutable.²⁰

The Incarnation is, according to Gregory, a true and inseparable union (ἔνωσις),²¹ the exact unity of the flesh and the Divinity that assumed it;²² a real contact (ἄπτω) of God with human nature;²³ the intertwining (συμπλοκή)²⁴ with our humanity by the One who, being true God, has born in our human nature.²⁵ In addition to this and many other descriptions, some of them very poetical,²⁶ Gregory widely employs a vocabulary with more philosophical implications like *mixis* or *krasis*.²⁷ These terms were used in different ways and with varied nuances by Aristotelians, Stoics, and Platonists in their investigations of the philosophy of change, cosmology, and the relations between the intelligible and the sensible as the two polarities of existing things.²⁸ Gregory's vast philosophical culture enables him to freely employ these sources and thus to frequently modify their content in order to express his own thought,²⁹ which

¹⁷ See, Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica*, ed. E. Mühlenberg, GNO III/4, 40-1.

¹⁸ Gregory deals extensively with Christ's virginal birth in: *In Canticum canticorum* XIII, ed. Hermannus Langerbeck, GNO VI (Leiden, 1960), 387-8; and *In diem natalem*, ed. Friedhelm Mann, GNO X/2 (Leiden, 1996), 246-7; 264-5. See Lucas F. Mateo-Seco, 'La mariología en San Gregorio de Nisa', *ScrTh* 10 (1978), 409-66, 431-3; Mauricio Gordillo, 'La virginidad trascendente de María Madre de Dios en san Gregorio de Nisa y en la antigua tradición de la Iglesia', *Estudios Marianos* 21 (1960), 117-55.

¹⁹ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica*, ed. E. Mühlenberg, GNO III/4, 48-9. See Lucas F. Mateo-Seco, *Estudios sobre la cristología de San Gregorio de Nisa* (Pamplona, 1978), 309-82.

²⁰ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica*, ed. E. Mühlenberg, GNO III/4, 39-41.

²¹ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Theophilum*, ed. F. Mueller, GNO III/1, 128, 3-4.

²² See Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Theophilum*, ed. F. Mueller, GNO III/1, 127, 15-6.

²³ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica*, ed. E. Mühlenberg, GNO III/4, 44-6.

²⁴ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica*, ed. E. Mühlenberg, GNO III/4, 62.

²⁵ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica*, ed. E. Mühlenberg, GNO III/4, 36 and 39. See Raymond Winling, *Grégoire de Nysse. Discours Catéchétique*, Sources Chrétiennes 453 (Paris, 2000), 56-60.

²⁶ See, for example, the many allusions to the Incarnation that can be found elsewhere in the *In Canticum*. As S. Coakley observes, in the *Commentary on the Song of Songs* 'Gregory has deployed a particular, and very subtle, form of apophatic speech in expressing his Christology', see S. Coakley, '"Mingling" in Gregory of Nyssa's Christology' (2009), 179. I studied the Christology of Gregory's *In Canticum*: see Miguel Brugarolas, 'The Incarnate Logos: Gregory of Nyssa's *In Canticum canticorum* Christological core', in Giulio Maspero, Miguel Brugarolas and Ilaria Vigorelli (eds), *Proceedings of the 14th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa*, forthcoming 2017.

²⁷ See Richard Sorabji, *The Philosophy of the Commentators, 200-600 AD. Volume 2. Physics* (Ithaca, 2005), 290-315.

²⁸ On Gregory's use of these terms, the following broad study still serves as a valuable reference: Jean-René Bouchet, 'Le vocabulaire de l'union et du rapport des natures chez Grégoire de Nysse' (1968).

²⁹ See Jean Daniélou, 'Orientations actuelles de la recherche sur Grégoire de Nysse', in Marguerite Harl (ed.), *Écriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse. Actes du Colloque de Chevetogne (22-26 Septembre 1969)* (Leiden, 1971), 8-9.

is mainly ruled by Sacred Scripture as the principal criterion for his philosophical hermeneutic.³⁰

In the framework of this vocabulary, the famous image of the drop of vinegar mingled with the ocean, which Gregory uses as a metaphor of the unity and relation between the human and divine natures of Christ, is especially relevant. Particularly significant is the fact that Gregory employs this metaphor in his three most relevant polemic works concerning Christology: *Contra Eunomium* III 3,68 (GNO II 133), *Antirrheticus adversus Apolinarium* (GNO III/1 201, 10-7), and *Ad Theophilum adversus Apolinaristas* (GNO III/1 126, 17-21). In *Contra Eunomium* III he writes:

Thus stirring that small first-fruit of our race into the infinity of the divine power, he made that also just what he himself was: the form of a slave, Lord, the man from Mary, Christ, the one who was crucified in weakness, Life and Power; and he did all those things which in true religion are attributed to God the Word, in the one whom the Word assumed. So these things should not appear to be attributed distinctly to one or the other by itself, but by mingling with the divine, the mortal nature is renewed to match the dominant element, and shares the power of the deity, as if one might say that the drop of vinegar mingled with the ocean is made into sea by the mixing, because the natural quality of this liquid no longer remains in the infinity of the dominant element.³¹

As M. Ludlow pointed out, the image of a drop of wine dissolved into a vast mass of water had different meanings in Stoic and Aristotelian theories with regard to mixture and neither is exactly the meaning Gregory tries to convey.³² For the Stoics, it expresses a true mixture where both elements preserve their proper substance and remain in actual existence,³³ whereas Aristotle's use of this image refers not to a genuine mixture but to a total absorption, in which the wine is dissolved and becomes water.³⁴ Gregory's view is closer to that of Aristotle inasmuch as he stresses the transformation of Christ's human nature which becomes exalted and immortal,³⁵ but he distances himself from Aristotle asserting that the *anakrasis* of the human and the divine in Christ is a strictly one-sided transformation,³⁶ which does not entail any change or increase in the predominant reality of the mixture, that is, the infinite and immutable God.

³⁰ Concerning this matter, see Mariette Canevet, *Grégoire de Nysse et l'herméneutique biblique. Étude des rapports entre le langage et la connaissance de Dieu* (Paris, 1983), 65-81; John Behr, *Formation of Christian Theology. Volume 2: The Nicene Faith. Part Two: One of the Holy Trinity* (Crestwood, 2004), 475.

³¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* III 3,68, ed. W. Jaeger, GNO II 132-3; tr. Stuart G. Hall in J. Leemans and M. Cassin (eds), *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium III* (2014), 121.

³² See M. Ludlow, *Gregory of Nyssa, Ancient and (Post)modern* (2007), 99.

³³ See Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De mixtione* (216,14; 217,2).

³⁴ See Aristotle, *De generatione et corruptione* 1.10 (327a34-b6).

³⁵ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* III 3, 44, ed. W. Jaeger, GNO II 123.

³⁶ The expression is Radde-Gallwitz's: see A. Radde-Gallwitz, 'Contra Eunomium III 3', in J. Leemans and M. Cassin, *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium III* (2014), 308.

Likewise, Gregory's notion differs widely from the Stoics' since for them the blended elements can be separated again because they preserve their proper substance in the mixture.³⁷ It seems that Gregory, instead of merely ascribing himself to a concrete philosophical theory of mixture, assumes this image of the drop and the sea and modifies its content so as to make it suitable for his own Christological purposes.

J.-R. Bouchet underscores that in Gregory's texts the image is slightly modified: whereas according to Aristotle and the Stoics the first element of the mixture is a drop of wine, for Gregory it is not wine but vinegar, and – what is more important – this change seems to be grounded on theological reasons.³⁸ As Bouchet asserts, in the Hippocratic medical tradition with which Gregory was familiar, vinegar blended with seawater was considered a therapeutic remedy.³⁹ With this in mind it is easy to draw out the deep meaning of Gregory's image, which clearly continues in line with his main Christological teachings. Gregory is describing the healing effect of the Incarnation and in doing so reveals its soteriological content. The drop of vinegar blended with the boundless sea is not only an image of the relation between the human and the divine in Christ, but also an explanation of the therapeutic character of the Incarnation for our human nature. Christ is the true Physician, who healed the sickness of fallen human nature.⁴⁰ Gregory, being closely related to the tradition of Origen, often depicts the economy of salvation in terms of a therapeutic economy for the healing of human sin.⁴¹

³⁷ See Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De mixtione* (216,14; 217,2); Arius Didymus, *fr.* 28, *ap.* Stobaeum 1,153-5 (SVF 2, 417). About the Stoic notion of mixture see: Robert B. Todd, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on Stoic Physics. A Study of the De Mixtione with Preliminary Essays, Text, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden, 1976), 29-73.

³⁸ See Jean-René Bouchet, 'A propos d'une image christologique de Grégoire de Nysse' (1967), 586-8. He also notes that Gregory, instead of using the term *σταλαγμός* present in the philosophical sources of this image, prefers *σταγών*, maybe as an allusion to *Sir.* 18:10.

³⁹ See J.-R. Bouchet, 'A propos d'une image christologique de Grégoire de Nysse' (1967), 587. About the medical knowledge of Gregory of Nyssa see Mary Emily Keenan, 'Saint Gregory of Nyssa and Medical Profession', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 15 (1944), 150-61; José Janini Cuesta, *La antropología y la medicina pastoral de san Gregorio de Nisa* (Madrid, 1946); Michael Dörnemann, *Krankheit und Heilung in der Theologie der frühen Kirchenväter* (Tübingen, 2003), 247-73; Annick Lallemand, 'Références médicales et exégèse spirituelle chez Grégoire de Nysse', in Véronique Boudon-Millot and Bernard Pouderon (eds), *Les Pères de l'Église face à la science médicale de leur temps* (Paris, 2005), 401-26.

⁴⁰ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Theophilum*, ed. F. Mueller, GNO III/1, 124; *Contra Eunomium* III 4, ed. W. Jaeger, GNO II 145.

⁴¹ See, namely, Gregory of Nyssa, *Epistula* 3,15, ed. Georgius Pasquali, GNO VIII/1 (Leiden, 1959), 23-4; tr. Anna Silvas, *Gregory of Nyssa: The Letters* (Leiden, 2007), 128: 'And inasmuch as the deity is incorruptible, though it had come to be in a corruptible body, so it was not altered by any change even as it healed what was changeable in our soul, just as in the art of medicine, he who is treating bodily ills, in touching the patient, does not himself become infected, but thoroughly heals that which is diseased'.

Along with the medical-soteriological significance of this metaphor, many scholars have pointed out another aspect that is also very much in line with Gregory's thought: the dynamic transformation of human nature into the divine, or better, the divinization of human nature through its assumption by the Logos and its final perfection accomplished in the Resurrection. At least, the use of the metaphor in the fragment of the *Antirrheticus* clearly references the humanity of Christ after his Resurrection.⁴² With the Resurrection, the mortal nature of Christ was transformed into the divine inasmuch as it is no longer mortal or perishable, but immortal and glorious. According to A. Radde-Gallwitz, who has conducted a thorough study of the passage of *Contra Eunomium* III where Gregory uses the vinegar drop image, Gregory's Christology is inherently bound to the narrative of passion and glorification; its main point is the dynamic of the transformation of human nature through the Resurrection.⁴³

Employing this metaphor, Gregory goes into the essentially soteriological character of the union of the human and the divine natures in Christ.⁴⁴ Therefore, to better understand Gregory's notion of the unity of Christ, it is necessary to analyse his understanding of the divine *economy*, as well as its distinction and unity with the divine *theology*.

II. The economy of Incarnation

As B. Daley noted, for Arian subordinationism as well as for Apolinarius, the Logos is 'the divine spiritual mind governing the universe' and 'the mind of the saviour' that realizes in him what it constantly achieved on a cosmic scale for the preservation of creation.⁴⁵ From this, the Arians subordinate the Logos insofar as they deem him a creature, while Apolinarius, on the other hand, inserts into the eternity of God the humanity of Christ as 'the man from heaven' (1Cor. 15:47-8).⁴⁶ Both positions lead to a deficient *economy* of salvation. The soteriological argument against the Arians is already clear in

⁴² See Ivan V. Popov, 'The Idea of Deification in the Early Eastern Church', in Vladimir Kharlamov (ed.), *Theosis. Deification in Christian Theology* (Cambridge, 2012), II 50. Suggesting affirmations about the joining together with the divinity and the effects of Resurrection can be found in: Gregory of Nyssa, *Refutatio confessiones Eunomii* 177, ed. Wernerus Jaeger, GNO II (Leiden, 1960), 386; *Oratio catechetica*, ed. E. Mühlenberg, GNO III/4, 48-9; and *De tridui inter mortem et resurrectionem Domini nostri Iesu Christi spatio*, ed. Ernestus Gebhardt, GNO IX (Leiden, 1967), 294.

⁴³ See A. Radde-Gallwitz, 'Contra Eunomium III 3' (2014), 293-312.

⁴⁴ See Elias D. Moutsoulas, Γρηγόριος Νύσσης. Βίος, Συγγράμματα, Διδασκαλία (Athens, 1997), 408-31.

⁴⁵ See Brian E. Daley, "'Heavenly Man" and "Eternal Christ": Apollinarius and Gregory of Nyssa on the Personal Identity of the Savior', *J ECS* 10 (2002), 469-88, 475.

⁴⁶ Gregory of Nazianzus affirms that for Apolinarius human nature was not assumed by Christ in the Incarnation but was in the Son from the beginning (see Gregory of Nazianzus, *Epist.* 202 [SC 208, 90]).

Athanasius: no one who denies the perfect divinity of the Logos can be saved, since it is the case that only if the Logos is true God he can be the saviour. The Apollinarian understanding of Christ results in an equally inadequate soteriology. For Apollinarius Christ is a 'timeless reality':⁴⁷ he is *unlike* us and salvation comes 'through the imitation of this Christ who is radically different from ourselves'.⁴⁸ Salvation would thus somehow be achieved through an ideal mechanical guidance of the Logos, much more similar to a kind of hierarchical automatism than to a true restoration of human nature.

Even if Gregory's Christological vocabulary and some of his expressions would appear to be very similar to those of Apollinarius, Gregory's view does not coincide with that of Apollinarius. Precisely because Gregory preserves the transcendence of God and the perfect divine nature of the Logos, he is able to comprehend the *economy of the flesh* in its concrete historical truth. The divine economy, and thus the salvation of human nature, are not realized in terms of an *ideal* governance of the Divine Mind upon human nature, but according to a true union of the Logos with the human nature that he assumed when he was born in the *flesh*.⁴⁹ For Gregory the Incarnation not only implies the assumption of a perfect humanity, but it also means taking on the life and the history of man.⁵⁰ This has important consequences for the spiritual life of Christians, which consists in imitating (μίμησις) the life of Christ. For Gregory, as Daley states, 'God can "assume" this creature, can make him his own – and in "assuming" him can "heal" all those who share the same human ancestry and structure – simply because God is utterly different from the human creature in every aspect of God's being'.⁵¹ In this sense, the more 'diophysite' language in Gregory's works against Apollinarius underscores the transcendence of God and the completeness of human nature so as to prevent the ambiguity of Apollinarianism from blurring the boundaries between God and human nature.

Through the *theology-economy* axis, Gregory illuminates both the truth of the absolute divinity of the Logos and the truth of his own human nature taken on by the Incarnation. For this reason, Gregory's Christology and Soteriology cannot be separated, as he himself affirms: 'When we recognize two aspects of Christ, the Divine and the human (he is divine in nature, human in economical

⁴⁷ Rowan A. Greer, 'The Man from Heaven: Paul's Last Adam and Apollinarius's Christ', in William S. Babcock (ed.), *Paul and the Legacies of Paul* (Dallas, 1990), 165-82, 171.

⁴⁸ B. Daley, "'Heavenly Man" and "Eternal Christ"' (2002), 478.

⁴⁹ See Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum canticorum* IV, ed. H. Langerbeck, GNO VI 107, 5-8. As it is revealed in the *In Canticum*, for Gregory all the mystical doctrine about union with Christ is based on his character as Mediator, and the nature of this mediation is based on the strict and radical dependence on the fact that in Christ two abysses are joined. See Lucas F. Mateo-Seco, 'La cristología del *In Canticum Canticorum*', in Hubertus R. Drobner and Christoph Klock (eds), *Studien zu Gregor von Nyssa und der Christlichen Spätantike* (Leiden, 1990), 173-90, 189.

⁵⁰ See Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum canticorum* XI, ed. H. Langerbeck, GNO VI 338, 2-14.

⁵¹ B. Daley, "'Heavenly Man" and "Eternal Christ"' (2002), 487.

dispensation), we confirm his eternal quality by his Divinity and consider his created quality by his human nature'.⁵²

The movement of Gregory's conception of divine economy is not the subordination of the Logos, nor the insertion of a heavenly man into the scope of eternity, but the free and philanthropic descent of the Logos. The movement is fundamentally downward; it is the Word that descends and lowers himself toward man. This is expressed frequently in his references – direct and indirect – to important texts from the NT. The texts *John* 1:14, *Phil.* 2:6-9, and *1Tim.* 3:16 are preferred by Gregory because they contain the two essential Christological affirmations: the divinity of Christ and the truth of the assumption of the human nature.⁵³ In the Incarnation, the descent of the Logos is, in a certain sense, infinite, as it is in a certain way the distance between God and man.⁵⁴ As a result of the economy, the Logos has descended to the point of making himself accessible to men.

The Logos, who *is in the beginning and is with God* (*John* 1:1), has *become flesh* (*John* 1:14) in these last days (*Heb.* 1:2) out of love for humanity, by sharing in the humble reality of our nature; by this means, he mingled with what is human and received our entire nature within himself, so that the human might mingle with what is divine and be divinized with it, and that the whole mass of our nature might be made holy through that first-fruit (*Rom.* 11:16).⁵⁵

Gregory's thought in these words of the *Antirrheticus* is clear: the *becoming flesh* of the Logos is essentially economical. Therefore, it happens not in the beginning but in 'the last days', that is, in a concrete moment of history and time and not in the infinite eternity of God. Moreover, it is motivated by the Logos' *philanthropy* and not by a necessity of nature since the Logos himself is the true agent of the Incarnation. Finally, it has as a result the transformation of human nature, which is made holy and divinized. For Gregory, God is *philánthropos*;⁵⁶ and his *humanitas*, his 'love for men' is the cause of the Incarnation.⁵⁷ As W. Völker states, the divine *philanthropía* is the deepest reason for the Incarnation

⁵² Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Simplicium*, ed. Fridericus Mueller, GNO III/1 (Leiden, 1958), 63: ὥστε ἐπειδὴ δύο περὶ Χριστοῦ γινώσκομεν, τὸ μὲν θεῖον τὸ δὲ ἀνθρώπινον (ἐν μὲν τῇ φύσει τὸ θεῖον, ἐν δὲ τῇ οἰκονομίᾳ τὸ κατὰ ἄνθρωπον), ἀκολούθως τὸ μὲν αἰδίον τῇ θεότητι προσμαρτυροῦμεν, τὸ δὲ κτιστὸν τῇ ἀνθρωπίνῃ λογιζόμεθα φύσει.

⁵³ See M. Canévet, *Grégoire de Nysse et l'herméneutique biblique* (1983), 240.

⁵⁴ See L.F. Mateo-Seco, 'Notas sobre el lenguaje cristológico de Gregorio de Nisa' (2003), 99.

⁵⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *Antirrheticus*, ed. F. Mueller, GNO III/1, 151.

⁵⁶ In patristic theology, *philanthropía* belongs to God in the strictest sense. As Cyril of Jerusalem says, God is 'perfect in *philanthropía*' (τέλειος ἐν φιλανθρωπία), *Catechesis* VI 8 (PG 33, 552). See Juan Ignacio Ruiz Aldaz, 'La recepción del concepto de *philanthropía* en la literatura cristiana de los dos primeros siglos', *ScrTh* 42 (2010), 277-308, 278.

⁵⁷ See John H. Strawley, *The Catechetical Oration of Gregory of Nyssa* (Cambridge, 1956), 63⁸. See Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* III 4, 31-2, ed. W. Jaeger, GNO II 146, 9-22. Gregory's words in *Cant* IV are also particularly expressive, when he says referring to God that: 'ἡφιλανθρωπία is your name' (Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum canticorum* IV, ed. H. Langerbeck, GNO VI 107, 4).

and the only perspective that permits us to understand properly the whole of the work of salvation.⁵⁸ By comparing his thought with that of Apolinarius, Gregory makes his own position even clearer:

Let the careful judge determine which is more reverent, whether, as we say, his glory dwells in our world by economical dispensation or, as he [Apolinarius] says, the Divinity does not acquire his flesh for our benefit but it is consubstantial and connatural with him.⁵⁹

B. Daley correctly labelled Gregory's Christology as a 'Christology of transformation' by stressing its soteriological character and the two principles that are at its base: the immutability of God and the mutability of human nature.⁶⁰ Indeed, Gregory's transformative assumption of human nature by the Logos would be misunderstood if it is not considered from the standpoint of his clear distinction between the *theology* of the Logos and the *economy* of the Incarnation. In fact, Gregory affirms that the transformation of Christ's human nature from mortality to immortality is a key argument that safeguards the truth of the Incarnation against the accusation of 'two Sons' and of the expansion of the Trinity into a 'Tetrad'.⁶¹ This is so precisely because the assumption of human nature and its transformation take place in the *economy* and not in the *theology*. Human nature is divinized through the union of Christ with God, while God remains perfect in his simplicity.

The essential economic character that the Incarnation has in Gregory's Christology makes it clear that the reason for the union comes from the free will of the eternal Logos. In this respect, Gregory writes: 'Christ did not suffer death because he had been born; rather, it was because of death that he chose to be born. Eternal Life had no need of life, but he entered our bodily existence in

⁵⁸ See Walther Völker, 'Zur Gotteslehre Gregors von Nyssa', *VigChr* 9 (1955), 103-28, 123. Gregory often expresses the idea that *philanthropia* is the reason for the Incarnation; a particularly beautiful instance is *In Canticum canticorum* XIV, ed. H. Langerbeck, GNO VI 427, 13. Commenting on the parable of the Good Samaritan, Gregory says that 'the Word explained, in narrative form (*Luke* 10:25-9), his whole economy of love for humanity [...] He is the one who made himself our neighbour through his love for men, who was born of Judah and became one of our family (see *Heb.* 7:14)' (Καὶ τίς ἐστί μου πλησίον; τότε ἐν διηγήματος εἶδει πᾶσαν τὴν φιλάνθρωπον οἰκονομίαν ὁ λόγος ἐκτίθεται, [...] ὁ τοίνυν πλησίον ἡμῶν γεγονώς διὰ τῆς τοιαύτης φιλάνθρωπίας, ὁ διὰ τοῦ ἐξ Ἰούδα ἡμῖν ἀνατεῖλαι ἀδελφιδὸς γενόμενος οὗτός ἐστιν). On this point, Gregory follows the patristic tradition which sees the Good Samaritan as a synthesis of the history of salvation. See Irenaeus, *Adv. haer* 3,11.3; Origen, *Genesis* 34,4.

⁵⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Antirrheticus*, ed. F. Mueller, GNO III/1, 154, 23-7.

⁶⁰ B. Daley, "'Heavenly Man" and "Eternal Christ"' (2002), 487-8. In Gregory's words: 'That which always remains the same cannot, by its nature, become anything other than what it is; it can come to be in another, surely, but it cannot become that other' (Gregory of Nyssa, *Antirrheticus*, ed. F. Mueller, GNO III/1, 227).

⁶¹ See Hélène Grelier, 'Comment décrire l'humanité du Christ sans introduire une quaternité en Dieu? La controverse de Grégoire de Nysse contre Apollinaire de Laodicée', in Volker H. Drecoll and Margitta Berghaus (eds), *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarianism. Proceedings of the 11th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Tübingen, 17-20 September 2008)* (Leiden, 2011), 541-56, 552.

order to restore us from death to life'.⁶² In the economy of the Incarnation, the one who is operative is the Logos, while the human nature is what is assumed and undertaken.⁶³ He is the 'Incarnated' and the Light that 'shines in the darkness',⁶⁴ the one 'who appeared in flesh'⁶⁵ and 'he who was seen in the flesh'.⁶⁶ Concerning the Logos as agent in the Incarnation, A. Meredith observes the differences between Origen and Gregory. He states that in Origen, the initiative for the union comes from the pre-existent human soul of Christ, whereas in Gregory the initiative comes from the inhabitation of the Logos in the complete human nature.⁶⁷ By no means is there any kind of pre-incarnate union between the Logos and humanity. In many places, Gregory affirms that soul and body are created simultaneously at the very moment of the creation of the human being as an ontological whole;⁶⁸ he rejects the pre-existence of souls⁶⁹ and, therefore, it follows that the assumption of a human soul by the Logos would have taken place at the very moment of his Incarnation.

Asserting the eternal Logos' free action that carries out the Incarnation is a way of affirming his transcendence and emphasizing the distinction between the divine and human in Christ. In this respect there is a passage from *De virginitate* where Gregory underlines the abyss between the infinite God and humanity using terms similar to those of the metaphor of the drop of vinegar. The context is not properly Christological since Gregory is writing about spiritual knowledge of God in this case; however, the affirmation of the distance between God and humanity remains the same. Discussing the transcendence of the Beauty and the Good and the ineffability of God, Gregory writes:

There are no verbal tokens of what we are seeking. It is even difficult to make it clear by comparison. For who likens the sun to a little spark, or who compares a tiny drop with the boundless sea? The relation of the drop to the sea and the spark to the beam of the sun is similar to the relation between all the beautiful wonders in the world of men and that beauty which is seen with reference to the first Good and to what is beyond every good.⁷⁰

⁶² Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica*, ed. E. Mühlenberg, GNO III/4, 84; tr. Jean Daniélou and Herbert Musurillo, *From Glory to Glory. Texts from Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Writings* (New York, 1979), 16-7.

⁶³ See E. Moutsoulas, *The Incarnation of the Word* (2000), 91.

⁶⁴ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* III 10,28, ed. W. Jaeger, GNO II 300.

⁶⁵ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* III 3,62, ed. W. Jaeger, GNO II 130.

⁶⁶ See Gregory of Nyssa, *VitMoys* (PG 45, 705A); *In Canticum canticorum* XI, ed. H. Langerbeck, GNO VI 338, 15-339, 4.

⁶⁷ A. Meredith, 'Contra Eunomium III,3', in Elias D. Moutsoulas (ed.), *Jesus Christ in St. Gregory of Nyssa's Theology. Minutes of the Ninth International Conference on St. Gregory of Nyssa (Athens, 7-12 September 2000)* (Athens, 2005), 165-71, 170-1.

⁶⁸ See Gregory of Nyssa, *An et res*: GNO III/3, 95-6; *Op hom* 15; 29-30: PG 44, 177; 235-7; *De mortuis oratio*, ed. Gunterus Heil, GNO IX (Leiden, 1967), 51.

⁶⁹ See Gregory of Nyssa, *An et res*: GNO III/3, 80-7; *Op hom* 27: PG 44, 229-33.

⁷⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *De virginitate* X, ed. Johannes P. Cavarinos, GNO VIII/1 (Leiden, 1963), 289; tr. Virginia Woods, *Saint Gregory of Nyssa. Ascetical Works* (Washington, 1996), 37.

The distance between God and humanity is irreducible; thus, the initiative of the economy belongs only to the eternal Logos. The Incarnation is a true gift from God that human nature cannot accomplish by itself. For this reason, there is no room for any kind of confusion between *theology* and *economy*. At the same time, though, the truth of the Incarnation also leads Gregory to consider the role that should be ascribed to human nature in Christ's economy of salvation. That is to say, the *distinction* between *theology* and *economy* should be affirmed simultaneously with its close *unity*.

III. The unity of theology and economy

If one had to summarize Gregory's thinking concerning the unity of *theology* and *economy*, one could say that it is characterized by a delicate equilibrium: the affirmation of God's infinite distance from humanity *qua* creature does not imply that God is the *totally other*.⁷¹ In Gregory's Christology, two infinities ineffably *come together*: God, infinite in himself, and human nature, infinite in its being transformed by God.

The unity of Christ takes place in such a way that it is possible to speak of an ineffable union between human nature and the Logos, which – being a real union – does not diminish the radical distinction between the Uncreated Logos and his human nature born in time. Rather, the contrary is true, because if there was some mixture between God and creation, there would be a degradation of being instead of a union.⁷² Such an ontology of mixture will hardly avoid a dualistic explanation of reality and in the end seems to be heading towards an absurd dialectic.

The gap between the created and uncreated does not allow for any kind of intermediate being,⁷³ just as Gregory argues with clarity against Eunomius, and is reflected in the way he understands the presence of the divine and the human in Christ. What is uncreated and what is created in Christ remains united, but

⁷¹ As L.F. Mateo-Seco shows, Gregory's formidable equilibrium also profoundly marks his doctrine on the names of God: Gregory is an unwavering defender of apophaticism, but he does not mistake apophaticism for equivocation. See Lucas F. Mateo-Seco, 'Atributos y simplicidad divina en el *Contra Eunomium* II de Gregorio de Nisa', in T. Trigo (ed.), *Dar razón de la esperanza. Homenaje al Prof.Dr. José Luis Illanes* (Pamplona, 2004), 381-99, 391.

⁷² Gregory of Nyssa, according to Alden A. Mosshammer, asserted a more radical and systematic distinction between the Creator and creation than that which any of his predecessors felt called to make. See Alden A. Mosshammer, 'The created and the Uncreated in Gregory of Nyssa. *Contra Eunomium* 1,105-113', in Lucas F. Mateo-Seco and Juan L. Bastero (eds), *El "Contra Eunomium I" en la producción literaria de Gregorio de Nisa* (Pamplona, 1988), 353-79.

⁷³ See, for instance, the following text of the Christological excursus of *Cant* XIII: 'In Christ there is that which is uncreated and that which is created. That which is uncreated of Him – we say – is eternal, and prior to the ages, and creator of all beings; on the other hand, that which is created has been conformed to the humility of our body in accordance with the economy for our sakes' (Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum canticorum* XIII, ed. H. Langerbeck, GNO VI 380, 15-20).

distinct and without confusion. By no means does Gregory understand the union of natures in Christ as a *synthesis* between them, which would give rise to an intermediate and compound *tertium quid*, an ἀνθρωπόθεος, which would be neither true God nor true man.⁷⁴ According to D. Balás, ‘this rejection of an “Intermediary” (μέσον) is actually a presupposition of Gregory’s well-developed theology of the “Mediator” (μεσίτης): the incarnate Logos, truly God and truly man, assuming humanity (“man”) not by necessity of nature but out of free φιλανθρωπία’.⁷⁵ In short, the Incarnate Word is not a mediator because he occupies an intermediate position between God and creation; rather, he is a mediator because he is at the same time consubstantial with the Father in divinity and consubstantial⁷⁶ with us in humanity.⁷⁷ As can be seen in the following text of *Contra Eunomium* III, the notion of filiation and the titles of ‘Son of God’ and ‘Son of Man’ are very important in Gregory’s explanation of Christ consubstantiality with God and humanity:

When then does Eunomius support the truth? It is when he says, The Lord himself being Son of the Living God, not being ashamed of his birth from the Virgin, often in his own sayings called himself ‘Son of Man’. This statement we also offer in order to demonstrate the shared nature, for the word ‘Son’ in both cases equally points to the sharing of nature. Just as he is called Son of Man because of the consanguinity of his flesh with that of her from whom he was born, so also surely he is reckoned Son of God because of the bond between his essential being and that from which he derived his existence. And it is precisely this word which is the strongest defence of the truth. In fact, no other name indicates ‘the Mediator of God and men’, as the great Apostle calls him (1Tim. 2:5), as the name of Son does, since it is equally applied to both natures, the divine and the human. For it is the same who is Son of God and has become Son of Man in the economy, in order to unite in himself, due to the communion in both [natures], that which had been separated in nature. If it were the case that in becoming Son of Man he did not participate in human nature, it would follow that in being Son of God he does not share in the divine being. If however the whole human compound was in him, for ‘he was tempted in all points similarly, without sin’ (Heb. 4:15), we are absolutely obliged to believe that every characteristic of the transcendent Being is in him, the word ‘Son’ affirming of him both things at once, the human in ‘Man’, the divine in ‘God’.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ See J.-R. Bouchet, ‘Le vocabulaire de l’union’ (1968), 540.

⁷⁵ David L. Balás, Μετουσια Θεου. *Man’s participation in God’s perfections according to saint Gregory of Nyssa* (Rome, 1966), 52.

⁷⁶ See, for example, Gregory’s words commenting on Cant 2:3 (‘As an apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my kinsman among the sons’): The Word – the apple tree – ‘being of wood, it is consubstantial (ὁμοούσιος) to man’s nature, tested in all things like ourselves *apart from sin* (Heb. 4:14)’, In *Canticum canticorum* IV, ed. H. Langerbeck, GNO VI 116, 17-117, 1.

⁷⁷ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* I 297-8, ed. Werner Jaeger, GNO I (Leiden, 1960), 114, 5-19; see L.F. Mateo-Seco, ‘La cristología del *In Canticum Canticorum*’ (1990), 185.

⁷⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* III 1, 91-3, ed. W. Jaeger, GNO II 35; tr. S.G. Hall (2014), 60-1: ‘Ἐν τίσιν οὖν ὁ Ἐδνόμειος τῇ ἀληθείᾳ συνίσταται; ἐν οἷς φησιν ὅτι <αὐτὸς ὁ κύριος υἱὸς ὢν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος τὴν ἐκ τῆς παρθένου γέννησιν οὐκ ἐπαισχυνόμενος

G. Maspero underscores the importance of this passage of Gregory, which was quoted by the emperor Justinian in his *Contra monophysitas* when he was dealing with the unity of both natures in Christ within the context of the second Council of Constantinople.⁷⁹ The unity of natures in Christ is grounded on the theology of filiation and the uniqueness of Christ. The Son, who has a natural relationship with the Father,⁸⁰ became the 'son of man' because of the consanguinity of the flesh and, sharing both 'filiations', joined together elements that are distinct in nature. Gregory asserts the union of natures in Christ so profoundly that he says that only through intellectual contemplation can one distinguish that which the philanthropic economy has united in him. The distinction of the two natures of Christ can be grasped only through reason (*theoria*).⁸¹

This union of natures implies that the human nature assumed by Christ is complete.⁸² Gregory states frequently in his works that by the Incarnation the Logos assumed a complete humanity, that is, body and soul. The unity between the Logos and his human body and soul occurred in such an inseparable and intimate manner that even at the moment of death both of them remain intimately united to the Logos: he is still present to his body and soul even after the separation of the human compound by death.⁸³ Gregory emphasizes the

ἐν τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ λόγοις υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου πολλάκις ὀνόμασεν ἑαυτόν>. τοῦτον γὰρ καὶ ἡμεῖς τὸν λόγον εἰς ἀπόδειξιν τοῦ κοινοῦ τῆς οὐσίας προφέρομεν, ὅτι τοῦ υἱοῦ τὸ ὄνομα ἴσῃν κατ' ἀμφοτέρω τῇ τῆς φύσεως κοινωνίαν ἐνδείκνυται. ὥς γὰρ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου λέγεται διὰ τὴν τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὴν ἐξ ἧς ἐγεννήθη συγγένειαν, οὕτω καὶ τοῦ θεοῦ πάντως υἱὸς νοεῖται διὰ τὴν τῆς οὐσίας αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὴν ἐξ ἧς ὑπέστη συνάφειαν. καὶ τὸ μέγιστον τῆς ἀληθείας ὅπλον οὗτος ὁ λόγος ἐστίν. τὸν γὰρ μεσίτην θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων, καθὼς ὀνόμασεν ὁ μέγας ἀπόστολος, οὐδὲν οὕτως ὥς τὸ τοῦ υἱοῦ δείκνυσιν ὄνομα, ἐκατέρω φύσει, τῇ θεῖα τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνῃ, κατὰ τὸ ἴσον ἐφαρμοζόμενον. ὁ γὰρ αὐτὸς καὶ θεοῦ υἱὸς ἐστὶ καὶ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου κατ' οἰκονομίαν ἐγένετο, ἵνα τῇ πρὸς ἑκάτερον κοινωνίᾳ δι' ἑαυτοῦ συνάψῃ τὰ διεστώτα τῇ φύσει. εἰ μὲν οὖν ἀνθρώπου γενόμενος υἱὸς ἀμέτοχος ἦν τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως, ἀκόλουθον ἂν ἦν θεοῦ υἱὸν ὄντα αὐτὸν μηδὲ κοινωνεῖν τῆς θεῆς οὐσίας λέγειν. εἰ δὲ πᾶν τὸ ἀνθρώπινον σύγκριμα ἐν αὐτῷ ἦν (Ἐπειράθη γὰρ κατὰ πάντα καθ' ὁμοιότητα χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας), ἀνάγκη πᾶσα καὶ πᾶν τῆς ὑπερεχούσης οὐσίας ἰδίωμα ἐν αὐτῷ πιστεύειν εἶναι, τῆς τοῦ υἱοῦ φωνῆς ὁμοίως αὐτῷ μαρτυρούσης ἑκάτερον, ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ μὲν τὸ ἀνθρώπινον, ἐν δὲ τῷ θεῷ τὸ θεῖον.

⁷⁹ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* III 4, 14-5, ed. W. Jaeger, GNO II 138-9. See Giulio Maspero, 'La Cristología de Gregorio de Nisa desde la perspectiva del II Concilio de Constantinopla', *ScrTh* 36 (2004), 385-410.

⁸⁰ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* III 1, 121; 136, ed. W. Jaeger, GNO II 44-5, 49.

⁸¹ G. Maspero, 'La Cristología de Gregorio de Nisa' (2004), 394-5. Maspero, studying the quotations of Gregory in the Justinian corpus, pointed out that Gregory, describing the union of natures in such a way that only reason could distinguish what is one in Christ, anticipated the assertion of the *theoria mone* of the second Council of Constantinople.

⁸² Some scholars maintain that Gregory develops in some of his writings a *Logos-anthrôpos* Christology. See Pierre Maraval, 'La lettre 3 de Grégoire de Nysse dans le débat christologique', *RSR* 61 (1987), 74-89; Bernard Pottier, *Dieu et le Christ selon Grégoire de Nysse* (Namur, 1994), 270-1.

⁸³ See Gregory of Nyssa, *De tridui inter mortem et resurrectionem*, ed. E. Gebhardt, GNO IX 290-4; *Antirrheticus*, ed. F. Mueller, GNO III/1, 153-4; *Epistula* 3,22, ed. Georgius Pasquali,

perfect humanity of Christ when he writes against the Apollinarian doctrine of the unique nature of God the Word Incarnate⁸⁴ and when he insists on the importance of Christ's soul as a real principle of Redemption.⁸⁵ This can be clearly observed when Gregory discusses the human will of Christ commenting on *Luke 22:42*.⁸⁶

For Gregory, the unity of natures in Christ should be understood in the deepest way that allows one to ascribe to the Logos the operations that belong to his human nature without jeopardizing the divine immutability.⁸⁷ This has to do with a kind of union that renders possible the attribution of the names of the human nature to the divine and vice versa: the exchange of names.⁸⁸ Accordingly, only if the union of the human and the divine in Christ is understood as a 'physical union' could the *communicatio idiomatum* that is notably present in Gregory's writings be justified.⁸⁹ For example, Gregory refers to this matter in the following text from the *Antirrheticus*:

The name of his humanity, as has been said, was Jesus. His divine nature, however, cannot be expressed by a name but the two [the divine and human natures] became one through their co-mingling (διὰ τῆς ἀνακράσεως). For that reason God receives his name from his humanity. For at the name of Jesus *every knee shall bow* (see *Phil. 2:10*), and a man becomes *above every name*.⁹⁰

J. Zachhuber notes that Gregory approaches Christology in terms of 'natures'. Their unity is seen as the 'physical' problem of how two different principles can make one unified being.⁹¹ Zachhuber contends that Gregory's Christology addresses the unity of the human and the divine in Christ, understanding it in analogy to the Stoic model of a unified world made up of an active and a passive principle. With this model, Gregory would be attempting to 'fit the challenge': 'that neither one nor the other side in the compound should be comprised, but

GNO VIII/2 (Leiden, 1959), 23-6; *Oratio catechetica*, ed. E. Mühlenberg, GNO III/4, 48-9. According to R. Winling, to assert the presence of the Logos in the body and soul of Christ after death is a way of affirming the *hypostatic union*. See Lionel R. Wickham, 'Soul and Body: Christ's Omnipresence', in Andreas Spira and Christoph Klock (eds), *The Easter Sermons of Gregory of Nyssa: Translation and Commentary. Proceedings of the Fourth International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa* (Philadelphia, 1981), 279-92; R. Winling, *Grégoire de Nysse. Discours Catéchétique* (2000), 62.

⁸⁴ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Antirrheticus*, ed. F. Mueller, GNO III/1, 154-8.

⁸⁵ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Antirrheticus*, ed. F. Mueller, GNO III/1, 166-8; 180-2.

⁸⁶ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Antirrheticus*, ed. F. Mueller, GNO III/1, 181.

⁸⁷ See L.F. Mateo-Seco, *Estudios sobre la Cristología de San Gregorio de Nisa* (1978), 117.

⁸⁸ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Theophilum*, ed. F. Mueller, GNO III/1, 127, 15-9.

⁸⁹ See among others Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* III 3, 66, ed. W. Jaeger, GNO II 131; *De perfectione*, ed. Wernerus Jaeger, GNO VIII/1 (Leiden, 1963), 175, 14-176, 11; *In Canticum canticorum* VIII, ed. H. Langerbeck, GNO VI 254, 10-256, 5; *In Canticum canticorum* XIII, ed. H. Langerbeck, GNO VI 380, 20-381, 22.

⁹⁰ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Antirrheticus*, ed. F. Mueller, GNO III/1, 161, 16-26.

⁹¹ J. Zachhuber, *Contra Eunomium* III 4 (2014), 334.

at the same time their unity be maintained'. From here, Zachhuber explains what he calls Gregory's insistence on the 'dialectics between God's active power and energy and the passive and receptive human nature'.⁹²

Certainly, when one reads Nyssa's texts it is easy to assert that according to Gregory the union in Christ is a union *of* natures and that in the Incarnation the activity belongs to God; consequently, the human nature's role in redemption is relatively passive. The similarities between the active-passive Stoic model and Gregory's Christology, however, should not be assumed without further consideration. On the one hand, Gregory's notion of divine activity is essentially economical and thus implies that God remains transcendent while he truly acts within creation and history. Furthermore, the Stoic idea about God as an immanent principle throughout the whole of creation is hardly consistent with Gregory's defence of God's transcendence. For the Stoics God is identified with one of the two ingenerated and indestructible first principles of the universe. These principles are matter – utterly unqualified and inert –, and *logos* – the eternal reason,⁹³ which structures matter in accordance with its plan. God's activity does not come from outside the universe, but it is intrinsic to every thing that is, and the entire universe, through its four elements, is structured on an active-passive dialectic.⁹⁴ On the other hand, the more *diophysite* language of Gregory which can be found in his *Contra Eunomium* and *Antirrheticus* has the specific intention of rejecting the doctrines that, by way of subordinationism or the affirmation of the heavenly humanity of Christ, threaten the infinite perfection of the Trinity. For this reason, a Christology of natures makes real sense. Within the Trinity, the *hypostases* are a principle of distinction whereas the personal agent in Christology, who is the eternal Logos, is the one who has united his human nature to himself, acting as the principle of unity. In this sense, the distinction and unity of *theology* and *economy* in Gregory's Christology appears to be a sure approach.

Conclusion: a pneumatological Christology

Gregory's Christological vocabulary is variable, especially in his dogmatic works, and depending primarily on the context, it moves between a particularly 'diophysite' formulation and a more 'monophysite' terminology. However, beyond this fact, there is a constant *economic* principle in his doctrine that pervades his works, not only the more polemic ones against Eunomius or Apolinarius, but also the spiritual and exegetical works as well as the liturgical

⁹² See J. Zachhuber, *Contra Eunomium* III 4 (2014), 327-34.

⁹³ See Diogenes Laertius (SVF 1,102).

⁹⁴ See Dirk Baltzly, 'Stoicism', in Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2014), <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/stoicism/>>.

sermons. This *economic* principle manifests that Gregory's Christology, considered as a whole, is more balanced than what is commonly recognized among scholars. The clear distinction and inseparability of *theology* and *economy* provides Gregory with the appropriate ontological and anthropological resources to maintain the unity of Christ together with the realism of the work of salvation.

The text that closes Gregory's *In illud tunc et ipse* is worth quoting in conclusion to the present work. It is a commentary of *John* 17:22 in which he delves into the understanding of the Holy Spirit as the Glory of Christ.⁹⁵ His description of the relationship between the Son and the Spirit has a special theological richness from the perspective of both *theologia* and *oikonomia*. Gregory writes that the Holy Spirit is the eternal *glory* that surrounds the Son, the Spirit of the Word already present in him before the existence of the world, the one who has glorified his flesh and the one who will glorify men.⁹⁶

The glory that you gave me, I have given to them (John 17:22). I maintain in fact that he here calls the Holy Spirit glory, whom he gave to the disciples through the act of breathing (see *John* 20:22), since those who were found divided from each other cannot otherwise be united, unless guided back to the unity of nature by the unity of the Spirit. For, *if someone has not the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him (Rom. 8:9)*. But the Spirit is the Glory, as he says in another passage to the Father: *Glorify me near you, with the glory that I had near you before the world was (John 17:5)*. For the divine Logos, who before the world was has the glory of the Father, in the last days became flesh (see *John* 1:14); and it was necessary that, due to the union to the Logos, also the flesh became that which the Logos is. And the flesh becomes it in receiving that which the Logos had before the world was. And this was the Holy Spirit. There is no other eternal being but the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Therefore he also says: *The glory that you gave me, I have given to them (John 17:22)*, so that by means of it they be united to me and by means of me to You.⁹⁷

The Holy Spirit is understood as the glory of the Word, which proceeds from the Father, is received by the Son, and returns to the Father. He is the bond of unity in the Trinity, a unity that expresses the total inseparability of the divine Persons and their mutual inherence. Therefore, Gregory underscores the eternal relation between the Spirit and the Logos, a relation that acquires a new character with the Incarnation, whereby the bond of Spirit and Logos is manifested by the glorification of Christ's flesh, with Christ having in his human nature

⁹⁵ I have written a commentary on this text in Miguel Brugarolas, "The Holy Spirit as the "Glory" of Christ. Gregory of Nyssa on John 17:22", in Nicu Dumitrascu (ed.), *The Ecumenical Legacy of the Cappadocians* (Hampshire, 2015), 247-63, 253-5.

⁹⁶ See Lucas F. Mateo-Seco, 'La Unidad y la Gloria (Jn 17,21-23 en el pensamiento de Gregorio de Nisa)', in Juan Chapa (ed.), *Signum et Testimonium. Estudios en honor del Prof. Antonio García-Moreno* (Pamplona, 2003), 179-98, 196.

⁹⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, *In illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*, ed. J. Kenneth Downing, GNO III/2 (Leiden, 1987), 21, 19-22, 16.

the same glory that he had before the beginning of time. Moreover, through the glorification of human nature in Christ, the Spirit becomes the glory given by Christ to humanity, whereby we are united to Christ and – through Him – to the Father. Thus, the Spirit calls for unity among those who, remaining distinct – for between man and God there is an infinite distance –, have been made capable of participating in the same divine life. According to Gregory of Nyssa, the Holy Spirit is the *Spirit of Christ* (see *Gal.* 4:6, *Rom.* 8:9)⁹⁸ and, as we saw in the preceding quotation, he is the glory of the Son and Christ.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Adversus Macedonianos*, ed. Fridericus Mueller, GNO III/1 (Leiden, 1958), 89, 21-90, 5; *Or dom* (GNO VII/2 43, 1).

⁹⁹ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* I 384, ed. W. Jaeger, GNO I 139-40; *In illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*, ed. J.K. Downing, GNO III/2, 21, 19-22, 16; *In Canticum canticorum*, ed. H. Langerberck, GNO VI 467, 2-17; *Antirrheticus*, ed. F. Mueller, GNO III/1, 222, 1-223, 10.

Soul's Dance in Clement, Plotinus and Gregory of Nyssa

Ilaria VIGORELLI, Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, Rome, Italy

ABSTRACT

Both Plotinus and Gregory of Nyssa have recourse to the metaphor of the souls' dance around a coryphaeus in order to describe rational nature's assimilation to the Divine. The origin of this image goes back to Plato's *Theaetetus* that was later reinterpreted by Clement of Alexandria according to a Christian meaning. The article studies the differences in these uses of the same metaphor against the background of the distinct conceptions of relation (*schesis*) and assimilation to God in Plotinus and Gregory. This analysis highlights the importance of Clement's contribution in the resemanticization of some Platonic categories in Christian theological thought.

Introduction

The figure of the coryphaeus and the choir to indicate the condition of the blessed souls comes into Greek philosophical literature with the *Theaetetus* of Plato (173c ff).

To understand the role that this metaphor has in the late Western tradition, it is useful to recall the place assigned to it by the *Didaskalos* of Alcinous-Albinus,¹ or to imagine the position that it would have had for the anonymous commentator of the *Theaetetus*,² but it may be even more interesting to see how in the doctrine of human perfection, narrated with this image, the conception of the relationship between God and man has been reflected in the centuries in which the first dogmatic formulations of Christianity were shaped.

Despite the references to the *Theaetetus* being repeatedly present even in the most recent studies, it seems that even a passing reference is missing to the use of the metaphor of the coryphaeus and the choir of the soul.

¹ See Alcinous-Albinus, *Didaskalos* 153,8-9 and 181,19-182,14 in John Whittaker and Pierre Louis, *Alcinoos. Enseignement des doctrines de Platon* (Paris, 1990), 2 and 56-7. For a bibliography about the history of the effects of the Platonic conception of ὁμοίωσις θεῷ, see *ibid.* note 23, 77.

² As it is well known, the discovered commentary only goes up to the *Theaetetus* 153 d-e. See Hermann Diels, Johan Ludvig Heiberg and Wilhelm Schubart, *Anonymer Kommentar zu Platons Theaetet: (papyrus 9782) nebst drei Bruchstücken philosophischen Inhalts (pap. no. 8; p. 9766, 9569); unter Mitwirkung von J.L. Heiberg*, 2 (Berlin, 1905). Still a valuable aid is the work of Claudio Mazzarelli, 'Bibliografia medioplatonica: parte prima: Gaio, Albino e anonimo commentatore del "Teeteto"', *RFNS* 72 (1980), 108-44, 141.

If we accept the distinction introduced by Russell, who presented³ the approaches to deification in the times of early Christianity according to four different types (nominal, analogical, ethical, and realistic), then we place ourselves along the lines of a realistic approach with this study. We consider, in fact, that the Platonic metaphor of the *Theaetetus* has not only not limited the development of Christian ontologies thus Hellenizing the thought of the Fathers, but it can even be seen as a thematic place in which there is reflected the progressive differentiation of the cosmological and anthropological conception of Christians; a differentiation that runs parallel to the maturation of the theological thought about Christ and the formulation of the Trinitarian dogma.⁴

The coryphaeus is the origin of the harmony and beauty of a chorus, the unifying figure of that dance which is also music and song and which from Plato onwards represents an ensemble of happy people who participate in the true life of the gods.⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, at the end of the fourth century, indicated by this figure Christ, who in his mortal nature and divine personhood assembles in unique harmony the creation and Creator, angels and men, in the same co-spiratio (σύμπνοια).⁶ Before him, Clement of Alexandria had already formulated the Christian conditions of the deification of souls, reformulating the present Platonic image in the middle-Platonic tradition contemporaneously to him.

This article proposes a cross-reading of the recurrences of the dance of the soul and of the coryphaeus, first taking up the mould in Plato (1) to then analyse it in Clement (2), Plotinus (3), and Gregory of Nyssa (4)⁷ in order to show some differences in the respective ontologies that emerge within the common argumentative system dictated by the Platonic dialogue.

³ Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford, 2004).

⁴ There was a stimulus put forth by Andrew Louth, quoted by Russell himself in his introduction: 'Metaphors disclose a way of looking at the world, a way of understanding the world. If we wish to understand the way in which any of the ancients understood their world, we must pay heed to their use of metaphors'. Louth (1983), cited in N. Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification* (2004), 3. Even Christensen and Wittung resumed, a few years after the publication of the twenty-year research of Russell, the theme of deification, with a collection of studies collected in terms of the historical development of the concept of deification in the Christian tradition, not just in the Greek tradition: Michael J. Christensen and Jeffery A. Wittung (eds), *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions* (Grand Rapids, 2008).

⁵ *Theaetetus* 176a.

⁶ See Jean Daniélou, *L'être et le temps chez Grégoire de Nysse* (Leiden, 1970), 51-74.

⁷ I'd like to remember here a long article by Ilaria Ramelli in which she dedicates some pages to harmony as a protological and eschatological principle, including in her analysis also Origen and Evagrius. See Ilaria Ramelli, 'Harmony between Arkhē and Telos in Patristic Platonism and the Imagery of Astronomical Harmony Applied to Apokatastasis', *The International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 7 (2013), 1-49.

1. Plato

As is known, the reference to the one who evokes and guides music and dance recurs in the *Theaetetus* within the famous interlude in which Socrates stops to underline who the true philosopher is.⁸ In order to describe what distinguishes the philosopher from other people, Plato applies the musical image of the coryphaeus because the philosopher is one who, in the manner of a free man (ἐλευθερίως),⁹ knows 'how to take up the harmony of discourse and rightly hymn the life of gods and happy men'.¹⁰ The philosopher is therefore the coryphaeus among the people, because he leads them higher, to the height of contemplation of the ideas in themselves, of justice, and of the good.¹¹ In the famous dialogue with Theodore, Socrates-Plato not only indicates the analogy between the philosopher and the coryphaeus but also brings to light three specific characteristics of his being and of his action:

- a) he *flees from evil* that prowls in mortal nature (θνητὴν φύσιν), evil which is inevitable 'because there must always be something opposite to the good'.¹²
- b) he is raised up,¹³ 'searching in every way into the total nature of each of the things which are, taken as a whole',¹⁴ because he desires to make himself similar to God (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ), 'and to become like a god is to become just and religious, with intelligence' (ὁμοίωσις δὲ δίκαιον καὶ ὅσιον μετὰ φρονήσεως γενέσθαι);¹⁵
- c) finally, because men are 'living the life which resembles the one they become like',¹⁶ the man-philosopher-coryphaeus becomes similar to God 'as

⁸ *Theaetetus* 173c-177c.

⁹ *Theaetetus* 175e,7. On the freedom of the philosopher see also just above *Theaetetus* 172d,1 (ἐλευθερίου).

¹⁰ ἁρμονίαν λόγων λαβόντος ὁρθῶς ὑμῆσαι θεῶν τε καὶ ἀνδρῶν εὐδαιμόνων βίον [ἀληθῆ] (*Theaetetus* 176a,1-2). English translation: John McDowell, *Plato, Theaetetus* (Oxford, 1973), 53.

¹¹ See *Theaetetus* 176c.

¹² ὑπεναντίον γάρ τι τῷ ἀγαθῷ ἀεὶ εἶναι ἀνάγκη (*Theaetetus* 176a,6). J. McDowell, *Plato, Theaetetus* (1973), 53.

¹³ To express the attitude of the philosopher Plato adopts from Pindar the expression: 'τᾷς τε γᾷς ὑπένερθε' καὶ τὰ ἐπίπεδα γεωμετροῦσα, 'οὐρανοῦ θ' ὕπερ' ἀστρονομοῦσα (*Theaetetus* 173e,5-6), "'in the depths of the earth"' and on the surfaces when it does geometry, and "'above the heavens"' when it does astronomy'. J. McDowell, *Plato, Theaetetus* (1973), 50.

¹⁴ πᾶσαν πάντη φύσιν ἐρευνωμένη τῶν ὄντων ἐκάστου ὅλου (*Theaetetus* 174a,1).

¹⁵ *Theaetetus* 176b,1-3. Alcinoos-Albinus resumes this passage in *Didaskalos* 181,19-36, juxtaposing the quote of the *Theaetetus* with the *Republic* and *Phaedo*. See J. Whittaker, *Alcinoos. Enseignement des doctrines de Platon* (1990), 56.

¹⁶ Plato expresses it in opposition to the example of the wicked one who through his actions makes himself similar to the unjust one, and not its opposite (τῷ μὲν ὁμοιούμενοι διὰ τὰς ἀδίκους πράξεις, τῷ δὲ ἀνομοιούμενοι) *Theaetetus* 177a,1-2. J. McDowell, *Plato, Theaetetus* (1973), 54.

near as possible' (κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν)¹⁷ becoming just (δικαιότατος),¹⁸ and thus revealing 'a man's true cleverness' (ἡ ὡς ἀληθῶς δεινότης ἀνδρός).¹⁹

In this way Plato outlines the aspiration of the free man, his perfection with respect to God and his relationship with the world.²⁰

2. Clement of Alexandria

The same image of the man-philosopher, a coryphaeus for men, is reprised by Clement of Alexandria in two chapters of the *Stromata*.

The first occurrence is in *Stromateis* IV 25,155,4,3 where Clement cites the corresponding passage of the *Theaetetus* and re-proposes the characteristics of the Platonic philosopher to praise the true gnostic, or rather – in Clementian terms – the authentic Christian; the second occurrence is in *Stromateis* V 98,5,3 where he states that in the *Theaetetus*, Plato describes the life of the philosopher, but he is indicating (ἐμφαίνων) what would have been the Christian life.²¹ The image proposed in the *Stromata* is thus placed in continuity with the Platonic metaphor and attributes the distinctive qualities of the coryphaeus to the soul that contemplates God; however, they appear completely reinterpreted.

In fact, Clement states 'for when the soul, rising above the sphere of generation, is by itself apart, and dwells amidst ideas' it is 'like the Coryphaeus in *Theaetetus*'²² but it becomes 'as an angel' (οἷον ἄγγελος), and 'it will be with Christ' (σὺν Χριστῷ)²³ 'being rapt in contemplation, ever keeping in view the will of God'.²⁴

If we read in parallel the passages of the Alexandrian and the dialogue of the Athenian, we thus see that the same argumentative system is kept, but the novelty of Christ is introduced.

This has a shattering effect on the ontology underpinning the metaphor,²⁵ in fact:

¹⁷ *Theaetetus* 176b,1-2.

¹⁸ *Theaetetus* 176c,2-3.

¹⁹ *Theaetetus* 176c,3.

²⁰ The passage of the *Theaetetus* dedicated to the coryphaeus is taken almost verbatim in the synthesis proposed by Alcinous-Albinus in his *Didaskalos* 181,19-182,14.

²¹ For further discussion of the distinctive features of the ethical approach of Clement to the perfection of man see the study of Matyáš Havrda, 'Grace and Will according to Clement of Alexandria', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 19 (2011), 21-48.

²² ὅταν γὰρ ψυχὴ γενέσεως ὑπεξαναβᾷσα καθ' ἑαυτήν τε ἢ καὶ ὁμιλῇ τοῖς εἶδεσιν, οἷός ἐστιν ὁ ἐν τῷ Θεαιτήτῳ «κορυφαῖος» (*Strom.* IV 25,155,4,1-3). We will follow the English translation in W. Wilson, *The Writings of Clement of Alexandria*, vol. II (Edinburgh, 1869). All passages are at the pages 212-3.

²³ *Strom.* IV 25,155,4,3-4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ On this point must be compared the opinion of G.W. Butterworth, 'The Deification of Man in Clement of Alexandria', *JTS* 17 (1916), 157-69, 167.

- a) the *flight from evil* which in the *Theaetetus* Socrates considered inevitable insofar as it is contrary to the good, becomes for Clement a voluntary offering of the things of the world, carried out through *gratitude* (εὐχάριστον) and with *purity* (ἀγνεία) after which the soul delights in it;²⁶
- b) to become *just, holy, and wise* like God, means, for Clement, to become like an *angel*;
- c) finally, to become *fully man* or to conform to the image of the chosen model, means to be *with Christ* (σὺν Χριστῷ).

Considering the merits of these differences allows one to single out what, for Clement, constitutes the contemplation and the harmony of the happy life, as well as the reference to the coryphaeus that conducts it and the assimilation to God that follows it.

First of all with regard to the relationship with the world: this no longer appears according to the scheme of the necessary ontological contraries, proper to the eidetic landscape of Plato, who supposes a graduated ontology and an intellectual asceticism through the use of dialectic;²⁷ for Clement everything that is material is good, and the soul can enjoy it without having to be distracted from the divine, but it receives from God the freedom of being able to give back to God himself even its own body as a pure and grateful offering.²⁸

Freedom from the passions that allows one to remain 'raised up' and to live contemplation is configured as *isoangelia* and union with Christ, who is the Son and the Logos, true 'wisdom, and knowledge, and truth, and all else that has affinity thereto.'²⁹ Here is inserted an important and novel point: the Son is one insofar as He unites all things ('For He is the circle of all powers rolled and united into one unity') (ἀλλ' ὡς πάντα ἕν), 'whence also He is all things' (ἐνθεν καὶ πάντα), for this reason He is called Alpha and Omega.³⁰ The similarity to the angels has been read by Russell as in continuity with the tradition of Philo and integrated in the middle-Platonic setting.³¹

²⁶ See *Strom.* IV 25,159,1,3-159,2,1.

²⁷ On the Platonic dialectic there are innumerable studies by Giovanni Reale, which I would like to cite on the year of his passing, making reference to one of his last books: Giovanni Reale, *Platone* (Milan, 2013).

²⁸ See *Strom.* IV 25,159,1,3-159,2,1.

²⁹ ὁ δὲ υἱὸς σοφία τέ ἐστι καὶ ἐπιστήμη καὶ ἀλήθεια καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα τούτῳ συγγενῇ (*Strom.* IV 25,156,1,2-3).

³⁰ See *Strom.* IV 25,156,2-157,1. Very interesting is the description that Clement gives here of the Son-Logos, if then confronted with that of Plato regarding the One: 'And the Son is neither simply one thing as one thing, nor many things as parts, but one thing as all things; whence also He is all things'.

³¹ 'Contemplation begins to deify a man even in this life by removing him from the created world, from corporeity, and making him like God. It is an anticipation of life after death', N. Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification* (2004), 131.

Finally, the assimilation to the divine, which in Clement coincides with the same aspiration of the philosopher-coryphaeus of Plato, now means ‘ever keeping in view the will of God’,³² and in this way to unite oneself to Christ.

For the theologian of Alexandria, therefore, the Platonic image provides the argumentative framework, to which is added that:

- ‘God is not a subject for demonstration’ while the Son offers the possibility of demonstration and description (‘He is also susceptible of demonstration and of description’: καὶ δὴ καὶ ἀπόδειξιν ἔχει καὶ διέξοδον), while also not being reducible to a defined limit (‘but He is incapable of being declared’: ἀπαρέμφατος).³³
- The Son is both Christ and the Logos, and the position of the Logos is, for Clement, without difficulty both in God and in the world.³⁴

Fusing the Pauline teaching with the Platonic system, Clement can re-delineate the assimilation to God, the same assimilation desired by free men,³⁵ as having life in Christ, as to say through Baptism.

If the Alexandrian seems to affirm, like the Athenian, that the assimilation to God takes place as contemplation of ideas, because ‘the mind is the place of ideas, and God is mind’,³⁶ the reference to the Son-Logos introduces in the

³² αἰεὶ τὸ βούλημα τοῦ θεοῦ σκοπῶν (*Strom.* IV 25,155,4,4-5). This point has been especially emphasized by Eric Francis Osborn, *The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge, 1957), 84.

³³ See *Strom.* IV 25,156,1. The passage is very complex. See the interesting study on demonstration in Clement by Dragoș Andrei Giulea, ‘Apprehending “Demonstrations” from the First Principle: Clement of Alexandria’s Phenomenology of Faith’, *JR* 89 (2009), 187-213.

³⁴ It is not possible here to enter into the merits of the issue of the position of the Logos in Clement. Allow me to refer to Mark J. Edwards, ‘Clement of Alexandria and His Doctrine of the Logos’, *VC* 54 (2000), 159-77 and to my ‘Schesis and Trinitarian Thought in Clement of Alexandria: From Philosophy to Scriptural Interpretation’, in Veronika Černušková, Judith L. Kovacs and Jana Plátová (eds), *Clement’s Biblical Exegesis* (Leiden and Boston, 2017), 147-61.

³⁵ The abundance of Pauline citations in the works of Clement is by far superior to any other reference, both of philosophical sources (among which Plato exceeds the citations of Philo), and of other texts from the New Testament. Annewies Van Den Hoek highlights this well, making reference to the columns of Stählin’s Index: ‘1273 possible references and 27 columns, pseudo-Pauline letters included; only followed at a large distance by Matthew 11 columns; Luke 7.5 columns; John 5 columns; Mark 3 columns; Acts 1.5 columns’. Annewies Van Den Hoek, ‘Techniques of Quotation in Clement of Alexandria. A View of Ancient Literary Working Methods’, *VC* 50 (1996), 223-43, 240 n. 51.

³⁶ νοῦς δὲ χώρα ἰδεῶν, νοῦς δὲ ὁ θεός (*Strom.* IV 25,155,2,2). We cannot enter here into the merits of the historiographical debate on the conception of the νοῦς in Clement and the identification between νοῦς and θεός. It is sufficient to return to the mediation of the middle-Platonic philosopher Eudorus of Alexandria: ‘Eudorus refined the *Theaetetus* precept by teaching that to become like God κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν meant not “as far as possible” but “according to that part which is capable”, that is to say, it was only the *nous* or highest part of the soul which could become like God’, N. Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification* (2004), 135. For the middle-Platonism of Eudorus see Claudio Mazzarelli, ‘Raccolta e interpretazione delle testimonianze e

same argumentative system a radical change: to have divine life is not, in fact, only to become just and good *by imitation* of he who is justice and goodness, but *to be in Christ*, 'for He is the circle of all powers rolled and united into one unity'³⁷ and, at the same time, he is the risen one preached by the Apostle.

For this reason even the mode of access to the divine life changes: the union with Christ happens through a change and a voluntary, not only intellectual, act. He *is* the Logos, but one adheres to Him through faith: 'To believe (πιστεῦσαι) in Him, and by Him, is to become a unit, being indissolubly united in Him'.³⁸

From the epistemological standpoint, the change of approach is radical, because the assimilation to the model no longer passes only by the intellect (νοῦς), but by the configuration of one's own will, which is merged with that of another through the relationship with Him. Only the souls who have become believers – Clement claims – are no longer separated, disjoined, divided (διστάσαι),³⁹ no longer strangers (ἀλλογενεῖς).⁴⁰ The theologian insists on the fact that faith in Him is the cause of purity and union, and that from union with Him divine life comes to the soul, which is knowledge but through faith, that is, through relational union.⁴¹

It is the Son-Logos, and therefore, the Coryphaeus who conducts the dance of the souls in contemplation, and the soul can enjoy harmony in the union with Him and in Him, which is in itself union with all things.

Son–Logos–Christ, are interchangeable terms, for Clement, who points out in the Christian revelation the continuity with the aspirations of knowledge and happiness of Platonic philosophy, but at the same time the discontinuity in the ways of their acquisition. Now the assimilation to God no longer takes place only through one's own intellectual elevation, but thanks to the voluntary union with the Logos–Son who is Jesus Christ in history and at the same time the 'Unknown God'.⁴²

dei frammenti del medioplatonico Eudoro di Alessandria', *RFNS* 77 (1985), 97-209 and 535-55 (Greek text and Italian translation) and John M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists, 80 BC to AD 220* (New York, 1996), 115.

³⁷ κύκλος γὰρ ὁ αὐτὸς πασῶν τῶν δυνάμεων εἰς ἓν εἰλουμένων καὶ ἐνουμένων (*Strom.* IV 25,156,2,2-3).

³⁸ διὸ δὴ καὶ τὸ εἰς αὐτὸν καὶ τὸ δι' αὐτοῦ πιστεῦσαι μοναδικόν ἐστι γενέσθαι, ἀπερι-σπάστως ἐνούμενον ἐν αὐτῷ (*Strom.* IV 25,157,2,1-2).

³⁹ *Strom.* IV 25,157,3,1.

⁴⁰ *Strom.* IV 25,157,3,5.

⁴¹ For the theory of knowledge of and communion with God that comes from it, in addition to the reference to faith it is important to remember *Strom.* IV 25,156,1: 'The Son, rather, is wisdom (σοφία), science (ἐπιστήμη), truth (ἀλήθεια), and everything that is inherent to this (συγγενῇ), and thus he offers the possibility of demonstration and description (καὶ δὴ καὶ ἀπόδειξιν ἔχει καὶ διέξοδον)', my translation. Clement is at the same time promoter of apophatism and of faith in reason precisely because of faith in Christ, from which a new epistemology is gradually forged.

⁴² *Acts* 17:23. See *Strom.* V 13,4.

While in Plato, due to his ontological approach, assimilation to God could occur ‘as nearly as possible’ and due to similarity, and so the middle-Platonic Alcinous-Albinus modelled it,⁴³ Clement here intends the Coryphaeus as God himself, and the assimilation to God as the *deification* of man.⁴⁴

While the Trinitarian theological description of the Christian God was not yet well-defined in the Alexandrian’s writings, the elements of epistemological and ontological novelty that the incarnation of the Word brings to the Platonic system appears evident.

3. Plotinus

If Clement remarked with respect to the *Theaetetus* about the characteristics of the soul and the coryphaeus, identifying the coryphaeus with Christ and the deified soul with the believer who adheres to Him through faith, Plotinus repeats the reference to the coryphaeus and to the dance of the souls, giving place to a further interesting, conceptual parallelism, this time with Gregory of Nyssa.

We first see which elements of continuity there are in Plotinus with Clement and Plato, even if it is clear that in this context, in order to follow the thread of the proposed parallelisms, we are not in a position to evaluate the merits of the important hermeneutical questions concerning the cited passages;⁴⁵ but we can note how the image of the coryphaeus constitutes a common thread that allows us to gather the foundational settings of the different ontologies present here.

The coryphaeus and the dance of the souls appears in the Sixth Ennead (*Enneads* VI 9,8,38 and *Enneads* VI 9,9,10), and the traits of the analogy that are present here appear to bear greater resemblance to those of Clement than to those of Plato, although faith in Christ is completely absent from the thought of Plotinus.⁴⁶

⁴³ φυγή δὲ ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν (*Didask.* XXVIII 181,24-5: Whittaker, *Alcinoos. Enseignement des doctrines de Platon* [1990], 56).

⁴⁴ Clement is the first Christian author to speak of the deification of man. Despite not having at that time a sufficiently developed Christology, the preaching of Christ and the incipient sacramental doctrine were already fully aware of the transformation of man to eternal life. See in this regard G.W. Butterworth, ‘The Deification of Man in Clement of Alexandria’ (1916), 169. See also the very deep insights on assimilation to God in Clement written by Veronika Černušková, ‘Divine and Human Mercy in the “Stromateis”’, in Jana Plátová, Matyáš Havrda, Vít Hušek (eds), *The Seventh Book of the Stromateis* (Leiden and Boston, 2012), 167-83.

⁴⁵ We point out the valuable comment of Pieter Ane Maijer, *Plotinus on the Good or the One* (VI.9) (Amsterdam, 1992), from which we take the English translation of the passages quoted by *Enneads*.

⁴⁶ On the relationship between Plotinus and Christianity see in particular John Rist, ‘Plotinus and Christian Philosophy’, in Lloyd P. Gerson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus* (Cambridge, 1996), 386-414.

a) The first element concerns the *position of the soul with respect to the One-Good*: Plotinus describes the soul that knows itself as having a circular movement around its center, 'from whence its origin is' (ἀφ' οὗ ἔστι).⁴⁷ This center is the One and it is, for the souls disposed towards it, like the coryphaeus, watching over those who can truly dance the 'divine dance' (χορείαν ἑνθεο-ν).⁴⁸ We have two elements for the same image of Plato and of Clement: the reference to the chorus with respect to the coryphaeus and the assimilation of the soul to the divine (which here is pictured as the full dance of god: ἑνθεον), occasioned by the disposition/relation of the soul toward the One-Good:

It will move around that from whence its origin is, and it will depend on this bringing itself towards the same centre towards which all souls had better move, and souls of Gods ever move themselves. Moving thither they are Gods. For a God is what is linked to that centre, what is far removed from it is every man and every beast [Meijer (1992) p. 229].⁴⁹

The prepositions used by Plotinus to describe the position of the soul are: περὶ τοῦτο⁵⁰; ἀφ' οὗ⁵¹; πρὸς τὸ αὐτό⁵²; πρὸς ὃ⁵³ and the verbs that convey the disposition taken up are ἀναρτήσεται, συμφέρουσα, φέρονται, φερόμεναι, or the opposite ἀφιστάμενον. The characteristics of the link of the soul with the One are thus dependent on the *disposition/relation* of the soul with respect to the One:⁵⁴ in comparison with Plato's description, who in order to convey the similarity of the soul with the divine used only ὁμοίωσις (*Theaetetus* 176b,1) and ὁμοιοῦνται (*Theaetetus* 177a,3) in that context, here Plotinus uses an argument that would seem closer to the sense of the union used by Clement in reference to Christ – for whom to believe is to be in unity (μοναδικὸν ἔστι γενέσθαι), unifying itself in Him without distinctions (ἀπερισπάστως ἐνούμενον ἐν αὐτῷ), according to Pauline terminology (1*Cor.* 7:35).

Plotinus makes use of terminology that seems to mark the interior, voluntary disposition of the soul, but Riccardo Chiaradonna has clearly highlighted the difference between Plotinus' concept of 'interiority' in the reflection of the

⁴⁷ *Enneads* VI 9,8,5.

⁴⁸ See *Enneads* VI 9,8,35-40.

⁴⁹ κινήσεται περὶ τοῦτο, ἀφ' οὗ ἔστι, καὶ τούτου ἀναρτήσεται συμφέρουσα ἑαυτὴν πρὸς τὸ αὐτό, πρὸς ὃ ἔχρην μὲν πάσας, φέρονται δὲ αἱ θεῶν ἀεὶ· πρὸς δὲ φερόμεναι θεοὶ εἰσι. Θεὸς γὰρ τὸ ἐκείνῳ συνημμένον, τὸ δὲ πόρρω ἀφιστάμενον ἄνθρωπος ὁ πολὺς καὶ θηρίον (*Enneads* VI 9,8,5-10).

⁵⁰ *Enneads* VI 9,8,5.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Enneads* VI 9,8,6.

⁵³ *Enneads* VI 9,8,7.

⁵⁴ See P.A. Maijer, *Plotinus on the Good* (1992), 230, note 665: commenting on the line five expression συμφέρουσα ἑαυτὴν, emphasizing that: 'This is a rather strong expression compared to the normal medium φέρεσθαι, cf. φέρονται (line 7) and φερόμεναι (line 8). This particular mode of putting it is intended to emphasize the "personal" active effort expected to the soul to set itself in motion together with (συν-)other moving beings like the ever centripetally striving souls of the Gods'.

soul, and that of a Christian character.⁵⁵ In the specific analysis of the soul offered by Chiaradonna, it emerges that for Plotinus the causality of the intelligible reality ‘derives from their very essence and is not in any way associated with the choice between alternatives’.⁵⁶ The ascent of the sensible to the intelligible is also an abstraction from bodies, and therefore also from individuality, so the disposition of the soul that leads to contemplation is a return to its own origin but does not give any value to history or the world. There is not, then, any reciprocity on the part of the One: while in fact in the metaphor of the coryphaeus it is said that the chorus must be addressed to the coryphaeus, there is no hint at the disposition of the coryphaeus with respect to the chorus, but rather, Plotinus emphasizes that ‘it does not strive [for] us in order to be around us, but we strive for it’,⁵⁷ thus marking a very different modality from the movement of the Son-Logos that is Christ as indicated by Clement.⁵⁸

b) While the common reference to deification of the soul and to the will seemed to bring Plotinus and Clement together, distancing them in a certain way from Plato, once again the common approach of the arguments does not point out a similarity between the underlying ontologies. There is, rather, a common and interesting trait that can be highlighted in reference to the fusing in unity of the souls with the Good, according to the image of the chorus and the coryphaeus: both Clement and Plotinus propose union through the *disposition/relation* of the souls with respect to the coryphaeus according to a *horizontal* positioning, as well as through *similarity* which is that of the traditional vertical disposition of Platonism.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ See Riccardo Chiaradonna, *Plotino* (Roma, 2009), 86.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 153, my translation.

⁵⁷ *κἀκεῖνο μὲν ἡμῶν οὐκ ἐφίεται, ὥστε περὶ ἡμᾶς εἶναι, ἡμεῖς δὲ ἐκείνου, ὥστε ἡμεῖς περὶ ἐκεῖνο* (*Enneads* VI 9,8,36-7), P.A. Maijer, *Plotinus on the Good* (1992), 239.

⁵⁸ Thanks to the appeal of the image of the chorus of souls around the coryphaeus, it seems that there can be an interesting approach in Clement’s description of the Logos-Christ: The centre of the soul of Plotinus seems to coincide with the centre of the souls, ‘the centre of centres’, thus as Christ is for Clement the circle of all the powers that are resolved and unified in one (κύκλος γὰρ ὁ αὐτὸς πασῶν τῶν δυνάμεων εἰς ἓν εἰλουμένων καὶ ἐνουμένων). According to the comment of Maijer: ‘The One/Good is in the centre of mind and soul. Mind has the Supreme Entity immediately, the soul aspires to it (line 28). This image is quite in line with what we meet in *Enneads* VI,9,8,7 (compare line 12) in which also the centre of soul’s circular motion is the Supreme Entity’, P.A. Maijer, *Plotinus on the Good* (1992), 231.

⁵⁹ The discrepancy from the Platonic vertical movement present in the *Timaeus* (43 e) and in the *Phaedrus*, consists in the fact that here the movement is horizontal, and the souls are on the same plane as their centre. In reality, as noted by Maijer himself (p. 232), even Plato, in the *Phaedrus*, added circular movement to the vertical movement, that is, that of the soul that has now come to contemplate the intelligible world (*Phaedrus* 247c and 247d). But while the human souls are unable to remain in the vision, because for Plato one always runs the risk of falling back on the vertical, the souls of the gods, while remaining in the vision, remain on the horizontal plane which, translated into the ‘centrology’ of Neo-Platonic ontology, corresponds to the centripetal movement of the chorus with respect to the coryphaeus.

c) The reference to the world and to material things recurs in the Plotinian reflection as well. As is known, the soul is united to the One if it abandons the body and corporeal realities – which are caused by multiplicity⁶⁰ – and is elevated above Intelligence in such a way that the union with the One happens through affinity (τὴν συναφήν), likeness (ὁμοιότητι) and identity (ταυτότητι), or through denying otherness (ἐτερότητι) and difference (διαφορᾷ) since ‘if otherness is not present, the things which are not other are present to each other’. Plotinus therefore resumes the theme of the ‘many’ as opposed to the One – and in this his image of the union between chorus and coryphaeus would seem better fitted to the epistemological model of Plato than that of Clement. Plotinian ontology, however, is remarkably different, as is known, even from the ontology of Plato, inasmuch as the One is to be understood as absolute transcendence, again more similar to the Judeo-Christian than the Greek.

Enneads VI 9,9,10-1 is also worth discussing where the reference to the coryphaeus returns in a more hidden mode because it is said of the One that ‘it always leads the chorus’⁶¹ (ἀεὶ χορηγοῦντος), ‘as long as it will be what it is’ (ἕως ἂν ᾗ ὅπερ ἐστί). Although the soul is found in the corporeal condition, in fact, Plotinus affirms that it has not lost its *congenital* love (ὁ ἔρως ὁ τῆς ψυχῆς ὁ σύμφυτος) for the Good.⁶² This indicates a necessary relationship, for which ‘the soul then, being in its natural state loves God wishing to be unified with him’.⁶³ On this basis, the One-Good-God is the end of the soul and it can ‘truly join itself to him’ (τὸ ἀληθινὸν ἐρώμενον) ‘there is the truly beloved (τὸ ἀληθινὸν ἐρώμενον) with whom one can be together participating in him and really possessing him’ (συνεῖναι μεταλαβόντα) ‘not embracing him with the flesh (σαρξίν) from the outside’.⁶⁴

The relation with the Good is therefore described in a similar way to how Clement describes the union between faithful and Christ; but in Plotinus the bond is governed by necessity, both because of the affinity of the soul with God and the disposition that it assumes when it is turned toward its coryphaeus. In this way the soul is not really free or self-determining, and thus it does not have value as an expression of individuality and uniqueness as it does with the faithful with respect to Christ in the metaphor of Clement.

Even the effect of deification, although subject ‘to more and less’ according to the criterion of the circle and that of the disposition towards its centre, seems

⁶⁰ *Enneads* VI 9,8,16-22.

⁶¹ We prefer to translate χορηγέω maintaining the reference to the vocabulary of the *Theaetetus* and therefore to the guide of the chorus, rather than adopt the ordinary choice of translators that is also followed by Meijer, who translates χορηγοῦντος with ‘bestows’. See P.A. Maijer, *Plotinus on the Good* (1992), 248-9.

⁶² *Enneads* VI 9,9,24-5.

⁶³ Ἐρᾷ οὖν κατὰ φύσιν ἔχουσα ψυχὴ θεοῦ ἐνωθῆναι θέλουσα (*Enneads* VI 9,9,33).

⁶⁴ *Enneads* VI 9,9,44-6.

more similar to Clement than to Plato: as we have seen, the assimilation to God in the ontology of Plato occurs according to the important clause ‘as nearly as possible’ (κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν), while in Clement it happens really and fully through the relation of faith that unites to Christ, as it also appears in Plotinus through the relation to the One.⁶⁵ Despite, however, the use of relative prepositions, how is it possible to speak of a *relation* to the One, that is, of a relation between the chorus and the coryphaeus in Plotinus? It seems that the Plotinian metaphor is to be understood in an analogical perspective, while the realistic perspective comes with Gregory of Nyssa.

4. Gregory of Nyssa

If the mediation of Clement seems to have had a certain relevance – although direct witness to this is not possible – in the composition of the metaphor of the dance of souls and of the coryphaeus in Plotinus, perhaps for this reason it also was relevant for the Neo-Platonic reprisal of Cappadocia. In the reformulation of the image of the coryphaeus and the assimilation to God, Plotinus seems to have reinterpreted certain elements of the Christian announcement and thus, in the fourth century, Gregory of Nyssa would cite Plotinus directly, moving about within his own cultural *milieu*, and acquiring the semantic shifts that occurred between Plato and Clement that we found in Plotinus.

The texts of the *Enneads*, just considered, have a corresponding parallel in two different works of Gregory of Nyssa (*In inscriptionem Psalmorum* II VI: GNO V 86, 14-23 and *De virginitate* II: GNO VIII/1, 253-5). We shall see how it is possible to find this in the theoretical elements of his discourse.

The first passage is found in the sixth chapter of the second book of commentary on the titles of the Psalms.

Likewise the inscription about *Maeleth* says that rejoicing and dancing await every victory over the adversaries which is achieved by sweat and labour, since the entire spiritual creation joins in harmonious choral chant, as it were, with the victors. For there was a time when the dance of the rational nature was one, and looked to the one leader of the chorus, and, in its movement in relation to his command (διὰ τῆς ἐντολῆς), interpreted the choral song in relation to the harmony exhibited thence. But later, when the sin occurred, it put an end to that divine concord of the chorus, when it poured the slipperiness of deceit at the feet of the first humans who used to sing in chorus with the angelic powers and caused the fall, wherefore man was separated from connection with

⁶⁵ Chiaradonna highlights this very well. See R. Chiaradonna, *Plotino* (2009), 166-7. See also Alessandro Linguisti, ‘La felicità dell’anima non discesa’, in Aldo Brancacci (ed.), *Antichi e moderni nella filosofia di età imperiale* (Napoli, 2001), 213-36. On this, I distanced myself from the statement of Russell, which although not wrong seems reductive, when he attributes to Clement the reading of the *Theaetetus* 176b and therefore the conception of deification, according to the ethical, not ontological, approach.

the angels. Because the fall put an end to this conjunction, there is the necessity of many hardships and labours by the one who has fallen, that he might again be restored, once he has prevailed against and overthrown the sentence that was imposed upon him by the fall, and has received the divine dance as a prize of his victory over the opponent.⁶⁶

Gregory is describing two real states of created nature, before and after sin. The harmony of the dance and looking toward the coryphaeus are metaphors that indicate a condition that has occurred, with respect to which sin breaks in, dividing the time of creation into a before and an after.

Here the coryphaeus is evidently the divine Logos who in Himself coincides with the will of God and who moves rational nature (τῆς λογικῆς φύσεως) not only because of attraction but through commands, that is, like a true coryphaeus, not only by being looked at, but by indicating what it wants.

The difference is radical with respect to Plotinus and while the language and metaphorical signifier are the same, the meaning has once again changed greatly.

- a) Gregory adds an element that was absent in the image of Plotinus and of his predecessors, and it is a fruit of biblical reading: the dance and joy are for the celebration of a warlike enterprise (*e.g.*, David vs Goliath) and all of intelligible creation is in accord with the victors like the harmony of a choir. The new interpretative picture of the victory that leads to unity and harmony once again requires the introduction of the aforementioned similitude of a Platonic mold through which, however, there is now indicated – with eyes on the coryphaeus and the harmony of the dance – a *singular, relational, and ethical* condition (see *Luke* 16:19), which is the cause of effects involving the entire cosmos.
- b) In Plotinus, the One did not voluntarily impart the movement of the souls but it was their coryphaeus in an analogical way, as the centre of the soul that is gathered into itself;⁶⁷ here Gregory utilizes rather the expression διὰ τῆς ἐντολῆς, in order to say that the movement reaches *from* the coryphaeus to the chorus of the souls and the angels.
- c) The double composition of the rational nature, in angels and men, although grouped in a unity prior to sin, is still an element of difference with respect to Neo-Platonic cosmology; a difference that highlights the Hebrew matrix of Christian thought but that also shows the radical novelty of the mediation of Christ.⁶⁸
- d) The terminology of the choral unity is enhanced by musical terms that indicate the reciprocity of the relations in the ensemble; other than ἁρμονίαν

⁶⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *In inscriptionem Psalmorum* II, ch. VI: Jacobus Mc Donough, S.J. (ed.), GNO V 86, 14-23 (Leiden, 1986). English translation: Ronald E. Heine, *Gregory of Nyssa's Treatise on the Inscriptions of the Psalms* (Oxford, 1995), 138-9.

⁶⁷ See *Enneads* VI 9,8,1-5.

⁶⁸ See Giulio Maspero, 'Isoangelia in Gregory of Nyssa and Origen on the Background of Plotinus', in this volume, pp. 77-100.

there appear the compounds of συν-: συνῳδίαν and συναφείας. The dance and the music is now divine: τὴν θεϊαν χοροστασίαν. It comes from God, it continues, and it persists in God.

The second passage in which Gregory of Nyssa makes use of the same image, is found in the treatise *De virginitate*, at the beginning of the second chapter.

Apparently we are dealing here with an insertion of an analogy, almost a touch of poetry, into a very complex argumentation; but the allusion to the Platonic metaphor is within a very clear dogmatic formulation, and it is relevant when describing the ontology of the Cappadocian Fathers.

Seeing, then, that virginity means so much as this, that while it remains in Heaven with the Father of spirits, and moves in the dance of the celestial powers (παρὰ τῷ πατρὶ τῶν πνευμάτων μένειν καὶ μετὰ τῶν ὑπερκοσμίων χορεύειν), it nevertheless stretches out hands for man's salvation; that while it is the channel which draws down the Deity to share man's estate (τὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπινου βίου κοινωνίαν κατάγουσα), it keeps wings for man's desires to rise to heavenly things, and is a bond of union (σύνδεσμος) between the Divine and human, by its mediation bringing into harmony (εἰς συμφωνίαν ἄγουσα) these existences so widely divided (τὰ τοσοῦτον ἀλλήλων ἀφεστῶτα) – what words could be discovered powerful enough to reach this wondrous height?⁶⁹

Gregory is speaking of that 'which was verified physically (σωματικῶς) in Mary Immaculate (ἐν τῇ ἀμιάντῳ Μαρίας) when the fullness of divinity shone forth in Christ through the virginity (διὰ τῆς παρθενίας)'.⁷⁰

We are on the level of a further interpretive value of the metaphor of the assimilation to the divine and of the relation between God and the world (or between the One and the many), and again we can see how the elements and the argumentative framework, this time of Plotinus, become re-transformed into a Christian perspective to describe the dogma.

a) The virginity that Gregory is considering is at the same time that of the Father and of the Son,⁷¹ that of the Virgin Mother and that which comes to be in every soul that 'remains virgin by following reason'.⁷² This therefore

⁶⁹ Johannes P. Cavadanos (ed.), GNO VIII/1, 255, 4-14 (Leiden, 1963). English translation: Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (eds), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series* 14 (Peabody, 1999), 345.

⁷⁰ GNO VIII/1, 254, 24-6, my translation.

⁷¹ With relation to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, Gregory says: 'When one speaks of purity and incorruptibility, with these terms one alludes precisely to virginity' (τὸ γὰρ καθαρόν καὶ ἀφθαρτόν ὀνομάσας ἄλλῳ ὀνόματι τὴν παρθενίαν ἐσήμανας), GNO VIII/1, 253, 18-9. Twice the reference is to the 'incorruptible Father', see GNO VIII/1, 253, 11-2.

⁷² τοῦτο καὶ ἐπὶ πάσης ψυχῆς κατὰ λόγον παρθενευοῦσης γίνεται (GNO VIII/1, 254, 27). κατὰ λόγον is translated by Schaff with 'by rule', I would prefer to translate it 'by reason'. See P. Schaff and H. Wace, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (1999), 344.

concerns a virginity that is found in the order of divine nature, but also in the created order. In the divine nature, virgin means incorruptible and source of eternal life. In the created nature, virginity is first of all of the corporeal world, understood immediately as the body of Mary, and then also of the world of the intelligibles, understood as a purity from passionate dispositions.

It is important then to note a first fundamental difference in the content that transforms from within the Neo-Platonic argumentative system. The virgin soul, which as such 'moves in the dance of the celestial powers',⁷³ is not virgin by itself, but is made such by the aid that is offered by God, which 'stretches out its offer of purity like a hand to raise it up again and make it look above'.⁷⁴

We can observe two elements of difference from the ontology of Plotinus. The first is the movement of the coryphaeus: where in the Sixth Ennead the soul had gather its strength to find in its centre the One-coryphaeus and unite itself to him, here it is God who goes toward the soul to elevate it to the contemplation of Himself, clearly maintaining the personal difference and establishing a reciprocal relation, as the God-coryphaeus of Gregory guides the dance directing himself to the souls and through his will. Gregory repeats the movement of the philosopher of the *Theaetetus*, but this time it is God himself who takes the place of the philosopher, in order to elevate the souls to the contemplation of Himself.

The second element is that, like in Clement, the being *with Christ* renders the soul deified. Here, even more strongly in contrast with Plato and Plotinus, there is added the mediation of the 'flesh and blood' (τοῖς διὰ σαρκὸς καὶ αἵματος)⁷⁵ of the Son incarnate which permits the deification of man: the helping hand of God gives the privilege of incorporeal nature, namely, participation in the purity (τὴν τῆς καθαρότητος μετουσίαν)⁷⁶, that is, in the divine life, through corporeal nature.

b) Where for Plotinus the dance, that is, the assimilation to the divine through vision, can take place because the soul has separated itself from the 'many' and from what is material, and can therefore elevate itself to the contemplation of the One, having lost every identity and otherness, here it is in a single and virgin body, that of Mary, to whom God himself descends in the economy of salvation, and the corporeal virginity is placed as a relational link between God and man (σύνδεσμός τις γινομένη τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης πρὸς τὸν θεὸν οἰκειώσεως),⁷⁷ which in the flesh and blood of Christ allows for their being reunited

⁷³ μετὰ τῶν ὑπερκοσμίων χορεύειν δυνάμεων (GNO VIII/1, 255, 6).

⁷⁴ ὥσπερ τινὰ χεῖρα τὴν τῆς καθαρότητος μετουσίαν ὀρέξασα, πάλιν ὀρθώσῃ καὶ πρὸς τὰ ἄνω βλέπειν χειραγωγήσῃ (GNO VIII/1, 254, 15-6). P. Schaff and H. Wace, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (1999), 344.

⁷⁵ GNO VIII/1, 254, 12-3.

⁷⁶ GNO VIII/1, 254, 15.

⁷⁷ GNO VIII/1, 255, 10.

in the harmony of the ‘many’ with the eternal. Being the same source of incorruptibility (τὴν πηγὴν τῆς ἀφθαρσίας αὐτόν), the virginity through which God comes into the world is for Gregory the mark (τοῦ τρόπου) of the incarnation (τῆς ἐνανθρωπήσεως).⁷⁸ Therefore, the source of the divine, eternal life, in the ontology of Gregory coincides with a single specific man, Jesus Christ, with whom it is possible to be united in faith sacramentally.

In this way the metaphor of the *Theaetetus* loses the characteristic of an image in order to become an expression of a concrete and historical reality: the coryphaeus is in fact the person of the Son incarnate, and the chorus comes about by the personal relationship with Him that constitutes the Church. The horizontal dimension that we have revealed in the ‘centrology’ of Plotinus is imposed here with the strength of the incarnation in the womb of the Virgin, and the vertical dimension of the link with God comes about by the same image of the source, which here is the source of purity (that is, of eternal life) that does not cease to be so in becoming flesh and blood.⁷⁹

c) The relation of the soul with the world is devoid of passions even in this case, but here is not considered the separation from the flesh and the ‘many’, but from sin. If the third characteristic of the Platonic argument remains unchanged – the necessity of distancing oneself from what separates one from the Good – here evil is no longer represented by the ‘many’ but by sin, which separates the soul from harmony with God and from other rational natures, the Angels. The ascent then becomes asceticism, in the sense of a personal ethical commitment.⁸⁰

Conclusions

We have been able to see how the argumentative system of the coryphaeus and the dance of souls, coined by the Platonic dialogue of the *Theaetetus*, was conserved throughout the centuries as the scheme for describing the assimilation of the soul to God according to three dimensions: flight from that which separates one from the good, desire to elevate oneself to contemplation, and union with God.

We have observed the argumentative setting of the referenced authors, not from the perspective of ethics, but of the ontology it presupposes.

⁷⁸ See GNO VIII/1, 254, 17-20.

⁷⁹ Even in this brief exemplification, the Christological advancement carried out by Gregory of Nyssa is clear. Strong evidence of this system is the entire homily IX of *In Cant.* See especially the reference to virginity Hermannus Langerbeck (ed.), GNO VI 262 (Leiden, 1960). See also as it refers to the communion of the wills that make the soul sister of the bridegroom (GNO VI 263, 1-8 and 273,1), and to the relation (σχέσις) with the good (GNO VI, 277,11).

⁸⁰ See Ilaria Vigorelli, ‘Desiderio e beatitudine. “Schesis” nell’ “In Canticum canticorum” di Gregorio di Nissa’, *Annales Theologici* 28 (2014), 277-300.

In Plato the soul can acquire similarity with the Good only 'as near as possible', because of a graduated ontology; in Clement the soul acquires union with God through faith in Christ, who in himself unifies all things, being Logos, and in himself unites to God; in Plotinus the disposition of the soul with respect to the One becomes relevant, but the union can happen only through the loss of otherness and of the 'many'; in Gregory of Nyssa, finally, the union with God happens through divine initiative, thanks to the purity of the virgin body of one, Mary, who unites the 'many' to the eternal in her womb, giving birth to the Son. In this way, being incarnated in her, God himself is made the bond of communion between things that by nature are distant/different from one another (τὰ τοσοῦτον ἀλλήλων ἀφεστῶτα τῇ φύσει).⁸¹

The metaphor of the assimilation, and then of the deification, of man therefore allows for seeing how the epistemological and ethical perspectives change according to different ontologies that mature alongside Trinitarian dogmatic and Christological conceptions: from the image forged by the Platonic dialectic there subsequently develops the delineation of a relational perspective, in which the centrality of Christ and of his divine life become more clearly the light by which all things are interpreted anew.

⁸¹ GNO VIII/1, 255, 11-2.

***Isoangelia* in Gregory of Nyssa and Origen on the Background of Plotinus**

Giulio MASPERO, Rome, Italy

ABSTRACT

In their works both Gregory of Nyssa and Origen speak about *isoangelia* (angel-likeness): according to God's plan the true end of a human person is to become like an angel. This article compares the thought of the two authors on the background of Plotinus' philosophy of the souls. The Cappadocian defines *isoangelia* as a condition of the soul acquired at the end of time, because it is related to human will and its definitive direction towards God, according to a movement that is prolonged into the *epektasis*. On the other side, Origen's *isoangelia* is at the beginning, because it is related to the original similarity of human souls to the angels. This difference is explained having recourse to their different metaphysical frameworks and Plotinus' ontological view.

Introduction

From its beginnings, the philosophical undertaking was conceived as a pursuit of the elevation of man; for this reason, metaphysical inquiry and the path to reach perfection have always been connected. This implies a fundamental polar tension, which the human thought throughout its history has resolved in very different ways: the first principle must by definition be other with respect to man, who in turn is evidently marked by limits, but the progress toward perfection of the latter apparently requires a fading or really a complete elimination of this ontological difference. This fundamental polar tension descends historically into terms of the relation between unity and multiplicity, between being and history, and between spirit and body. This is also the context of the *isoangelia*, since the articulation of the relationship between the divine, purely spiritual beings, and a humanity marked by its corporeality is crucial for understanding *isoangelia* itself. The analysis of this issue offers a perspective of the dialogue between philosophy and theology that is typical of the Fathers.

For this reason, the study of the conception of the *isoangelia* in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, against the background of the ontological development that led from middle and Neo-Platonism, particularly Plotinus, to the formulation of Christian dogma, seems to come with a further significance with respect to

a simple terminological comparison. In particular it seems interesting to compare Origen and Gregory on account of their different stages of development concerning the ontology of relation that distinguishes their thought.¹

Antecedents

Angels are present both in the Greek and Semitic traditions.² For this reason, the reference to them in Christian theology is particularly interesting and complex. The same double origin is reflected in the rather rare compound *isoangelia*, which appears in *Luke* 20:36, and is found both in the pagan ambit, such as in the *De anima* of Iamblichus,³ and in the Christian ambit, for example, in epitaphes.⁴ Certainly an especially conspicuous element is the connection with immortality, as can be seen from as early as the *Divisiones Aristoteleae* which distinguishes amongst living beings between mortal and immortal beings and where, among the latter, angels are specifically cited (ἀθάνατα δὲ οἷον ἄγγελοι).⁵ The two lines converge in the thought of Philo, whose importance for the Alexandrian and Cappadocian traditions cannot be overstated. It is he who right away fixed the eschatological meaning of the *isoangelia*: in *De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini* he allegorically interprets the inclusion of Abraham in the people of God in *Gen.* 25:8 as a participation in immortality (ἀφθαρσία) which would render Abraham equal to the angels (ἴσος ἀγγέλοις γεγονώς), who ‘are the army of God and are incorporeal and happy souls’ (ἄγγελοι γὰρ στρατός εἰσι θεοῦ, ἀσώματοι καὶ εὐδαίμονες ψυχαί).⁶ A fundamental element of Philo’s legacy is, therefore, the equivalence between angels and souls, which would have a primary influence on later writers.

However, to grasp the importance of the theological development of this point, it is essential to start from the philosophical perspective. This allows one to better appreciate the progressive emergence of a metaphysical tension inherent in the double, Greek and Semitic, origin of *isoangelia*.

This latter category is *per se* impossible in the thought of Plotinus, who does not know the proper meaning of *angels*, but uses the term only to indicate the function of the messenger. In the *Ennead* V, after having defined the middle position of the soul between sensation and Intelligence, he defines the soul with

¹ See Giulio Maspero, *Essere e relazione* (Roma, 2013), 124-7.

² See Joseph Barbel, *Christos Angelos* (Bonn, 1941) and Guy G. Stroumsa, ‘La couple de l’ange et de l’Esprit: traditions juives et chrétiennes’, *RB* 88 (1981), 42-61.

³ See the apparatus in John M. Dillon (ed.), *Iamblichus Chalcidensis, De anima* (Leuven, 2002), 72.

⁴ See Gerhard Kittel, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart, 1933), I 87.

⁵ Aristotle, *Divisiones aristoteleae*, 63, 10 (Cod.Marc.), ed. Hermann Mutschmann (Leipzig, 1906).

⁶ Philo, *De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini*, 5,4-5, ed. Leopold Cohn (Berlin, 1962).

angel,⁷ so that in the *Ennead* IV, speaking of pleasure and pain, he states that an authentic messenger cannot be subject to passions.⁸ He equates the gods with demons, good souls, and good men.⁹

For Plotinus, therefore, here, there are only the souls that tend toward perfection up to the perfect man who through contemplation has come to unification with the One. The soul of man, in fact, has a higher part directed at Intelligence (πρὸς νοῦν) and a lower part directed at the body (πρὸς σῶμα),¹⁰ since the soul did not fall completely, but something of it remains forever in the intelligible world.¹¹ This concerns the doctrine of the un-fallen soul, which presents serious difficulties from an ethical standpoint.¹² The way of ascent is always opposed with respect to the way of the material, because the body, for Plotinus, is dead. The ‘many’ should, in fact, be radically overcome, not only on the material level, but also for what concerns the individual subject or the ‘I’. Thus, one who has contemplated is one who is united to such an extent with the contemplated reality as to no longer bear in himself the image and not even to be able to remember:

But he was one in himself, without any difference in himself neither with respect to himself nor in respect to other realities – in fact, nothing in him was moved, not anger, nor desire, because he was on high – and not even (there was) reason or a thought, indeed really not even he himself, if it must be said so. However, as enraptured or in ecstasy he has entered silently in solitude and in a steady state, without withdrawing anymore from being of Him and without occupying himself with himself, inasmuch as he is absolutely still and as having become immobility.¹³

This, for Plotinus, is the description of the life of the gods, of divine men, and of the blessed (θεῶν καὶ ἀνθρώπων θείων καὶ εὐδαιμόνων), which in a succinct formula is depicted as ‘they abandon everything else that is here, life estranged to the pleasures of here, the escape of one alone toward the Only One’ (ἀπαλλαγὴ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν τῆδε, βίος ἀνήδονος τῶν τῆδε, φυγὴ μόνου πρὸς μόνον).¹⁴

⁷ Plotinus, *Enneades* V, III 3,44, ed. Paul Henry and Hans-Rudolph Schwyzer (Leiden, 1951-1973).

⁸ *Ibid.* IV, IV 19,28.

⁹ *Ibid.* III, II 3,24-5. See also V, VIII 10.4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* IV, VIII 8,12-3.

¹¹ *Ibid.* IV, VIII 8,2-3.

¹² See Riccardo Chiaradonna, *Plotino* (Roma, 2009), 167.

¹³ Plotinus, *Enneades* VI, IX 11,8-16: Ὅν δὲ ἐν καὶ αὐτὸς διαφορὰν ἐν αὐτῷ οὐδεμίαν πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἔχον οὔτε κατὰ ἄλλα – οὐ γάρ τι ἐκινεῖτο παρ’ αὐτῷ, οὐ θυμός, οὐκ ἐπιθυμία ἄλλου παρὴν αὐτῷ ἀναβεβηκότι – ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ λόγος οὐδὲ τις νόησις οὐδ’ ὅλως αὐτός, εἰ δεῖ καὶ τοῦτο λέγειν. Ἄλλ’ ὥσπερ ἀρπασθεῖς ἢ ἐνθουσιάσας ἡσυχῇ ἐν ἐρήμῳ καὶ καταστάσει γεγέννηται ἀτρεμεῖ, τῇ αὐτοῦ οὐσίᾳ οὐδαμῇ ἀποκλίνων οὐδὲ περὶ αὐτὸν στρεφόμενος, ἐστὼς πάντῃ καὶ οἷον στάσις γενόμενος (All the translations are the author’s own).

¹⁴ *Ibid.* VI, IX 11,49-51.

The perfection therefore consists in a union that is solitary and static, as the return of the soul to the Intelligence (νοῦς γενόμενος), through intellectualization (νοωθεῖσα) and the entrance into the intelligible place (ἐν τῷ τόπῳ τῷ νοητῷ).¹⁵

Porphyry, on the other hand, also due to his dialectical position with respect to Christianity, considers explicitly the question of the angels that approach the gods; in his *Contra Christianos* there emerges, in fact, the inherent tension in the duplicity of origin of the *isoangelia*. In the pagan criticism of Christianity the angel was equated to the gods, so the philosopher addresses the Christians saying:

In fact, if you say that the angels, free from passions and immortal, and by nature incorruptible, are close to God, who we call gods because of their proximity to the Divinity, why do you debate over the name and not consider it a merely terminological difference?¹⁶

It is significant that the text of the philosopher precisely cites *Matth.* 22:30 a parallel to, in addition to *Mark* 12:25, *Luke* 20:34-6, where the term under review appears, to support the equivalence of angel and pagan god, as both would have a divine nature (τῆς φύσεως αὐτῶν μαρτυρουμένης θείας)¹⁷ through participation (θείας φύσεως τοὺς ἀγγέλους μετέχειν).¹⁸ It is evident that Porphyry's thought is not changed with respect to his master and that the essential element that characterizes the angels-gods is the absence of passions. From the philosophical tradition there thus emerges an ideal line that connects the perfection of the soul, impassibility, and immortality, linked by participation in the divine nature that the very souls always possess due to their ontological proximity to the angels.

The position of Iamblichus is more articulate, perhaps because of the influence of his relationship with Christianity, which led him to shape Neo-Platonism increasingly in a religious direction. In *De mysteris*, clearly differentiating in this regard from the position of Plotinus and Porphyry,¹⁹ he distinguishes angels, heroes, and souls in substantial terms (κατ' οὐσίαν).²⁰ The difference in their nature would correspond to the diversity of the causes that originate them (ὥς ἀπὸ τῶν ἐτέρων αἰτίῳ).²¹ Demonic beings would be responsible for the bond that unites souls with bodies (τοῦ συνδέσμου τῶν ψυχῶν εἰς τὰ σώματα).²² This role seems

¹⁵ *Ibid.* VI, VII 35,4-5.

¹⁶ Porphyry, *Contra Christianos* 76, 1-4 (Makar. IV 21), ed. Adolf von Harnack (Berlin, 1916): Εἰ γὰρ ἀγγέλους φασὶ τῷ θεῷ παρεστάναι ἀπαθείς καὶ ἀθανάτους καὶ τὴν φύσιν ἀφθάρτους, οὓς ἡμεῖς θεοὺς λέγομεν διὰ τὸ πλησίον αὐτοὺς εἶναι τῆς θεότητος, τί τὸ ἀμφισβητούμενον περὶ τοῦ ὀνόματος ἢ μόνον τὸ διαφορὰν ἡγεῖσθαι τῆς κλήσεως;

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 76,8.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 76,11-2.

¹⁹ See J.M. Dillon, *Iamblichus Chalcidensis* (2002), 14-5.

²⁰ Iamblichus, *De mysteris* II 1,1, ed. Édouard des Places (Paris, 1966).

²¹ *Ibid.* II 1,10.

²² *Ibid.* II 1,18.

to explain why this ontological difference can be overcome thanks to the good will of the gods, for whom the soul can elevate itself to the angelic order (τάξιν τὴν ἀγγελικὴν), becoming, exactly, an angelic soul (ἀγγελικὴν ψυχὴν).²³ There is therefore likely a probable assertion of the *isoangelia*²⁴ accompanied by the affirmation in *De anima* 7, of an ontological duality of the soul, whose essence would be twofold, intelligible, and animal. This would imply the need to live a life, even a corporeal life, together with the intellectual life, passing through the material dimension to the attainment of perfection.²⁵

Origen

a. *Ontological Differences*

After this sketch of the philosophical outline from which the ontological value of the *isoangelia* emerges, it can be seen how the same questions reverberate on the theological front.

In the Alexandrian school, Clement speaks of the spiritual progress realized through knowledge and love that allows one to live according to God and in communion with the angels, whom he calls gods and says are to be placed immediately below the Saviour.²⁶ The soul once purified can also reach this through spiritual progress,²⁷ in such a way that for man it is possible to already possess, *in anticipation*, the *isoangelia* (τὸ ἰσάγγελος εἶναι)²⁸ up to the fullness of the immutable state (πάντως ἄτρεπτον) that corresponds to it.²⁹ This anticipation of the *isoangelia* by the true gnostic is linked to impassibility (ἀπαθείας) and consists in the assimilation to God (ἐξομοιουμένη θεῷ),³⁰ which is also achieved through prayer.³¹ Two elements that are associated with the *isoangelia* emerge here, which will be important for the relationship between Origen and Gregory of Nyssa: impassibility and immutability. The heart of the matter will circle around the resemanticization of these categories in the context of the development of the ontology.³²

²³ *Ibid.* II 2,25.

²⁴ See *id.*, *De anima* VIII 47 with the reference to the apparatus in note 3.

²⁵ See J.M. Dillon, *Iamblichus Chalcidensis* (2002), 15-6.

²⁶ See Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* VII 10, 56, 3 and 6,1-7,1, SC 428, ed. Alain Le Boulluec (Paris, 1997), 184.

²⁷ *Ibid.* VII 10, 57, 3,1, SC 428, ed. A. Le Boulluec (1997), 186.

²⁸ *Ibid.* VII 10, 57, 5,2, SC 428, ed. A. Le Boulluec (1997), 186.

²⁹ *Ibid.* VII 10, 57, 5,6, SC 428, ed. A. Le Boulluec (1997), 188.

³⁰ *Ibid.* VII 14, 84, 2,3, SC 428, ed. A. Le Boulluec (1997), 258.

³¹ *Ibid.* VII 12, 78, 6,1, SC 428, ed. A. Le Boulluec (1997), 240.

³² On Origen's angelology, see Cécile Blanc, 'L'angélogie d'Origène', *SP* 14 (1972), 79-109 and Vito Limone, *Origene. Commento al Vangelo di Giovanni* (Milano, 2012), 115-21.

In the original writings of Origen the adjective *isangelos* appears six times,³³ but similar expressions are more numerous insofar as the relation between the soul and the angel seems to be a key point of his thought. He must confront the aforementioned polar tension from the perspective both of the affirmation of the divine transcendence and that of the authentic holiness – and thus perfection – of man. On the one hand, he must contrast the ontological-gradual conception of the gnostic mould, which denies the possibility of an authentic progression, because it crystallizes the difference, and on the other hand, he must avoid the dissolution in the One of Plotinian mysticism, which cancels the difference itself.

The text of Porphyry that was just mentioned seems to reverberate precisely in a passage where, in the ambit of his debate with Celsus, Origen is opposed to the statement that after God (μετ' ἐκεῖνον) men follow immediately.³⁴ From a Christian perspective, rather, the ontological space above man would be occupied by many beings of superior value (πολλὰ ἐστὶν ἀνθρώπου τιμιώτερα).³⁵ The exegetical work is aimed at clarifying the ontological distinction between the angels as creatures and the divine nature through the reinterpretation of the gods through an angelic lens. This is obtained by approaching Old Testament passages like *Ps.* 95(6):5 and *Ps.* 81(2):1, where there is reference to the gods of the nations who are judged by God and who are treated as demons in the text of the LXX (πάντες οἱ θεοὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν δαιμόνια), along with *1Cor.* 8:5-6, where Paul states precisely the oneness of God and the radical difference with respect to the multiplicity of pagan divinities. It is here that the *isoangelia* enters into play:

We know that the angels are so much greater than men that the men who become perfected are similar to them (ἰσαγγέλους).³⁶

The perspective of affirming the ontological distinction between God and rational creatures leads to underlining the wealth and variety of the metaphysical space occupied by the latter, while simultaneously showing the dynamism possible in it.

The text is immediately followed by the citation of *Luke* 20:36, from which comes both the specific term in question and the hermeneutical key of the previous exegesis: living a life of virtue according to the *Logos*, man can be

³³ See Origen, *Contra Celsum* IV 29,18 and 20, SC 136, ed. Marcel Borret (Paris, 1968), 252; *Commentarii in evangelium Joannis* II 22, 140,7, SC 120, ed. Cécile Blanc (Paris, 1966), 300; XIII, 16, 99,5, SC 222, ed. Cécile Blanc (Paris, 1975), 82; *Fragmenta ex commentariis in epistolam i ad Corinthios* 49, 38, ed. Claude Jenkins, *JTS* 9 (1908), 33; *Selecta in Psalmos*, PG 12, 1281B.

³⁴ *Id.*, *Contra Celsum* IV 29,2, SC 136, ed. M. Borret (1968), 252.

³⁵ *Ibid.* IV 29,6-7, SC 136, ed. M. Borret (1968), 252.

³⁶ *Ibid.* IV 29,16-8, SC 136, ed. M. Borret (1968), 252: οἶδαμεν δὲ καὶ τοὺς ἀγγέλους οὕτως εἶναι ἀνθρώπων κρείττονας ὥστε τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τελειωθέντας ἰσαγγέλους γίνεσθαι.

elevated, closing the ontological distance that separates him from the angelic hierarchies, Thrones, Dominions, Principalities, and Powers, to become similar to God.³⁷ In this sense, after God there are found, according to Origen, the virtuous rational beings, because ‘virtue itself belongs to men and to God’ (ἡ αὐτὴ ἀρετὴ ἀνθρώπου καὶ θεοῦ).³⁸

Here is shown the ontological novelty that is being produced, inasmuch as in the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition God cannot have virtues, because they are always marked by potentiality.³⁹ In Stoicism, the situation is different and there is talk of the same virtues that characterize God and men,⁴⁰ but the price paid for the ontological tension cited is the materialization of the Divinity and its identification with the world. Origen is well aware of the danger, and yet he affirms at the same time the divine transcendence and virtue as a union between God and man.

For this reason, still in contrast with Celsus, he clarifies that Christ is not an angel,⁴¹ emphasising the ontological abyss that distinguishes the Creator from the creature. However, at the same time his theology seems dependent on the Philonian affirmation that angels and men are only names of souls, toward which philosophical language also pushes. For example, in the *Commentary on John*, Origen also writes:

In favour of the thesis one can further add the fact that the names assigned to the superior powers are not names of living natures, but of orders, where this or that rational nature is assigned by God. In fact, *throne*, *principality*, *dominion*, and *power* are not a living species, but names of the reality into which those that are denominated have so been classified. Their subject is none other than a *man* and to the subject is added as accident being *throne* or *dominion* or *principality* or *power*.⁴²

Thus, according to the Alexandrian, this explains why in Scripture there is no difference between man and angel⁴³ and why the Saviour, going way beyond Paul, could become man for men and angel for the angels.⁴⁴

³⁷ See *ibid.* VIII 29,21-8, SC 150, ed. Marcel Borret (Paris, 1969), 252.

³⁸ *Ibid.* VIII 29,34-5, SC 150, ed. M. Borret (1969), 254.

³⁹ See Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* 1178b.7-23.

⁴⁰ See Chrysippus' fragment transmitted in Themistius, *Oratio* 2, 27,9-10, ed. Heinrich Schenkl (Leipzig, 1965): οἱ φάσκοντες εἶναι τὴν αὐτὴν ἀρετὴν καὶ ἀλήθειαν ἀνδρὸς καὶ θεοῦ.

⁴¹ See Origen, *Contra Celsum* V 53, SC 147, ed. Marcel Borret (Paris, 1969), 148-60.

⁴² *Id.*, *Commentarii in evangelium Joannis* II 23, 146, 1-9, SC 120, ed. C. Blanc (1966), 304: Καὶ ἔτι μᾶλλον παραμυθῆσεται, ὅτι ἐπὶ τῶν κρείττωνων δυνάμεων τὰ ὀνόματα οὐχὶ φύσεων ζῶων ἐστὶν ὀνόματα ἀλλὰ τάξεων, ὧν ἥδε τις καὶ ἥδε λογικὴ φύσις τέτευχεν ἀπὸ θεοῦ. Θρόνος γὰρ οὐκ εἶδος ζώου οὐδὲ ἀρχὴ οὐδὲ κυριότης οὐδὲ ἐξουσία, ἀλλὰ ὀνόματα πραγμάτων, ἐφ' ὧν ἐτάχθησαν οἱ οὕτως προσαγορευόμενοι, ὧν τὸ ὑποκείμενον οὐκ ἄλλο τί ἐστὶν ἢ ἄνθρωπος, καὶ τῷ ὑποκειμένῳ συμβέβηκε τὸ θρόνον εἶναι ἢ κυριότητι ἢ ἀρχῇ ἢ ἐξουσίᾳ.

⁴³ See *ibid.* II 23, 144, SC 120, ed. C. Blanc (1966), 302.

⁴⁴ See *ibid.* I 31, 217, SC 120, ed. C. Blanc (1966), 166.

From the Latin translation of *De principiis* it can be seen that Origen's scope is to counter the gnostic subdivision of beings into different ontological degrees that are fixed by nature. The distinction of the angelic orders is, rather, arranged by God based on acquired merits (*pro meritis disposita*), therefore, based on the use of freedom, and not fixed by nature (*naturaliter*).⁴⁵ The dogmatic explanation is particularly relevant for demons, who were not created ontologically as such (*substantialiter*), but have become demons through their actions and their procession toward evil (*pro motibus suis et profectibus*). Thus, even in the third order of beings, constituted by humankind, that is, by the souls of human beings, it is similarly seen that some, who pursue the beatitudes, *i.e.* the perfections proposed by Christ, are even assumed into the angelic order because of their progress (*per profectum etiam in illum angelorum ordinem quosdam videmos assumi*).⁴⁶ The highest perfection (*ad summam perfectionem*) of holiness is, thus, identified with beings who are similar or equal to the angels ('*similes angelis*' vel '*aequales*').⁴⁷

b. *The Content of the Isoangelia*

The dogmatically essential point is that the great Alexandrian is missing a fundamental means of expression, namely, *physis*. For this, he fails to terminologically indicate the difference of nature between angel and man⁴⁸ and entrusts the absolute distinction between God and the other creatures to the absence of all corporeality. In fact, only the Trinity is purely spiritual in the sense of being incorporeal, while the angels and men have a corporeal dimension that is much thinner the closer they are to perfection.⁴⁹ For this reason, in the commentary on *Matthew*, regarding the question by the Sadducees in *Matth.* 22:23-8 about the wife who married seven brothers, Origen resumes the ὡς ἄγγελοι ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ εἶσιν of *Matth.* 22:30, and explains:

I believe that with these words it is shown that those who are deemed worthy of the resurrection from death become like the angels in heaven not only for the fact that they do not wed nor do they get married, but also for the fact that their bodies are transfigured in the descent becoming like those which are the bodies of the angels, that is, eternal and resplendent.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ *Id.*, *De principiis* I 8, 1, 15 and 23, ed. Samuel Fernández, *Sobre los principios* (Madrid, 2015), 306.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* I 8, 4, 137-8 and 146-8, ed. S. Fernández (2015), 316-8.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* IV 4, 2, ed. S. Fernández (2015), 934.

⁴⁸ See Cécile Blanc in SC 120 (1966), 30 and Peter Nemeshegyi, *La Paternité de Dieu chez Origène* (Paris, 1960), 81.

⁴⁹ See e.g. Origen, *Homeliae in Exodum* VI 5, 21-25, SC 321, ed. Marcel Borret (Paris, 1985), 184. See also Adele Monaci Castagno, 'Angelo', in *ead.*, *Dizionario Origene* (Roma, 2000), 6-13, esp. 7.

⁵⁰ Origen, *Commentarium in evangelium Matthaei* 17, 30, 48-59, ed. Erich Klostermann, *Origenes Werke* 10/2, GCS 40, 671: ἐγὼ δ' οἶμαι διὰ τούτων δηλοῦσθαι ὅτι οὐ μόνον κατὰ

Origen states that the soul is gifted with substance and its own life (*substantiam vitamque habens propriam*).⁵¹ He excludes that such a soul is tripartite, according to the Platonic tradition, and leaves open the possibility, inherent in the Neo-Platonic philosophical framework, that one can speak of two souls, one more divine and celestial with another that is inferior (*duae animae in nobis dicendae sunt, una quaedam diviniore et caelestis et alia inferior*). In the same way, he discusses the possibility that the tendency toward evil is attributed *in full* to the body, which in itself is dead⁵² and is linked to the soul as an accident.⁵³ In fact, it is precisely the material dimension that is the cause of movement and mutability:

It was necessary that the intelligible nature make use of bodies, because, by the very fact of being created it is subject to mutation and change. In fact, a reality that was not but came to be, for this same reason is said to be of a mutable nature and therefore has the virtue or vice not substantially but as an accident.⁵⁴

In II 1, 2, in the treatise on the soul, Origen discusses the fact that the angels can be defined as souls, responding affirmatively, insofar as they meet the definition of soul, that is, a sensitive, rational, and mobile substance (*substantia rationabiliter sensibilis et mobilis*).⁵⁵ Moreover, this should not be deemed unworthy of heavenly creatures insofar as Christ has a soul. Starting from 1Cor. 14:15, the Alexandrian distinguishes the soul from the intelligence (*mens*), linking the latter to the Holy Spirit and thus to the possibility of praising God. One would therefore pray with the spirit and the intelligence, not with the soul.⁵⁶ Thus Origen proposes the etymology that connects *psyche* with *psychos*, that is, with cold, identifying its being with having lost the primitive heat, in order to conclude with the following exegesis of the invitation directed at the soul to return to its repose in Ps. 114:7, significantly indicated by the verb ἐπίστροφον in the translation of the LXX:

τὸ μὴ γαμεῖν καὶ τὸ μὴ γαμεῖσθαι ὥς οἱ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἄγγελοι γίνονται οἱ καταξιούμενοι τῆς ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστάσεως, ἀλλὰ καὶ κατὰ τὸ μετασχηματιζόμενα αὐτῶν τὰ σώματα τῆς ταπεινώσεως γίνεσθαι τοιαῦτα, ὅποιά ἐστι τὰ τῶν ἀγγέλων σώματα, αἰθέρια καὶ αὐγοειδὲς φῶς.

⁵¹ *Id.*, *De principiis* I, praef, 5, ed. S. Fernández (2015), 124.

⁵² See *ibid.* III 4, 1, ed. S. Fernández (2015), 722.

⁵³ On the anti-gnostic criticism of Origen and his consideration of the body, see Mark J. Edwards, 'Origen No Gnostic; or On The Corporality of Man', *JTS* 43 (1992), 23-37.

⁵⁴ Origen, *De principiis* IV 4, 8: 360,10, ed. S. Fernández (2015), 956-8: *ut quoniam necesse erat uti corporibus intellectualem naturam, quae et commutabilis et convertibilis deprae-henditur ea ipsa conditione, qua facta est (quod enim non fuit et esse coepit, ex hoc ipso naturae mutabilis designatur et ideo nec substantialem habet vel virtutem vel malitiam, sed accidentem).*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* II 8, 2, ed. S. Fernández (2015), 452.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* II 8, 3, ed. S. Fernández (2015), 454.

And from all this it seems to be proven that intelligence, decaying from its state and its dignity, it has become and has been called soul. But that, if it will be cured and corrected, will again be intelligence (*mens*).⁵⁷

The *isoangelia* is configured, therefore, as a condition common to angels and men, who are all *souls* that are purified returning to the intelligence. Origen, obviously, does not conceive of the possibility that men become angels,⁵⁸ but with the ontological categories at his disposal he cannot express the difference between their nature in substantial terms. Furthermore, matter is linked to mutability, and perfection must thus minimize the corporeal dimension in order to ensure stability in the good. Some common elements to Plotinian metaphysics are evident.

But the expressive genius of Origen succeeds in introducing certain categories that will be fundamental for Gregory of Nyssa's thought, in a somewhat different ontological context, and which are remarkable elements of the development of theological thought. The *Commentary on John* emphasizes these.

A first citation of the term *isoangelios* appears *en passant* in the second book, where Origen interprets *John* 1:4 in contrast with Heracleon: the identification of *life* and of the *light of men* cannot mean that life is only proper to men, just as the self-identification of the Most High as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob in *Ex* 3:6 does not imply that He is not also the God of all others. However, aside from this reasoning, it is the very text of the New Testament that excludes the possibility that life is only proper to men when it is said that 'they can no longer die, for they are like angels' (*Luke* 20:36) (ὅταν προκόψωμεν, ἰσάγγελοι ἐσόμεθα).⁵⁹

More interesting is the criticism of the gnostic and spiritualist exegesis of *John* 4:21, where the response of Jesus to the Samaritan woman, regarding the adoration in spirit and truth that will not take place on the mount or at Jerusalem, is read by Origen based on the identification of the mount with the adoration of those who are heterodox and of Jerusalem with the adoration of the many in the Church who have not already reached perfection. The reason adopted by the Alexandrian is the following:

In fact, just as the angels do not adore the Father at Jerusalem, something that even the Jews would affirm, since the angelic adoration is higher with respect to the adoration that is directed toward the Father at Jerusalem, so not even those who have already achieved the disposition (διαθέσει) of being similar to the angels (ἰσάγγελοι) adore

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* II 8, 3, ed. S. Fernández (2015), 462: *Ex quibus omnibus illud videtur ostendi, quod mens de statu ac dignitate sua declinans, effecta vel nuncupata est anima; quae si reparata fuerit et correctata, redit in hoc, ut sit mens.*

⁵⁸ See Mark J. Edwards, *Origen against Plato* (Aldershot, UK and Burlington, VT, 2002), 100-1.

⁵⁹ See Origen, *Commentarii in evangelium Joannis* II 22, 140, 7-8, SC 120, ed. C. Blanc (1966), 300.

the Father at Jerusalem, but they adore in a better way with respect to those who are at Jerusalem, even if they have relationships with those who are at Jerusalem precisely through those who are at Jerusalem, making themselves Jews for the Jews in order to win over the Jews (cf. 1Cor. 9:20).⁶⁰

Therefore, it is deduced from the *Commentary on John* that the *isoangelia* is for Origen a disposition (*diathesis*) in which the perfection of the soul consists. From the exegeses on the *Psalms* is deduced a further element. In fact, commenting on the *faciem tuam, Domine, requiram* of Ps. 26:8, he states:

When the face of anyone seeks the Face of the Lord, the Glory of the Lord is shown openly like in a mirror and he, having become like an angel (ἰσάγγελος), contemplates forever the Face of the Heavenly Father.⁶¹

The search for the Face of the Lord would therefore purify the soul and render it similar to the angels, because they are always looking at that Face (οἱ ἄγγελοι διὰ παντὸς βλέπειν).⁶² The disposition that perfection consists in would thus be that of being turned toward the Father like the angels.

The Origenian conception of the *isoangelia*, thus, immediately introduces the element of the disposition toward God that characterizes the angels and which the souls reach insofar as they are purified and are distanced from material worship in order to live the purely spiritual worship.

Such a disposition is also present in friendship. From the beginning of the first *Homily on the Song of Songs*, according to the translation of Jerome, the Alexandrian sets rules of interpretation for the different characters that appear in the biblical poem and, after having established the Bridegroom as Christ, the bride with the Church, the young girls who accompany her with believers who are not yet perfect, he adds:

And regarding the men who are with the Bridegroom it refers to the angels and those who are reaching 'to the state of perfected man' (Eph. 4:13).⁶³

The key issue is that the condition of the soul's affinity with the angels is original, because the critique of Gnosticism leads Origen to express the difference between the various angelic degrees and, in a certain sense, also between

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* XIII 16, 99, 1-9, SC 222, ed. C. Blanc (1975), 82: Ὡσπερ γάρ – καθὼς ὁμολογήσαιεν ἂν καὶ οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι – ἄγγελοι οὐκ ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις προσκυνοῦσιν τῷ πατρί, τῷ κρείττονως παρὰ τὸ ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις προσκυνεῖν τῷ πατρί, οὕτως οἱ ἥδη τῇ διαθέσει τὸ ἰσάγγελοι εἶναι ἐσχηκότες οὐδὲ ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις προσκυνήσουσιν τῷ πατρί, ἀλλὰ βέλτιον ἢ οἱ ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις, κἂν διὰ τοὺς ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις συμπεριφέρωνται τοῖς ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις, τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις γινόμενοι Ἰουδαῖοι ἵνα Ἰουδαίους κερδήσωσιν.

⁶¹ *Id.*, *Selecta in Psalmos*, PG 12, 1281B: Ὅταν τὸ πρόσωπόν τινος τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ Κυρίου ζητήσῃ, τότε ἀνακεκαλυμμένως τὴν δόξαν Κυρίου κατοπτρίζεται, καὶ γενόμενος ἰσάγγελος, διὰ παντὸς ὄψεται τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς Πατρός.

⁶² *Ibid.* PG 12, 1281C.

⁶³ *Origenis in Canticum Canticorum homiliae* II: CB 33, ed. Wilhelm A. Baehrens (1925), I 1, 29,7: Angelos vero et eos, qui 'pervenerunt in virum perfectum', intellige viros esse cum sponso.

the angels and men at the accidental level, given that both are substantially souls. The affirmation of the reality of deification reveals the tension with respect to the dimension of corporeality and mutability that characterizes human nature.

Gregory of Nyssa

a. *The Perspective*

In the fourth century dogmatic development would oblige to sharply distinguish between created natures and the divine nature which alone can be considered eternal. The distinction between God and the world begins to be expressed in terms of *physis* and attributes. Athanasius is credited with having perfected these conceptual instruments, who, in response to the *tropikoi* and the Arians and, in the final analysis, to the Valentinian gnostics, is concerned with affirming the radical ontological difference between the Holy Spirit and the angels, who are not eternal⁶⁴ and are not divinities.⁶⁵ Now there are two different ontological orders: the eternal Trinity and creation, within which the angels and men are different natures.

It is interesting to know that, in this different ontological context, the bishop of Alexandria maintains his affirmation of the *isoangelia* (ἴσος ἀγγέλοις γίνεται) defined in an analogous way to what we saw with Origen in reference to the capacity that unites the different angelic degrees of forever contemplating the face of God (βλέπουσι διαπαντός τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ Πατρὸς αὐτοῦ).⁶⁶ In this context the angels and men are distinct on the substantial and not merely accidental level. The difference of nature would seem to render it more difficult to speak of the *isoangelia*, even if the strength of affirming deification obliges to do that. It will come about that the metaphysical tension inherent in the concept, which emerged in the analysis of the thought of Origen, will be partly resolved in the thought of Gregory of Nyssa.

In the latter's works, the terminological family being linked to the *isoangelia* is not frequent: it appears a number of times similar to what happens in the writings of Origen.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the term of *isoangelia* is qualitatively very much present and, beyond quantitative evaluations, it plays an important role.

⁶⁴ See Athanasius, *Epistulae ad Serapionem*, 10,5-6, ed. Dietmar Wyrwa, *Athanasius Werke* I/4 (Berlin, 2010), 478.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 29, 20, ed. D. Wyrwa, *Athanasius Werke* I/4 (2010), 522.

⁶⁶ *Id.*, *Orationes tres contra Arianos* 51, 4: ed. Karin Metzler, *Athanasius Werke* I/1 (Berlin, 2000), 362.

⁶⁷ Seven times in Gregory: *Antirrheticus adversus Apollinarium*, GNO III/1, ed. Fridericus Mueller (Leiden, 1958), 212,4; *In Canticum canticorum*, GNO VI, ed. Hermann Langerbeck (Leiden, 1986), 30,7; *De virginitate* 14, 4,15, GNO VIII/1, ed. John P. Cavarnos (Leiden, 1986),

A first recurrence allows one to appreciate how much its use is coherent with the previous tradition: in chapter fourteen of *De virginitate* it is explained that virginity is stronger than death and its superiority is shown, starting from the affirmation of the eschatological promise of a life similar to that of the angels (ἰσάγγελος ἡ ζωὴ) after resurrection. From here there is deduced the convenience of already following this lifestyle in the present, which also characterizes the angels who do not marry.⁶⁸ The context in which the term is used is implicitly connected to *Luke* 20:36.

The same position is repeated in chapter seven of *De hominis opificio* where he faces the difficult question posed by the connection between human generation and sin: if the carnal union of Adam and Eve with procreation did not characterize the prelapsarian condition, can it be said that the fall of the progenitors was positive, because otherwise humanity would be limited to two single persons? The reply of Gregory begins with the explicit citation of *Luke* 20:36, which represents a first recurrence of the *isoangelios*.⁶⁹ The reasoning is again linear and is connected to the *apokatastasis*:

If, therefore, the life of those who are returned (ἀποκαθισταμένων) to the primitive state is similar to that of the angels (πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἀγγέλων οἰκείως ἔχει),⁷⁰ it is clear that the life preceding the fall was in a certain way angelic; for this reason, even the return of our life to the ancient state makes us like the angels (τοῖς ἀγγέλοις ὁμοίωται).⁷¹

In the solution proposed by Gregory, the *isoangelia* which seemed to be the critical point of the reasoning now becomes, rather, a point of strength, because the angels, who do not know marriage, are nevertheless myriads in number in such a way that even men could be many without recourse to marriage.⁷² But God, who 'had honoured man with an elevated and angelic portion' (καὶ τῇ ὑψηλῇ τε καὶ ἰσαγγέλῳ λήξει τιμήσας),⁷³ foreseeing the possible misuse of freedom (προαίρεσιν), which would make men lose the angelic life (τῆς ἀγγελικῆς ζωῆς), endowed them with the ability to procreate according to animal form to replace the ineffable form of generation that makes the angels so numerous.

309, 10; *De vita Gregorii Thaumaturgi*, GNO X/1, ed. Gary Heil (Leiden, 1990), 21,13; *De opificio hominis*, PG 44, 188C; 189C; 196A.

⁶⁸ See *id.*, *De virginitate* 14.4.13-20, GNO VIII/1, ed. J.P. Cavarnos (1986), 309, 8-15.

⁶⁹ *Id.*, *De opificio hominis*, PG 44, 188C.

⁷⁰ This term is present also in *In inscriptiones Psalmorum*, GNO V, ed. Jacobus McDonough (Leiden, 1986), 123,13.

⁷¹ *Id.*, *De opificio hominis*, PG 44, 188D: Εἰ τοίνυν ἡ τῶν ἀποκαθισταμένων ζωὴ πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἀγγέλων οἰκείως ἔχει, δηλονότι ὁ πρὸ τῆς παραβάσεως βίος ἀγγελικός τις ἦν· διὸ καὶ ἡ πρὸς τὸ ἀρχαῖον τῆς ζωῆς ἡμῶν ἐπάνοδος τοῖς ἀγγέλοις ὁμοίωται.

⁷² *Ibid.* PG 44, 188D-189B.

⁷³ *Ibid.* PG 44, 189C.

The next chapter explains how, together with animal procreation, irrational passions would be introduced in man (for example, greed), which are none other than instincts whose end is positive in nature, but which in the case of man compromises the use of the intelligence. For this reason, we always need to look to the higher examples and listen to the word of God. Finally, Gregory reiterates that the resurrection will open up to us a similar life to that of the angels (ἰσάγγελον τὸν βίον), who do not need to feed themselves.⁷⁴

From these first texts, Gregory's conception appears totally focused on protology, almost more intensely than Origen, inasmuch as the latter distinguishes image and similarity in *Gen.* 1:26-7,⁷⁵ while the Cappadocian does not. The diachronic perspective could play a role, because both works cited are before 379, but such an argument is always weak in the interpretation of Gregory's thought. It seems, rather, more interesting to proceed to a theological and ontological deepening of the content of the *isoangelia*, particularly regarding the role of the body.

Therefore, especially interesting is the discussion with Apolinaris, who interpreted 1*Thess.* 5:23 in the line of a divisive anthropology, where spirit, soul, and body are proposed as separate elements, which he intends to apply even to Christ. The biblical citations, used by Gregory in chapter 48 of the *Antirrheticus*, go from *Dan.* 3:8 – where the three children address the spirits and the souls of the just asking for the blessing of the Lord – to the adoration in spirit of *John* 4:23.

Gregory's response is supported by 1*Cor.* 3:1 and 15:44, where it speaks of the carnal man, the spiritual man, and the animal (or natural) man. This obviously does not concern three different men, but the first is called carnal inasmuch as he is subject to material passions, while the second is spiritual inasmuch as he turns his thoughts to the higher realities, and the animal man is that which is between the two previous positions. The example is particularly effective because clearly the carnal man is not without intellect or soul, nor is spiritual man detached from body and soul. The denomination – carnal, spiritual, or animal – indicates, rather, the element which human freedom gives prominence.⁷⁶

This implies that a perfect existence can be lived even in material activities, if they are carried out keeping one's gaze fixed on God (ἀλλὰ κἄν τι τῶν σωματικῶν ἐνεργῇ πρὸς θεὸν βλέπειν).⁷⁷ Thus, the reference to the sanctification in body, soul, and spirit that is present throughout the letter to the Corinthians (1*Cor.* 10:31) is read as an affirmation of the fact that all activities – those according to the spirit, the soul, and the body – can be the object of sanctification

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* PG 44, 196A.

⁷⁵ See Origen, *De principiis* III 6, 1, ed. S. Fernández (2015), 764-8.

⁷⁶ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Antirrheticus adversus Apollinarium*, GNO III/1, ed. F. Mueller (1958), 208,28-210,6.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 210,23-4.

(πάν τὸ σωματικὸν καὶ ψυχικὸν καὶ πνευματικὸν ἐπιτήδευμα, πρὸς ἁγιασμὸν βλέπει).⁷⁸ The point is that salvation is extended to all of man, and therefore even the body, and is obtained by living in a spiritual way as Paul does.⁷⁹

At this point Gregory focusses on the exegesis of *Dan.* 3:8 and on the invitation of the three Hebrew children to the spirits and the souls that they might glorify God together. Apolinaris read the text as referring to different parts of man, that is, the spiritual and animal parts. Gregory, recovering an element that already appeared in Origen⁸⁰ objects that there cannot be proper praise of the soul without the intellect.⁸¹ Here the *isoangelia* enters into play:

But because the souls free of corporeal constraints are similar to the angels (ισάγγελοι), as says the Lord, the Word by bringing the souls and the spirits close indicates in this way the identity of honour of the souls themselves with respect to the angels. In fact, the spirits are the angels, according to what the prophet says: 'Who makes thy angels spirits' (*Ps.* 103:4), with whom the three children and the souls of the righteous are deemed worthy to make praise.⁸²

The reinterpretation of Gregory moves the negativity from the body to the constraints of the body: being similar to the angels is possible – in the symphonic perspective on the basis of which we read the words of the three young ones – for man in his unity of soul and body. The chapter concludes, in fact, restating that if even one of the elements that constitute the nature of man is missing, what remains cannot be called human.⁸³

It is notable how a starting point similar to Origen's protological one – through the ontological fact of the substantial and non-accidental distinction between the angels and men – leads to a new understanding of the role of the body and of materiality. This will also be extended to movement and dynamics.

b. *Macrina*

Although the expression does not appear explicitly in reference to Macrina, her figure seems capable of offering the best perspective for explaining both how Gregory's thought is bound to the preceding tradition and how it is new and specific.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 211,1-2

⁷⁹ See *Ibid.* 211,14-5.

⁸⁰ See note 52.

⁸¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Antirrheticus adversus Apollinarium*, GNO III/1, ed. F. Mueller (1958), 211,19-27.

⁸² *Ibid.* 212,4.10: ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ ἰσάγγελοί εἰσιν αἱ ψυχαὶ τῶν σωματικῶν λυθεῖσαι δεσμῶν, καθὼς ὁ κύριος λέγει, διὰ τοῦτο τῇ μετὰ τῶν πνευμάτων συζυγία τὴν πρὸς τοὺς ἀγγέλους τῶν ψυχῶν ὁμοτιμίαν ὁ λόγος ἐνδείκνυται· πνεύματα γάρ οἱ ἄγγελοι κατὰ τὸν εἰπόντα προφήτην· Ὁ ποιὼν τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ πνεύματα, μεθ' ὧν ὑμνοῦσιν οἱ τρεῖς παῖδες καὶ τὰς τῶν δικαίων ἀξιούσι ψυχάς.

⁸³ *Ibid.* 213,5-6.

A first text is thematically connected to the recurrence already analysed in *De virginitate*. The context is clearly eschatological because Macrina is on her deathbed. Describing the life of his sister and of her companions at Annesis, the admiring brother writes:

In fact, just as souls are withdrawn from their bodies and simultaneously are free from preoccupations of this life due to death, so their life is separated and removed from all vanity and is in accord with the imitation of the way of life of the angels (πρὸς μίμησιν τῆς τῶν ἀγγέλων διαγωγῆς).⁸⁴

This treats of a life that did not know the passions and was entirely dedicated to contemplation, to prayer, and to the singing of hymns. For this reason Gregory considers it an existence on the border between the human and the angelic:

And what human discourse could describe such a way of living, when their life was on the border between human nature and incorporeal nature? In fact, provided that their nature had been free from human passions, they were in a superior state to the human one, whereas because of the fact of being visible in a body, of being limited by a figure, and of living with sensible organs, they were in this way inferior to the angelic and incorporeal nature. Perhaps one would dare to say that there is not a great difference, because, while living in the flesh, in the likeness of incorporeal powers (καθ' ὁμοιότητα τῶν ἀσωμάτων δυνάμεων) they were not burdened by the weight of the body, but their life tended toward the heights and was elevated, moving itself in the highest regions together with the heavenly powers.⁸⁵

We note two characteristic points of Gregory: a) perfection is understood in the dynamic sense, as we shall better see in the *Commentary on the Canticle*; b) the corporeal dimension is not denied here, because Marcina leads an angelic life in the body. This is a weight, but it does not *per se* prevent the life from being able to develop without the passions. The development with respect to the tradition is more noticeable in a subsequent passage, inspired by the wonder of Gregory regarding the absence of fear in his sister who was approaching ever

⁸⁴ *Id.*, *Vita sanctae Macrinae* 11,16-20, GNO VIII/1, ed. Virginia Woods Callahan (Leiden, 1986), 382,2-6: καθάπερ γὰρ αἱ διὰ θανάτου τῶν σωμάτων ἐκλυθεῖσαι ψυχαὶ καὶ τῶν κατὰ τὸν βίον τοῦτον μεριμνῶν συνεκλύονται, οὕτως κεχώριστο αὐτῶν ἡ ζωὴ καὶ ἀπόκτιστο πάσης βιωτικῆς ματαιότητος καὶ πρὸς μίμησιν τῆς τῶν ἀγγέλων διαγωγῆς ἐρρυθμίζετο.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 11,33-45, GNO VIII/1, ed. V. Woods Callahan (1986), 382,19-383,5: τὴν τοίνυν τοιαύτην διαγωγὴν τίς ἂν ὑπ' ὄψιν ἀγάγοι λόγος ἀνθρώπινος, παρ' οἷς μεθόριος ἦν ἡ ζωὴ τῆς τε ἀνθρωπίνης καὶ τῆς ἀσωμάτου φύσεως; τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἐλευθερωθῆναι τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων παθημάτων τὴν φύσιν κρεῖττον ἢ κατὰ ἄνθρωπον ἦν, τὸ δὲ ἐν σώματι φαίνεσθαι καὶ σχήματι περιειληφθαι καὶ τοῖς αἰσθητικοῖς ὀργάνοις συζῆν ἐν τούτῳ τῆς ἀγγελικῆς τε καὶ ἀσωμάτου φύσεως τὸ ἐλαττον εἶχον. τάχα δ' ἂν τις τολμήσας εἴποι μὴδὲ πρὸς τὸ καταδεέστερον τὴν παραλλαγὴν εἶναι, ὅτι σαρκὶ συζῶσαι καθ' ὁμοιότητα τῶν ἀσωμάτων δυνάμεων οὐκ ἐβαροῦντο τῷ ἐφορκίῳ τοῦ σώματος, ἀλλ' ἀνωφερῆς τε καὶ μετέωρος ἦν αὐτῶν ἡ ζωὴ ταῖς οὐρανίαις συμμετεωροποροῦσα δυνάμεσι.

closer to death, and who seemed once again to have surpassed the bounds of common human nature (τὴν κοινὴν φύσιν):⁸⁶

And it seemed to me that she no longer behaved like human beings, but as if an angel had providentially taken on a human form, an angel who did not have any relationship and affinity with life in the flesh and whose thought in no way was unlikely to remain in impassibility (ἐν ἀπαθείᾳ), insofar as the flesh does not pull it down toward the passions that characterize it. Thus, it seems to me that she showed to everyone that divine and pure love for the invisible Bridegroom, whom she harboured hidden in the depths of her soul, and that she made known to all the disposition (διάθεσιν) that she carried in her heart to cast herself towards the One she desired (ποθοῦμενον), in order to be with Him free from the constraints of the body as soon as possible. In fact, her rush (δρόμος) was indeed directed as at a lover (ἐραστήν), without any other pleasures of life being able to divert her gaze.⁸⁷

The language is paradoxical, because it states the absence of the passions through an erotic and dynamic terminology. This concerns the discovery of the ‘impassible passion’ (ἀπαθὲς τὸ πάθος)⁸⁸ highlighted by Daniélou.⁸⁹ Gregory, with respect to Plotinus who had already introduced such an oxymoron joining impassible passions and irrational reasons (λόγους ἀλόγους καὶ ἀπαθῆ πάθη),⁹⁰ resemanticized impassibility itself as the entrance into a definitive movement toward God that is the *epektasis*.⁹¹

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 22, 21, GNO VIII/1, ed. V. Woods Callahan (1986), 395, 21.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 22, 26-39: GNO VIII/1, ed. V. Woods Callahan (1986), 396, 1-14: οὐκέτι μοι ἐδόκει τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων εἶναι, ἀλλ’ οἷον ἀγγέλου τινὸς οἰκονομικῶς ἀνθρωπίνην ὑπελθόντος μορφὴν, ᾧ μηδεμιᾶς οὐσης πρὸς τὸν ἐν σαρκὶ βίον συγγενείας ἢ οἰκειώσεως οὐδὲν ἀπεικὸς ἐν ἀπαθείᾳ τὴν διάνοιαν μένειν, μὴ καθελκούσης τῆς σαρκὸς πρὸς τὰ ἴδια πάθη. διὰ τοῦτο μοι ἐδόκει τὸν θεῖον ἐκείνον καὶ καθαρὸν ἔρωτα τοῦ ἀοράτου νυμφίου, ὃν ἐγκεκρυμμένον εἶχεν ἐν τοῖς τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπορρήτοις τρεφόμενον, ἐκδηλον ποιεῖν τότε τοῖς παροῦσι καὶ δημοσιεύειν τὴν ἐν καρδίᾳ διάθεσιν τῇ ἐπείγεσθαι πρὸς τὸν ποθοῦμενον, ὥς ἂν διὰ τάχους σὺν αὐτῷ γένοιτο τῶν δεσμῶν ἐκλυθεῖσα τοῦ σώματος. τῷ ὄντι γὰρ ὡς πρὸς ἐραστήν ὁ δρόμος ἐγίνετο, οὐδενὸς ἄλλου τῶν κατὰ τὸν βίον ἡδέων πρὸς ἑαυτὸ τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν ἐπιστρέφοντος.

⁸⁸ *Id.*, *In Canticum canticorum*, GNO VI, ed. H. Langerbeck (1986), 23, 10.

⁸⁹ See Jean Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique. Doctrine spirituelle de saint Grégoire de Nysse* (Paris, 1944), 92-103 and 201-7.

⁹⁰ Plotinus, *Enneades* III 6, 1, 33.

⁹¹ On this fundamental topic of Gregory’s thought see Theodoros Alexopoulos, ‘Das unendliche Sichausstrecken (Epektasis) zum Guten bei Gregor von Nyssa und Plotin. Eine vergleichende Untersuchung’, *ZAC* 10 (2007), 302-12; Paul M. Blowers, ‘Maximus the Confessor, Gregory of Nyssa, and the concept of “perpetual progress”’, *VC* 46 (1992), 151-71; Jean Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique* (1953), 291-307; Everett Ferguson, ‘Progress in perfection: Gregory of Nyssa’s Vita Moysis’, *SP* 14 (1976), 307-14; Marguerite Harl, ‘Recherches sur l’origénisme d’Origène: la satiété (κόρος) de la contemplation comme motif de la chute des âmes’, *SP* 8 (1966), 373-405; Ronald E. Heine, *Perfection in the Virtuous Life. A Study in the Relationship between Edification and Polemical Theology in Gregory of Nyssa’s De vita Moysis* (Cambridge, MA, 1975); Lucas F. Mateo-Seco, ‘¿Progreso o inmutabilidad en la visión beatífica? Apuntes de la historia de la Teología’, *ScrTh* 29 (1997), 13-39; Ovidiu Sferlea, ‘On the Interpretation of the Theory of Perpetual Progress (epektasis). Taking into Account the Testimony of Eastern Monastic

Macrina asks God to send ‘the luminous angel’ (φωτεινὸν ἄγγελον)⁹² who leads her by hand into the realm of peace.⁹³ And Gregory can no longer distinguish his sister from an angel, not because of the dimension of nature, but on the basis of relation, since, like in the case of the angel, her heart is also totally fixed on God, already being unbound during earthly life from every attachment to irrational passions. She is like the angels in her love, in her having her gaze fixed on the divine Bridegroom. For this reason, the death of Macrina and her *isoangelia* points towards the *Commentary on the Canticum Canticorum*.

c. *The Canticum*

Here, in the first homily, Gregory presents the deification of man as the *skopos* of the particular book he is commenting on and of the Scriptures in general.⁹⁴ The mystagogic perspective of his exegesis leads him to take as hermeneutic key the transformation of human nature in the direction of the divine (πρὸς τὸ θεϊότερον) brought to effect through the mysteries, that is, the sacraments.⁹⁵ The homilies of Gregory are originally pronounced during Lent of a year between 391 and 394 and they thus serve to prepare the catechumens and the community for the Christian initiation administered during the Easter Vigil.⁹⁶ Gregory writes about the meaning of the *Canticum*:

Indeed, the person who before such words, whose immediate meaning speaks of carnal pleasures, does not slip into impure thoughts, but by these words is conducted as by hand to the philosophy of the divine realities, that is, to pure thoughts, shows to no longer be human and to no longer have a nature composed together of flesh and blood, but shows to have that life of the saints that we hope to receive in the resurrection, in that such a person has become like the angels on account of impassibility (ἰσάγγελος διὰ τῆς ἀπαθείας). In fact, after the resurrection the body, becoming changed in its elements to enter into incorruptibility, is united (συνπλέκεται) to the soul of the man,

Tradition’, *RHE* 109 (2014), 564-87; Andreas Spira, ‘Le temps d’un homme selon Aristote et Grégoire de Nyssa’, in *Colloques internationaux du CNRS* (Paris, 1984), 283-94.

⁹² This a typical topic of Judeo-Christianism. Sometimes the angel who leads the souls to heaven is identified with Michael, see Jean Daniélou, *Théologie du judéo-christianisme* (Paris, 1991), 145 and 149-51.

⁹³ Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita sanctae Macrinae* 24, 26, GNO VIII/1, ed. V. Woods Callahan (1986), 397, 22.

⁹⁴ See Hubertus R. Drobner, ‘Skopos’, in Lucas F. Mateo-Seco and Giulio Maspero (eds), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa* (Leiden, 2010), 681-2.

⁹⁵ See Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum canticorum*, GNO VI, ed. H. Langerbeck (1986), 29, 12-6.

⁹⁶ See J.B. Cahill, ‘The Date and Setting of Gregory of Nyssa’s Commentary on the Song of Songs’, *JTS* 32 (1981), 447-60. See also Alessandro Cortesi, *Le Omelie sul Cantico dei Cantici di Gregorio di Nissa. Proposta di un itinerario di vita battesimale* (Roma, 2000).

while now the passions that plague us through the flesh will not rise along with those bodies, but our life will receive in gift a condition of peace.⁹⁷

The text is completely concerned, even through its terminological references, with the resemanticization of the passions, which in Christian lenses acquire a new value, insofar as perfection is now dynamic and the body takes part in it. The very presence of the verb συμπλέκω seems important, because it indicates the act proper to spousal union and expresses here the harmony between the soul and the body that will follow the resurrection. The theme reemerges subsequently in the work, in the fourth homily, emphasizing the link with *epektasis*:

In fact, since it was announced that the life after the resurrection will be similar (ὁμοιον) to the condition (καταστάσει) of the angels – and the One who announces it does not lie –, it would be proper that even life in the world would be a preparation for the life we hope for after it, in such a way that those who live in the flesh and in the field of the world do not lead a life according to the flesh nor configure themselves to this world, but they practice in anticipation the life they long for during the life in this world. Thus the bride inspires in the souls of those who follow her a confirmation by means of a vow, that their life in this field will be directed at contemplating the Powers, imitating the angelic purity through impassibility (ἀπαθείας). In fact, just as love (ἀγάπης) becomes more and more kindled, that is, it is lifted up and with addition it grows always toward the better, it is said that the good will of God be carried out in heaven as in earth because the impassibility of the angels is realized in us as well.⁹⁸

The text perhaps suggests that the intended audience of the Commentary, beyond the assembly present to the preaching, could have been in the second

⁹⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum canticorum*, GNO VI, ed. H. Langerbeck (1986), 29,20-30,12: ἀληθῶς γὰρ ὁ διὰ τῶν τοιούτων ῥημάτων, ὃν ἡ πρόχειρος ἔμφασις τὰς σαρκώδεις ἡδυπαθείας ἐνδείκνυται, μὴ κατολισθαίνων εἰς τὴν ρυπώσαν διάνοιαν ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὴν τῶν θείων φιλοσοφίαν, ἐπὶ τὰς καθαρὰς ἐννοίας διὰ τῶν ῥημάτων τούτων χειραγωγούμενος δείκνυσι τὸ μηκέτι ἄνθρωπος εἶναι μηδὲ σαρκὶ καὶ αἵματι συμμεμνημένην τὴν φύσιν ἔχειν, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐλπίζομένην ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει τῶν ἁγίων ζωὴν ἐπιδείκνυται ἰσάγγελος διὰ τῆς ἀπαθείας γενόμενος. ὥς γὰρ μετὰ τὴν ἀνάστασιν τὸ μὲν σῶμα μεταστοιχειωθὲν πρὸς τὸ ἄφθαρτον τῇ ψυχῇ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου συμπλέκεται, τὰ δὲ νῦν διὰ σαρκὸς ἡμῖν ἐνοχλοῦντα πάθη τοῖς σώμασιν ἐκείνοις οὐ συνανίσταται ἀλλὰ τις εἰρηνικὴ κατάστασις τὴν ζωὴν ἡμῶν διαδέξεται.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 134,9-135,6: ἐπειδὴ γὰρ τὸν μετὰ τὴν ἀνάστασιν βίον ὁμοιον ἐπήγγελται τῇ ἀγγελικῇ καταστάσει [τῶν ἀνθρώπων] γενήσεσθαι (ἀψευδὴς δὲ ὁ ἐπαγγελιάμενος), ἀκόλουθον ἂν εἴη καὶ τὴν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ζωὴν πρὸς τὴν ἐλπίζομένην μετὰ ταῦτα παρασκευάζεσθαι, ὥστε ἐν σαρκὶ ζῶντας καὶ ἐν τῷ ἄγρῳ τοῦ κόσμου διάγοντας μὴ κατὰ σάρκα ζῆν μηδὲ συσχηματίζεσθαι τῷ κόσμῳ τούτῳ, ἀλλὰ προμελετᾶν τὸν ἐλπίζομενον βίον διὰ τῆς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ζωῆς. διὰ τοῦτο τὴν διὰ τοῦ ὅρκου βεβαίωσιν ἐμποιεῖται ταῖς ψυχαῖς τῶν μαθητευομένων ἡ νύμφη, ὥστε τὴν ζωὴν αὐτῶν τὴν ἐν τῷ ἄγρῳ τούτῳ κατορθουμένην πρὸς τὰς δυνάμεις βλέπειν, μιμουμένην διὰ τῆς ἀπαθείας τὴν ἀγγελικὴν καθαρότητα· οὕτω γὰρ ἐγειρομένης τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ ἐξεγειρομένης (ὅπερ ἐστὶν ὑψουμένης τε καὶ αἰεὶ διὰ προσθήκης πρὸς τὸ μεῖζον ἐπαυξομένης) τὸ ἀγαθὸν εἶπε θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ τελειοῦσθαι ὥς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς τῆς ἀγγελικῆς καὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ἀπαθείας κατορθουμένης.

place the noblewomen gathered at Constantinople by Olympias.⁹⁹ The reference to the commitment taken on by the bride to the souls that follow her seems aimed at drawing the gaze of the believer toward the angels, whose impassibility it becomes possible to imitate: an impassibility that consists precisely in the infinite and unstoppable movement toward God.

Gregory's proposal is ontologically dizzying and Christologically based. He connects the divine word that saves to the creative word, in such a way that the deification of man is ensured by the very power of the *Logos*. In this context, he writes that the soul-bride is:

rendered more divine and transformed by the beautiful change into a higher glory with respect to the glory she had, in such a way as to inspire awe in the choir of angels surrounding the Bridegroom who together address to her the astonished greeting "You have ravished my heart, our sister and bride" (*Song* 4:9). In fact, having obtained impassibility, this very condition of impassibility, which shines both in her and in the angels, introduces her into kinship and fraternity with the incorporeal beings.¹⁰⁰

The reference to the going *from glory to glory* explicitly indicates *epektasis* lived in the flesh, so as to inspire the awe of the angels, to whom man has become similar.

Here we notice in action a fundamental element of the thought of Gregory, for whom the mutability of the creature becomes positive, insofar as it is the possibility of being turned forever towards the Creator in a growing participation: the man that remains faithful to God will reach the state of the angels whose will is definitively turned to the Trinity in the perpetual progress of *epektasis*. Man is called to imitate and reach in the eschatological condition this angelic state, now no longer conceived in the static sense, but in the eternally dynamic one.

We see in this the profound difference of the *isoangelia* of Gregory of Nyssa with respect to Origen, for whom, as was seen, the distinction of nature between the angels and men is nebulous if not absent. Both would differ from God because they have a body, however thin, while only the Creator is purely spiritual. Thus, Origen's mysticism is characterized by light rather than by darkness, and the eschatological state is presented as a return rather than as progress.

⁹⁹ See Jean Daniélou, *Bible et liturgie* (Paris, 1951); *id.*, *Platonisme et théologie mystique* (1944).

¹⁰⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum canticorum*, GNO VI, ed. H. Langerbeck (1986), 253,15-254,4: μεταποιηθεῖσα πρὸς τὸ θεϊότερον καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς δόξης ἐν ᾗ ἦν πρὸς τὴν ἀνωτέραν δόξαν μεταμορφωθείσα διὰ τῆς ἀγαθῆς ἀλλοιώσεως, ὥς θαῦμα γενέσθαι τῷ περὶ τὸν νυμφίον τῶν ἀγγέλων χορῷ καὶ πάντας εὐφύμῳ πρὸς αὐτὴν τὴν θαυμαστικὴν ταύτην προέσθαι φωνὴν ὅτι Ἐκαρδίωσας ἡμᾶς, ἀδελφὴ ἡμῶν νύμφη· ὁ γὰρ τῆς ἀπαθείας χαρακτήρ ὁμοίως ἐπιλάμπων αὐτῇ τε καὶ τοῖς ἀγγέλοις εἰς τὴν τῶν ἁσωμάτων αὐτὴν ἄγει συγγενειάν τε καὶ ἀδελφότητα τὴν ἐν σαρκὶ τὸ ἀπαθὲς κατορθώσασαν.

The difference of the Origenian conception with respect to the Cappadocian apophatism is particularly evident in the sixth homily of the *In Canticum*, which speaks of the meeting of the soul with the angelic powers. The homily glosses *Song* 3:1-8 and is based on the distinction between the sensible dimension and the suprasensible dimension: the first is limited, while the second is infinite and unlimited. Already on this level is clear the novelty of Gregory's ontological perspective, which is shown in fullness in the further subdivision of the spiritual and intelligible dimension into created and uncreated.¹⁰¹ The latter cannot rise toward perfection nor can it change for its perfection, while the spiritual creature is aimed at a continuous ascent toward God. The first, rather, consists precisely of the angels who do not belong to material creation inasmuch as they are pure spirits, but spirits who can always increase in perfection.

In the text the complete route of the soul is traced to the meeting with the Bridegroom and to the union that takes place thanks to this meeting, in the mutual inhabitation, for which God is found in the soul and the soul is found in God (ὁ τε γὰρ θεὸς ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ γίνεται καὶ πάλιν εἰς τὸν θεὸν ἡ ψυχὴ μετοικίζεται).¹⁰² It is this dynamic union, which is carried out from power to power (ἐκ δυνάμεως εἰς δύναμιν, see *Ps.* 83:8), up to being in Him who is desired (ἐν αὐτῷ γενέσθαι τῷ ποθουμένῳ) accepting Him at the same time into itself (ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὸν ποθοῦμενον δέξασθαι).¹⁰³

This union takes place, however, in the darkness of night, like the spousal union in the marriage bed, because God is beyond every possibility of comprehension. For this reason, the text of the *Canticum* shows the bride that is unable to reach the Bridegroom but even after the meeting with him continues to seek him. Here the angels enter onto the scene, because the soul retraces the entire spiritual nature called 'city' by the text, composed of dominions, principalities, thrones, and powers that form, with the endless line of the celestial beings like *plazas* and *streets* of the city itself:¹⁰⁴

Thus the soul went through the entire angelic order and since she did not see that which she sought among the goods that she found, she thought to herself: "Perhaps for them the one whom I love is comprehensible?" and says to them: "Have you seen him whom my heart loves?" (*Song* 3:3). However, because they were silent before the question and with their silence they demonstrated that even for them that which she seeks is incomprehensible, as soon as she had gone in mental pursuit throughout the entire spiritual city and did not get to know what she was looking for even among intelligible and incorporeal beings, then renouncing everything she had found, she knew whom she sought, whose existence is known only in the impossibility of comprehending that

¹⁰¹ See *ibid.* 173-4.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* GNO VI 179,6-7.

¹⁰³ See *ibid.* GNO VI 179,11-5.

¹⁰⁴ See *ibid.* 182,4-10.

which He is. In fact, every element that makes it known is an obstacle for those who seek Him come to find Him.¹⁰⁵

The text is particularly important because it presents the apophatism as an epistemological consequence of the distinction between uncreated and created, in such a way that both human nature and angelic nature are united by the possibility of knowing divine nature in recognizing that it is unknowable, thus opening the heart to union with God. This is not possible on the merely intellectual plane, but only on the plane of love.

The passage is relevant for the *isoangelia* because it indicates a type of reversal with respect to the Alexandrian tradition, inasmuch as Gregory states that even the angels cannot know God immediately with their intellect, but that they must go through divine economy.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, the following conclusion is reached:

And if it is not too bold to say, perhaps [the angelic powers] have marvelled seeing the beauty of the Bridegroom in the Bride, invisible and incomprehensible to all. In fact, He who 'no one has ever seen' (*John* 1:18), as John says, and who 'no human being has seen or can see' (*1Tim.* 6:16), as Paul testifies, made the Church His Body and built in love through the addition of the saved, 'until we all attain [...] mature manhood, to the extent of the full stature of Christ' (*Eph.* 4:13). Therefore, if the Church is the Body of Christ and the Head of the Body is Christ, Who forms the face of the Church with His own image, perhaps the friends of the Bridegroom are heartened watching her because in her they see the invisible more distinctly. Like those who do not manage to see the disk of the sun, they see it in splendor reflected in the water, so also [the angelic powers] in the pure mirror that is the Church they contemplate the Sun of Justice known through that which appears.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* 182,10-183,5: ἡ μὲν οὖν περιήει διερευνωμένη πᾶσαν ἀγγελικὴν διακόσμησιν καὶ ὥς οὐκ εἶδεν ἐν τοῖς εὐρεθεῖσιν ἀγαθοῖς τὸ ζητούμενον τοῦτο καθ' ἑαυτὴν ἐλογίσαστο· ἄρα κἂν ἐκείνοις ληπτὸν ἐστι τὸ παρ' ἐμοῦ ἀγαπώμενον; καὶ φησι πρὸς αὐτοῦς· μὴ κἂν ὑμεῖς ὃν ἡγάπησεν ἡ ψυχὴ μου εἶδετε; σιωπησάντων δὲ πρὸς τὴν τοιαύτην ἐρώτησιν καὶ διὰ τῆς σιωπῆς ἐνδειξαμένων τὸ κάκεινοις ἄληπτον εἶναι τὸ παρ' αὐτῆς ζητούμενον, ὥς διεξῆλθε τῇ πολυπραγμοσύνῃ τῆς διανοίας πᾶσαν ἐκείνην τὴν ὑπερκόσμιον πόλιν καὶ οὐδὲ ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς τε καὶ ἀσωμάτοις εἶδεν οἷον ἐπόθησεν, τότε καταλιποῦσα πᾶν τὸ εὐρισκόμενον οὕτως ἐγνώρισε τὸ ζητούμενον, τὸ ἐν μόνῳ τῷ μὴ καταλαμβάνεσθαι τί ἐστιν ὅτι ἐστι γινωσκόμενον, οὗ πᾶν γνῶρισμα καταληπτικὸν ἐμπόδιον τοῖς ἀναζητοῦσι πρὸς τὴν εὐρεσιν γίνεται.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* 254,13-20.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 256,9-257,5: εἰ δὲ μὴ τολμηρόν ἐστιν εἰπεῖν, τάχα κάκεινοι διὰ τῆς νύμφης τοῦ νυμφίου κάλλος ἰδόντες ἐθαύμασαν τὸ πᾶσι τοῖς οὖσιν ἀόρατον τε καὶ ἀκατάληπτον· ὃν γὰρ Οὐδεὶς ἑώρακε πώποτε, καθὼς φησιν Ἰωάννης, Οὐδὲ ἰδεῖν τις δύναται, καθὼς ὁ Παῦλος μαρτύρεται, οὗτος σῶμα ἑαυτοῦ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ἐποίησε καὶ διὰ τῆς προσθήκης τῶν σφζομένων οἰκοδομεῖ ἑαυτὸν ἐν ἀγάπῃ. Μέχρις ἂν καταστήσωμεν οἱ πάντες εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον, εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ. εἰ οὖν σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἡ ἐκκλησία, κεφαλὴ δὲ τοῦ σώματος ὁ Χριστὸς τῷ ἰδίῳ χαρακτηρισμῷ μορφῶν τῆς ἐκκλησίας τὸ πρόσωπον, τάχα διὰ τοῦτο πρὸς ταύτην βλέποντες οἱ φίλοι τοῦ νυμφίου ἐκαρδιώθησαν, ὅτι τρανότερον ἐν αὐτῇ τὸν ἀόρατον βλέπουσιν· καθάπερ οἱ αὐτὸν τοῦ ἡλίου τὸν κύκλον ἰδεῖν ἀδυνατοῦντες,

Not only can men be similar to the angels, but *isoangelia* is now read in the relational sense even as *isoanthropia*, if one may say so, because even the angels themselves are similar to the men in their power to know God only through the Incarnation and even through the Body that is the Church. The overcoming of intellectualism is definitive here, and the reason for the *isoangelia* is now profoundly changed with respect to preceding philosophies and Origen. The angels are, therefore, presented as turned to God because they turned to the Humanity of Christ and to the Church. The eternal movement of the *epektasis* that constitutes impassibility passes through the material dimension and the history of salvation.

Conclusion

From this perspective *isoangelia* and impassibility are profoundly reconfigured with respect to the Alexandrian tradition on account of Gregory's conception of *epektasis* and apophatism, which reveal the ontological novelty underlying the theology of Gregory: the *isoangelia* is impassibility, as an impossibility of being diverted from the movement toward God, an impossibility which is inherent in *epektasis*.

God, angels, and men are ontologically distinct, but the rational creatures' communion with the Trinity is affirmed in all its strength through the appeal to the dynamic conception of perfection. Union with God does not require a thinning of the material dimension, like the philosophical presuppositions seemed to require,¹⁰⁸ but rather this is *in* and *through* the body, to the extreme that even the angels enter into relationship with Him through the Incarnation and the Church. The perfection is described, therefore, as a relation, like an indefectible disposition, which introduces one into an infinite movement of love whose ontological consistence is affirmed with force and rigor. Salvation no longer consists only in knowledge, like in the Christian gnosticism of Origen, but in directing thought, with the will, toward Christ in a stable way, as do the angels.

Perhaps, in light of the analysis proposed, the *isoangelia* can also offer an interesting perspective for comparing Gregory's and Origen's conception of *apokatastasis*:¹⁰⁹ the return to the original state is not static, but dynamic, in the sense that it does not concern, for Gregory, a return to a previous condition,

διὰ δὲ τῆς τοῦ ὕδατος αὐγῆς εἰς αὐτὸν ὁρῶντες, οὕτω κάκεῖνοι ὡς ἐν κατόπτρῳ καθαρῷ τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τὸν τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἥλιον βλέπουσι τὸν διὰ τοῦ φαινομένου κατανοούμενον.

¹⁰⁸ Perhaps in Iamblicus there is an attempt to recognize the value of the material and of the body, probably in the light of their resemanticization which the spread of Christianity is generating.

¹⁰⁹ On this topic, see Ramelli's impressive study: Ilaria Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 120 (Leiden, 2013).

but a return with respect to the body and all its history to the disposition in which we were created. The ontology of relation can offer a better understanding of these aspects. This also suggests that a study of the ontological work developed by the Fathers in dialogue with the philosophers of their time can open a new perspective in order to untie hermeneutic knots and open further horizons to our knowledge of their thought.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ See Giulio Maspero, 'Patristic Trinitarian Ontology', in Robert J. Wozniak and Giulio Maspero (eds), *Rethinking Trinitarian Theology: Disputed Questions and Contemporary Issues in Trinitarian Theology* (London and New York, 2012), 211-29.

Response to the Workshop, “Theology and Philosophy between Origen and Gregory of Nyssa”

Ilaria RAMELLI, Catholic University Milan, Italy; Angelicum & Princeton University, USA; Oxford University, UK

I have enjoyed all of the papers in this workshop very much. They are all rich and stimulating, so I am really grateful to all of you. Given the time constraints, I shall have to limit myself to a few remarks and suggestions.

I have much appreciated Martin Wenzel’s contribution, ‘The Omnipotence of God as a Challenge for Theology in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa’. I definitely share his caveat, that we ought not to project back onto patristic times the concept of *omnipotentia absoluta*. The only small criticism, or warning, that I would offer concerns the quotations from Origen’s *De principiis* about the power of God as (purportedly) finite. These come from Justinian’s *Letter to Men(n)as*, which stems in fact from a *florilegium* prepared by the monks, hostile to Origen, from the Lavra of St Sabas.¹ These fragments, therefore, risk being unreliable, and are to be taken with caution. Indeed, they contradict other surely authentic passages of Origen, coming from preserved Greek works such as *Contra Celsum*.

I have found Ilaria Vigorelli’s paper, ‘Soul’s Dance in Plotinus and Gregory of Nyssa’, beautiful and full of insight. I have no criticism proper to provide, but just a couple of suggestions. I would add at least a reference to, and possibly an analysis of, the passage in *De anima et resurrectione* in which Gregory depicts the eschatological dance of human beings and angels in full harmony before God, as an expression of the eventual *apokatastasis* configured as recovered unity and as *theōsis*. This passage is close to the one, already cited by Vigorelli, in Gregory’s *In inscriptiones Psalmorum*. I have analysed the passage from *De anima et resurrectione* in my commentary and later, with specific regard to the notions of harmony and unity, in an essay in the *International Journal of the Platonic Tradition*.²

I have very much liked Miguel Brugarolas’ paper, ‘Metaphysics of the Logos and the Overcoming of Dualism: Notes on Gregory of Nyssa’s Language of Mixture’. It delves into a very important issue. Its overarching thesis is that Gregory’s language of mixture is aimed at preserving God’s transcendence as well as avoiding dualism. This seems to me a sound point. I also liked Brugarolas’

¹ So Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita S. Sabae* 72; 87.

² *Gregorio di Nissa sull’anima e la resurrezione* (Milan, 2007); ‘Harmony between *arkhē* and *telos* in Patristic Platonism and the Imagery of Astronomical Harmony Applied to the Apokatastasis Theory’, *IJPT* 7 (2013), 1–49.

attribution of a “pneumatological Christology” to Nyssen. The author rightly builds on Anthony Meredith, Elias Moutsoulas, and Lucas Francisco Mateo-Seco in maintaining that Gregory Nyssen’s thought is primarily Christocentric (see especially the paper’s Introduction). Indeed, from one specific angle, I have argued extensively that Gregory’s eschatology, soteriology, and apokatastasis doctrine are eminently Christocentric.³ So, this comes as a strong confirmation of this point.

I absolutely agree that the famous vinegar metaphor, used by Gregory in the explanation of the mixture of human and divine in Christ, was dictated by Nyssen’s therapeutic framework for Christology – a framework that, one may observe, is very Origenian (the therapeutic role of Christ-Logos-Wisdom being essential to Origen’s Christology and soteriology). Brugarolas also correctly observes that Christ is mediator because he is consubstantial with the Father in divinity and with us in humanity. Arguably Origen was already on this line.

I have some doubts as well, which, however, concern marginal points and do not affect the main arguments of this paper. It is definitely the case that Gregory rejected the preexistence of bare souls, although this was very probably not Origen’s doctrine. Therefore, Gregory was not countering Origen in his criticism of both metempsychosis and the preexistence of souls.⁴ It is also true that, according to Gregory, soul and body are created simultaneously, as Brugarolas rightly observes. One should ask, however, which soul, and which body. For it is not so certain that Gregory means the mortal, corruptible body. If the soul were created along with this, a big problem would arise with respect to the perishability axiom. Further research, at any rate, is ongoing on this critical point.

Samuel Fernández has recently contributed a monumental edition of Origen’s *De principiis*, also based on a meticulous study of the titles of the various sections of this work as are found in the Latin manuscripts of Rufinus’s version and, in Greek, in Photius.⁵ He is thus an expert in the structure of Origen’s masterpiece, which is also in the focus of his paper, ‘The Pedagogical Structure of Origen’s *De principiis* and its Christology’. His proposed thesis makes a lot of sense: Origen in *De principiis* moves from elements that are still in continuity with Greek philosophy to those which were more difficult to accept for people imbued with a Greek philosophical mentality, such as the Incarnation. In sum, the structure of Origen’s work is pedagogical in that it aims at introducing Greek educated people to Christian faith. On the other hand, we should also ask which Greek philosophy. Fernández is right to remark that Origen is not enslaved to a single

³ In *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena* (Leiden, 2013) and some essays.

⁴ Some arguments in this sense appear in my ‘Gregory of Nyssa’s Purported Criticism of Origen’s Purported Doctrine of the Preexistence of Souls’, in *Lovers of Souls and Lovers of Bodies: Philosophical and Religious Perspectives in Late Antiquity*, ed. Ilaria Ramelli and Svetla Slaveva Griffin (Cambridge, MA, forthcoming).

⁵ Samuel Fernández (ed., trans.), *Orígenes: Los Principios* (Madrid, 2015).

philosophical school, and indeed Origen's didactic method reflected this fact. However, there are schools that he excluded even from his teaching, namely, the atheistic sects (surely Epicureanism, probably also Aristotelianism, which denied the immortality of the soul and divine providence). Stoicism had many good ethical tenets, which were powerfully influential on Origen, but its immanentism and determinism were incompatible with his thought and with what he regarded as Christian philosophy. Platonism was by far the most compatible school and, although Origen's authoritative text was Scripture and not Plato, there are very good reasons to think that he intended to construct an 'orthodox' Christian Platonism.⁶ After all, apart from all other considerations, in Scripture Origen found expressed the same truths as Plato expressed.

Giulio Maspero's paper, '*Isoangelia* in Gregory of Nyssa and Origen against the Background of Plotinus', is a rich study, from which I profited a great deal. I think, in fact, that Gregory Nyssen's link between the angelic life and impassivity/*apatheia*, which Maspero highlights well, may represent one of the many respects in which Gregory exerted a profound influence on Evagrius. Under the heading, 'Gregory of Nyssa a. The Perspective', Maspero is correct to note that fourth-century dogmatic developments caused theologians to posit only God's nature as eternal. I would like to point out that this was already maintained by Origen. This is why for him the coeternity of the Son with the Father was so crucial, since it implied the divinity of the Son. On the tenet that only God is eternal, moreover, Origen also built one pillar of his apokatastasis doctrine, since that tenet implied the non-eternity of evil and death. Maspero is also right that Athanasius proclaimed angels to be neither eternal nor divine. Again, I would point out that this was already Origen's position, which Athanasius is likely to have been following.

I certainly agree that Gregory stresses the dynamic element more than Origen; this is a peculiarity of his thought, closely related to the stress he laid upon the infinity of God. However, apokatastasis for Origen is not a static return to the original state, as is sometimes misrepresented, but it is already dynamic. Origen clearly envisages a progression, as is also indicated by his distinction between image as an initial datum and likeness as an ideal to be achieved in the *telos*, through personal effort.⁷ This is why for him the end is similar to, but infinitely better than, the beginning. Indeed, in Origen one can arguably find the roots of Gregory's doctrine of *epektasis*, as I have endeavoured to show in my lecture at the last Gregory of Nyssa Colloquium in Rome – the Colloquium mentioned above in the introduction.⁸

⁶ This line will be developed in *Origen of Alexandria as Philosopher and Theologian* (Cambridge, in preparation).

⁷ See, e.g., Georgios Lekkas, *Liberté et progrès chez Origène* (Turnhout, 2001).

⁸ '*Apokatastasis* and *Epektasis* in *Hom. in Cant.*: The Relation between Two Core Doctrines in Gregory and Roots in Origen', in the Proceedings of the XIII International Colloquium on

Likewise, Maspero remarks: ‘the mutability of the creature becomes positive, insofar as it is the possibility of being turned forever towards the Creator in a growing participation: the man that remains faithful to God will reach the state of the angels whose will is definitively turned to the Trinity in the perpetual progress of *epektasis*. Man is called to imitate and reach in the eschatological condition this angelic state, now no longer conceived in the static sense, but in the eternally dynamic one’. The ‘static’ element, again, should not too easily be associated with Origen and contrasted with Nyssen’s dynamic concept of the relation between human being and God. The mutability of the creature is undoubtedly positive for Gregory of Nyssa, but this cannot be squarely opposed to Origen’s view, since the positivity of the rational creature’s mutability was posited already by Origen. The mutability is the very basis and condition for rational creatures’ free will (as only God, constitutively, is immutable in the Good), and this is precisely what enables the aforementioned passage from image (εἰκόν) to likeness (ὁμοίωσις). The latter is to be fully achieved in the end, through the exercise of free will, and will ultimately lead to unity (ἕνωσις).⁹

That human beings without bodies are not complete human beings is surely a tenet of Gregory Nyssen’s thought, as Maspero correctly remarks. However, this should not be contrasted with Origen’s position, given that for Origen a body (whether spiritual, mortal, *etc.*) is constitutive of every human being, and even of every rational creature and every creature in general. Indeed, Origen was adamant that only the Holy Trinity can subsist without any body, of any kind.¹⁰ Both for Origen and for Gregory, humans will become like angels, equipped with an angelic, immortal body, not subject to corruption, and, more importantly, an impassible soul and an illuminated intellect. This is, in fact, the threefold resurrection, of body, soul, and *nous*, that will be taken over and developed by Evagrius.

This is a fine paper, which I enjoyed a great deal and brings about much food for thought. For this reason I am very grateful to Fr Giulio Maspero, as well as to all the other participants in this rich and significant workshop. Among its many merits, it has helped to highlight even better the profound continuity that obtains between the theologies of Origen, the Cappadocians, and Evagrius, and especially between Gregory of Nyssa’s and Evagrius’s thought.

Gregory of Nyssa, Rome, 17-20 September 2014, ed. Giulio Maspero and Miguel Brugarolas (Leiden, forthcoming).

⁹ See the chapter on Origen in I. Ramelli, *Apokatastasis* (2013); *ead.*, *Origen of Alexandria* (forthcoming).

¹⁰ Much study still needs to be devoted to this point. See, *e.g.*, my ‘Preexistence of Souls? The ἀρχή and τέλος of Rational Creatures in Origen and Some Origenians’, *SP* 56 (2013), 167-226; *ead.*, ‘Origen’, in *A History of Mind and Body in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, forthcoming).

Dunamis and the Christian Trinity in the Fourth Century

Mark J. EDWARDS, Christ Church, Oxford, UK

ABSTRACT

The teaching of Gregory of Nyssa on the Trinity has been explored in the light of late antique logic by a number of recent authors, notably Johannes Zachhuber in *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa* (Berlin, 2000) and in his subsequent exchange of articles with Richard Cross. The evolution of Aristotelian logic in late antiquity has also been the subject of perceptive and innovative works by scholars such as Ricardo Chiaradonna, Sten Ebbesen and Steven Strange. Most of these studies have been undertaken without reference to theology; the present article will consider whether the difficulties of Gregory's argument could be tempered, not so much by the direct application of ancient logical theories, as by reflection on what the theorists have to say about the *nature and purpose* of Aristotelian logic. A secondary goal of the article will be to reconcile the simile of the rainbow in [Basil], *Letter* 38 with the meteorological phenomena, making use of other ancient writings on the same topic and of modern work on ancient perceptions of colour.

The Greek noun *dunamis*, like its English equivalent 'power', is used in a variety of senses. When we admire the power of a shot or attribute some success to the power of God, we refer to an active exercise of force upon some object; when, on the other hand, we complain of failing to do all that is in our power, or decide to refrain from playing a radio at full power, we are speaking of a capacity or potential which remains partially unemployed. Aristotle characteristically differentiates *dunamis*, the capacity to act or be acted upon, from *energeia*, the realisation of either capacity. Before one object acts upon another, each is the agent or substrate of the action *dunamei*, that is, in mere potentiality; the performance of the act is simultaneously the realisation of the agent's power to act and the substrate's power to be acted upon (see *e.g. Physics* 1.1-3). This being acted upon can be described as the actualising of matter by form, or its conversion into form; an entity which was free from matter would be a pure *energeia* or actuality, possessing no capacity to be other than it is, and therefore wholly identical with its form. God, for Aristotle, is the one example of this pure *energeia*; he also has the capacity for *energeia* in the sense of activity, but, since the activity of such a being must be eternal, and its substrate therefore equally eternal, it would seem that the sole activity of Aristotle's God is thought, and its sole object himself.¹

¹ *Metaphysics* 1074b; see J. Brunschwig, 'Metaphysics A9: "A Short-Lived thought-Experiment?"', in M. Frede and D. Charles (eds), *Aristotle's Metaphysics Lambda: Symposium*

In a paper delivered to a previous conference, I have argued that in Christian literature before Constantine the term *dunamis* typically denotes the manifest power of God, above all the manifest power of recreating his fallen creatures in Jesus Christ, whom Paul extols as the wisdom and power of God at 1Cor. 1:21-4. Since, however, the deity is eternal and his creation temporal, Christians before this epoch had been apt to distinguish between the eternal being of the Son as the Father's reason and his coming forth as the Word through whom the world was to be created. Origen, who denied that there was ever a time when the Son was not distinct from the Father (*First Principles* 1.2.1-2),² had been obliged to posit an eternal creation in the noetic realm so that the Son would always have a world to govern. Arius took the contrary position: if the world has a finite history, the Son too has a finite history, which we need not prolong by positing an eternal incubation within the undivided Godhead. This indivisibility is for Arius a theological axiom, and since it would be compromised in his view by the generation of the Son from the substance of the Father, he surmises that, whatever term we use to describe his origin, the Son was in fact produced from nothing by the Father's will. The rejection of this thesis by a majority at the Council of Nicaea in 325 did not put an end to all dissent. Indeed we discern as many as four positions, each of which implies a different understanding of the term *dunamis* when we predicate this of God. We may distinguish first between those for whom Christ is the active *dunamis* of the Father and those for whom he is the realisation of a latent *dunamis*. In the former case *dunamis* is almost a synonym for *energeia*, while in the second it signifies potentiality. Next we may distinguish those who maintain that the active *dunamis* of the Father is eternal from those who set a temporal limit to this activity; and on the other side, we may distinguish those for whom *dunamis* is a capacity to be actualised from those who understand it as the capacity to act. In the immediate aftermath of Nicaea, all four parties were represented;

1. Athanasius, now remembered as the arch-champion of the Council, may be numbered with those for whom the Son is the eternally active *dunamis* of the Father. He is not, says the eloquent patriarch, a product of the Father's will but the will itself, and he exists as a hypostasis distinct from the Father not because the latter needs an instrument of creation but because he must have some object for his love.
2. To the second class, for whom *dunamis* is active but not eternal, we may assign Eusebius of Caesarea, who, without expressly denying the Son's coeternity with the Father, always stops short of affirming it and certainly regards the Son as the Father's instrument and intermediary in his dealings

Aristotelicum (Oxford, 2000), 275-306, and A. Kosman, 'Metaphysics Λ9: Divine Thought', in M. Frede and D. Charles (eds), *Aristotle's Metaphysics Lambda: Symposium Aristotelicum* (Leiden, 2006), 318-23.

² Origen, *De Principiis*, ed. P. Koetschau (Leipzig, 1913).

with the temporal creation. His bugbear was not Athanasius but Marcellus, whom he accuses of denying the hypostatic existence of the Son before the incarnation.

3. Whether or not he is fairly represented by Eusebius, Marcellus contrasts the existence of the Son *en dunamei* from his existence in actuality, contesting the general assumption that the Son is to be identified with the Wisdom of *Prov.* 8:25 who declares that she was begotten before all the world to be the coadjutor of the Lord in his creation. It appears that he had an ally in Constantine, who, as Eusebius confesses, informed the Council of Nicaea that the Son is *homoousios* (consubstantial) with the Father because he existed potentially within the latter before coming forth (Theodoret, *Church History* 1.12.8).
4. Arius, for all his tergiversations, never conceded that the Son is *homoousios* with the Father or recanted his opinion that the Father had produced him out of nothing. Although he does not make use of the same nomenclature, he would surely have agreed with those who held that the Son owes his being to the *dunamis* which resides eternally within the Father but is exercised contingently and according to his will.

The first great disputation after Nicaea – subtler, more protracted and more vigorous than any that preceded it – was between the second and third of these positions, and can be studied in the writings of Eusebius against Marcellus. The next, between the first position and all the others, is represented now in the Orations of *Athanasius against the Arians*. In the 350s, Marius Victorinus³ developed a form of the third position against the fourth; finally the fourth and the first are set against one another in the polemics of the Cappadocian Fathers against Eunomius. All four are germane to the present subject, but the first three, in which power was often discussed in other terms, will therefore be treated more summarily than the fourth. Once the clash of arms had at last become a battle in open daylight, the relation between the essence and the power of God was perceived as the capital question, both by Gregory of Nyssa and by the adversary whom he stigmatized as an Arian and a besotted follower of Aristotle.

The first two phases: Marcellus, Eusebius and Athanasius

In what I have called the first phase of the Nicene controversy, the distinction between existence in potential and existence in actuality was applied to the Second Person of the Trinity by Marcellus of Anyra. No texts survive under his name, and his opinions must be deduced from the pedantically, and therefore usefully, hostile ebullitions of Eusebius of Caesarea *Against Marcellus* and

³ Marius Victorinus, *Opera Theologica*, ed. A. Locher (Leipzig, 1976).

On the Theology of the Church. For Marcellus the Pauline eulogy of Christ as the wisdom and power of God was a cardinal text, to be quoted against Asterius, who maintained that the Son was one power and the Father another, the former being the icon, or subaltern image, of the latter (*Frs* 82 and 96 Klostermann). Marcellus protests that the Godhead is one indivisible *dunamis* (*Fr.* 77), and that another of his adversaries, Narcissus of Neronias, is falling into blasphemy when he imagines that this power can be divided into two (*Fr.* 81). As *dunamis* – the inscrutable power through which God executes all his works (*Frs* 60 and 65) – the Logos or divine Word is coeternal with the Father; but this is not to say that he possessed his own hypostasis, and Marcellus shifts from the active to the passive sense of the term when he declares that before the incarnation the Son was present *en dunamei* – that is, potentially – in the Father, until he took on actuality in the flesh, just as the latent potentialities of a man remain unknown until they are actualised in his deeds (*Frs* 52 and 61).

Prov. 8:22, where Wisdom proclaims, ‘the Lord created me in the beginning of his way’, was understood by Origen and those who followed him to mean that Christ, the Wisdom of God, had been the coadjutor of the Father, and hence a distinct hypostasis, from the very first.⁴ Marcellus pronounced this text too enigmatic to be of service in doctrinal controversy. To Eusebius, on the other hand, it is plain that Wisdom in *Prov.* 8:22 is a distinct hypostasis, hence that the Son was already a distinct hypostasis before the ages, if not eternally. He insinuates that Marcellus posits a change from a monadic to a triadic God at the time of Christ’s nativity, in violation of the Nicene doctrine that the Son undergoes no change (Theodoret, *Church History* 1.12.12). Conscious (perhaps more conscious than his rival) that the term *dunamis* needs to be carefully parsed, he admits that God may be said to contemplate all things in his divine and ineffable power before they come into existence (*Ecclesiastical Theology* 2.6.4); he can even grant that our knowledge of the Father was merely potential (*en dunamei*) before it was actualised in the Son (1.11.6). He insists for all that, that we cannot think of the Logos as having been dormant in the Father before the latter chose to exert his ‘drastic power’ (2.2.23); we are not to imagine a time when the logos remained inchoate in the Father as the plant is at first inchoate in the seed (2.13.2). Eusebius displays a marked partiality for the active sense of *dunamis*, as when he declares that the grace of the saviour dispenses the power of the Spirit to the saints, or that it is Christ, the one light of men, whose intellective and rational power fills us with reason and intellection (*Against Marcellus* 1.3.11 and 1.20.8). The plural *dunameis*, which is as common as the singular in his writings against Marcellus, always denotes the angelic host (*Ecclesiastical Theology* 1.11.6, 1.20.11, 1.20.27, 3.2.25, 3.6.1).

⁴ Eusebius, *Against Marcellus* 1.4; *Contra Marcellum* and *De Ecclesiastica Theologia*, ed. E. Klostermann (Berlin, 1972).

When we pass from the first to the second phase of the controversy, we find this preference for the active sense of *dunamis* to be equally characteristic of Athanasius. In his apologetic works, *Against the Nations* and *On the Incarnation*, the insuperable power of God is set against the counterfeit power of demons, whom the pagans wrongly imagine to be present by *dunamis* in wood and stone.⁵ In Paul's phrase he acclaims Christ as the wisdom and power of God, who in the strength of this power has brought all things into being, though for our sake he concealed it in the weakness of his flesh (*Against the Nations* 46; *On the Incarnation* 19 and 21). In his treatise *On the Decrees of Nicaea* (24 and 26) he quotes with approval the dictum of Dionysius of Rome that *logos*, *sophia* and *dunamis* (word, wisdom and power) are the three *dunameis* of God, and that the one in whom these powers are united cannot be temporal in origin. In his letters to Serapion he asserts that the Son is *dunamis* in nature and truth, not only the power of God but the Lord of glory (*To Serapion* 3.25 and 1.25). In his three orations *Against the Arians*, he invokes the term *dunamis* in refutation of every attempt to construe other terms as proofs of the Son's inferiority. The latter is not merely the Father's image but his image and power;⁶ being not a creature of the Father's will but the will itself, he is more properly described as the living will and power of the Father, while at other times the noun *dunamis* is coupled with 'truth' and 'light'.⁷ Salvation is possible for all because he who has been made sin for us is the universal *dunamis* of God (2.58); the divine power that is in gives life to all, and the knowledge of him whom the Father possesses as word, his wisdom and his *dunamis* is sown in every soul from the beginning (2.34). Asterius is thus fighting against his conscience when he pretends that there would be no second person but for an arbitrary bestowal of the Father's *dunamis* (3.2). He may, however, seem to have raised an objection of some cogency when he argues that if the Son is to be eternal then the Father's power of creation must be eternal, and there would never be a time when the world was not (1.29). Athanasius is content to reply that the sophist (as he calls him) has failed to distinguish the eternal generation of the Son, which is an act of nature rather than of *dunamis*, from the contingent origin of all other things. This is a point to which I shall return in the epilogue; Athanasius himself need not detain us in this article, as his reasoning is always more dogmatic than philosophical. Before we pass on to the third phase of the Nicene controversy, in which philosophy becomes more salient, we may quit the second phase with the observation that it had now become the norm in Trinitarian theology for *dunamis* to signify active power, not the mere potentiality either to act or to be.

⁵ Athanasius, *Against the Nations* 19; *Contra Gentes* and *De Incarnatione*, ed. and trans. R.W. Thomson (Oxford, 1971).

⁶ Athanasius, *Against the Arians* 1.9; *Contra Arianos* I-III, ed. K. Metzler, D. Hansen and K. Savvidis, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1998-2000).

⁷ *Ibid.* 2.2, 3.63, 3.65.

Third phase: the Trinity of Marius Victorinus

Although the Nicene Creed declared the Son to be *homoousios* (consubstantial) with the Father, subsequent councils failed to include this term in their formularies even when they did not disown the theology of Nicaea. For that matter, it was not until the 350s that Athanasius, who had wielded his pen at home and abroad against every deviation from the Nicene faith as he understood it, began to insist upon the term *homoousios* as a test of orthodoxy. The quarrel between the *homoousian* party and their allies of a day, the homoiousians, proved so wearisome to the Emperor and his peace-loving acolytes that in 357 the Council of Sirmium proscribed the very use of the term *ousia* in relation to the Trinity. The most defiant rejoinder came not from the Greek world but from Marius Victorinus, a rhetorician converted late in life, to whom philosophy was a more familiar discipline than biblical exegesis.⁸ In his four tracts against the Arians, he repeats the word *homoousios* with a frequency to which no other writer of his period, Greek or Latin, affords a parallel. Conscious at the same time that Latin theology had inherited from Tertullian a distinction between the one substance and the three persons of the Godhead, he retains the noun *substantia* to designate that which gives each person his ontological status, but replaces *persona* by *subsistentia*, or mode of being. More clearly than many Nicene theologians of his era, he perceives that his task is to show that each *subsistentia*, though distinct from the other two, is coextensive with the *substantia*, that is to say that, while the persons are not identical with each other, each is identical with the one being whom we call God.

Although this is an irreducibly Christian tenet, the tools for its elucidation are borrowed by Victorinus from Aristotle. The latter, we recall, distinguished being in potential from being in act, with a further distinction between the actuality of a thing, its first *energeia* or entelechy, and its characteristic activity, the second *energeia*. In a material object, there is never a full conversion of the potential into the actual, and consequently never a pure and uninterrupted exercise of the characteristic activity. In an immaterial being on the other hand, there is no potentiality to be converted, and the God of Aristotle is thus a perfect actuality whose activity is to contemplate eternally that one thing which is fully actual, namely himself. Christians had already begun to identify their God with this more personal and dynamic counterpart to the Platonic form of the Good; only Victorinus, however, was bold enough to conceive the Godhead as a timeless symphony of all three modes, potential, actual and active. The Father in this scheme is the initial potentiality, which, being the source of the other two persons, has a peculiar claim upon the term being. Since God is spirit

⁸ See M.J. Edwards, 'Marius Victorinus and the *Homoousion*', *SP* 46 (2010), 105-18, and M. Barnes, *Power of God: Dunamis in Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology* (Washington, 2001), 151-6.

according to *John* 4:24, we give this name to the actuality which the Father assumes when he becomes the object of his own reflection. Had the Stagirite been his only guide, Victorinus would have gone no further; since, however, he also embraced the Neoplatonic principle that the Good must superabound (Plato, *Timaeus* 29e), he adds that the self-intellection of God entails a collateral activity which is directed towards the lower plane of being. This he calls life, remembering that the Evangelist says of the word who is also the son that 'in him was life, and the life was the light of men' (*John* 1:4). For this notion of God's activity in the world as an efficient cause he could find no warrant, of course, in Aristotle, any more than for his doctrine of the priority of the potential to the actual. Aristotle indeed would have accused him of falling back into the error of Speusippus,⁹ to which (no doubt) the Christian theologian would have retorted that his aim was not to reproduce the teaching of any school but to frame a philosophy consistent with his faith.

The triad of being, mind and life is not his own invention. Before him it is attested in Iamblichus and Theodore of Asine, while more than a century later it plays a structural role in the metaphysics of Proclus. Its origins lie in Plato's *Sophist* where the order of terms is clearly not prescriptive;¹⁰ whether any significance should be attached to the variation of order in Neoplatonic writings is a matter of debate, into which we need not enter here. For Proclus in his *Elements of Theology* (101),¹¹ the order is immutable, since the class of things that exist comprehends the class of those that have life, and this in turn comprehends the class of those that are capable of thought. But whether we adopt this or Theodore's triad in which mind holds the middle place between being and life,¹² it is clear that life and mind are distinct and active functions. There is, however, an earlier form of the triad, attested in Porphyry and the *Chaldaean Oracles*, in which *dunamis* is the intermediate term between being and mind.¹³ In this case mind is the actualisation of the *dunamis*, though it is harder to determine whether the *dunamis* is an active power of being or a latent potentiality to be actualised as mind. The triad of Victorinus, a hybrid of both, is faithful to neither, as it is only in him, and only because he is struggling to interpret an ecclesiastical dogma, that potentiality can usurp the first place.

Victorinus, as we have noted, was a neophyte. In the course of his unusual career he had digested books which the authorised teachers of Christendom opened only to refute them. Striking coincidences have been discovered between his writings and a number of the texts which we now call Sethian,

⁹ See R.M. Dancy, *Two Studies in the Early Academy* (New York, 1991), 85-8.

¹⁰ Plato, *Sophist* 248e-249a; cf. Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.6.8.

¹¹ Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, ed. and trans. E.R. Dodd's (Oxford, 1963).

¹² Proclus, *In Timaeum* iii.64; Proclus, *Commentarium in Platonis Timaeum*, ed. E. Diehl, 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1903).

¹³ *Chaldaean Oracles* 3.2-4, 5.5., 56.2, 96.1, 136.2, 137 Des Places.

though the ancients called them Gnostic. The oldest perhaps, and certainly the most read, was the *Apocryphon of John*, in which the Father of all is extolled as a fathomless monad, beyond conceit or knowledge and superior alike to affirmation and negation. He reveals his Fatherhood, if not his nature, by engendering another monad, the triple-powered aeon or thrice-male virgin Barbelo, whose name appears to signify 'in the beginning, God'.¹⁴ In another Sethian text, the *Zostrianus*, a version of which was certainly known to Porphyry, we read of three unborn images, Existence, Form and Blessedness (*NHC VIII* 1.3.9),¹⁵ and later of three origins – Existence, Life and Blessedness – which have a single origin in Barbelo and are present in every other origin (*NHC VIII* 1.1.14). In a cognate text, the *Allogenes*, the First One exists hypostatistically in Vitality, Mentality and That-Which-Is, each of the three being coinherent in the other two (*NHC XI* 3.48.30ff and 49.25ff). In his search for the highest principle, the adept must pass from Mentality, the third silence (*NHC XI* 3.53.24), into Vitality, and thence into Existence where the likeness of the One will be disclosed in rest and motion (*NHC XI* 3.59.14-23); at the same time, he is admonished that the One who is truly at rest transcends Mentality, Vitality and Existence (*NHC XI* 3.61.32-62.31). Hymns to the triple power appear also in *The Three Steles of Seth*, while in *The Concept of our Great Power* the creation is the appearance of a Power in the midst of powers, and Christ is the redeemer of the psychic realm, because he knows the Great Power.

None of these writings, even if they were available to him, furnished a perfect template for Victorinus. None of them apportions a different power to each of the persons in the Trinity; the triads that they adumbrate are inferior to the Father, who never loses his simplicity as a monad, and is never said to stand to another subject in the relation of the potential to the actual. The Gnostic contribution to the evolution of Trinitarian dogma, though undeniable, is oblique, and it is difficult in some cases to determine the order of precedence, as the Nag Hammadi Documents are fragmentary, corrupt and overwritten. For the same reasons, we cannot hope to ascertain whether the Gnostic triads were calqued on those of the Platonists or the Platonic triads on those of the Gnostics. I have quoted in the last paragraph an allusion to rest and motion as inferior manifestations of the One, which should convince us that the Sethians were acquainted with the great genera of the *Sophist*. It was no new thing for Christians of this era to seek the assistance of philosophy in dispelling obscurities or resolving doubts; it was, however, illicit in the eyes of many churchmen, to let philosophy hold the reins, invoking the creeds, tradition and scripture only as ancillary sources of knowledge. By this canon the gnostic were plainly culpable

¹⁴ *Nag Hammadi Codices* II 1.2.33-II 1.4.31.

¹⁵ *Nag Hammadi Codices*. See *The Coptic Gnostic Library*, ed. J.M. Robinson, 5 vols. (Leiden, 2000).

and Victorinus suspect: a more acceptable balance between speculation and exegesis was observed by the protagonists in what I have called the fourth stage of the controversy, to which the remainder of the present paper is devoted.

Fourth Phase: Eunomius v. Gregory of Nyssa

The *Apology* of Eunomius, Bishop of Cyzicus and gadfly of the Nicenes in the latter half of the fourth century, is his only surviving work of any magnitude, though a sequel to this text can be reconstructed from the writings of his adversaries, the Cappadocian fathers. The argument of the *Apology* begins from the Nicene platitude that the Father is the one being who has no cause.¹⁶ The homoousian party, which denied that the Son is temporally posterior to the Father, proclaimed with equal warmth that he was none the less begotten, not by a birth or creation of the common order but by what came to be called (after Plotinus, *Enneads* 5.1.3)¹⁷ an eternal generation. It was generally regarded as a heresy to speak of *duo agennêta*, two unbegotten subjects, in the Godhead.¹⁸ Eunomius, however, is no longer on common ground when he maintains that *agennêsia* is a peculiar quality, not so much of the Father, as of the *ousia* or essence of the Godhead (*Apology* 9, p. 42). It is obvious, he reasons, that no being posterior to the *agennêtos* can itself be *agennêtos*, and equally obvious that that which is first in the order of being is God (*Apology* 10, p. 46). We are told in the scriptures that it is the property of God to be 'he who is', that is to be the one logical subject whose existence is identical with his essence (*Apology* 9; cf. *Ex.* 3:14). Hence whatever we predicate of him is predicated essentially, and therefore it is of his essence to be *agennêtos*. To imagine another being who shares his essence is to fall into the error of positing two *agennêta*, which not only flouts the teaching of the church but compromises the simplicity of the Godhead (which appears to follow from the identity of existence and essence) and entails the logical fallacy of attributing *agennêsia* to that which has a cause. Nothing could be more obvious than that the Son, who depends for his origin on the Father, is not that being whose existence is identical with his essence. On the contrary, he has come into being, and just as that which truly is never undergoes any process of becoming, so that which does undergo this process must have come to be from what is not. The *Categories* (12a26-34) are cited to prove that *agennêsia* can be a property rather than a privation,¹⁹ while echoes of the *Sophist*, the *Metaphysics* and Alexander of Aphrodisias can be detected in the argument that if that which is were to change it would

¹⁶ *Apology* 7, p. 40 Vaggione.

¹⁷ Plotinus, *Enneads*, ed. and trans. A.H. Armstrong, 7 vols. (New York, 1966-1988).

¹⁸ Pamphilus, *Apologia pro Origene* 87, ed. Georg Röwekamp (Turnhout, 2006), 312; cf. E.J. Jonkers, *Acta et Synoda quae Quarto Saeculo habita sunt* (Leiden, 1954), 101 and 105.

¹⁹ *Apology* 8, p. 42 Vaggione with note.

become that which it is not and therefore pass from existence into non-existence.²⁰ Thus, Eunomius reasons, it is as perverse to suppose that God imparts his essence to another as that another could come into being and be God.

To put the matter shortly: that which is God must be unbegotten, and therefore that which is begotten cannot be God. According to the Nicene doctrine, represented by Basil of Caesarea and his brother Gregory of Nyssa, *agennêsia* was a property of the Father in relation to the Son, but not an essential attribute. Those attributes that pertain to his essence – eternity, omnipotence and sovereignty, for example – are equally predicable of the Son, who because he originates from the Father, inherits his essence according to the rule that applies to parents and their offspring in this world. Eunomius replies that, while every word that is said of God in the scriptures is true, and thus indicative of his essence (*Apology* 12, p. 48), it is not always true in the sense that it would convey when used of his creatures (*Apology* 16, p. 50). Paternity in God does not imply the same alienation of his own substance that takes place in the generation of one creature by another (*Apology* 17, p. 54); conversely, the divine predicates and even the divine name may be accorded to the Son without implying that he and the Father share one essence. The Nicenes, who rejected this dichotomy between talk of the Son and talk of the Father, drew their own distinction between the use of a term to express the proper notion, the *ennoia*, of a thing and the use of it to express the *epinoia*, or knowledge of a thing by its effects. Only the latter usage, they asseverate, is possible in the case of God, and hence it is a fallacy to assume that in knowing him to be *agennêtos* we know anything of his essence. Eunomius demurs: the essence, he argues, manifests itself through its effects, and thus the *epinoia* must be congruent with the *ennoia* (*Apology* 20-3, pp. 58-64). Both sides, we observe, admit the ambivalence of theological language, though they do not give the same account of this ambivalence and do not employ the same definition of truth.

Eunomius seems to throw doubt upon his own maxim that an essence is manifest in its effects when he ascribes the origin of the Son to the *dunamis* or *energeia* of the Father, using the two nouns indiscriminately in his creed, and declaring with emphasis in the *Apology* that the *energeia* does not pertain to the essence of the Father (*Apology* 23, pp. 62-4). The Son is known from scripture to be *monogenês*, one of a kind, an epithet that distinguishes him in essence both from the Father and from the Spirit, who is the product of his own *dunamis* and *energeia*.²¹ For all that, it is not to be expected that the active power

²⁰ *Apology* 13-4, pp. 48-50 Vaggione. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1074b; Plato, *Sophist* 251-9; Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Mantissa* 22, in R.C. Sharples, *Alexander of Aphrodisias: On Fate* (London, 1983), 213-4.

²¹ *Apology* 22, p. 62; see M. Barnes, 'The Background and Use of Eunomius' Causal Language', in *id.* and D.H. Williams (eds), *Arianism after Arius* (Edinburgh, 1993), 217-36 on Clement, *Stromateis* 8.9.33.

of the Son (as we must understand *dunamis* here) will be of a piece with that of the Father. Both the propagation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit are works of paternal *exousia*, a term that implies both sovereignty and an increment to the *ousia* (*Apology* 28, p. 76). To illustrate the freedom of God's action in bringing forth the Son, Eunomius also describes it as an ordinance²² and an exercise of will or deliberation,²³ whereas the Son (we are reminded) can do nothing of his own will.

Like every Christian author outside the New Testament who subordinates the Son and the Holy Spirit to the Father, Eunomius has been styled a Platonist, a Neoplatonist and even a Plotinian.²⁴ Michel Barnes has argued that a precedent for his understanding of *dunamis* can be found in the metaphysics of Iamblichus for whom *dunamis* mediates between the *ousia* and the *energeia* by which the *ousia* is known.²⁵ His usage is anticipated in the *Chaldaean Oracles*, perhaps also in Numenius of Apamea (whose star was at its highest in the first half of the fourth century), and wider currency was given to it in the epoch of Eunomius himself by Julian the Apostate. For all that, as Barnes acknowledges, Iamblichus never intimates that the exercise of the *dunamis* by the essence might be arbitrary or subject to intermission; his assertion that composite entities have a multitude of powers would rather suggest that a simple essence has only one, which we must assume (since there is no mention of the will) to be exercised without cessation. Moreover, he plainly means by *dunamis* a potentiality to actualised, whereas *dunamis* and *energeia*, as we have seen, are synonyms for Eunomius. When we compare Eunomius with Plotinus, the disparity is palpable, for the latter asserts repeatedly that an *ousia* cannot be separated from its productive activity (cf. *Enneads* 3.8.2-3). In answer to those who say that soul is in body only by its *dunamis*, he insists that where the *dunamis* is present the soul is present, though distinct (*Enneads* 6.4.3). The soul envelops the body, not somatically but dynamically, and therefore invisibly and indivisibly, as an object in the hand would be enveloped invisibly and indivisibly by the *dunamis* if the corporeal mass could be eliminated (*Enneads* 6.4.7).

One Platonist whom Eunomius might have claimed as an intellectual friend is Porphyry, whose treatise *On Statues*, well known to the Christians of this period, contends that the gods are present in their images by *dunamis*, in a manner that seems to exclude their being present in *ousia*.²⁶ In his *Sententiae*, Porphyry again contrasts these terms when he asserts that soul is present in

²² *prostagma*: *Apology* 17, p. 54; Eunomius of Cyzicus, *Extant Works*, ed. and trans. R. Vaggione (Oxford, 1987).

²³ *Apology* 15, p. 52.

²⁴ See P. Papageorgiou, 'Plotinus and Eunomios: A Parallel Theology of the Three Hypostases', *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 37 (1992), 215-31.

²⁵ M. Barnes, *Power of God* (2001), 99, citing Iamblichus *Fr.* 75 Dillon.

²⁶ Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel* 3.7.1; *Preparation for the Gospel and Demonstration of the Gospel*, ed. and trans. E.H. Gifford, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1903).

body only by *dunamis*.²⁷ Eunomius holds a similar position with regard to the coexistence of divinity and humanity in the incarnate Christ;²⁸ in modern parlance he would be an Antiochene, a denier of the true unity of natures, but the leitmotif of Nemesius of Emesa's work *On the Nature of Man*, to which we owe this testimony, is that every false Christology implies a false understanding of human nature.²⁹ If he is right, it is likely enough that Porphyry's anthropology was the model for the Christology of Eunomius; we should not conclude, however, that he was merely a philosopher shaping dogma according to his own preconceptions, Christian theology is set apart not so much by its metaphysics, its psychology or its view of the natural world as by its appeal to revelation, and the credal formulae based on revelation, as first principles. The consequence is that its problems are its own, yet it does not possess its own tools for their solution. The typical error of modern theologians is to assume that they have these tools already by virtue of their profession; the typical error of classicists in their study of antiquity is to assume that where common tools are being deployed they are being deployed for a common purpose. Whatever Eunomius takes from the pagan schools he applies to the vindication and elucidation of beliefs derived from scripture, or from reflection on the logical consequences of the monotheism which for him is both a credal and a scriptural axiom. Moreover, we shall see when we turn to Gregory of Nyssa that, whatever Porphyry taught regarding the separability of power and essence, he would never have countenanced the Eunomian teaching that an essence may choose not to exercise its characteristic power.

Dunamis in Gregory of Nyssa

So far *dunamis* and *energeia* would appear to be synonymous in Eunomius. If Gregory of Nyssa can be trusted, however, the words were differentiated in his subsequent writing, *energeia* standing as always for activity, while *dunamis* denotes the power that is exercised in activity. In an excerpt censured by his Cappadocian adversary, Eunomius urges that even that sublime *ousia* which wields authority over all others is subordinate to the *ousia* of the Father both because it has a cause and because it is brought into existence by a certain *energeia*. Granting that each of the three divine *ousiai* is simple and one, he adds that this is true of each only according to its dignity, and in each the *energeiai* are 'circumscribed along with the works', while the works in turn are a measure of the *energeiai*.³⁰ Hence these *energeiai* must admit of more or less,

²⁷ Porphyry, *Sententiae* 2, ed. E. Lamberz (Leipzig, 1975), 2.

²⁸ Nemesius of Emesa, *On the Nature of Man*, p. 1.11 Morani.

²⁹ Nemesius of Emesa, *De Natura Hominis*, ed. M. Morani (Leipzig, 1987), 43.17.

³⁰ *Against Eunomius* 1.152: GNO I 72.

for it would not be lawful to say that the same *energeia* was responsible for the creation of the angels, of the stars and of humankind. As one work surpasses another, so must be the *energeia* from which one work proceeds surpass the *energeia* from which another proceeds.³¹ Gregory's subsequent commentary implies that the Son himself was numbered among these products of the divine *energeia kai dunamis* – or rather, of the *energeia dunameos*, since Eunomius now distinguishes the activity from the latent potentiality to act.³² Gregory in his response does not deny that every creature of the visible world, and even those denizens of the invisible world who are not begotten but created, are the fruits of a limited exercise of divine power. The very fact, however, that the highest of these are acclaimed in the plural as *dunameis* or powers of God is evidence that they do not share the monadic nature of the three divine persons.³³ The Son we know, by contrast, to be the *dunamis* and wisdom of the Father;³⁴ if instead we postulate an intermediate *dunamis*, distinct from the Father's essence, as the instrument of his creation, then that *dunamis*, not the Father, is his author.³⁵ Absurdity is compounded if we introduce *energeia* as a third term, distinct from any of the hypostases; for, having no hypostasis of its own, it could produce only a work commensurate with its own nature, that is, a work without substance (1.253-60; GNO I, 100-2). Unless we confess that the Son is the offspring rather than the creature of the Father, issuing directly from his essence rather than any 'partial *dunamis*', we shall fall into the blasphemy of reckoning the fount of being among the things that are not.

Dunamis in God cannot be distinguished from *energeia*; neither, if we grant to Eunomius that the simplicity of divine beings precludes the separation of properties from the essence, is it any more possible to distinguish the Father's *dunamis* from that which he is in himself. In short it is he, by the mere fact of being the Father, who brings the Son into being, not an *energeia* distinct from himself, a decantation (as it were) of his power or essence. Gregory has been credited with a new understanding of *dunamis*, and certainly he would seem to have been the first to bring this notion into his teaching in the Trinity. Similar notions, however, can be found in his Greek precursors, none of whom is likely to have been better known than Porphyry in the second half of the fourth century. As Eirini Viltanioti has pointed out to me, two passages in the commentary of Proclus on the *Timaeus* reveal that Porphyry defined a real power as one that acts not intermittently or through instruments, but by its mere proximity to the substrate (Proclus, *In Timaeum* I, 393.1-8 Diehl). Rejecting the opinion of 'those around Atticus', who maintain that God could exist without creating, Porphyry

³¹ 1.153; GNO I 72.

³² 1.244; GNO I 98.

³³ 1.310-3; GNO I 118-9.

³⁴ 1.335; GNO I 126.

³⁵ 1.247; GNO I 99.

urged that, since the *dunamis* of God is inseparable from his essence, he will exercise this *dunamis* unceasingly by virtue of his essence: a Demiurge who failed to create would no longer be the demiurge, just as the soul, if it failed to sustain the vital operations of the body, would no longer be a soul. In the second passage he contrasts the Demiurge of the world with the artisan who, for want of mastery over his substrate, is obliged to make use of tools; if his mere existence furnished the necessary power, the form would immediately supervene upon the matter without the assistance of any tool.³⁶ If it is true, however, that Gregory had been reading Porphyry, he had found a dangerous bedfellow, for Porphyry thought it a logically ineluctable conclusion that the world must be eternal. Christians, of course, denied this inference, and were therefore bound to admit that even a God who was not circumscribed by any other entity might set limits to his activity when the *ergon* was the product of his will. On the other hand, Porphyry was a safer guide to the logic of the Trinity if one held, with Athanasius, that the Son was a product of the Father's nature. When a timeless and immaterial being works by nature, there is nothing to prevent the full conversion of the potential into the actual; on this view, which was warmly embraced by the Cappadocian Fathers, the exercise of paternal *dunamis* was not only uninhibited and unmediated but, as Porphyry would contend, inevitable.

From what has been said it is evident that the noun *dunamis*, in Gregory no less than in Eunomius, is customarily used as a synonym for *energeia*, signifying active power. Gregory tells us often enough that the power of God is ineffably superior to the limited capacities that he imparts to us,³⁷ inexpressibly greater than the signs by which we know it,³⁸ surpassing every name that we apply to him,³⁹ unchanging and unalterable, as the Nicene Creed had declared the Word to be,⁴⁰ and requiring no instrument but his almighty will.⁴¹ Unlimited and immeasurable as it is, it is circumscribed only by the impossibility of his doing evil.⁴² This too is no deficiency but the consequence of the immutable goodness which defines his nature insofar as a word can define it.⁴³ In short his power is his sovereignty, and when characterized as eternal is all but synonymous with his divinity.⁴⁴ Inasmuch as his sovereignty is undivided, his nature simple and his Godhead one, his *dunamis* too can be spoken of only in the singular.

³⁶ *Ibid.* I 395.10-22 Diehl; cf. Plotinus, *Enneads* 3.8.2.

³⁷ *Against Eunomius*, GNO I 291.8.

³⁸ *On the Holy Pasch*, GNO IX 256.24.

³⁹ *Against Eunomius*, GNO I 222.10

⁴⁰ *Then the Son also*, GNO III/2, 7.8.

⁴¹ *Infant Deaths*, GNO III/2, 92.4.

⁴² *Epistles*, GNO VIII/2, 25.9; *Song of Songs*, GNO VI 204-10.

⁴³ *Titles of the Psalms*, GNO V 65.25; *Against Eunomius*, GNO I 311.16; *Song of Songs*, GNO VI 255.14.

⁴⁴ *On Virginity*, GNO VIII/1, 298.11; *Christian Instruction*, GNO VIII/1, 43.22; *Against Eunomius*, GNO I 290.17.

Gregory, as we have seen, lays down a rule that where scripture speaks monadically of *dunamis*, it is always the power of God that is intended, whereas *dunameis* in the plural is another term for angels.⁴⁵ So far, he and Eunomius agree in their adherence to the axiom of Plotinus that if the source is simple the power too must be one (*Enneads* 5.3.15). For all that, he is in no want of qualifying adjectives which enable him to distinguish one operation of omnipotence in the lower realm from another. Thus we hear frequently of the *prognostikê*, or prescient, *dunamis*, by which God knows all things before they come into being.⁴⁶ We are warned to fear the *antapodotikê*, or retributive, *dunamis*, of his wrath.⁴⁷ His power as creator is sometimes styled his *dêmiourgikê dunamis*,⁴⁸ though Gregory seems to imply that it is only Eunomius who would favour this epithet, and certainly only Eunomius who would regard the creative faculty as a thing superadded to God's original nature.⁴⁹ *Poiêtikê* is the term by which he himself prefers to describe the power that encompasses within itself 'every object of thought that strives to reach the beginning of divine life'.⁵⁰

Does Gregory therefore contradict his own tenet that the power of God is as simple as his essence? No doubt he would answer, as any Neoplatonist would, that this fissiparation is the illusion of finite creatures who cannot grasp the operation of the divine will as a whole. He would indeed be drawn into inconsistency if he held that the Son is a product of the Father's *dunamis*, for the eternal and infinite act of generation cannot be simultaneously the finite and contingent process of shaping a temporal world. Eunomius can ascribe demiurgic activity both to the Father and to the Son without imperilling the simplicity of the Godhead because in his view only the Father is truly God, and although the same verb is predicated of both it does not denote the same operation. In Gregory's theology, the Son is not a product of *dunamis* but the very *dunamis* of the Godhead. The Father is the sole cause of his generation and of the procession of the Spirit; in the created order, on the other hand, whatever the Father initiates is effected through the Son and consummated by the Spirit, all three working together in all to reveal the indivisible unity of the Godhead. In this world we would object that even perfect coadunation of powers is something less than ontological unity; of the Godhead we cannot say this, because the words that are vouchsafed to us in scripture tell us not what he is by nature but how his nature is exhibited in his works. In his letter to Ablabius, Gregory proposes a new etymology of the word *theos* from *theasthai*, to behold, and takes this to indicate that God is known to us only as the one who superintends the created order.⁵¹

⁴⁵ *Christian Instruction*, GNO VIII/1, 133.7.

⁴⁶ *Making of Man*, GNO IV/2, 206.14 and 22; *Catechetical Oration*, GNO III/4, 34.10.

⁴⁷ *Titles of the Psalms*, GNO V 113.9.

⁴⁸ *Antirrheticus*, GNO III/1, 223.21; *Life of Moses*, GNO VII/1, 120.7.

⁴⁹ *Against Eunomius*, GNO II 282.23-9.

⁵⁰ *Against Eunomius*, GNO I 135.18-20.

⁵¹ *To Ablabius*, GNO V 44.17.

The essence of the Godhead is inscrutable, and since all three persons are equally divine all there are equally beyond our understanding; their being at one in every work, however, is the earnest of their being one in essence.

While Gregory does not think it a heresy to call the creative power of God his *logos* or *sophia*, his word or wisdom,⁵² the name Logos when applied to the second person of the Trinity denotes not a mere operation of the Father, but a co-possessor of *dunamis*, or rather the *autodunamis*, the power-itself, of the Godhead.⁵³ He is the unique or only-begotten *dunamis*, who executes in himself all things that the Father executes through him.⁵⁴ At the same time, it can be said that he performs through the Spirit all that the Spirit himself is said to perform:⁵⁵ the Father, we may say, is the fount of *dunamis*, the Son the very *dunamis*, the Spirit the spirit of that *dunamis*.⁵⁶ The life-giving power comes forth as activity from the Father and the Son in unison;⁵⁷ it is by the same power that the Son unites the Spirit to himself and to the Father.⁵⁸ The demi-urgic activity that is metaphorically signified by the hand of God⁵⁹ can also be described as *apergastike* or productive, and *tekhnikē* or craftlike, as *katakeuastike* or constructive and as *exergastike* or efficacious.⁶⁰ Under all these names the will of God – the triune deity – brings into being every product or effect of his power, but even when this is also called his *boulesis* or *boulema*, no temporal process of deliberation is implied.⁶¹ Since his will and his workmanship can never be separated from his benignity, we can also attribute to God an epoptic or tutelary *dunamis*, which with equal propriety might be termed *energeia* or activity.⁶² The union of benevolence with omnipotence entails that the power of Christ will also be *zoopoios*, or productive of life, manifesting its supremacy in the banishment of diseases by a mere word of command.⁶³

Concluding observations

More scrutiny would be required to discover whether this equation of the power of God with the Son or Second Person of the Trinity is consistently

⁵² GNO XVI 16.11-23.

⁵³ *Catechetical Oration*, GNO III/4, 35.12.

⁵⁴ *Against Eunomius*, GNO I 177.22.

⁵⁵ *To Ablabius*, GNO V 51.13.

⁵⁶ *On the Holy Spirit*, GNO III/1, 99.32-100.1.

⁵⁷ *Against Eunomius*, GNO II 302.14.

⁵⁸ *Against Eunomius*, GNO I 120.16.

⁵⁹ *Song of Songs*, GNO VI 337.14.

⁶⁰ *Defence of the Hexaemeron*, GNO IV/1, 20.23 and 78.29; *Against Eunomius*, GNO II 198.7; *Refutation of Eunomius*, GNO II 340.25.

⁶¹ *Catechetical Oration*, GNO III/4, 61.2; *Against Eunomius*, GNO I 296.28 and 396.29.

⁶² *Titles of the Psalms*, GNO VIII 40.21.

⁶³ *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, GNO III/3, 2.137.

observed in Gregory's writings. Even if it proves to be so, consistency is not the same thing as cogency, and the faithful application of this thesis may allay certain difficulties at the cost of raising others. If every exertion of *dunamis* by any of the three persons must be concretely realised in the Second Person, it will follow, since each person is identical with the one being named God, that God is identical with his own *dunamis*. This would be an intelligible theory if *dunamis* signified *energeia* in the sense of actuality. In Greek thought, however, *dunamis* is always a complementary term, not a synonym, for *energeia* in this sense; the present paper has shown that in Christian thought of the late fourth century it often functioned as a synonym for *energeia* in the sense of activity. Gregory himself teaches that all three persons are known to us only through their synergetic activity in the creation, preservation and redemption of the cosmos; he also holds, however, that the creation was itself a contingent act and that the world which it brought into being has only a finite history. The charge against Eunomius was that he makes the Son the product of a fickle exertion of *dunamis* which remains extrinsic to the Father's essence; Gregory, in asserting that the *dunamis* is intrinsic to the essence of the Godhead, and hence eternal, has given metaphysical force to the dictum of Athanasius that the Son is not a creature of the divine will but the will itself, and he anticipates the teaching of Augustine that, because God is eternal love, the Son must exist eternally as an object of that love. But what he gains in metaphysics he loses in cosmology, for the pagan question, 'what was God doing before he created the world?' is now transferred from the Godhead as a whole to the Second Person in particular. To judge by the *Hexaemeron*, Gregory was content with Origen's answer that there was nothing before the world because time itself came into being with the creation.⁶⁴ The fact that the question is still in dispute suggests that this solution, though it satisfied Augustine,⁶⁵ has not always been found compelling. It also shows that the difficulty is not peculiar to those who entertain a particular theory of the Trinity, and it is not my purpose here to disparage Gregory's capacity as a philosopher. He could not have embraced the eternity of creation as a logical corollary of his teaching on the Trinity, because this appeared to him to be negated by the opening words of *Genesis*. The paradox into which he is thrown is therefore an illustration of a point made more than once in the present paper, that Christian speculation in antiquity was never entirely free to take its own course, and was bound to shun every path that was not illumined by the light of revelation.

⁶⁴ See M. DelCogliano, 'Basil of Caesarea versus Eunomius of Cyzicus on the Nature of Time', *Vigiliae Christianae* 68 (2014), 498-532; P. Tzamalikos, *Origen: Cosmology and Ontology of Time* (Leiden, 2006), 142-4.

⁶⁵ *Confessions* 11.13; *City of God* 11.4-5.

Trauma before Trauma: Recognizing, Healing and Transforming the Wounds of Soul-Mind in the Works of Evagrius of Pontus¹

Kevin CORRIGAN, Emory University, Atlanta, USA

ABSTRACT

Against the widespread view that trauma is at root a modern or 19th Century phenomenon, this article argues, in the broader context of the ancient world, that trauma in the 4th Century (before trauma in the 19th and 20th Centuries) has something valuable to say to us today, particularly the complex and sophisticated recognition in Evagrius of Pontus of the wounds of a radically decentered soul/mind. For Evagrius, the wounds of the soul-mind – together with its afflictions, malignant growths *etc.* – first, have to be remembered, for forgetfulness of the cuts and wounds in the soul, condemns us not only to relive them but to inscribe their painfulness more and more deeply; second, they have to be healed by a psychosomatic process that must be imbued with a proper theology, for without theology there is no possibility of a cosmos; and third, they have to be brought back not simply as traumas but as scars (*stigmata*) and signs (*semeia*) of that theological cosmos at work already in the parts of the cosmos, lifting and inscribing the redemptive effects of affliction, pain and sorrow already here and now into the individual and collective resurrected body.

Despite some scholarly recognition of a broader pre-history of trauma, a significant set of contemporary views holds that trauma is an inescapably 19th Century phenomenon. In the last 10-20 years, at least three variants of this thesis have been maintained: first, that before the late nineteenth century, concepts of psychic trauma may well have existed, but that there was no notion of a ‘forgotten trauma’;² second, that the expansion of the concept of trauma from physical to ‘mental and psychological phenomena’ was ‘simultaneously responsive to and constitutive of “modernity”’ (10): ‘in our secular society, which endows science with ultimate explanatory authority, the concept of human psychological trauma has emerged as one means of making sense of “this century of mass

¹ I am grateful to Yuri Corrigan because the impetus and the title of this article came from him and from a talk entitled ‘Before Trauma: Dostoevsky’s Theology of the Wound’ that he gave at the ASEES Convention, November 2014, in San Antonio, TX.

² Ian Hacking, ‘Memory Sciences, Memory Politics’, in *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory* (New York, 1996), 67-87, 82 especially.

mortality and engineered apocalypses”’;³ and third, most radical of all, that not only did no notion of post-traumatic stress exist before the late nineteenth century, but that it would even be impossible to experience trauma – as we understand it today – before that moment in history.⁴

In this article I do not wish to argue that ‘trauma’ might not differ from period to period or even from decade to decade or year to year. I suspect that an infinite sea of dissimilarity carries no easy markers from second to second.⁵ Instead, I want to argue that the three variants of the 19th Century hypothesis articulated above are plainly false – and can be shown to be so from an appreciation of the complexity of the medical psychology and theology we find in the 4th Century. Here I shall restrict my focus to Evagrius of Pontus, though I will have occasion to mention Basil and Gregory of Nyssa. Of course, it should go almost without saying that the ancient world knew a great deal about trauma, as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* vividly illustrate,⁶ and much too about post-traumatic distress disorder, as Sophocles’ *Ajax* and Exekias’ famous vase painting of Ajax ‘contemplating suicide’ tend to confirm. The Greeks were also deeply invested in diagnosing and attempting to heal ancient buried wounds, curses and plagues, as we can see so deeply represented in Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*.⁷ But my focus will not be on early antiquity, but on the later Christian period that developed a new medical psychology situated within a much broader theology in order to recognize, heal and allow for the transformation of traumata.

I shall therefore focus on the concepts of wounds (*traumata*, *titroskein* etc.), cuts (*tomai*, *temnein* etc.), forgetfulness (*lethe*) and memory/mindfulness (*mneme* etc.) in Evagrius, primarily. Freud’s (in some respects) necessary restriction of the psychic field to uncover repressed traumas led inevitably to the conflicted afterlife of ‘Freudian’ psychotherapy – even to the opening up of moral, religious, spiritual and mystical dimensions in the following 100 years of practical research.⁸ In the 4th Century already, the development of a medical psychotherapy already included those many dimensions, and it was linked – as we can see occasionally in Evagrius – to a practical, very down-to-earth neurology. This linking of psychology and neurology is thought to be characteristic only

³ Mark S. Micale and Paul Lerner (eds), *Traumatic Pasts: History, Psychiatry, and Trauma in the Modern Age, 1870-1930* (Cambridge, 2001), 26.

⁴ See Allan Young, *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* (Princeton, 1997).

⁵ The phrase is from Plato, *Politicus* 273d6-e1.

⁶ See Jonathan Shay’s discussions of Homer’s depictions of post-traumatic stress disorder in *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey: Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (New York, 1994), and *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Overcoming* (New York, 2002).

⁷ In fact, the first usage of *diaggonai* in a quasi-medical/legal context occurs in Aeschylus, *Eumenides*, 708-10.

⁸ See P. Rudnytsky, *Rescuing Psychoanalysis from Freud and Other Essays in Re-Vision* (Karnac, 2011).

of modernity, but in fact it is part of the medical legacy that Evagrius and the Cappadocians inherit from Galen and others.⁹

My major object, however, will be to lay the groundwork for a broader argument. Trauma as the uncovering and repetition of a repressed event runs the risk of endless repetition, however temporarily purgative, or of the kind of ritual in which either analyst or analysand or both pick over the bones of an event that cannot be digested, revisited or redeemed. In fact, ‘redemption’ is inevitably excluded a priori as too distasteful for any truly scientific practice or as simply the receding afterglow of theories that should be long dead. With Evagrius and Gregory, I shall argue, we have for the first time in this form a much broader theory: the wounds of the soul-mind – together with its afflictions, disastrous fortunes, malignant growths *etc.* – first, have to be remembered, for forgetfulness of the cuts and wounds in the soul, condemns us not only to relive them but to inscribe their painfulness more and more deeply; second, they have to be healed by a psychosomatic process that must be imbued with a proper theology, for without theology there is no possibility of a cosmos; and third, they have to be brought back not simply as traumas but as scars (*stigmata*) and signs (*semeia*) of that theological cosmos at work already in the parts of the cosmos, lifting and inscribing the redemptive effects of affliction, pain and sorrow already here and now into the individual and collective resurrected body.¹⁰ My thesis then is this: trauma in the 4th Century before trauma in the late 19th and 20th Centuries has something valuable to say to us today.

Let me say a few things, first, about the wounds of the soul and, second, about Evagrius’ worldview and the striking contrast between it and contemporary trauma theory, since any contrast or comparison otherwise risks being facile.

First, wounds – *traumata*. Spiritual warfare is a dominant theme in Evagrius with physical images foremost. We human beings battle with the passions, the 8 thought-temptations (pride, vainglory, acedia, anger, sadness, avarice, fornication, gluttony) and the demons that seem to cohabit those thought/passions, and in this battle we can be ‘cut’ or ‘wounded’. ‘Pleasure wounds and destroys the mind with ease’ (8 *Thoughts*, 8, 27). ‘Pride is a tumor of the soul filled with pus; when it has ripened, it will rupture and make a disgusting mess’ (Υπερηφανία ἐστὶν οἰδημα ψυχῆς ἰχῶρος πεπληρωμένον· ἐὰν πεπανθῇ, ῥαγήσεται, καὶ ποιήσῃ ἀηδίαν πολλήν) (*ibid.* 8, 1). We should honor our elders and the angels ‘for they anoint us for the struggles and heal all the wounds inflicted by the wild beasts [*i.e.*, demons]’ (*Praktikos* 100; compare KG 2.46). Perhaps most important

⁹ On this see Luke Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer* (Oxford, 2005), 104-15.

¹⁰ I cannot treat this here because it is too big a topic. I would have liked, however, to have examined Shelly Rambo’s recent thesis that in Gregory’s account of his sister, Macrina, being healed by prayer and her mother’s touch in the *Life of Macrina*, ‘the scar emerges as a site of touch [rather than gaze] in which wounds [traumatic, gendered and Christian] are transfigured’, Shelly Rambo, ‘Refiguring Wounds in the Afterlife (of Trauma)’ (talk given at Boston University, December 4, 2013).

is the positive memory of our wounds that is emphasized in *Eulogios*: in the case of people overpraised for their asceticism, ‘their soul’s conscience was torn apart ... the thoughts led the soul to wander from its wounds and carried off their ascetic labors in their high reputations’ (14, 13: τῆς μὲν ψυχῆς τὸ συνειδὸς ἡλκοῦτο, τῆς δὲ εὐφημίας ἡ νόσος ἐνευρύνετο, οἱ δὲ λογισμοὶ τῶν τραυμάτων τὴν ψυχὴν ἀποπλανῶντες ἐν ταῖς εὐφημίαις τοὺς πόνους ἀπέφερον). If we conceal our ‘wounds’ with forgetfulness (πολλάκις τῇ λήθῃ καλύπτουσιν), then the person who struggles to cut off the passions that attack him (τὰ προσπесόντα πάθη πυκτεύων ἐκκόψαι) will bring to the battle armed soldiers more numerous than the passions. ‘Do not forget you have fallen ... but hold onto the memory of your fault as an occasion for compunction that leads to humility, that thus humbled you will cut out your pride’ (*Eulogios* 14, 14: Μὴ ἀμνημόνει πταίσας, κἂν μετανοήσης, ἀλλὰ μνήμην ἔχε τῆς σῆς ἁμαρτίας τὸ πένθος πρὸς ταπεινώσιν σου, ὅπως, ταπεινωθεῖς, τὴν ὑπερηφανίαν ἀνάγκῃ ἐκκόψῃς). And, indeed, compunction – *penthos/katanuxis* – wounds in a different way: it pricks, pierces, shocks.¹¹ This then will provide a small sense of Evagrius’ language and thought.

But when this language is compared with contemporary terms, we can rightly ask how a psychology, cosmology or theology filled with angels and demons, centered in Christ and the Trinity, can have anything to do with contemporary trauma theory, psychoanalysis or postmodernism that emphasizes trauma as an event that is not capable of being assimilated. How can the centered self of a 4th Century monk or nun have anything in common with the postmodern de-centered self? The wounds of Christ, for contemporary theorists, are a perpetuation of the ‘father-son’ patriarchal system that already absorbed too much oxygen over the past two thousand years; and the wounds of the soul in the Egyptian desert that must be wrestled from forgetfulness into memory have little to do with modern trauma and the discovery of stress in the early 20th Century. The American Psychological Association, for instance, defines trauma as follows:

Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical; and longer-term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea. While these feelings are normal, some people have difficulty moving on with their lives. Psychologists can help these individuals find constructive ways of managing their emotions.¹²

¹¹ For *penthos* and *katanuxis*, see I. Hausherr, *Penthos. The Doctrine of Compunction in the Christian East*, Cistercian Studies (Kalamazoo, 1982) (translated from the French: *Penthos: La Doctrine de compunction dans l’Orient Chrétien*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 132 [Rome, 1944]); J. Driscoll, ‘Penthos and Tears in Evagrius Ponticus’, *SM* 36 (1994), 147-64; K. Corrigan and G. Glazov, ‘Compunction and Compassion: two overlooked virtues in Evagrius of Pontus’, *J ECS* 22 (2014), 61-77.

¹² American Psychological Association: <<http://www.apa.org/topics/trauma/>> (accessed July 2015).

Critical to the emergence of such a practical definition has been the codification of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and its inclusion and further elaboration in the third and fourth editions of *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* of the American Psychiatric Association,¹³ as well as the development of a neuro-scientific approach to memory disorders. Can all this in any way be usefully compared with a 4th Century demonology that Freud dismissed as neurotic projections and that is much more practically approached, without superstition, as a function of brain states?

I think that despite the vast differences we can usefully compare the origins of the seven deadly sins tradition, in Evagrius' theory of eight *logismoi* or thought-temptation tendencies, with contemporary trauma theory and actually learn something from it. In his *Four Quartets (Dry Salvages)*, T.S. Eliot writes: 'I do not know much about gods; but I think that the river is a strong brown god – sullen, untamed and intractable'. I believe that something like this can be applied to Evagrius' demonology. We don't have to accept Evagrius' explanation but we do have to recognize the forces we may be dealing with; once apparently tamed, Eliot goes on to suggest, 'the brown god' is almost forgotten by city-dwellers, but remains nonetheless 'implacable'.¹⁴

The similarities may at first sight seem superficial but they are nonetheless striking. The tripartite structure of the psyche, some theory of the 'unconscious', dream interpretation, the need for analysis and a spiritual director of some sort, as well as a medical and sometimes physicalist approach, if I can call it so, to psychic and psycho-somatic phenomena – all of these are characteristic of Evagrius' (and Gregory of Nyssa's) thought¹⁵ and of Freudian

¹³ American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th Edition (Washington, D.C., 1994).

¹⁴ A 'demon-explanation' from a contemporary viewpoint may well seem to over-determine little 'wounds' or ordinary pathological experience, but it has been found necessary by 19th and 20th Century writers to characterize major traumatic events as demonic in different forms. So Dostoevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov* characterizes Liza as Alyosha's 'little demon' (who wishes to do evil for evil's sake, as she asserts), the 'devil' as part of Ivan's chilling dream, and Thomas Mann in *Doctor Faustus* introduces Leverkühn's pact with the devil as an emblem of the horrors of the 20th Century. See also Isaac Bashevis Singer: 'I had developed a theory that what used to be called devils, trolls, gnomes, and imps now were called "nerves". Ancient evil spirits went by a new name. Nerves were not merely threads of tissue that sprouted downward from the brain into the spinal cord; they were superhuman forces possessed of strange powers. They could make bank notes disappear, snap buttons off clothes, untie shoelaces, twist a necktie awry ten times a day, pull a coat off its hanger. They did what in the old days was ascribed to demons. Wars, revolutions, crimes – all the evils that beset mankind – could be traced to them. It may be that they are the essential force in the universe. It was not unlikely that they were closely linked, or even identical, with the forces of gravity and of electromagnetism'. (10) 'But the truth is that I was a victim of compulsive thoughts. Within me there was a dybbuk speaking – or several dybbuks'. (4), from *The Certificate*, trans. Leonard Wolf (New York, 1992).

¹⁵ On the tripartite structure of the soul, *Praktikos* 89; attention to dreams, *Praktikos* 54-6; the operation of an 'unconscious', *Thoughts* 37, 13-8; *Gnostikos* 6, 2; the need for analysis, *Thoughts*

psychoanalysis; and ironically perhaps, most of them are creative developments of important features of Plato's *Republic*. Evagrius adapts Plato's model of the tripartite soul and the definition of virtues and vices in Aristotle's *Ethics*;¹⁶ and Freud's early theory of the unconscious (ucs.) becomes the id of his later tripartite psyche (id-ego-superego), with 'His Majesty the Ego' caught uncomfortably between ungovernable, tyrannic forces.¹⁷ Evagrius and Gregory of Nyssa describe the soul in similar ways, threatened in the desert by the onslaught of the Egyptian tyrant, simultaneously tinged by the powerful genealogy of the tyrant from *Republic* books 8-9.¹⁸ 'The whole phalanx of evil' together with Pharoah, the tyrant, Gregory says, must be drowned in the mystical water of baptism, for they are all 'so many tyrants and masters' (*Life of Moses* II 122-129). 'Do not pay tribute to the tyrant, because when this one has been given over to the fire you will pay the last penny (*Matth.* 5:26)' (*Eulogios* 13, 13). Furthermore, when Freud first develops his later drive theory of the psyche caught between two major drives – eros and Thanatos – he uses Aristophanes' speech from the *Symposium* as the most useful starting point for the initial scientific hypothesis he then proposes!¹⁹ There is then a striking general and specific similarity between the 4th Century and the early 20th Century on these issues.

But I think that we can go a little further than this. Luke Dysinger and others have shown how medical imagery and the figure of Christ (and the apostles) as 'the physician of souls' were part of a well-established Christian tradition (deriving in part from Plato, *Protagoras* 313c4-e5) from Ignatius of Antioch, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen to Athanasius and the Cappadocians.²⁰ This medical interest that we find perhaps even more pronounced in Basil and Gregory of Nyssa as well as in Evagrius was made possible by Galen's mapping of the Platonic tripartite soul (together with other psychic structures) onto the three major systems of the body: the brain and nervous system; heart and arteries; liver and veins; and it helped to produce, I think, a new scientific focus on the body, certainly compatible with Plato's *Timaeus* and Galen's research,

14; spiritual direction, *Eulogios* 26; *On the Vices*, prologue.

¹⁶ See especially *Praktikos* 89 and Guillaumont *ad loc.*, A. and C. Guillaumont, *Évagre Le Pontique, traité pratique ou le Moine*, SC 170-1 (Paris, 1971).

¹⁷ In 'Mourning and Melancholia', 584-5, Peter Gay, *The Freud Reader* (New York and London, 1989), melancholy undermines the Ego's architecture, and in 'The Ego and the Id', 634-5, the Ego is overwhelmed by ungovernable forces; for the phrase itself, 'His Majesty the Ego', 636, first employed in his 1907 essay 'Creative writing and Daydreaming', *ibid.* 436.

¹⁸ *Republic* 8, 565d-9, 580a.

¹⁹ Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, translated and edited by James Strachey (New York and London, 1989), 69-71: 'Shall we follow the hint given us by the poet-philosopher, and venture the hypothesis that living substance at the time of its coming to life was torn apart into small particles, which have ever since endeavoured to reunite through the sexual instincts ...?' (70).

²⁰ L. Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer* (2005), 104-14.

but with a new Christian significance: a focus upon the interrelatedness of mind-soul-body functions for both healthy and pathological practice.

Dysinger points to Evagrius' concern, for example, to concentrate upon the intelligibility of natural phenomena, to produce different classificatory systems to confront the passions, together with the wealth of empirical observation that can be found in Evagrius' works, that, like those of Galen, utilize both theoretical and empirical knowledge to provide multi-layered explanations for spiritual phenomena – some of them physiological.²¹ As Dysinger observes in relation to Evagrius' fondness for classification, while the system of eight tempting thoughts is the most familiar, providing the structure of the *Antir-rhetikos*, 8 *Thoughts*, and much of the *Praktikos*, it is not the only system. In *Thoughts*, for instance, self-love is first among all the thoughts, and the vices or demons of wandering (the 'vagabond' demon) and insensitivity are also included. In addition, Evagrius classifies the passions sometimes into primary and secondary passions, sometimes according to their origin in different parts of the soul or bodily organs, and sometimes according to different empirical characteristics such as oppressiveness, swiftness and duration.²²

With this in mind, let me first set out for the sake of convenience three strands intertwined in so-called trauma theory: first, brain activity in neuroscientific approaches; second, absence of traces and the need for intersubjectivity in trauma theory itself; and, third, a decentered model of subjectivity.²³ If I understand all this correctly, in neuro-scientific approaches to memory disorders, a Freudian emphasis on memory's relations with unconscious conflict, repression and fantasy is replaced by an understanding of memory as related to brain functioning. This is one strand to keep in mind.

In a second strand, trauma theory suggests that the relation between representation and 'actuality' might be conceived as one constituted by the absence of traces. For Dori Laub, this absence of traces gives rise to a formulation of the aetiology of trauma as 'an event without a witness'²⁴ – an absence of witnessing that derives, Cathy Caruth argues, from the unassimilable or unknowable nature of the traumatic event.²⁵ Alongside a stress on memory and brain function, this approach also emphasizes intersubjectivity and the role of the listener or witness in the bringing to consciousness of previously unassimilated memory.

²¹ *Ibid.* 119–20.

²² *Ibid.* 118.

²³ The two major texts I have consulted here are: Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (New York and London, 1992); Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore and London, 1996).

²⁴ S. Felman and D. Laub, *Testimony* (1996), 75–92.

²⁵ C. Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), 1–17; S. Felman and D. Laub, *Testimony* (1996), 4.

Finally, in a third strand of the puzzle for our purposes here, there is a tension between the subject, as it were, hypnotized by the traumatic event and thus prey to imitation, to uncontrollable forces (as in ‘His Majesty, the ego’, above) and the anti-hypnotic or anti-mimetic subject who appears to be sovereign if passive. In the first model, the mimetic subject may appear complicit in the trauma; the trauma is part of the subject, whether psyche or brain state; in the second model, the anti-mimetic subject is distinct from the trauma event, and victim, but sovereign in its own limited way. Both models of subjectivity in different ways reject any traditional, centered self, introducing a measure of incoherence or incompleteness into a decentered self. According to Susannah Radstone in a recent article,²⁶ however, trauma theory, arguably, negotiates a way through ‘the ‘revelation’ of the subject’s incoherence or ‘de-facement’. It moves through and beyond modernity’s supposition of a coherent, autonomous, knowing subject, but without simply rendering subjectivity incoherent, unknowing, fragmented’.

So if neuroscience tends to talk about encoding in the brain and trauma theory about traces or absence of traces and the need for witness, Evagrius talks about imprinting or cutting. Here I shall look at two passages that I propose show something of the subtlety of Evagrius’ thinking: *Thoughts* 7 and 25.

For Evagrius, everything leaves a mark – except for God and experiences close to God, such as pure prayer that is without impressions or representations.²⁷ The healthy thought articulates the structure of our being as created by God, whereas the unhealthy deforms that structure, but both occur in the same space. In *Thoughts* 7 Evagrius puts this as follows:²⁸

Among thoughts some cut; others are cut. Bad thoughts cut good ones and are in turn cut by good ones. The Holy Spirit therefore pays attention to the thought posited first and condemns or approves us in relation to that. What I mean is something like this: I have a thought of hospitality and this I have because of the Lord, but this thought is cut when the tempter comes along and suggests offering hospitality for the sake of my reputation ... If then by our actions we stay henceforth in the former thoughts even while being tempted by the second thoughts, we will receive the reward only of the thoughts posited earlier (τῶν πρότερον τεθέντων), because since we are human beings and occupied in the struggle with demons, we do not always have the strength to hold to the right thought (ὀρθὸν λογισμόν) incorruptible, nor again are we able to hold the bad thought untested, since we have acquired the seeds of virtues. However, if one of the cutting thoughts lingers (χρονίση), it becomes established in the place of the thought that is cut (ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ τοῦ τεμνομένου καθίσταται) and henceforth the individual will be moved to act (κινούμενος ἐνεργήσῃ) in accordance with that thought. (7, 1-21)

²⁶ Susannah Radstone, ‘Trauma Theory: Contexts, Politics, Ethics’, *Paragraph* 30 (2007), 9-29, <http://www.academia.edu/942637/Trauma_Theory_Contexts_Politics_Ethics> (accessed July 2015).

²⁷ See, for example, *Prayer*, 51-73.

²⁸ See Kevin Corrigan, ‘Thoughts that Cut: Cutting, Imprinting, and Lingering in Evagrius of Pontus’, in Robin Darling Young and Joel Kalvesmaki (eds), *Evagrius* (Notre Dame, 2015), 43-74.

Notice here, first, how concretely Evagrius conceives this: cutting and being cut occur in the same ‘space’ and, second, the verb *chronizein* means to linger, to fester – for a disease to become chronic;²⁹ the unholy word lingering in one’s heart leads to the death of the soul and even of the mind itself, Evagrius says in scholion 63, 1ff. of his commentary on *Ecclesiastes*.³⁰ When anger lingers, it is ‘changed into rage’ (*Praktikos* 11). If the good thought lingers, then it becomes a positive motive force in future action – just as the universal comes to stand or become ‘established’ from many particular instances for Aristotle in the *Posterior Analytics* II 19.³¹ However, this is also the case with the bad thought, but with a twist, since here the passive participle, κινούμενος, takes on an ominous nuance, for if we are moved passively against our created nature even in our active operations (ἐνεργήσει), are we fully conscious of what we are doing? Hence, Evagrius’ constant injunction not to be forgetful of our wounds but to develop good memory, recollection, to pay attention – all of this makes very good sense. The negative cut, imprint or image involves repetition, habit – even to the point of compulsion, and the need for memory work, very much as in contemporary psychoanalysis and trauma theory, becomes urgent. For Evagrius, everything (except God and the most intense experience of the Divine) leaves a mark for good or ill, even if one cannot see it, and implicitly the bad cut becomes deeper and more obscured from direct consciousness the more it is exercised.

What is the *chora* in which this occurs? Presumably, it could be the mind/heart or a psychic space, such as pride in the rational faculty or acedia in the spirited faculty, which according to Evagrius ‘strangles’ or ‘suffocates’ the mind;³² or again, it could be an encoding in the brain, since Evagrius elsewhere sees a physiological basis for psychic operation and even for apparently higher-order functions. In Prayer 73, for instance, he gives it as his own opinion that so-called mystical visions of God in some composite form are caused by a demon manipulating a particular brain location.³³

Is Evagrius’ ‘cut’ an ‘event’ in the sense that, for some trauma theorists (contrary to Freud), it is the determinate event rather than the conscious subject that is seen as unpredictable or ungovernable or is it an event already imbued with conscious and unconscious meanings by a decentered subject?³⁴ Perhaps it is a little bit of both and yet neither entirely. For Evagrius, I suggest, the traumatic cut, image or imprint is not something stable as if we could fully determine it as an event-reality. Sin is not strictly an activity but a *defect* – focused more on *what*

²⁹ *LSJ* sv; see also Galen, *De methodo medendi*, Kühn, 10: 276, 13; *De usu partium*, Kühn, 3: 350, 4; *In Hippocratis librum iii epidemiarum commentarii*, Kühn, 17a: 703, 5.

³⁰ See *Praktikos* 6, 7; 11, 5; *Monks* 58, 1; 8 *Thoughts* 22; *Proverbs* 82, 2; 86, 19; 115, 2.

³¹ *Posterior Analytics* 100a-b.

³² *Thoughts* 22, 10-2.

³³ See also L. Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer* (2005), 120-30.

³⁴ For both see S. Radstone, ‘Trauma Theory: Contexts, Politics, Ethics’ (2007).

is not than what is.³⁵ Gregory of Nyssa typically characterizes its volatility as an inclination or constant movement to the ‘opposite’.³⁶ Evagrius sees this in a profound if puzzling way in *Thoughts* 25 (and elsewhere), where he suggests a theory of representation and subjectivity that takes account of both healthy and traumatic experience. Let me take each in turn, as Evagrius does.

First, in healthy experience, Evagrius suggests, the mind is intrinsically de-centered since it is never simply self-sufficient but in need of the other – our neighbor. In the case of determining the veracity of proofs drawn from the contemplation of nature, Evagrius says, in most cases ‘the heart of my reader’ is the determining factor, not his own judgment. He then sets out a theory of representation (that looks Aristotelian)³⁷ and a thought-example: ‘Whatever may be the form of the object, such is necessarily the image that the mind receives, whence the mental representations of objects are called copies because they preserve the same form as them (ὁποία γὰρ ἂν εἴη τοῦ πράγματος ἡ μορφή, τοιαύτην ἀνάγκη καὶ τὸν νοῦν δέξασθαι τὴν εἰκόνα· ὅθεν καὶ ὁμοιώματα λέγεται τὰ νοήματα τῶν πραγμάτων τῷ τὴν αὐτὴν ἐκείνοις διασφῶζειν μορφήν)’. The shape (*morphe*) of the sensible object is received by the mind as an image or *eikon*, and called a likeness or *homoïoma* because it preserves the *morphe*. There is then an intrinsic continuity between sensible shape or *morphe* through likeness or *homoïoma* to image or *eikon*.

Evagrius then goes on to argue that ‘in this way [the mind] receives also [the mental representation] of its own organism – for this too is sensible – but with the exception altogether of its own face, for it is incapable of making this shape in itself, because it has never seen it (οὕτω καὶ τοῦ ἰδίου ὀργάνου – αἰσθητὸν γὰρ καὶ τοῦτο – χωρὶς δὲ πάντως τῆς ὄψεως· ταύτην γὰρ ἐν ἑαυτῷ μορφῶσαι ἀδυνατεῖ, μηδέποτε θεασάμενος)’ (25, 14-7). However quaint this example may be³⁸ and whatever Evagrius might be thought to have meant by it (no puddles or reflective surfaces in the desert?), the overall thought is striking and innovative. The face, self or mind is constantly in need of the other for its own constitution. It cannot get outside of itself to see itself as a whole for the whole is always in process of being given reflexively by the other. If perception is a relatively direct transmission, subjectivity is much more

³⁵ *Thoughts* 19, 14-20; *Gnostikos* 42 and 44, 7; compare Gregory of Nyssa, VM II 23: Ψεῦδος γὰρ ἐστὶ φαντασία τις περὶ τὸ μὴ ὄν ἐγγινομένη τῇ διανοίᾳ, ὡς ὕφεστῶτος τοῦ μὴ ὄντος.

³⁶ E.g., Gregory of Nyssa, *De hominis opificio* 164b (PG 44).

³⁷ See Aristotle, *De interpretatione*, 16a; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* VIII 23, 1; P. Géhin, C. Guillaumont and A. Guillaumont, *Évagre Le Pontique: sur les pensées*, SC 438 (Paris, 1998), 241 n. 3; Kevin Corrigan, *Evagrius and Gregory: Mind, Soul and Body in the 4th Century* (Abingdon and New York, 2009), 116-9.

³⁸ Evagrius’ general view here could be characterized as ‘ghost-in-the-machine’ or ‘instrumentalist’, but the purpose of the theorem seems much more concrete, embodied and practical than these characterizations would suggest.

complex, for it is situated in an incoherence, a gap that can never be permanently remedied. The subject is always in need of its own face in the face of the other. ‘Even one’s own appearance one cannot see fully or conceive in its totality ... [but] only by others’ (Bakhtin, 1989, 507).³⁹ Furthermore, the word *eikon* here is perhaps chosen deliberately, since the mind so given to itself by the other is the likeness or image primarily of God. ‘So pay attention to yourself with regard to how the mind puts on the form of its own body, apart from the face, but in turn expresses in discursive thinking its neighbor whole since it has previously grasped and seen such a person whole’ (Πλὴν πρόσεχε σεαυτῷ πῶς ἄνευ τοῦ προσώπου τοῦ ἰδίου σώματος ὁ νοῦς ἐνδύεται τὴν μορφήν, τὸν δὲ πλησίον πάλιν ὅλον κατὰ διάνοιαν ἐκτυποῖ, ἐπειδὴ τοιοῦτον ὅλον προλαβὼν καὶ ἐώρακεν) (25, 38-41).

What Evagrius wants to emphasize is the intersubjective responsibility each of us has for our own actions and the importance of immateriality⁴⁰ in everything we do – that is, to become fully conscious of what we do and how we do it. From observation of a gap in consciousness, Evagrius can thus establish the ‘theorem’ that mind is intrinsically inter-subjective. And he concludes the chapter with the other end of the scale, citing *Deut.* 15:9: the anchorite needs to pay attention that there not be a ‘hidden word’ in his heart that is ‘without thought’ (ῥῆμα κρυπτόν ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ ἀνόμημα), since at the time of temptation, in the presence of the demon, the mind will not grasp and see his neighbor whole, but will seize/plunder/rape *its own shape* (ὁ νοῦς κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν τῶν πειρασμῶν, ἐπιστάντος τοῦ δαίμονος, ἀρπάζειν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ ἰδίου τὸ σχῆμα) (25, 45-50).⁴¹ Evagrius then concludes chapter 25 with a definition of the traumatic, unhealthy thought:

... a demonic thought is an *image* of the sensible human being put together in discursive thinking, an incomplete image, with which the mind being moved in a passionate way does or says something lawlessly in hiddenness in relation to the *image being formed successively by it* (λογισμὸς γὰρ δαιμονιώδης ἐστὶν εἰκὼν τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ ἀνθρώπου

³⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity*: ‘The values that pertain to the existence of a qualitatively determinate person are characteristic only of the other. It is only with the other that I have the possibility of experiencing the joy of meeting and abiding with him, the sorrow of parting and the grief of bereavement, it is only with him that I can meet in the dimension of time as well as part in the dimension of time; only he can *be* as well as *not be* for me. I am always with myself – there can be no life for me without myself’. (105). ‘[I]t is only the other who can be embraced, clasped all around, it is only the other’s boundaries that can all be touched and felt lovingly. The other’s fragile finiteness, consummated-ness, his here-and-now being – all are inwardly grasped by me and shaped, as it were, by my embrace’ (41-2). In *Art and Answerability*, edited by Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov (Austin, 1990).

⁴⁰ The question of immateriality in Evagrius and of what is not visible in different senses in trauma theory is a crucial question that I have no space to treat here.

⁴¹ Compare Gregory of Nyssa: τὴν ἀρπακτικὴν διάνοιαν, VM 44, 364a-b; GNO VII, I, 72, 12; and 72, 15-7: νεκρὰ ποιεῖν ἐν τῷ ὕδατι, αὐτὰ τε τὰ πονηρὰ τῆς διανοίας κινήματα καὶ τὰ ἐκ τούτων ἀποτελέσματα, καθάπερ ἐν τῷ μυστηρίῳ τοῦ Πάσχα.

συνισταμένη κατὰ διάνοιαν, ἀτελής, μεθ' ἧς ὁ νοῦς κινούμενος ἐμπαθῶς λέγει τι ἢ πράττει ἀνόμως ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ πρὸς τὸ μορφούμενον ἐκ διαδοχῆς εἰδῶλον ὑπ' αὐτοῦ). (52-6)⁴²

I have italicized the words above to emphasize the transition from *eikon*, as in healthy thinking, to *eidolon* – which here, I think, means a deceptive image in constant process of being reconfigured or reshaped. We are admittedly worlds away from contemporary trauma theory. How strange it is to think of an inhuman element somehow coinhabiting a thought! Is the ‘demon’ simply the suggester or whisperer, and we the partially unwitting executors?⁴³ Or does the relation between the demon and the human subject in this focus give ‘voice’ to the wound, the voice of the ‘other’, as Cathy Caruth puts it?⁴⁴ Whatever the case, this model seems to make the victim complicit in the trauma, something that is abhorrent to our sensibility and a good reason why there is an anti-mimetic strand in contemporary trauma theory. We are not compelled to imitate the abuser or to be complicit in any way. Surely this is the major difference between the 4th Century and contemporary trauma theory? Not entirely, since events and people can wound us just as much as we can become wounded in the struggle with demons (who are non-human intellects so more deeply fallen than us that do not know our hearts, but can only watch us closely from outside like hard behaviorists). For Evagrius, when we live in community, demons struggle with us through the foibles of our brothers and sisters. Only when we live alone, do they struggle with us ‘naked’ (*Praktikos* 5).

Nonetheless, *Thoughts* 25 is striking, for it starts with the same *eikon* constitutive of healthy thinking (constructed in accordance with the διάνοια), but ends up with an *eidolon* and suggests that this is a complex event in constant replicative transmission, ultimately caught in a recurring loop that goes nowhere since it has no *telos*. It is an ‘incomplete’ motion, as Aristotle puts it.⁴⁵ Second, from Deuteronomy, it is *anoema* – ‘without thought’, ‘not-thought’, or as

⁴² Compare *Reflections* 13.

⁴³ ‘Suggest’, ‘whisper’, ‘babble’, as in *Thoughts* 9, 5, or ‘call out’, ‘spur one on’, as in *Thoughts* 1. For *hypoballein*, see *Thoughts* 1, 3-4; 2, 11; 5, 8-10; 7, 8; 8, 14-6. Sometimes the thought (e.g., of gluttony or avarice) ‘suggests’, as in *Praktikos* 7, 2; 9, 1, and sometimes the demon ‘suggests’, ‘whispers’ or ‘provokes’ as in *Praktikos* 22 (demons suggest, work and call us); angels can also ‘suggest’ good things to us (*Praktikos* 24, 3).

⁴⁴ C. Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), 8-9 (in relation to the story, as retold by Freud, of Tancred who unwittingly kills his beloved Clorinda disguised in the armor of an enemy knight. Later in a strange magic forest, he slashes at a tall tree from which blood streams forth and the voice of Clorinda, whose soul is imprisoned in the tree, complains that he has wounded her again [*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, chapter 3, 24 – see note 18 above]); ‘The figure of Tancred addressed by the speaking wound constitutes ... not only a parable of trauma and of its uncanny repetition but, more generally, a parable of psychoanalytic theory itself as it listens to a voice that it cannot fully know but to which it nonetheless bears witness’ (9).

⁴⁵ Aristotle, *Physics* 201b16-202a12; 257b8-9; *De anima* 417a16; for commentary, see H.H. Joachim, *Aristotle. The Nicomachean Ethics* (Oxford, 1970), 205-7.

Evagrius says elsewhere, a thought of something not really existent at all;⁴⁶ it has no foundation, as it were, and does not reflect the reality of the created mind. It is precisely, in fact, the absence of a real trace – a traceless trace, one might say, since there is a link, but also a gap between *eikon* and *eidolon*.

Finally, it is something said or done ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ, that is, an event that has no witness. This idea that trauma is an event without a witness and that it therefore has subsequently to be acknowledged and witnessed by and through others, however irrecoverable it might be, has been at the forefront of trauma studies over the past fifteen years and more, as we saw above. The lost face, as it were, must always be in process of reconfiguration for the traumatized mind.

In sum, for Evagrius there is a remarkable economy and yet layered flexibility in his thinking, since the healthy and traumatic models are located in the same space, that is, in a radically decentered subject in both the healthy and the pathological models, but in different ways. Whereas contemporary trauma theory tends to see trauma as an event constituted, in part, by its lack of integration into consciousness or as an event that results in brain encoding or a state not fully available to consciousness, Evagrius sees trauma in a broader context of healthy and pathological functioning as a complex event in constant replicative transmission, an incomplete process that can be reflected on multiple levels as local brain stimulation or body affect or, again, as imprinting or cutting into different functions of the tripartite soul or as threatening the survival even of the mind itself. In addition, since pathological thinking swings away from the created world of inter-subjective experience into a formative loop of its own making, psychic trauma tends to focus on what is not and to become, instead of an *eikon* of something in the created world, a lower deceptive image that I have characterized as effectively an absence of real trace.⁴⁷ Therefore, as in contemporary trauma, forgetfulness and the lack of witness have to be remedied by memory, mindfulness and inter-subjectivity: compassion and spiritual direction.

However, whereas contemporary thinking eliminates any layering or hierarchy, positive or negative, of psychic topography, Evagrius' world, I think, is more complex since affects and deeper wounds can be reflected on multiple levels simultaneously, wounds that can only be brought back into cognitive re-focus (and then only partially, if at all – to the degree that any trauma involves a progressively obsessive focus upon the non-substantial, however *real*) by acknowledgement, analysis and practice in a much broader cognitive, moral, scientific and spiritual cosmos. The signs in the cosmos are everywhere. In the

⁴⁶ *Thoughts* 19, 14-20; *Gnostikos* 42 and 44, 7.

⁴⁷ Compare Laub in S. Felman and D. Laub, *Testimony* (1996), 57: 'The listener to the narrative of extreme pain, of massive psychic trauma, faces a unique situation. In spite of the presence of ample documents, of searing artifacts and of fragmentary memoirs of anguish, he comes to look for something that is in fact nonexistent; a record that has yet to be made'.

Life of Moses, Gregory of Nyssa calls envy ‘the bitter dart, the nail of soul’ (II 257) and then seventeen sections later (II 274), in looking to the cross, he turns this into the wound, scar, symbol of transformed flesh: ‘The nail would be the self-control that *retrieves and holds* the flesh (Ἔηλος δ’ ἂν εἴη σαρκῶν καθεκτικὸς ἢ ἐγκράτεια)’. For Evagrius, too, if the healthy and the pathological are in the same ‘space’, God’s compassion is even more strikingly intimate: the Holy Spirit ‘suffers with us even in our weakness and visits us even when we are impure’ (Τὸ ἅγιον Πνεῦμα συμπάσχον τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ ἀσθενείᾳ, καὶ ἀκαθάρτοις οὖσιν ἐπιφοιτᾷ ἡμῖν) (*Prayer* 63).

My suggestion then is this: why not think more broadly about the resonances and differences in trauma across historical periods so as to avoid living effectively in a planisphere or in the basement of a life, when a bigger, if de-centered, 3 or 4 story house may provide more perspective and free us, however tenuously, in a moment of extreme suffering from the recurring straightjacket of only one or two historical points of view?

The Place of God: Stability and Apophasis in Evagrius

Monica TOBON, Franciscan International Study Centre, Canterbury, UK

ABSTRACT

Stability and apophasis figure prominently in the writings of Evagrius as defining characteristics of *apatheia* and pure prayer respectively. From these primary senses they reverberate throughout the spiritual life, always in reciprocal relationship mediated by the *nous* as the place of God. Stability and apophasis have also played a major role in Latin Christian spirituality throughout its history as distinct tributaries, Benedictine and Dionysian, of a shared Evagrian source. This article will examine the meaning of stability and apophasis in Evagrius and trace the relationship between them as it unfolds from the beginning of the monastic life to its fruition in knowledge of God. While its primary aim is to deepen our knowledge of Evagrius, it is to be hoped that it will also contribute to our understanding of the subsequent tradition.

Introduction

Stability and apophasis figure prominently in the writings of Evagrius as defining characteristics of *apatheia* and pure prayer respectively. From these primary senses they reverberate throughout the spiritual life, always in reciprocal relationship mediated by the *nous* as the place of God. Why, though, focus on stability and apophasis rather than the more obviously Evagrian entities *apatheia* and pure prayer? The original title of this article was in fact ‘The Place of God: Apophasis in Evagrius’, but while working on it I was invited to speak at a monastic conference hosted by the Benedictine community of which I am an Oblate. The centrality of stability to the Benedictine Rule and the intuition that an interesting relationship between stability and apophasis in Evagrius lay waiting to be explored gave rise to the article in its present form.¹

Stability and apophasis have played a major role in Latin Christian spirituality throughout its history as distinct tributaries of their Evagrian source. Stability has its *locus classicus* in the *Rule of St Benedict*, which requires a vow of stability in the sense of lifelong commitment to a particular monastic community,² and is

¹ I hope to explore in a future study the biblical theme of stability as the sign of God’s favour and reward for virtue as informing Evagrius’ thought in dialogue with Greek philosophical psychology.

² See *Rule of St Benedict* 58.

observed by the Benedictine and Cistercian orders. Its connection to Evagrius is *via* his disciple John Cassian, to whom the Rule is indebted and to whose writings it refers those seeking further guidance in the monastic life.³ Apophasis in the sense of an approach to prayer and contemplation rooted in the recognition that God transcends all intellectual categories reached the West above all through the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite, which received influential Latin translations from John Scottus Eriugena in the ninth century and Robert Grosseteste in the thirteenth and decisively informed the spirituality of Bonaventure and Meister Eckhart as well as inspiring the fourteenth century English treatise on prayer *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Notwithstanding our ignorance of the identity of 'Dionysius', the presence in his writings of Evagrian themes such as cosmic hierarchy and analogy, the division of the spiritual life into phases of purification, illumination and union and its fruition in apophasis, are strongly suggestive of Evagrian influence. In recent decades the work of Thomas Keating OCSO and his brethren has seen the Cistercians host a resurgence and democratisation of apophatic spirituality in the form of what is now known as contemplative prayer.

This article will examine the meaning of stability and apophasis in Evagrius and trace the relationship between them as it unfolds from the beginning of the monastic life to its fruition in knowledge of God. While its primary aim is to deepen our knowledge of Evagrius, it is to be hoped that it will also contribute to our understanding of the subsequent tradition.

1. First things first: protology

If we are to grasp the significance of stability and apophasis in Evagrius' spiritual theology we must start at the beginning of salvation history. For Evagrius as for Origen, God's initial creation is of a multiplicity of *logikoi*, rational beings each comprising an intelligence or *nous* bearing his image and furnished with an incorporeal body – that is, a body of very light and subtle consistency or *krasis*.⁴ The *nous* is a faculty of gnosis; more precisely, for knowing God, who is 'essential gnosis'.⁵ It knows God through being receptive to him, meaning that receptivity is one of its core properties. It is in virtue of its receptivity that the *nous* is the place of God. But because, as the image of God, the *nous* is self determining, and because the act of choosing involves movement, a

³ See *Rule of St Benedict* 73.

⁴ For the 'incorporeal' bodies of the primary creation see Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, "'Preexistence of Souls'?" The *archē* and *telos* of Rational Creatures in Origen and Some Origenians', *SP* 56 (2013), 167-226. Also germane is L.R. Hennessey, 'A Philosophical Issue in Origen's Eschatology: The Three Senses of Incorporeality', in R.J. Daly (ed.), *Origeniana Quinta: Papers of the 5th International Origen Congress, Boston College, 14-18 August 1989* (Leuven, 1992), 373-80.

⁵ See Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostika* 1.89.

choice being a movement of the *nous*,⁶ a second core property is mobility. It is the mobility of the *nous* that enables it to turn away from being the place of God. Receptivity and mobility are the foci of apophasis and stability respectively.

God is the sole good.⁷ As such he is the sole source for the *noes* of all goods, which they enjoy through union with him. Evagrius' preferred way of referring to such union is in terms of gnosis, knowledge of God. For the *nous* to receive gnosis it must be directed wholly toward God, since whatever it is directed toward is what it receives. We might best think of such directedness in terms of the orientation of the will: for the *nous* to be directed toward God, it must choose to be.

The first state of the *nous* was of perfect directedness toward God, but at some point (so to speak, since this is prior to space or time) all but one of the *noes* chose to turn away from God, a deflection which Evagrius attributes to inattentiveness, negligence and carelessness.⁸ As a result they suffered the privation of all goods. Just as Evagrius' preferred term for union with God is gnosis, so his preferred way of characterising such privation is in terms of ignorance.

God now undertook through the mediation of Christ, the one *nous* who remains in union, a secondary creation which provides the optimum conditions for the restoration of the *logikoi*. It is characterised by multiplicity and mutability, arising from the diversity of wills among them⁹ and reflected in the emergence of different orders of being, the assignment of the *noes* to which is determined by God's judgement according to the extent of their deflection.¹⁰ Those who deflected least became angels and the remainder either humans or demons. With the secondary creation time comes into existence,¹¹ the *noes* become souls, and their incorporeal and immortal bodies condense into thicker, heavier and mortal corporeal bodies. The soul is the form of the body, such that the relative proportions of *epithumia*, *thumos* and *logos* in the former determine the elemental constitution of the latter. In the case of humans, the soul is

⁶ Evagrius, Scholion 10, *Eccl.* 2:11: ἡ ... προαίρεσις ἐστὶ ποῦα νοῦ κίνησις. P. Géhin, *Évagre le Pontique: Scholies à l'Éclésiaste* (Paris, 1993). See also Scholion 23, *Prov.* 2:17: ἡ βουλὴ ποῦα νοῦ κίνησις. P. Géhin, *Évagre le Pontique: Scholies aux Proverbes* (Paris, 1987).

⁷ See Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostika* 1.1; *Mark* 10:18; *Luke* 18:19; Plato, *Republic* 508e-509a.

⁸ See Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostika* 1.49, 3.28.

⁹ See Evagrius, *Great Letter* 23, 24, 26.

¹⁰ See, for example, Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostika* 3.36, 38.

¹¹ See Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostika* 6.9 and the commentary by Ilaria L.E. Ramelli (Translation, Introduction and Commentary), *Evagrius's Kephalaia Gnostika. A New Translation of the Unreformed Text from the Syriac*, *Writings from the Greco-Roman World* (Atlanta, 2015), 321. Since the primary creation is outside of time, neither it nor the movement and fall are historical events. We remain rooted in the primary creation in the ontological participation in God without which we would cease to exist, our estrangement from God being solely gnoseological. Because the primary creation is outside of time, I use the present tense in relation to it.

dominated by *epithumia* and the body by earth.¹² The formative causality is reciprocal such that changes in the body's mixture are reflected in that of the soul, a principle that forms a cornerstone of Evagrius' asceticism. It means that the restoration of the soul to God has a physiological basis involving the progressive refinement of the body's mixture until eventually we regain the light incorporeal bodies characteristic of the primary creation.¹³

From Evagrius' protology there follow four axioms of his spiritual theology. First, the world of our everyday experience is part of a much bigger picture of which ordinarily we have no awareness. Second, we ourselves are both other than, and much more than, we realise. In particular, rather than the *nous* being a part or a faculty of the human person, the human person is a contraction of the *nous* into self-forgetfulness. In the deepest core of our being, we are intelligences existing outside of time and space and created to know the God who is Love Itself. The third axiom follows from the second, that we are made for union with God, and through him, loving concord with all other intelligences. Fourth, the world in which we live in is the product of our choices not only in ethical terms but metaphysically.

With these four axioms Evagrius offers us a truly cosmic perspective on creation, salvation history and the human condition. In their breadth and depth of perspective they underwrite his understanding of the grandeur of spiritual reality and of the spiritual life as a journey of infinite widening of the *nous*-heart in communion with the infinite God; a journey beyond the limited view of the 'exterior person' into ever more expansive modes of knowing, loving and being.

2. *Empatheia*: chronic instability

In so far as the *nous* turns away from God, its receptivity is directed instead to what Evagrius refers to generically as *pragmata*, objects, by which he means things seen and valued in isolation from the relationship of all creation with God. Objects usurp the position of God in our minds and hearts by becoming the primary focus of our desire. Evagrius conceptualises this state of affairs in terms of the Stoic category of *pathos*.

The standard English translations of *pathos* are 'passion', 'emotion' or, more rarely, 'affect', but all fall short of capturing the scope and nuances of the Greek term.¹⁴ Konstan notes that the word *pathos* derives from the verb *paschô*,

¹² See Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostika* 1.68.

¹³ See Monica Tobon, 'Raising Body and Soul to the Order of the *Nous*: Anthropology and Contemplation in Evagrius', *SP* 57 (2013), 51-74, 56-66.

¹⁴ See Monica Tobon, *Apatheia in the Teachings of Evagrius Ponticus* (Doctoral Thesis, University College London, 2010), 134-47.

meaning 'to suffer' or 'to experience', and, like the Latin *patior*, to which it is related, derives from a prehistoric stem **pa* which has the basic sense of 'suffer'. Via *patior* it is related to the English words 'passion' and 'passive'.¹⁵ According to Sihvola and Engberg-Pedersen

The basic meaning of the term *pathos* is not 'emotion'; *pathos* stands for a much more general notion which covers all accidental and contingent changes that happen to somebody in contrast to what he or she actively does. The broad sense of *pathos*, familiar from Aristotle's *Categories* and *Metaphysics*, comes out in translations such as 'affection', 'experience', 'undergoing' or 'attribute' as opposed to 'emotion' or even 'passion'.¹⁶

The word 'passion' at least preserves the etymological association with the passivity which is essential to the philosophical understanding of *pathos*, and so for convenience I shall sometimes use it, while also retaining the Greek *pathos* in order to keep in sight the conceptual distance between the modern English understanding of 'passion' and the late antique understanding of *pathos*. An important distinction between the two is that, whereas in today's idiom 'passion' has predominantly positive connotations, in antiquity *pathos* had a distinctively negative timbre, as evident from the third of the four definitions in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: 'especially, injurious alterations and movements, and, above all, painful injuries'.¹⁷ Konstan offers the following summary:

In classical Greek, *pathos* may refer more generally to what befalls a person, often in the negative sense of an accident or misfortune, although it may also bear the neutral significance of a condition or state of affairs. In philosophical language *pathos* sometimes signifies a secondary quality as opposed to the essence of a thing (cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1022b15-21).¹⁸ Psychologically, it may denote a mental activity or phenomenon such as remembering (Aristotle, *De memoria et reminiscencia*, 449b4-7; cf. 449b24-5 for memory as the *pathos* of formerly perceived or contemplated things).¹⁹

Evagrius offers no explicit definition of *pathos*, but attention to his writings reveals that for him it retains its traditional philosophical associations with excess, passivity and changeability in respect of an external influence, directedness to a causative external stimulus and injuriousness to the agent. For Evagrius, *pathos* is at the deepest level an unconscious disposition of the soul and thus of the *nous*, the precipitate of our estrangement from God and the root of the

¹⁵ David Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks. Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature* (Toronto, 2006), 3.

¹⁶ J. Sihvola and T. Engberg-Pedersen (eds), *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy* (Dordrecht, 1998), viii.

¹⁷ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1022b18-19: ἔτι τούτων μᾶλλον αἱ βλαβεραὶ ἀλλοιώσεις καὶ κινήσεις, καὶ μάλιστα αἱ λυπηραὶ βλάβαι, trans. W.D. Ross in Jonathan Barnes (ed.), *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2 (Princeton, 1984).

¹⁸ J.O. Urmson, *The Greek Philosophical Vocabulary* (London, 1990), 126-7.

¹⁹ D. Konstan, *Emotions* (2006), 3-4.

(evil) thoughts, the *logismoi*, and of occurrent episodes of *pathos*.²⁰ Chapter 49 of the *Chapters of the Disciples of Evagrius* explains:

Pathos lies below in the soul and from it comes the impassioned thought. Before (the *pathos* manifests) the thoughts coalesce so that there might be sin in thought. Likewise, before a sin in act (is committed) many objects coalesce. But once a sin has been committed, the intermediaries disappear and only the image of the sin remains in the *nous* of the soul, and the *pathos* that engendered the thought.²¹

The psychological priority of *pathos* accords with the fundamental receptivity of the *nous* and the pivotal role of its self-determined orientation: in so far as the *nous* is directed away from God, its receptivity is given over to objects which are seen and valued in isolation from him and to which it is bound by *pathos*. Chapter 112 of *The Chapters of the Disciples of Evagrius* records his explanation of its impact upon our relationship with God:

It is not the possession of objects that harms us, but their impassioned possession, because when the worry of a farmer or love for a wife have become excessive, they render us strangers to gnosis.²² The saints who had wives and wealth did not suffer any harm, so Job, when he had lost his children, philosophised and corrected his friends since he did not have *pathē*.²³

Whenever we value anything more than God, whether explicitly or implicitly, we are acting out of *pathos*. Both farmer and husband have lost the capacity to see beyond their immediate interests. Their frame of reference, and with it their perspective on reality, has contracted to what is immediately in front of them and in doing so placed them at the mercy of its vicissitudes. Such an attitude derives from a fragmented perspective which sees through the lens of our alienation from God and projects it onto the world. Because it is rooted in an unconscious disposition it might well be at odds with what the person consciously maintains. The farmer and the newly wed husband could well have been devout

²⁰ So close is the connection between *pathos* and the *logismoi* that the three definitions of *logismos* Evagrius offers all include reference to *pathos*. See Evagrius, *On Thoughts* 25.52-6; Evagrius, *Reflections* 13; *Chapters of the Disciples of Evagrius* 65. See also M. Tobon, *Apatheia* (2010), 92-101.

²¹ Translation my own, from the Greek text of Paul Géhin (ed.), *Chapitres des disciples d'Évagre*, SC 514 (Paris, 2007): 'Υπόκειται τὸ πάθος ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ, ἐξ οὗ γεννᾶται ὁ ἐμπαθὴς λογισμός· πρὸ δὲ τούτου συνίστανται οἱ λογισμοὶ ἵνα κατὰ διάνοιαν ἁμάρτη· ὁμοίως καὶ πρὸ τῆς κατ' ἐνέργειαν ἁμαρτίας συνίστανται πολλὰ πράγματα· ἐπὶ δὲ τελεσθῇ ἡ ἁμαρτία, τὰ μέσα ἀφίστανται, μόνον δὲ τὸ εἶδωλον τῆς ἁμαρτίας ἐμμένει ἐν τῷ νῷ τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τὸ πάθος τὸ γεννῶν τὸν λογισμόν. See Tobon, *Apatheia* (2010), 152 ff for discussion of this passage.

²² See Luke 14:16-24.

²³ Translation my own, from the Greek of P. Géhin, *Chapitres* (2007): Οὐ τὸ ἔχειν πράγματα βλάπτει ἡμᾶς, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἐμπαθῶς ἔχειν· πλεονάσασα γὰρ ἡ τοῦ ἀγροῦ μέριμνα καὶ ἡ πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα ἀγάπη ἀλλοτρίους τῆς γνώσεως ἡμᾶς ποιεῖ. Οἱ οὖν ἄγιοι γυναῖκας ἔχοντες καὶ πλοῦτον οὐδὲν ἐβλάβησαν, καὶ γὰρ ὁ Ἰωβ τὰ τέκνα ἀπολέσας ἐφιλοσόφει καὶ τοὺς φίλους διωρθοῦτο, ἅτε πάθη μὴ ἔχων.

men. It is often when we are caught off guard that our *de facto* priorities are revealed, thus Evagrius warns that many *pathē* can lie hidden in the soul, escaping our notice until suddenly they are revealed to us by strong temptations.²⁴

Chapter 22 of *On Thoughts* describes the effects *pathos* in more concrete terms:

All the impure thoughts that linger within us on account of the *pathē* bring the *nous* down to 'ruin and destruction' (1Tim. 6:9). For just as the mental image of bread lingers with the hungry person on account of the hunger, and the mental image of water in the thirsty person because of the thirst, so too the mental images of wealth and possessions linger on account of greed and the mental images of food and shameful thoughts begotten by food linger with us because of the *pathē*.²⁵

As chapter 49 of the *Chapters of the Disciples of Evagrius* makes clear, the issue is not the body's legitimate need for food and drink, nor wealth, nor possessions, nor marriage *per se*, but rather a misplaced attachment to them. But in the case of food and drink, what Evagrius regarded as legitimate is at variance both with our own view and with that of the secular medical wisdom of his own day. He believed *pathos* to have a physiological basis in an excess of vital heat caused by a surfeit of food, and sexual incontinence in particular to originate in overeating and be exacerbated by fluid intake. He regarded the appetitive part of the soul as the vehicle of the vital heat's insatiable appetite for fuel such that the desire to eat in excess of the body's true needs reflected the insatiability of fire.²⁶ The surplus vitality that resulted from excessive eating discharged itself chaotically through the *pathē*, rendering the soul as volatile as fire. It follows that for Evagrius the desire to eat or drink what we would consider a healthy amount represented a direct temptation to further our alienation from God by reinforcing our immersion in *pathos*. To succumb was to sell one's birthright for a pottage of lentils.²⁷

The objects of *pathos* are ubiquitously present to the *nous* in the form of mental images. The farmer sees a mental image of his field and thinks he must attend to it; the husband sees a mental image of his wife and desires to be with her. Sometimes we do not realise we are hungry until we find ourselves thinking about – which is to say, seeing mental images of – food. Evagrius accordingly assigns a key role in the aetiology of *pathos* to the mental images associated with *pathos*. His generic term for mental representations, whether images or

²⁴ See Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostika* 6.52

²⁵ Evagrius, *On Thoughts* 22.1-8: ὥσπερ γὰρ τὸ νόημα τοῦ ἄρτου χρονίζει ἐν τῷ πεινῶντι διὰ τὴν πείναν καὶ τὸ νόημα τοῦ ὕδατος ἐν τῷ διψῶντι διὰ τὴν δίψαν, οὕτω καὶ τὰ νοήματα τῶν χρημάτων καὶ κτημάτων χρονίζει διὰ τὴν πλεονεξίαν καὶ τὰ νοήματα τῶν βρωμάτων καὶ τῶν τικτομένων αἰσχροῦν λογισμῶν ἐκ τῶν βρωμάτων χρονίζει διὰ τὰ πάθη. Greek text P. Géhin, C. Guillaumont and A. Guillaumont (eds), *Évagre le Pontique: Sur les pensées* (Paris, 1998).

²⁶ See for example Evagrius, *On the Eight Thoughts* 1.4, 27, 28.

²⁷ See *Gen.* 25:29-34; although Evagrius does not to my knowledge cite this text, he would have assumed his readers' familiarity with it.

concepts, is *noēmata*. In the case of sensible objects, the *nous* receives and is imprinted by their *noēmata*.²⁸ If the process is accompanied by *pathos*, the *pathos* causes the imprinting to be especially forceful.²⁹ By means of these impassioned images, *pathos* binds the *nous* to its objects:

Neither do objects bind the *nous* nor do their *noēmata*, but rather the *empathê noēmata* of objects. For the Lord created gold and he made woman, but none of the beings created by God are opposed to people's salvation, but rather fornication and greed bind the *nous* and force the *noēmata* of objects to linger in the heart. For objects hold the *nous* in check by means of *empathê noēmata*, just as water holds the thirsty person by means of thirst, and bread the hungry person by means of hunger.³⁰

Pathos binds the *nous* to objects seen under the false aspect of alienation from God, and in doing so, reinforces it. In succumbing to *pathos* the *nous* renders itself passive in respect of the external world, choosing to make itself prey to the instability this entails. The *nous* in thrall to *pathos* is dragged and spun round by impassioned mental images,³¹ and by the *logismoi* to which they are so closely related. It is prone to wandering,³² entangled in material things,³³ agitated by continuous concerns³⁴ and unable to achieve a stable state.³⁵ Having located the source of the *logismoi* in *pathos*, *On Thoughts* 22 takes up the theme of the banquet:

It is not possible for the *nous* strangled by such mental images to stand before God and wear the crown of righteousness (2Tim. 4:8). Dragged down by these thoughts the thrice wretched *nous* mentioned in the Gospels refused the feast of the knowledge of God (cf. *Matth.* 22:2-7); or again the one who was cast into the outer darkness, bound hand and foot, had a garment woven of these thoughts, and the one who invited him declared he was not worthy to attend such a wedding (cf. *Matth.* 22:11-3).³⁶

²⁸ See Evagrius, *On Thoughts* 25.8-14; M. Tobon, *Apatheia* (2010), 42-7.

²⁹ See Evagrius *Praktikos* 34; M. Tobon, *Apatheia* (2010), 147-52.

³⁰ See Evagrius, Scholion 2 on *Psalms* 145:8: Οὐτε τὰ πράγματα δεσμοῖ τὸν νοῦν, οὔτε τὰ τούτων νοήματα, ἀλλὰ τὰ ἐμπαθῆ τῶν πραγμάτων νοήματα. Καὶ γὰρ τὸν χρυσὸν ὁ Κύριος ἔκτισε, καὶ αὐτὸς τὴν γυναῖκα ἐποίησεν, οὐδὲν δὲ τῶν γεγονότων ὑπὸ Θεοῦ ἐναντιοῦται τῇ σωτηρίᾳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἀλλ' ἡ πορνεία καὶ ἡ πλεονεξία δεσμοῦσι τὸν νοῦν, ἀναγκάζουσι χρονίζειν τὰ νοήματα τῶν πραγμάτων ἐν καρδίᾳ. Ἰστησι γὰρ τὸν νοῦν τὰ πράγματα διὰ τῶν ἐν πάθει νοημάτων, καθάπερ καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ τὸν διψῶντα διὰ τῆς διψῆς, καὶ τὸν πεινῶντα ὁ ἄρτος διὰ τῆς πείνης. Greek text according to the collation of M.-J. Rondeau: Key in 'Le commentaire sur les Psaumes d'Évagre le Pontique', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 26 (1960), 307-48, kindly made available to me by Luke Dysinger OSB. See also Evagrius, *On Thoughts* 40.3-5; Evagrius, *Reflections* 23.

³¹ Evagrius, *Chapters on Prayer* 71.

³² See Evagrius, *Praktikos* 15; also Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostika* 1.85.

³³ Evagrius, *Chapters on Prayer* 70.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.* 71.

³⁶ Evagrius, *On Thoughts* 22.10-8: Οὐκ ἔστι δὲ νοῦν πνιγόμενον ὑπο τῶν τοιούτων νοημάτων παραστήναι θεῷ καὶ τὸν τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἀναδήσασθαι στέφανον. Ἐκ τούτων γὰρ τῶν λογισμῶν κατασπώμενος καὶ ἐν τοῖς Εὐαγγελίοις ἐκεῖνος ὁ τρισάθλιος νοῦς τὸ τῆς γνώσεως τοῦ θεοῦ ἄριστον παρητήσατο· καὶ πάλιν ὁ δεσμούμενος χεῖρας καὶ πόδας καὶ εἰς τὸ ἐξώτερον

In sum, instability, in the form of *empathēia* is endemic to the *nous* in so far as it remains out of union with God. The *nous* is in union will see everything from that perspective, which is to say in relation to God. Nothing will be isolated from the whole. But out of union it fragments and sees everything through the lens of its brokenness, projecting its alienation onto the world. In this perspective of radical falsehood all other existents are seen without relation to the whole because the *nous* no longer knows the whole. *Empatheia* contracts the *nous* in gnoseological terms, just as its primal deflection from God resulted in its luminous and immortal body contracting to a heavy mortal body. The person in thrall to *pathos* has no awareness of their true dignity as a *nous* made for union, beyond the constraints of space, time and mortality, with the infinite God who is love itself. Their perspective has narrowed to encompass only the most pressing concerns of their mortal nature. As the image of God, the *nous* retains its desire for the good, meaning that the person longs for wholeness, but in their ignorance they seek it through the objects of their fragmented awareness which by arousing *pathos* reinforce their bondage and alienation.

3. *Apatheia*: dynamic stability

Stability, along with freedom and the beginning of the fulfilment of our desire for the true good comes with *apatheia*, freedom from *pathos*, which Evagrius identifies with the health of the soul.³⁷ *Apatheia* is the ‘blossom’ of the first phase of the monastic life, *praktikē*.³⁸ It is the flowering of a process that begins with *xeniteia*, voluntary exile from the secular world. In the desert the monk finds exterior stillness, *hesychia*, but as he soon realises, this does not bring interior stillness. On the contrary, whereas in the secular world the demons make war by means of external objects, in the emptiness of the desert their weapon of choice becomes the *logismoi*. When the arena shifts from the exterior world to the monk’s own soul, the warfare becomes much harder.³⁹ ‘We often do not know how attached we are to something until we find ourselves deprived of it’,⁴⁰ and retirement into the ‘apophatic’ environment of the desert means the monk is confronted with his interior instability. Having died to the physical presence of the world, the monk must now die to its presence in his heart. Both ‘deaths’ are aspects of the ‘death of Christ’ that the *nous* must die in order that it might rise with him, and in neither case does the designer

σκότος βαλλόμενος ἐκ τούτων τῶν λογισμῶν εἶχε καθυφασμένον τὸ ἐνδύμα, ὅνπερ οὐκ ἄξιον τῶν τοιούτων γάμων ὁ καλέσας ἀπεφάνητο εἶναι. P. Géhin, C. Guillaumont and A. Guillaumont (eds), *Sur les pensées* (1998).

³⁷ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 56.

³⁸ See Evagrius, *Praktikos* 81.

³⁹ See Evagrius, *Praktikos* 48.

⁴⁰ Sr Johanna Caton OSB, from an unpublished manuscript ‘Cassian and Interiority’.

‘the world’ refer to the physical world created by God; rather, the ‘world’ to which we must ‘die’ both exteriorly and interiorly is the false world constructed by fallen humanity and projected onto God’s creation. Evagrius is, as we have seen, well aware of the distinction. For him, *pathos* distorts our vision while *apatheia* restores it.⁴¹

At one level death to the world means learning to detach from the habitual mental clutter of the thoughts, but at a deeper level it means the purification of the unconscious. The need for this is evident in psychological terms from the role of the unconscious as the hiding place of the *pathē* and breeding ground of the *logismoi*, and in spiritual terms from the fact that the human person is a part of the *nous* and not *vice versa*. Were the *nous* a part of the human person, it might in principle be possible to purify it in isolation from the rest of the person, but since the human person is part of the *nous*, the purification of the *nous* entails that of both soul and body.

Praktikē has four foundational components: unceasing prayer, the cultivation of interior watchfulness, the practice of strict dietary discipline and persevering in the face of the temptation to give up the spiritual life. All bear directly upon the stability of the soul, but only unceasing prayer, is obligatory, commanded by Paul at 1Thess. 5:17. Prayer is that for which the *nous* is naturally constituted, and so it invigorates the *nous* and purifies it for the struggle.⁴²

Keeping the *nous* focused on prayer and avoiding the arousal of *pathos* is the remit of interior watchfulness. We see this most clearly in *Praktikos* 6 where Evagrius states that it is not within our power whether or not the thoughts arise in the soul, but it is within our power whether or not we allow them to linger and stir up the *pathē*. This does not contradict the aetiology of the *logismoi* discussed in the previous section according to which they have their source in *pathos*. *Empatheia* is a vicious cycle in which at the level of unconscious disposition *pathos* generates *logismoi* which emerge into consciousness and, if allowed to linger, arouse fresh episodes of *pathos* which in turn reinforce the disposition. Hence the importance of vigilance, since it is when we become aware of a *logismos* that we can break this cycle by denying it hospitality. It is surely because our ability to do this depends in part upon our capacity to distinguish between *logismoi* and non-vicious thoughts, that Evagrius’ assurance in the *Praktikos* that we can withhold assent from the *logismoi* is accompanied by his list of the eight genera of *logismoi*.

Strict dietary discipline establishes a physiological basis for the stability of *apatheia* by rooting it in the body’s *krasis* such that it is literally embodied.⁴³

⁴¹ See *Chapters of the Disciples of Evagrius* 58.

⁴² See Evagrius, *Praktikos*; 1Thess. 5:17.

⁴³ See M. Tobon, *Apatheia* (2010), 64–80. In supposing diet to be morally significant through its physiological effects Evagrius accords with the best medical wisdom of his day, Galen having composed a treatise entitled *That the Powers of the Soul Follow the Mixtures of the Body* (*Quod*

This ‘mixing’ of virtue into the body’s *krasis* is the beginning of the process by which knowledge of God will ultimately become ‘co-extensive with the substance of the *nous*’.⁴⁴ At the physical level it involves the transmutation of the body’s mixture from a ‘bad quality’ to an ‘excellent quality’, which is to say from heavy and earthy to light and fiery.⁴⁵

The temptation to give up the spiritual life comes in the form of the demon of acedia, who will in the first instance incite the monk to ‘fashion excuses seemingly reasonable’ to ‘abandon the cell’. He must on no account succumb. Instead he must ‘be seated inside, exercise perseverance and valiantly welcome all attackers, especially the demon of acedia’, since ‘fleeing and circumventing such struggles teaches the *nous* to be unskilled, cowardly and evasive’.⁴⁶

Prayer, then, stabilises the *nous* by orientating it toward God, and vigilance by ensuring that it does not entertain thoughts that will arouse *pathos*. Dietary restraint works on the body’s constitution to stabilise it, and thereby the soul and *nous* from the bottom up, and standing one’s ground against the demon of acedia trains the *nous* to hold its own against the onslaughts of *pathos*. But more generally all the virtues contribute to the stability of the soul since all are constitutive of *apatheia*:⁴⁷ ‘When the soul has been purified by the full complement of the virtues’, says Evagrius, ‘it stabilises the attitude of the *nous*’.⁴⁸ This stability manifests in gentleness⁴⁹ and a serenity apparent not only in waking life but also in dreams and in relation to memories: it is a proof of *apatheia* when the *nous* ‘remains still before the apparitions occurring during sleep and [when awake] looks upon objects with serenity’.⁵⁰ Again showing his awareness of the unconscious, Evagrius cautions that the soul ‘possesses *apatheia* not in virtue of the fact that it experiences no *pathos* with respect to objects, but because it remains untroubled even with regard to the memories of them’.⁵¹ *Apatheia* can never be simply a habit of good behaviour, however well established. It is not enough to control and contain our sinful tendencies; they must

animi mores corporis temperamenta sequuntur) in which he declared that this ‘has been consistently found, not only to be the case, but also to be of practical value for those whose desire is to improve the condition of their soul. The reason for this ... is that we derive a good bodily mixture from our food and drink and other daily activities, and that this mixture is the basis on which we then build the virtue of the soul’. *Quod animi mores corporis temperamenta sequuntur* 767-8, translation by P.N. Singer, *Galen: Selected Works* (Oxford, 1997).

⁴⁴ See Evagrius, *Praktikos* 3, discussed below.

⁴⁵ See Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostika* 5.21; M. Tobon, ‘Raising Body and Soul to the Order of the *Nous*’ (2013), 56-66.

⁴⁶ See Evagrius, *Praktikos* 27.

⁴⁷ See Evagrius, Scholion 293, *Prov.* 24:3.

⁴⁸ Evagrius, *Chapters on Prayer* 2: ἀκλόνητον τὴν τάξιν τοῦ νοῦ κατασκευάζει.

⁴⁹ See for example Evagrius, *Reflections* 3; *To Monks in Monasteries and Communities* 31.

⁵⁰ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 64.

⁵¹ See Evagrius, *Praktikos* 67.

be excised through love. Only then will the heart become pure, and without purity of heart there can be no true stability, only at most its appearance.

Evagrius describes the person who possesses perfect *apatheia* as having ‘established (*kathidrusas*) the virtues within themselves and become wholly mixed (*anakraatheis*) with them’.⁵² The participle *kathidrusas* comes from the verb *kathidruō*, the causal of *kathezomai*, ‘to make to sit down’, so has strong connotations of stability. Its use here echoes Evagrius’ description of ‘a soul accomplished in *praktikē*’ as a ‘throne of *apatheia*’,⁵³ his reading of the verb ‘seats’ in *Prov.* 18:16 as ‘the seat (*kathedra*) of the *nous* ... the excellent state which keeps that which is sitting there difficult to move or immovable’,⁵⁴ and his instruction to ‘remain seated’ in the cell during demonic attacks. The participle *anakraatheis* is from the verb *anakerannumi*, cognate with the verb *kerannumi* from which the noun *krasis* derives, suggesting that the language of mixture refers in part to virtue’s physiological embodiment. Taken together these participles indicate that when it becomes perfect *apatheia* is ‘seated’ in the body’s stabilised *krasis*. As Driscoll notes,

This is strong language: *established, blended, indeed wholly blended*. This is describing not what might be a passing disposition of goodness but what is called ‘and excellent condition’, an expression implying a stable and durable state.⁵⁵

Evagrius spells out the implications of this stability in terms that appear at first sight paradoxical: the *apathēs* practises neither abstinence nor perseverance, and ‘no longer remembers the law or the commandments or punishment’. The observance of the commandments establishes (*sunistēsēsin*) *praktikē*,⁵⁶ but when the virtues have literally become part of the monk he has no further need self-consciously to practise or even recall them. No longer troubled by the *pathē*, he ‘says or does those things which this excellent state dictates to him’.⁵⁷ This is synonymous with Augustine’s ‘Love, and do what you will’,⁵⁸ since love being the child of *apatheia*, the establishment of *apatheia* in the soul is the establishment of love therein.⁵⁹

⁵² See Evagrius, *Praktikos* 70.

⁵³ See Evagrius, *To Monks in Monasteries and Communities* 31.

⁵⁴ See Evagrius, Scholion 184, *Prov.* 18:16.

⁵⁵ Jeremy Driscoll, ‘Spiritual Progress in the Works of Evagrius’, in *id.*, *Steps to Spiritual Perfection. Studies on Spiritual Progress in Evagrius Ponticus* (New York and Mahwah, 2005), 11–37, 26.

⁵⁶ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 81.

⁵⁷ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 70.

⁵⁸ *Homily 7* on 1John 4:4–12, 8, Boniface Ramsey (introduction, translation, and notes), *Saint Augustine: Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, 1/14, The Works of Saint Augustine for the 21st Century, series editors Daniel E. Doyle OSA and Thomas Martin OSA (New York, 2008).

⁵⁹ See Evagrius, *Praktikos* 81; also *Praktikos* Prologue 8.

Chapter 31 of *To Monks in Monasteries and Communities* adds to the ideas of gentleness and enthronement that of rest: 'In the gentle heart, wisdom will rest; a throne of *apatheia*, a soul accomplished in *praktikē*'.

Our discussion of *empathēia* has shown how apposite this is: *apatheia* truly does bring rest to the soul. This does not, however, mean that it brings the soul to a standstill, for since the soul is but *nous* in the secondary creation, like the *nous* it is always in motion.⁶⁰ What *apatheia* does is to stabilise the movement of the soul so that it is experienced as stillness.⁶¹

In bringing stability to the *nous*, *apatheia* 'prepares it to receive the desired state',⁶² namely the pure prayer in which the *nous* reconnects to the primary creation and its role as the place of God.

4. The place of God

The restoration of the *nous* to God has, in addition to its future eschatological sense, a realised eschatological sense according to which imageless prayer is a participation of the *nous* in the primary creation, which is to say, in unity. It is in the primary creation that the *nous* functions as the place of God. As the tumult of the thoughts recedes and the *nous* begins to regain its balance, its prayer life stabilises and deepens. Drawn by its great longing for God, it gradually withdraws from the concerns and images and thoughts that formerly occupied it, becoming filled with ever greater reverence and joy as it approaches the frontiers of pure prayer.⁶³ God is ever more able to come to his place, the pure *nous*. Since the *nous* is a faculty for knowing and God is essential knowledge, God comes to the *nous* in being known.

At this point some brief remarks about the nature of Evagrian gnosis are in order.⁶⁴ In the *Gnostikos*, Evagrius attributes to Basil of Caesarea a distinction between two kinds of knowledge, that which comes from human beings and that which comes from the grace of God. The former strengthens through study and exercise and can be received by those in thrall to the *pathē*, while the latter strengthens through justice, freedom from anger and mercy and can only be

⁶⁰ That soul is always in motion was axiomatic in Greek philosophy; see for example, Plato, *Phaedrus* 245c.

⁶¹ See M. Tobon, *Apatheia* (2010), 178-86.

⁶² Evagrius, *Chapters on Prayer* 2.

⁶³ See Evagrius, *Chapters on Prayer* 61.

⁶⁴ To give the subject the attention it merits is beyond the scope of the present paper, but as an initial corrective to the misapprehensions Evagrius' use of the term 'gnosis' has sometimes occasioned, I recommend the extended discussion Christian gnosis in Louis Bouyer, *The Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers*, History of Christian Spirituality 1 (New York, Tournai, Paris, Rome, 1963). As an example of such misapprehension is Derwas J. Chitty, *The Desert a City* (Crestwood, 1999), 50, remark of Evagrius that 'one is suspicious at his seeming to set Knowledge above Love'.

received by those who are free of the *pathē*.⁶⁵ In other words, the knowledge which comes from the grace of God depends upon the person's moral character and spiritual condition, from which it follows that fulfilment of the commandments is integral to it. This recalls Basil's statement in his Homily on the martyr Mammes of Caesarea, cited by Theo Kobusch in the present collection, to the effect that to know God means to fulfil his commandments,⁶⁶ which in turn recalls *Praktikos* 70, where, as we have just seen, Evagrius describes the *gnostikos* as no longer remembering the law or the commandments or punishment, but instead acting in accordance with her excellent state. The reason why the gnostic no longer remembers the commandments is that she literally embodies them, and moreover in a twofold sense: in her actions and in her physical constitution. There is, accordingly, nothing abstract about Evagrian gnosis. It is rooted in the fulfillment of the commandments in the love of God and neighbour, grows in a person in proportion to his physical, psychological and spiritual reintegration, and is revealed in the excellence of his life.

For Evagrius the purity of the *nous* consists in its primary orientation toward God as the source and context of all else. This purity, which he also refers to as nakedness, recalling thereby the prelapsarian state of Adam and Eve, is most clearly seen pure prayer, which is imageless and, *ex hypothesi*, silent. We need not, I think, suppose that the experience of such prayer must always involve the complete absence of images or thoughts. Rather, by analogy with Evagrius' interpretation of the parable of the banquet, we can surmise that the purification of the *nous* relates to its *pathē*, its attachments to the images, concepts and thoughts that come before the mind's eye. This would mean that in its phenomenology imageless prayer resembles certain types of meditation or, what I suspect is probably the best analogy, the 'centering prayer' developed by Thomas Keating and his confreres from the *Cloud of Unknowing*. Keating offers the following description of the structure of the mind as experienced in centering prayer:

Our consciousness can be likened to a river, with our thoughts passing like boats along its surface. The surface of the river represents our ordinary psychological level of awareness. But a river also has its depths, and so does our awareness. Beneath the ordinary psychological level of awareness, there is the spiritual level of awareness where our intellect and will are functioning in their own proper way in a spiritual manner. Deeper still, or more 'centred', is the Divine Indwelling where the divine energy is

⁶⁵ Evagrius, *Gnostikos* 45: Τῆς ἀληθείας ὁ στύλος ὁ καππαδόκης Βασίλειος· τὴν μὲν ἀπὸ ἀνθρώπων, φησὶν, ἐπισυμβαίνουσιν γνῶσιν, προσεχῆς μελέτη καὶ γυμνασία κρατύνει· τὴν δὲ ἐκ Θεοῦ χάριτος ἐγγινομένην, δικαιοσύνη καὶ ἀοργησία καὶ ἔλεος· καὶ τὴν μὲν προτέραν, δυνατὸν καὶ τοὺς ἐμπαθεῖς ὑποδέξασθαι· τῆς δὲ δευτέρας οἱ ἀπαθεῖς μόνοι εἰσὶ δεκτικοί· οἱ καὶ παρὰ τὸν καιρὸν τῆς προσευχῆς τὸ οἰκεῖον φέγγος τοῦ νοῦ περιλάμπον αὐτοὺς θεωροῦσιν. A. Guillaumont and C. Guillaumont (eds), *Évagre le Pontique: Le gnostique* (Paris, 1989).

⁶⁶ Basil of Caesarea, *In Mamentem martyrem*, PG 31, 597: Τοῦτο γνῶσις Θεοῦ, τήρησις ἐντολῶν Θεοῦ.

present as the source of our being and inspiration at every moment. Personal effort and grace meet at the most centred or inward part of our being.⁶⁷

The practice of centering prayer trains the mind to detach from its thoughts so that it can allow the 'boats' to pass by on the surface rather than compulsively 'boarding' them and being carried along. This detachment in turn enables its awareness to sink below to the depths of our being where the Divine Indwelling is ever present. I take it that when Evagrius speaks, for example, of the *nous* withdrawing from the flesh (and again we should note that it is the *sarx* from which we are to withdraw, which is to say material creation as the object of *pathos*, not material creation *per se*) and turning aside from all mental representations, he refers to a similar sort of detachment.⁶⁸ Images may continue to arise in the *nous*, but since it makes no attempt to engage with them, they do not linger since there is nothing to hold them. The process is analogous to that described in *Praktikos* 6, but whereas in *praktikē* assent is withheld from the *logismoi* in order to deny them hospitality so they do not arouse us to *pathos*, in seeking to practice imageless prayer we withhold assent from the mental images that arise at the time of prayer so that they do not steal our awareness away from the presence of God. Detached from its mental content, the *nous* rests in a deeper place, utterly peaceful yet fully alert. Its *apatheia* in respect of any images or thoughts that arise enable it to move gently among, and away from, them:

Sometimes the *nous* moves from one mental image to another, sometimes from one contemplative consideration to another, and in turn from a contemplative consideration to a mental image. And there are also times when the *nous* moves from the imageless state to mental image or contemplative considerations, and from these it returns again to the imageless state. This happens to the *nous* at the time of prayer.⁶⁹

As the *nous* becomes stronger under the invigorating and purifying influence of continual prayer, its prayer will gradually become more rooted in imagelessness and at the same time this deepened prayer will become an established disposition. As it does so, it will overflow into the rest of the monk's life, becoming the habitual state of the *nous* and bringing profound stability, peace and joy, the hallmarks of deepening and expanding gnosis.

This is the beginning of the journey that leads by the grace of God to the kingdom of God, which Evagrius describes in *Praktikos* 3 as 'gnosis of the Holy

⁶⁷ Thomas Keating, *Intimacy with God* (New York, 1994), 29.

⁶⁸ I do not intend this comparison with the phenomenology of centering prayer to be taken too literally. One obvious difference is that whereas in Fr Keating's metaphor of the river of consciousness the awareness sinks down to the depths, for Evagrius the separation of soul from body, of which imageless prayer is one aspect, is conceptualised in terms of the *nous* rising aloft, as for example when *Prayer* 52 speaks of its being 'snatched aloft to the intelligible height'.

⁶⁹ Evagrius, *Reflections* 22. My reading of this passage, together with the understanding of Evagrian apophatic prayer of which it is part, is based on my own experience of prayer.

Trinity co-extensive with the substance of the *nous* and surpassing its incorruptibility'. We have seen that *apatheia* is embodied in the 'mixing' of virtue into the body's constitution is the beginning of the process whose fruition is described in *Praktikos* 3, the language of which recalls the metaphor of iron in fire, used by Origen to describe the immersion in the Logos of the soul of Christ.⁷⁰ When a piece of iron has been immersed for some time in fire, the fire penetrates all of its pores and veins so that, for as long as the immersion continues, the iron becomes completely changed into fire. In the same way, Evagrius seems to be saying, the kingdom of God is an immersion of the *nous* in God so complete that, for as long as it lasts, gnosis becomes co-extensive with its substance. For as long as the immersion continues the *nous* is completely changed into God, although God always surpasses it. Such was its original condition in the primary creation, and in so far as it regains it, it participates once more in the primary creation. But however complete the participation, the *nous* remains a created substance wholly dependent upon God. The iron never ceases to be iron.

The primary creation is characterised by 'unspeakable peace'.⁷¹ But this peace involves neither immovability nor immutability. It is not immovability because the *nous* must voluntarily maintain its orientation toward God, which means continually choosing to remain directed towards him, and for the *nous* to choose is for it to move. It is not immutability because for Evagrius progress in the spiritual life is infinite, a perpetual expansion of the *nous* into God:⁷² while one sort of ignorance comes to an end, there is another that does not.⁷³ This finds reflection in the structure of his *Gnostic Trilogy* in that the *Kephalaia Gnostika* is four times' the length of the other two volumes combined, and *via* the ten 'silent chapters' that conclude each of its six centuries leaves its reader standing on the threshold of infinity⁷⁴ like Plato's immortal souls standing on the outer rim of the heavens.⁷⁵ In understanding spiritual progress to be eternal Evagrius echoes Gregory of Nyssa, for whom 'The human being, since he is spirit, is in an infinite and perpetual progress'.⁷⁶ Evagrius expresses

⁷⁰ See Origen, *De principiis* 2.6.6: 'That soul which, like an iron in the fire, is always situated in the Word, always in the Wisdom, always in God – in all that it does, feels and understands, is God' (*Illa anima, quae quasi ferrum in igne sic semper in Verbo, semper in Sapientia, semper in Deo posita est, omne quod agit, quod sentit, quod intelligit, Deus est*). Translation mine from the Latin of Herwig Görgemanns und Heinrich Karpp, *Origenes. Vier Bücher von den Prinzipien* (Darmstadt, 1992).

⁷¹ See Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostika* 1.65.

⁷² For discussion of how Evagrian contemplation comprises noetic expansion rooted in refinement of bodily *krasis* see M. Tobon 'Raising Body and Soul to the Order of the *Nous*' (2013), 70-2.

⁷³ See Evagrius, *Praktikos* 87.

⁷⁴ See M. Tobon, 'Words Spoken in Silence: the "Missing Chapters" of Evagrius' *Kephalaia Gnostika*', *SP* 72 (2014), 197-209.

⁷⁵ *Phaedrus* 247c1-2.

⁷⁶ L.F. Mateo-Seco and G. Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa* (Leiden, 2009), 38.

this by saying that in the primary creation ‘there are only pure *noes* who continually satiate themselves from [God’s] impossibility to satiate’.⁷⁷ The perpetual interplay of desire and satiety, movement and repose, is experienced as peace because the *nous* participates in perfect stability throughout. In other words, in so far as the *nous* is present to the primary creation it enjoys peace and stillness in phenomenological terms even though in metaphysical terms it is in motion.

The kingdom of God is not static. The more receptive we become to the ever present Divine Indwelling, the more God communes with us and journeys with us,⁷⁸ the more the *nous* is carried aloft by a supreme eros into the ignorance that has no end.⁷⁹ Evagrius surely found in Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians his own description of the kingdom of God understood as gnosis of the Trinity co-extensive with the substance of the *nous* but surpassing its incorruptibility: ‘And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another’.⁸⁰

We can now see that in relation to pure prayer, apophasis in Evagrius has a double reference: to the nakedness of the *nous* and to the infinity of God. In order to function as the place of God, the *nous* must be naked. In recovering its nakedness it recovers its receptivity to the Divine Indwelling. This encounter is both kataphatic and apophatic. It is kataphatic because, as the image of God, the *nous* is able to know him in a union so intimate that ultimately he becomes co-extensive with its very substance, a union which finds expression in the person’s excellent state and the actions arising therefrom. It is apophatic because however fully the *nous* receives God, God will always exceed the *nous* as Creator to creature, thereby calling forth ever greater longing and receptivity

⁷⁷ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostika* 1.65, trans. Ramelli, who comments: ‘The right meaning here is “impossibility to satiate” rather than “insatiability”, which is the translation of Guillaumont (p. 49: “insatiabilité”), followed by Dysinger, who ascribes this “insatiability” to the intellects (“their insatiability”), even though the possessive suffix in Syriac is singular, -h, which refers back to the unity and state of peace mentioned by Evagrius soon beforehand. Fr. Theophanes, although he is translating on the basis of the French rather than of the Syriac, gets closer to the correct meaning and renders “the naked *noes* which always take their fill of its inexhaustibility”, adding in note 5 to this passage: “Correcting the ‘insatiabilité’ of the text for sense”. Indeed, the meaning is that God – and the state of unity with God – will never satiate the intellects: it is the divinity’s “impossibility to satiate”. This is essential, because *koros* was the cause of the fall of the intelligent creatures at the beginning, but in the end there will be no new fall, and this thanks to love (*agape*), which, as Paul avers, “never falls”. This is why after all intellectual souls have adhered to God in perfect love, after the manifestation of God’s love in Christ, no one will possibly fall again’. She notes that the latter argument is put forward by Origen in his *Commentary on Romans*. I.L.E. Ramelli, *Evagrius’s Kephalaia Gnostika* (Atlanta, 2015), 64.

⁷⁸ See Evagrius, *Chapters on Prayer* 65.

⁷⁹ See Evagrius, *Chapters on Prayer* 52.

⁸⁰ 2Cor. 3:18.

from the *nous*.⁸¹ Evagrius' own participation in unity is reflected in the unity of his thought, in which, as Bouyer remarked, 'cosmology, anthropology, asceticism and mysticism form a whole in which all the connections have been perfectly made'.⁸² As Evagrius says, commenting on *John* 17:21: 'As God is one, he unifies all when he comes into each'.⁸³

5. Stability and apophasis in Evagrius

Evagrius supposes a tripartite anthropology according to which the human person comprises *nous*, soul and body. Since soul is but *nous* in the second creation, there is a sense in which whatever belongs to the soul also belongs to the *nous*. The primary and secondary creations are, however, different dimensions of being, and therefore different contexts. It is from the perspective of the secondary creation that the proper subject of *apatheia*, and hence of stability in its primary sense, is the soul, meaning that stability relates first and foremost to the secondary creation, while apophasis relates in its root denotation to pure prayer and thus to the unity and simplicity of the primary creation. But we also saw, with regard to Evagrius' protology, that stability and apophasis answer respectively to the mobility and its receptivity of the *nous*. This is the perspective of the primary creation, in which soul has been raised to the order of the *nous*.⁸⁴ The two perspectives are distinct in logical and conceptual terms but intertwined in practical terms, meaning that stability and apophasis resonate throughout the spiritual life

In the perfect union with God which the *nous* enjoyed prior to the movement, both its nakedness and its stability were complete, whereas in the human condition its native limpidity lies buried deep within the unconscious. Forgetful of its own interiority, it mistakes itself for the exterior person, a fragment of itself contracted and solidified around the illusion of its separation from God. In this state it is radically unstable, a house built on sand.

The spiritual journey involves stripping away everything that confines the *nous* to this partial existence. It begins with the renunciation of the false world constructed by fallen human consciousness, symbolised and initiated by withdrawal into the *hesychia* of the desert, a locative apophasis which enables the encounter of the *nous* with what it has become. This encounter takes place through the eight generic *logismoi* and involves not only the personal unconscious but

⁸¹ For longing (*pothos*) as characteristic of the *nous* in prayer, see Evagrius, *Chapters on Prayer* 61. For discussion of *Praktikos* 3 in terms of the spousal imagery of Evagrius' *Sentences to a Virgin*, see J. Driscoll, 'Spousal Images', in *id.*, *Spiritual Perfection* (2005), 38-50, 47.

⁸² L. Bouyer, *Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers* (London, 1963), 383.

⁸³ Evagrius, *On the Faith*, 25, translation Augustine M. Casiday, *Evagrius Ponticus* (London, 2006), 53.

⁸⁴ See Evagrius, *Great Letter* 22.

warfare with the demons. Stability comes with the attainment of *apatheia* and is constituted by freedom from the turbulence and self-centredness of the *pathos*. As the interiorisation of the desert's *hesychia*, *apatheia* is a form of apophasis with its 'kataphatic' counterpart in love. It enables the soul to expand into its true stature and dignity as a *nous* in the image of God, responsible for the world it creates.

Since *apatheia* has a physical basis in the stabilised *krasis* of the physical body, apophasis too is rooted in the body. And since *apatheia* is constituted by the virtues and the virtues are part of the knowledge of God, gnosis too is embedded in the body's mixture. The body itself becomes apophatic in its transparency to gnosis. It follows that for Evagrius, both apophasis and knowledge of God are profoundly incarnational in the double sense that they are embodied both in the person's actions and in their physical constitution.

Conclusion

When Evagrius speaks of 'the thought of pride that glorifies me on the pretext that I edify souls with a stable way of life and knowledge of God',⁸⁵ his words have the ring of personal experience. For him, stability and knowledge of God are closely connected since it is by recovering its interior stability that the soul becomes receptive to gnosis *via* the apophasis that is both the condition of gnosis and its constant companion.

This article has explored how stability and apophasis, defining characteristics respectively of *apatheia* and pure prayer, resonate throughout the Evagrian spiritual life in reciprocal relationship. Withdrawal to the exterior apophasis of the desert and the practice of exterior stability in the form of perseverance in the spiritual life enables the establishment of thoroughgoing psychological stability. This then serves as the foundation for the expansion of the soul into its true nature as a *nous* unbounded by space, time or mortality and disposed at the deepest level of its being for knowledge of God, which it enjoys through recognising itself as his place and welcoming him into itself.

⁸⁵ Evagrius, *Antirrhētikos* 8.30.

Practical Knowledge in ‘Christian Philosophy’: A New Way to God

Theo KOBUSCH, Bonn, Germany

ABSTRACT

In ‘Christian Philosophy’, which is the term by which the Christian authors themselves describe their way of thinking from the 4th century onwards, we can discern a certain tendency which reached its final and massive breakthrough with the Cappadocian Fathers. This tendency consisted in circumscribing the divine essence, which according to Neoplatonism and negative theology is unknowable for theoretical reason, by increasingly making use of ethical categories. We already find a first indication of this in the circle of Gregory of Nyssa (Ps.-Gregor, *De creatione hominis*) where the answer to the question what Christianity is has ethical implications: *Homoiosis Theo*. The clearest example of this tendency is then provided by Gregory of Nyssa himself who quite often calls God the *aretē pantelēs*. This, however, is possible only if the sense of the word *aretē* is univocal, *i.e.* the meaning of moral expressions is the same when applied to God and to man – an idea that was already formulated by Origen and Gregory Thaumaturgos in the wake of the Stoics. According to this notion, which is present in Origen and the Cappadocian Fathers, man is able to come closer to God by a practical knowledge of himself as it is mentioned in the commentaries to the *Song of Songs*. In this way for the Cappadocian Fathers subsequent to Origen, the way to God seems to be blocked for theoretical reason. Practical reason, however, does open a new way here.

While knowledge of the highest Being, namely God, has always been the subject of theoretical reason, a notable shift took place in ‘Christian Philosophy’, which it is so rightly called just due to fact that the Church Fathers of the 4th century named their thought thus.¹ This especially pertains to the Cappadocian Fathers, in whose thought one can observe this transition. Along these lines, I will present in what follows a main feature of Cappadocian Philosophy, which can be observed in all the three great Cappadocians, Gregory of Nyssa, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus. Such a common underlying schema in their thoughts – this is the thesis of this article – consists in: 1) to fundamentally cast doubt on the possibility of Aristotle’s proposed theoretical knowledge of the essence of God and temporal things; 2) to open a practical way to the knowledge of God.

¹ See Theo Kobusch, *Christliche Philosophie. Die Entdeckung der Subjektivität* (Darmstadt, 2006), 26–33.

1. Critique of a theoretical knowledge of essence

What the critique of a theoretical knowledge of essence concerns can be most clearly seen in Gregory of Nyssa. As Gregory shows in the 6th *Oratio* of his *De beatitudinibus*, God is unknowable in terms of theoretical knowledge. This does not mean that theoretical reason can know nothing of God. Rather, Gregory only wants to say that the divine Being, as it is in and of itself, entirely evades the grasps of theoretical reason, and therefore the ‘conceptual thought’ of the human being.² The thesis of the impossibility of knowledge of the divine Being must be seen in correlation with a more comprehensive dispute with the Aristotelian conception of reason and its theological claims; as well as with Aristotelian metaphysics, whose object is the hidden essences of things and the essence of the highest, non-sensible substance. In particular, Gregory doubts and questions the significance and possibility of a certain, purely theoretical determination of essences as such – not only of the divine nature. For the patriarchs and prophets – according to him – did not in any way concern themselves with determining the essence of objects (*e.g.* the sky, earth, sea, time, eternity). In fact, they consciously disregarded all determinations of theoretical metaphysics.³ This manner of metaphysics assumed that the underlying essence of a sensible, appearing thing is theoretically knowable, once its components have been dissolved and its qualities ‘despoiled’ by abstracting reason. Gregory criticizes this form of metaphysics on a foundational level. Namely, regarding the being of a manifest body, one has to ask, what should remain of the determination of its essence, if the color, shape, renitence, weight, size, position, movement *etc.* has been abstracted?

A metaphysical knowledge of the essence of a thing is in this way not at all possible. Moreover, it is also pointless and superfluous. The true knowledge of things (*e.g.* the elements) is much more the orientation in the life-world, which recognizes things in their usefulness and relevance for living. However, of the determination of essence, Gregory says that we ‘neither come to know them, nor do we suffer any harm if we do not know them’.⁴

² Gregorius Nyssenus, *De beatitudinibus* or. VI, ed. John F. Callahan GNO 7.2 (Leiden, 1992), 140,15: Ἡ θεία φύσις αὐτὴ καθ’ ἑαυτὴν ὃ τι ποτὲ κατ’ οὐσίαν ἐστὶ πάσης ὑπέρκειται καταληπτικῆς ἐπινοίας, ἀπρόσιτος τε καὶ ἀπροσπέλαστος οὐσα ταῖς στοχαστικαῖς ὑπινόαις, καὶ οὐπὼ τις ἐν ἀνθρώποις πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἀλήπτων κατανόησιν ἐξεύρηται δύναμις, οὐδέ τις ἐφοδος καταληπτικῆ τῶν ἀμυχάνων ἐπενοήθη.

³ Gregorius Nyssenus, *Contra Eunomium* II 103, ed. Werner Jaeger, GNO 1 (Leiden, 1960), 256,24ff.

⁴ Gregorius Nyssenus, *Contra Eunomium* II, ed. W. Jaeger, GNO 1, 259,26-260,27: Καὶ τί περὶ τῆς ψυχῆς λέγω; ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτῆς τὸ τὰς σωματικὰς ἀναδεγεμένον ποιότητος ἐναργεῖ τινι καταλήψει μέχρι τοῦ δεῦρο τεθήραται. ἐὰν γάρ τις τῷ λόγῳ τὸ φαινόμενον εἰς τὰ ἐξ ὧν σύγκειται διαλύσῃ καὶ ψιλώσας τῶν ποιότητων ἐφ’ ἑαυτοῦ κατανοῆσαι φιλονικίῃ τὸ ὑποκείμενον, τί καταλειφθήσεται τῇ θεωρίᾳ, οὐ συνορῶ. ὅταν γὰρ ἀφέλῃς τοῦ σώματος τὸ χρῶμα, τὸ σχῆμα, τὴν ἀντιτυπίαν, τὸ βάρος, τὴν πηλικότητα, τὴν ἐπὶ τόπου θέσιν, τὴν

Which sort of form of theoretical reason Gregory had in mind in his critical analysis emerges, for example, from his *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*. Therein the discursive, discerning power of thought is addressed; which – temporally determined and with the help of analytical methods – seeks to raise each given thing to the preconditions of its being-given and so to apprehend the highest Essence. Gregory designates this advanced form of reason as 'curiosity' (*polypragmosynē*). With this, he employs the concept that has already been present in Plotinus for Aristotelian conceived syllogistic thought.⁵ In his *Commentary on Song of Songs*, Gregory describes the *polypragmosynē*, that is, the curiously inquiring, explorative, pure, theoretical reason, as the mindset of 'physiology', therefore as the thought of natural philosophy. This is contrasted with the 'mystical' as another variety of the metaphysical.⁶ Gregory also calls this *curiously inquiring reason* – in Aristotelian terminology – 'searching reason', which is not capable of grasping what the objects of the life-world or creation are in their essences. How could it then grasp the nature of that which lies beyond this realm!⁷ In another place, he asks the following question in order

κίνησιν, τὴν παθητικὴν τε καὶ ἐνεργητικὴν διάθεσιν, τὸ πρὸς τί πως ἔχειν, ὃν ἕκαστον οὐδὲν ἔφ' ἑαυτοῦ σῶμά ἐστι, περὶ δὲ τὸ σῶμα τὰ πάντα, τί λοιπὸν ἔσται, ὃ τὸν τοῦ σώματος δέχεται λόγον, οὔτε δι' ἑαυτῶν συνιδεῖν ἔχομεν οὔτε παρὰ τῆς γραφῆς μεμαθήκαμεν. ὁ δ' ἑαυτὸν ἀγνοῶν πῶς ἂν τι τῶν ὑπὲρ ἑαυτὸν ἐπιγνοίῃ; καὶ ὁ τῇ περὶ ἑαυτοῦ ἀγνοίᾳ προειθισμένος ἄρ' οὐχὶ φανερώς δι' αὐτοῦ τούτου διδάσκεται πρὸς μηδὲν τῶν ἔξωθεν ἀποκεκρυμμένων ξενίζεσθαι; διὰ τοῦτο καὶ τὰ τοῦ κόσμου στοιχεῖα τῇ μὲν αἰσθήσει τοσοῦτον γινώσκουμεν, ὅσον τὸ ἀφ' ἑκάστου χρήσιμον πρὸς τὴν ζωὴν ἡμῶν δέχεσθαι, τὸν δὲ τῆς οὐσίας αὐτῶν λόγον οὔτε ἐμάθομεν οὔτε τὸ μὴ εἶδέναι ζημίαν ποιούμεθα. Τί γάρ μοι πολυπραγμονεῖν τοῦ πυρὸς τὴν φύσιν, πῶς ἐκτρίβεται, πῶς ἐξάπτεται, πῶς τῆς παρακειμένης δρασσίμενον ὕλης οὐ πρότερον ἀποχωρεῖ πρὶν διαφαγεῖν καὶ ἐξαναλώσαι τὸ ὑποκείμενον, πῶς λανθάνει ὁ σπινθὴρ τῷ λίθῳ ἐγκείμενος, πῶς ψυχρὸς ὢν τοῖς ἀποτομείοις ὁ σίδηρος ἀπογεννᾷ τὴν φλόγα, πῶς τριβόμενα πρὸς ἑαυτὰ τὰ ξύλα πῦρ ἀναδίδωσι, πῶς ἀπαυγάζον ἐν ἡλίῳ τὸ ὕδωρ φλόγα ποιεῖ, τῆς τε ἐπὶ τὸ ἄνω φορᾶς τὴν αἰτίαν καὶ τὴν ἀεικίνητον δύναμιν καὶ πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα παρέντες πολυπραγμονεῖν τε καὶ ἐξετάζειν μόνον τὸ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ χρήσιμον εἰς τὸν βίον ἑαυτῶν ἐνοήσαμεν, εἰδότες ὅτι οὐδὲν ἔλαττον ἔχει τοῦ πολυπραγμονούντος ὁ ἀπραγμόνως τὴν ὠφέλειαν δεχόμενος. Διὰ τοῦτο ὡς περιττὸν τε καὶ ἀνωφελὲς τὸ περὶ τῆς οὐσίας τῶν γεγονότων ἀδολεσχεῖν ἢ γραφὴ παρῆκε.

⁵ Gregor Nyssenius, *In Ecclesiasten* or. VII, ed. Paul Alexander, GNO 5 (Leiden, 1962), 413,2. See Theo Kobusch, 'Name und Sein. Zu den sprachphilosophischen Grundlagen in der Schrift *Contra Eunomium* des Gregor von Nyssa', in Lucas F. Mateo-Seco und Juan L. Bastero (eds), *El 'Contra Eunomium I' en la Producción literaria de Gregorio de Nisa (VI Coloquio Internacional sobre Gregorio de Nisa)* (Pamplona, 1988), 247-68, 260-1.

⁶ Gregorius Nyssenius, *In Canticum canticorum* 11, GNO 6, ed. Hermann Langerbeck (Leiden, 1960), 339,14-9: ἐκ μὲν γὰρ τοῦ γνῶναι, ὅτι τοῦ θεοῦ τὸ γνωστὸν κατὰ τὴν τοῦ Παύλου φωνὴν διὰ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου κτίσεως νοούμενον καθορᾶται, τῆς περὶ τῶν ἀκαταλήπτων πολυπραγμοσύνης φεισόμεθα, ὥς ἂν μὴ διὰ τοῦ φυσιολογεῖσθαι τὴν ἀνέφικτόν τε καὶ ἀνεκφώνητον φύσιν ὕλην λάβοι κατὰ τῆς ἀληθείας ἢ αἵρεσις.

⁷ Gregorius Nyssenius, *In Canticum canticorum* 15, GNO 6, 337: οὐπω δὲ κατεῖληφεν ἡ ζητητικὴ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου διάνοια, τί κατ' οὐσίαν ὁ οὐρανὸς ἐστίν ἢ ὁ ἥλιος ἢ ἄλλο τι τῶν φαινομένων ἐν τῇ κτίσει θαυμάτων, τούτου χάριν θροεῖται πρὸς τὴν θεῖαν ἐνέργειαν ἡ καρδία, ὅτι εἰ ταῦτα καταλαβεῖν οὐ χωρεῖ, πῶς τὴν ὑπερκειμένην τούτων καταλήψεται φύσιν;

to greater accentuate this contrast: if human reason cannot manage, even once, to grasp the nature of the smallest living being, namely, the ant, how can it then boast to have comprehended the Creator through its conceptual thought?⁸ And moreover, one must consider that this curiously inquiring, theoretical reason cannot grasp its own essence, that is, the essence of the soul. How could it then be able to theoretically understand the essence of that which is above it!⁹ What this curiously inquiring reason can grasp of God is not his essence, but rather at best the divine ‘activity’ (*energeia*). Due to this, Gregory often calls the divine essence the *apolypragmonêton*, of which the curiously inquiring reason of Aristotelian philosophy is absolutely deprived.¹⁰ However, what Gregory does not want to question is the general possibility of any purposeful, theoretical research or the theoretical investigation of the Divine. In the 6th *Oratio* of *De beatitudinibus* he expresses this explicitly: there are ‘many paths’ of divine knowledge. One of which is to know God on the basis of his creation. But then, this is not to know God in his essence, but as creative wisdom, insofar as it is able to make its ‘activities’ (*energeiai*) visible.¹¹ Knowledge of these effects is, according to Gregory, the function, but also the boundary of theoretical curiosity. Knowledge of essence is not possible for human reason. One might say that Gregory of Nyssa is the John Locke of Ancient

⁸ Vgl. Gregorius Nyssenus, *Contra Eunomium* III 4, GNO 2 (Leiden, 1960), 239. The whole paragraph deals with the nature of the ant (238-239). Essentially, it presents the text of the 16th letter wrongly attributed to Basil and was taken over as authentic in the Byzantine collection of texts by Basilius *Sermones de moribus a Symeone Metaphrasta*.

⁹ Gregorius Nyssenus, *Contra Eunomium* II 117, GNO 1, 260,6: ὁ δ’ ἐαυτὸν ἀγνοῶν πῶς ἂν τι τῶν ὑπὲρ ἑαυτὸν ἐπιγνοίῃ; In *Ecclesiasten* 7, ed. P. Alexander, GNO 5 (Leiden, 1962), 416,1: οὐπω γὰρ ἔγνων, κατὰ γε τὸν ἑμὸν λόγον, ἑαυτὴν ἢ κτίσις, οὐδὲ κατέλαβεν τίς ψυχῆς ἢ οὐσίας, τίς σώματος ἢ φύσις, πόθεν τὰ ὄντα; In *Canticum canticorum* 11, GNO 6, 337,16 (see note 7); In *inscriptiones Psalmorum* II 14, ed. James McDonough, GNO 5, 155,25: αὐτὸ μὲν γὰρ τὸ θεῖον ὅ τί ποτε τῇ φύσει ἐστίν, ἀνέφικτον μένει τῇ ἀνθρωπίνῃ φύσει καὶ ἄληπτον. Also *De mortuis*, ed. Günter Heil, GNO 9 (Leiden, 1967), 44-5, contains a critique of useless and merely theoretical knowledge.

¹⁰ Gregorius Nyssenus, *De vita Moysis* II, ed. Herbert Musurillo, GNO 7.1 (Leiden, 1964) 97,18-19: [...] ἀπολυπραγμόνητον εἶναι χρὴ τῶν ὑπὲρ κατάληψιν ὄντων τὴν κατανόησιν, [...]; *Oratio catechetica*, ed. Ekkehard Mühlenberg, GNO 3.4 (Leiden, 1996) 40,4; *De anima et resurrectione*, ed. Andreas Spira, GNO 3.3 (Leiden, 2014), 93,8-9: [...] ἀπολυπραγμόνητον τὸν λόγον τὸν περὶ τοῦ πῶς ἕκαστόν ἐστι [...]; *Contra Eunomium* II 1, GNO 1, 255,1-2: Καὶ ἄλλως δ’ ἂν τις ἀσφαλὲς εἶναι φήσειεν ἀπολυπραγμόνητον ἔαν τὴν θείαν οὐσίαν ὡς ἀπόρρητον καὶ ἀνέπαφον λογισμοῖς ἀνθρωπίνους; *Contra Eunomium* II 105, GNO 1, 257,21-2: [...] αὐτὴν δὲ τὴν οὐσίαν ὡς οὔτε διανοίᾳ τινὶ χωρητὴν οὔτε λόγῳ φραστὴν ἀπολυπραγμόνητον εἶασε [...]

¹¹ Gregor Nyss., *De beatitudinibus* 6, ed. J.F. Callahan, GNO 7.2, 141,1-27: Πολλοὶ δὲ οἱ τῆς τοιαύτης κατανοήσεως τρόποι. [...] Οὕτως καὶ πρὸς τὸν ἐν τῇ κτίσει βλέποντες κόσμον, ἔννοιαν οὐ τῆς οὐσίας, ἀλλὰ τῆς σοφίας τοῦ κατὰ πάντα σοφῶς πεποιηκότος ἀνατυπούμεθα. [...] Ὁ γὰρ τῇ φύσει ἀόρατος, ὁρατὸς ταῖς ἐνεργείαις γίνεται, ἐν τισι τοῖς περὶ αὐτὸν καθορώμενος. For the difference between the ἐνέργειαι and God’s essence see *De professione Christiana*, ed. Werner Jaeger, GNO 8.1 (Leiden, 1952), 138,14ff.; *Contra Eunomium* I 206, GNO 1, 86,22ff.; *Contra Eunomium* I 426, GNO 1, 150,25ff.

Philosophy.¹² On these grounds, the boundless claims of Aristotelian, conceptual, discursive reason, which believes to be able to grasp the ultimate cause of every beings, has, according to Gregory, to be rejected. Gregory's critique of the Aristotelians' concept of reason even appears to be an early conception of Critical Philosophy in the modern sense. A sentence from Gregory's *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* (415,22) points in this direction: ἐν δὲ τοῖς ὑπερέκεινα μὴ ἐφίεναι τῇ κτίσει τοὺς ἰδίους ὅρους ἐκβαίνειν, ('In the realm of the transcendent, created human reason cannot be permitted to exceed its own boundaries').

Similar to his brother, Basil also expresses his own skepticism towards the possibility of a theoretical knowledge of essences in general, and particularly of a theoretical knowledge of the divine Being. The manner of argumentation is also similar. It is a sign of pride and vanity of those, for example, of the Eunomians, who assert to know the essence of God, that is, to know the essence of the 'Father'. 'I would like to ask them', says Basil, what they claim to be the essence of the earth, whereupon they stand and from which they originate, also in what 'way of comprehending' they seek therewith to support their position, whether on the basis of a *logos* that can be found in the Holy Scriptures or transmitted by the Saints or on the basis of sense perception. But since each of the five senses only has its own formal object – for example, the sense of sight, color –, only the *logos* of the Holy Scriptures remains, which, however, says nothing about the essence of God. Basil wants to say that the God of Christianity is in no way theoretically knowable. He is not the God of Aristotle, but rather the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. As such he is only accessible in the pursuit of virtue, in other words, only in the realm of practical knowledge.¹³ Basil directly contrasted the one way of knowledge with the other.

¹² See Theo Kobusch, 'Zeit und Grenze. Zur Kritik des Gregor von Nyssa an der Einseitigkeit der Naturphilosophie', in S.G. Hall (ed.), *Proceedings of the VIIth International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa, St. Andrews 5.-10. Sept. 1990* (Berlin, 1993), 317; George Karamanolis, *The Philosophy of Early Christianity* (Durham, 2013), 106-7.

¹³ Basilios Caesariensis, *Adversus Eunomium* I, 12, SC 299, 214,27-216,48,; Εἰ δὲ ταῦτα τοῖς εἰς τὸ Παύλου τῆς γνώσεως μέτρον ἐφθακόσιν ἀνέφικτα, πόσος ὁ τύφος τῶν ἐπαγγελλομένων εἰδέναι τοῦ Θεοῦ τὴν οὐσίαν; Οὐς ἡδέως ἂν ἐρωτήσαιμι περὶ τῆς γῆς ἐφ' ἧς ἐστᾶσι, καὶ ἀφ' ἧς γεγόνασι, τί ποτε λέγουσι; τίνα αὐτῆς τὴν οὐσίαν ἀπαγγέλλουσιν ἡμῖν; ἵνα ἂν ἄρα περὶ τῶν χαμαὶ καὶ ὑπὸ τοῖς ποσὶ κειμένων ἀναντιρρήτως διαλεχθῶσι, τότε αὐτοῖς καὶ περὶ τῶν ἐπέκεινα πάσης ἐννοίας διατεινομένοις πιστεῦσωμεν. Τίς οὖν τῆς γῆς ἡ οὐσία; ποῖος τρόπος τῆς καταλήψεως; Ἀποκρινάσθωσαν ἡμῖν, πότερον λόγος ἐφίκετο ταύτης, ἢ αἴσθησις; καὶ εἰ μὲν τὴν αἴσθησιν φήσουσι, ποία τῶν αἰσθήσεών ἐστι καταληπτὴ; Ὅρασει; Ἀλλὰ χρωμάτων ἐστὶν ἀντιληπτικὴ αὕτη. Ἀλλ' ἀφῇ; Καὶ αὕτη σκληρότητος καὶ ἀπαλότητος, καὶ θερμοῦ καὶ ψυχροῦ, καὶ τῶν τοιούτων ἐστὶ διακριτικὴ, ὣν οὐδὲν ἂν τις οὐσίαν εἴποι, μὴ εἰς ἔσχατον παρανοίας ὑπενεχθεῖς. Περὶ γεύσεως δὲ καὶ ὀσφρήσεως τί χρὴ καὶ λέγειν; ὣν ἡ μὲν χυμῶν, ἡ δὲ ἑτέρα τῶν αἰμάτων τὴν ἀντίληψιν ἔχει. Ἀκοῇ δὲ νόφω ἐστὶ καὶ φωνῶν αἰσθητικὴ, τῶν οὐδεμίαν ἐχόντων πρὸς τὴν γῆν οἰκειότητα. Λεῖπεται οὖν τῷ λόγῳ φάσκειν αὐτοὺς τὴν οὐσίαν αὐτῆς εὐρηκέναι. Ποίῳ τούτῳ; ποῦ τῆς Γραφῆς κειμένῳ; ὑπὸ τίνος τῶν ἁγίων παραδοθέντι; *ibid.*, 13, 218,22-31: Ὅθεν καὶ οὗτοι οὐδὲ τῆς γῆς, ἣν καταπατοῦσι, τὴν φύσιν, ἥτις

In his Homily on the martyr Mammes of Caesarea, he asks what knowledge actually is then. He clearly says what knowledge is not: it does not mean to think, with the aid of curiously inquiring reason (*polypragmosynē*), essences, to measure the size of something, to search for a transcendent being neither to think what cannot be seen by virtue of ‘*epinoia*’, that is human, finite reason. To ‘know’ God, simply means to fulfill his commandments.¹⁴ In this way, Basil underscores the possibility of a practical knowledge of God.

Also in the thought of Gregory of Nazianzus one can perceive a general skepticism towards the capability of human knowledge. In fact, when one looks closely, the critique of the optimism of knowledge coming from Greek Philosophy and being upheld by Eunomius of Cyzicus is even more profound than in Basil and Gregory of Nyssa. In numerous places of his work, particularly in his so-called ‘*Theological Discourses*’, Gregory of Nazianzus emphasizes the impossibility of knowledge of the divine Being.¹⁵ Albeit, what is in our context of special importance, is the fact that along the lines of negative theology, he often connects a general doubt with the human power of knowing. Every truth and every speech, according to Gregory, is difficult to be traced and made object of theoretical knowledge. This is due to the fact that ‘we’ seek to comprehend vast things with a small cognitive apparatus, like when we pursue, with our human wisdom, to know ‘what is’ or want to grasp the Intelligible with our senses (or at least not without them), which will at the very least lead us astray. In this sense it is not possible to grasp ‘with naked mind the naked things’, that is to say, to know the ‘naked truth’ of things.¹⁶ And if one wants to clarify in the manner of natural science (*physiologêsō*) the Divine Begetting, the same thing happens: the truth will inevitably be missed. Yes, our knowledge already fails to understand ‘what is beneath our feet’. ‘We are not able to count the

ἐστιν, ἐπιστάμενοι, αὐτὴν ἐμβατεύειν τὴν οὐσίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ τῶν ὅλων ἀλαζονεύονται. Καὶ τοῖς μὲν ἁγίοις αὐτοῦ ὁ Θεὸς, τῷ Ἀβραάμ καὶ τῷ Ἰσαὰκ καὶ τῷ Ἰακώβ, ὧν διὰ τὸ εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρετὴν τελεῖν, καὶ τὸ Θεὸς ὀνομάζεσθαι ὥς τι ἐξαιρετον καὶ πρέπον τῇ ἑαυτοῦ μεγαλειότητι προετίμησε, λέγων ἑαυτὸν Θεὸν Ἀβραάμ, καὶ Θεὸν Ἰσαὰκ, καὶ Θεὸν Ἰακώβ· «*Τοῦτο γάρ μου ἐστὶν ὄνομα αἰώνιον, φησὶ, καὶ μνημόσυνον γενεῶν γενεαῖς*».

¹⁴ Basilus Caesariensis, *In Mamantem martyrem*, PG 31, 597,1-13: Γινώσκειν ἄρα τί λέγει; τὴν οὐσίαν νοεῖν; τὸ μέγεθος ἐκμετρεῖν; Ἐκεῖνα κατανοεῖσθαι τῆς θεότητος, ἃ σὺ τῇ σεαυτοῦ θρασυστομίᾳ κατεπαγγέλλῃ; Ἦ ἐκ τῶν κατόπιν οὐ νοεῖς τὸ μέτρον τῆς γνώσεως; Τί γινώσκωμεν Θεοῦ; Τὰ ἐμὰ πρόβατα τῆς φωνῆς μου ἀκούει. Ἴδε πῶς νοεῖται Θεός· ἐκ τοῦ ἀκούειν ἡμᾶς τῶν ἐντολῶν αὐτοῦ· ἐκ τοῦ ἀκούοντα ποιεῖν. Τοῦτο γνῶσις Θεοῦ, τήρησις ἐντολῶν Θεοῦ. Πῶς οὐ πολυπραγμοσύνη περὶ οὐσίας Θεοῦ; οὐ ζητήσις τῶν ὑπερκοσμίων; οὐκ ἐπίνοια τῶν ἀοράτων; *Γινώσκει με τὰ ἐμὰ, καὶ γινώσκω τὰ ἐμά*. Ἀρκεῖ σοι εἰδέναι, ὅτι ποιμὴν καλός· ὅτι ἔθηκε τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ὑπὲρ τῶν προβάτων. Οὗτος ὁρος τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐπιγνώσεως.

¹⁵ Gregorius Nazianzenus, *Or.* 28,4, ed. Paul Gallay, Maurice Jourjon, SC 250 (Paris, 1978), 108,11.

¹⁶ See Gregorius Nazianzenus, *Or.* 28,21, ed. Paul Gallay, Maurice Jourjon, SC 250 (1978), 142-4. For the notion of the ‘naked truth’ see Ralf Konersmann, ‘Wahrheit, nackte’, in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* 12, ed. by Joachim Ritter, Karlfried Gründer and Gottfried Gabriel (Basel, 2004), 148-54.

grains of sand on the shore of the sea, or the drops of rain or the days of cosmic time. Even less so are we able to penetrate into the depths of the godhead and give an account of the inexpressible and supra-rational nature'.¹⁷ It is, as with Gregory of Nyssa, the *polypragmosynê* – the Aristotelian, discursive, curiously inquiring reason of natural philosophy – which is the object of critique here.¹⁸ Those who claim to be able to speak to that which lies above human nature do not even know that which lies before their feet, neither the inner nature of the human being nor the nature of things.¹⁹ Furthermore, Gregory chalks up curiously inquiring reason as an error, that is, as a sign of a lack of education, to have attempted to think of the self-presence of something (*heautô parestin*). However, the historian of philosophy has to stress concerning this point that the idea of the constant self-presence of the Intellect not only for Aristotelians but also for Plotinus had long been taken for granted.²⁰

2. The practical path

Hence it is not theoretical knowledge through which the human being is connected to God, instead through the practical one, that is, what depends on the will and virtues. The precondition for it is that the concept of 'virtue' has a univocal meaning, *i.e.* the same meaning for God and humanity, as was already said by the Stoics and taken over by Clement of Alexandria, Origen and the Cappadocian Fathers. I attempted to show that with regard to Gregory of Nyssa in Rome at the XIIIth International Gregory of Nyssa Congress in 2014. However, we already find this conviction in Basil. His small but significant text *Quod deus non est auctor malorum* is a kind of Christian theodicy. Such a work is clearly determined by Origen's criticism against the established antinomy in Gnosticism between 'constitution' (*kataskewê*) and 'freedom' (*prohairesis*). Therein the question is raised, why God did not already embed the impossibility of sin in human Nature, in one's 'constitution', so that one would not feel the desire to sin? Basil's answer is of a disarming clarity: as the servants acquire the goodwill of the master, when they fulfill their tasks voluntarily and not under coercion, so loves God above all the voluntarily virtuous act, not the forced one. Virtue does arise from free will (*prohairesis*), not from coercion. Free will rests upon 'that which lies within us'. But that within us is what is in our power (*autexusion*). Had God endowed our constitution with the

¹⁷ Gregorius Nazianzenus, *Or.* 31,8, ed. Gallay, Jourjon, SC 250 (1978), 290.

¹⁸ While in *Or.* 31,8, the Divine Begetting is the object of 'physiologeîn', it is the object of the 'polypragmoneîn' in *Or.* 29,11, SC 250 (1978), 200,16. See also *Or.* 20,11, ed. Justin Mossay, Guy Lafontaine, SC 270 (Paris, 1980), 78-80. See Johannes Chrysostomus, *In epistulam I ad Thessalonicenses*, PG 62, 437.

¹⁹ Gregorius Nazianzenus, *Or.* 28,29, SC 250 (1978), 166,1-5.

²⁰ Gregorius Nazianzenus, *Or.* 29,9; SC 250 (1978), 196,33-8, See Plotinus, *Enn.* V 3,9,22.

impossibility of sin, he would have given preference to what is without reason or motion or impulse over what is deliberated and practical.²¹ This argument most clearly demonstrates that Basil also saw virtue, freedom and thereby the practical as the connecting link between humanity and God, and also God and man. Consequently, he sees the will as the root cause of the separation.²²

Finally, we can observe the primacy of the practical realm in Gregory of Nazianzus too. In his eulogy of Athanasius, he states that whoever praises virtue praises God, who has given the virtue to humanity. Again, it is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – that is to say, it was not the Aristotelian God who has given humanity such a ‘great and charitable’ gift, namely, the ability to ‘incline toward and become familiar with’ God on this practical path.²³ Additionally, Gregory – entirely in a Platonic sense – sees the nobility in the preservation of his ‘being image’ and the effort to ‘become like’ the Archetype, something which virtue makes possible. This ‘forms’ the Godly and the knowledge ‘whence, whereby and whereupon we come into being’.²⁴

In conclusion: Although the Cappadocian Fathers, as represented in the figure of Gregory of Nyssa, praised ingenuity of human reason, generally they did not assess the worth of the theoretical knowledge of essence very highly, and specifically they held the theoretical knowledge of the essence of God to be impossible. Instead, they favored the practical way to God. Negative theology, or rather the elements of negative theology in the Cappadocian Fathers has to be restricted to the boundaries of the theoretical realm. Morality in contrast has a univocal meaning for God and the human being.

²¹ Basilus, *Quod deus non est auctor malorum*, PG 31, 345,21-31: Ἀλλὰ διὰ τί οὐκ ἐν τῇ κατασκευῇ τὸ ἀναμάρτητον ἐσχομεν, φησὶν, ὥστε μηδὲ βουλομένοις ἡμῖν ὑπάρχειν τὸ ἁμαρτάνειν; Ὅτι καὶ σὺ τοὺς οἰκέτας, οὐχ ὅταν δεσμίους ἔχῃς, εὖνους ὑπολαμβάνεις, ἀλλ’ ὅταν ἐκουσίως ἴδῃς ἀποπληροῦντάς σοι τὰ καθήκοντα. Καὶ Θεῷ τοίνυν οὐ τὸ ἡναγκασμένον φίλον, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἐξ ἀρετῆς κατορθούμενον. Ἀρετὴ δὲ ἐκ προαιρέσεως, καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἀνάγκης γίνεται Προαίρεσις δὲ τῶν ἐφ’ ἡμῖν ἥρτηται. Τὸ δὲ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν ἐστὶ τὸ αὐτεξούσιον. Ὁ τοίνυν μεμφόμενος τὸν ποιητὴν ὡς μὴ φυσικῶς κατασκευάσαντα ἡμᾶς ἀναμάρτητους, οὐδὲν ἕτερον ἢ τὴν ἄλογον φύσιν τῆς λογικῆς προτιμᾷ, καὶ τὴν ἀκίνητον καὶ ἀνόρμητον τῆς προαιρετικῆς καὶ ἐμπράκτου. For the anti-manichean background of the distinction between *kaskeue* and *pro-hairesis* see Theo Kobusch, *Christliche Philosophie* (Darmstadt 2006), 106-11.

²² Basilus, *Ep.* 203,3, ed. Yves Courtonne, vol. 2 (Paris, 1961): Οὐδὲν ἡμᾶς χωρίζει ἀπ’ ἀλλήλων, ἀδελφοί, ἐὰν μὴ τῇ προαιρέσει τὸν χωρισμὸν ὑποστώμεν.

²³ Gregorius Nazianzenus, *Or.* 21,1, ed. Mossay, Lafontaine, SC 270 (1978), 110-2: καθ’ ὃ καὶ Ἀβραάμ, καὶ Ἰσαάκ, καὶ Ἰακώβ ἀκούει Θεός, ὁ Θεός, ὡς οὐ νεκρῶν Θεός, ἀλλὰ ζώντων. Ἀρετὴν δὲ ἐπαινῶν, Θεὸν ἐπαινέσομαι, παρ’ οὗ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἡ ἀρετὴ, καὶ τὸ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἀνάγεσθαι, ἢ ἐπανάγεσθαι διὰ τῆς συγγενεοῦς ἐλλάμψεως. Πολλῶν γὰρ ὄντων ἡμῖν καὶ μεγάλων, οὐ μὲν οὖν εἴποι τις ἂν ἡλίκων καὶ ὅσων, ὧν ἐκ Θεοῦ ἔχομεν τε καὶ ἔξομεν· τοῦτο μέγιστον καὶ φιланθρωπότατον, ἢ πρὸς αὐτὸν νεύσις τε καὶ οἰκείωσις. See also *Or.* 7, 4, ed. Marie-Ange Calvet-Sebasti, SC 405 (Paris, 1995), 188,13-4: [...] ἡ ἀρετὴ καὶ ἡ πρὸς τὸ κρεῖττον οἰκείωσις.

²⁴ Gregorius Nazianzenus, *Or.* 8, 6, ed. Calvet-Sebasti, SC 405 (1995), 256,14-8: Εὐγένεια δὲ ἡ τῆς εἰκόνος τήρησις καὶ ἡ πρὸς τὸ ἀρχέτυπον ἐξομοίωσις, ἣν ἐργάζεται λόγος καὶ ἀρετὴ, καὶ καθαρὸς πόθος, αἰεὶ καὶ μᾶλλον μορφῶν κατὰ Θεὸν τοὺς γνησίους τῶν ἄνω μύστας, καὶ τὸ γινώσκειν ὅθεν καὶ τίνες καὶ εἰς ὃ γεγόναμεν.

Gregory Nyssen's and Evagrius' Biographical and Theological Relations: Origen's Heritage and Neoplatonism

Ilaria RAMELLI, Catholic University Milan, Italy; Angelicum &
Princeton University, USA; Oxford University, UK

ABSTRACT

I shall preliminarily revisit, in short, biographical links between Nyssen and Evagrius (pointing to a closer relationship than usually assumed), and then focus on some major theological and philosophical points that suggest a significant influence of Nyssen's thought on Evagrius, in addition to Nazianzen's influence. For instance, Evagrius' characteristic doctrine of the subsumption of body into soul and soul into intellect is traced by Eriugena (who, like Maximus, followed it) back to Nyssen. I shall argue that Eriugena was right with respect to this and other cases of theological influence of Nyssen on Evagrius, including the *apokatastasis* doctrine that Nyssen and Evagrius supported in a radical form, although it was becoming controversial in their time. Allusions to Gregory also lurk behind several of Evagrius' references to his teachers. Evagrius' Christology, misunderstood as subordinationist, reveals itself as Nyssian and Origenian. Also Evagrius' dynamic notion of the protological and eschatological unity are in line with Origen's and particularly Nyssen's, and have little to do with pantheism and the views condemned under Justinian. Even Evagrius' anthropology is consistent with Origen's and Gregory's: none of them maintained the pre-existence of bare souls, often attached to Origen (under the unwarranted assumption that Nyssen rejected Origen's theory). Even Evagrius' conviction that wealth is tantamount to theft and that asceticism has much to do with justice comes very close to the line of Origen and, especially, of Nyssen. But there are a number of other larger and smaller points of convergence between Evagrius and Nyssen, some also involving specific exegetical details. A painstaking reassessment of the relation of Evagrius' true thought to Nyssen's is showing that Evagrius was, like Nyssen, authentically Origenian, and not radically 'Origenistic', as he has often been depicted on the basis of the identification of the Origenistic tenets condemned under Justinian with Evagrius' own ideas.

Evagrius was a faithful follower of Origen and of his close disciple Gregory Nyssen, as well as of Nazianzen, who was also an Origenian.¹ It has been often

¹ Besides possibly the *Philocalia*, and what I pointed out in *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena* (Leiden, 2013), 440-61, see Joseph Trigg, 'Knowing God in the Theological Orations of Gregory of Nazianzus. The Heritage

missed by scholarship that Evagrius was an Origenian, more than an Origenist: he stuck to Origen's true thought, like Nyssen, his other great inspirer. Indeed, Evagrius was not – as Guillaumont famously suggested, followed by many – an Origenist of the kind of those who radicalised and altered Origen's legacy, such as those condemned under Justinian in AD 543 and 553.² A reassessment like that of Origen's true ideas – beyond the construals inherited from the Origenistic controversy and partially still holding today – which is needed, and is underway, is also needed for Evagrius' ideas, with respect both to a *holistic* vision of his production against an inveterate dichotomy between his philosophical and his ascetic works – the former accepted, the latter deemed dangerous – and to his often misunderstood 'Origenism'. Particularly in relation to the former issue, helpful work has been done, for instance, by Kevin Corrigan, Julia Konstantinovskiy, Augustine Casiday, and Monica Tobon.

For both a holistic assessment of Evagrius' production and a correction of misunderstandings related to his 'Origenism', it is necessary to recover Origen's true thought, determine its impact on Evagrius' system, and investigate the Cappadocians' role in the transmission of Origen's authentic ideas to Evagrius. Nyssen is arguably the most insightful follower of Origen. A study of his reception of Origen's philosophy and theology is showing more and more that Gregory is the patristic philosopher-theologian who best grasped Origen's ideas.³ I shall suggest that Nyssen's ideas were more influential on Evagrius than is usually assumed.

Even some biographical data may prove significant in this connection.⁴ Evagrius was ordained a reader by Basil. After the latter's death, he moved to Constantinople to study, according to Socrates and Sozomen, with Nazianzen. He participated in the 381 Council as a deacon. Here, Nyssen surely played a core role. Evagrius was ordained deacon by Nazianzen according to Socrates, *HE* 4.23, but Palladius rather indicates Nyssen. Unlike Socrates and Sozomen, Palladius had known Evagrius personally,⁵ and had been a personal disciple of Evagrius (*HL* 23). He devoted to Evagrius a whole chapter of his *Lausiac*

of Origen', in Wolfgang Bienert (ed.), *Origeniana VII* (Leuven, 1999), 83-104: Gregory 'knew Origen's work and held it in high esteem' (83). Trigg suggests that 'we look for Origen's influence not so much in individual doctrines, as in a pervasive pattern of thought' (86). Under Alexander Severus (222-235), Firmilian of Caesarea in Cappadocia invited Origen to his city, and in turn went to Palestine to study with Origen (Eus., *HE* 6.27); Gregory Nazianzen himself later visited Caesarea in Palestine (*Or.* 7.6). For Claudio Moreschini, *Filosofia e letteratura in Gregorio di Nazianzo* (Milan, 1997), 309, Gregory was 'the most consistently Origenian of the major Cappadocian thinkers after Gregory the Wonderworker'.

² On these see soon István Perczel, *Origénistes ou théosophes? Histoire doctrinale et politique d'un mouvement des V^e-VI^e siècles* (Paris, forthcoming).

³ A monograph will eventually stem from this systematic investigation.

⁴ See my 'Evagrius and Gregory: Nazianzen or Nyssen? A Remarkable Issue that Bears on the Cappadocian (and Origenian) Influence on Evagrius', *GRBS* 53 (2013), 117-37.

⁵ *HL* 12, 23, 24, 35, 38, 47.

History, and in Ch. 86 he speaks of Evagrius very highly. Palladius was an Origenian monk himself and a friend of the Origenian 'Tall Brothers', Rufinus, and Melania the Elder, all close friends of Evagrius. Thus, Palladius is a source worthy of consideration. In *HL* 86 (PG 34, 1188C), Palladius reports that *Nyssen* – 'the brother of the bishop Basil' and 'the bishop of Nyssa' – ordained Evagrius and was a close friend of his. Palladius here extols Nyssen – the closest follower of Origen and the spiritual father of Evagrius – as supremely wise and free from passions. Palladius profoundly admired both Origen and Evagrius.

The relationship between Nyssen and Evagrius might go back to the former's sojourn in Iborā, in late 379-380. In *HL* 86 Palladius goes on to say: 'When he left, saint Gregory the bishop handed Evagrius to the blessed bishop Nectarius at the great Council of Constantinople. For Evagrius was most skilled in dialectics against all heresies'. Gregory is generally identified with Nazianzen, but the Gregory whom Palladius mentions in the immediately preceding sentence is Nyssen. Likewise, the source of Socrates, *HE* 4.23, about a Gregory who went to Egypt with Evagrius, likely referred to Nyssen, since Nazianzen never went to Egypt or Jerusalem after the council of Constantinople, but Nyssen after Constantinople travelled to Jerusalem late in 381 and in 382.⁶ He may have gone from Jerusalem to Egypt with Evagrius, who left Constantinople hurriedly and travelled to Jerusalem (382), where he frequented Melania and Rufinus. Melania, as the head of the double monastery where Rufinus too lived, gave Evagrius monastic garb, and suggested leaving for the Egyptian desert. Evagrius first headed to coenobitic Nitria, then hermitic Kellia, where he remained until his death (399).

If Nyssen was with Evagrius in Jerusalem and Egypt, or was in contact with Melania and Evagrius, this would explain the reason why Nyssen's *De anima et resurrectione* was translated into Coptic in Egypt very early, possibly during his lifetime.⁷ Nyssen in that dialogue, like Evagrius after him, supported Origen's *apokatastasis* doctrine. Nyssen was also in Arabia – close to Palestine and Egypt – shortly after 381: the Council of Constantinople sent Gregory to a church there, for correcting them. While he was in Arabia, Gregory, by request of 'those who oversee the holy churches of Jerusalem',⁸ visited Jerusalem, just when Evagrius was there at Melania's and Rufinus' monastery. Evagrius' friends and admirers, the Tall Brothers, after being chased from Egypt by Theophilus, were received by Deacon Olympia, the dedicatee of the Origenian *Homilies on the Song of Songs* by Nyssen, who in the *Prologue* calls her with deference σεμνοπρεπεστάτη, 'most reverend', a title used for bishops.

⁶ Nyssen, *Ep.* 3.

⁷ See my 'Evagrius and Gregory' (2013) and 'Il contributo della versione copta all'edizione del *De anima et resurrectione* di Gregorio di Nissa', *Exemplaria Classica* n.s. 10 (2006), 191-243.

⁸ Nyssen, *Ep.* 12.2, GNO 8/2, 17.

Konstantinovsky is right to remark that Evagrius' ideas are not very similar to those of 'the Cappadocians';⁹ they are not too similar to those of Basil, but quite similar to those of Nyssen, for instance in metaphysics, psychology, anthropology, social thought, Christology, and eschatology. Nyssen in turn was the most perceptive follower of Origen (hence, among much else, his outspoken adhesion to Origen's doctrine of universal restoration or *apokatastasis*¹⁰). Origen and Nyssen, together with Nazianzen, seem to have been Evagrius' most prominent inspirers.

Nyssen, the most faithfully Origenian of Evagrius' friends, probably ordained him a deacon and was with him in Palestine and Egypt. These circumstances also help to explain Evagrius' acquaintance with Nyssen's thought. Remarkable parallels between Evagrius' and Nyssen's ideas, from protology to eschatology, from theology to anthropology, are emerging more and more. A systematic assessment of the relationship between Evagrius' and Nyssen's ideas is an important *desideratum*, although Corrigan has offered some suggestive insights.¹¹ Gregory also indirectly transmitted Origen's ideas to Evagrius, who seems to have had direct access to them as well.

Evagrius may allude to Nyssen more than once in his works. In *Praktikos* 89, Evagrius expounds the tripartition of the soul according to Plato, with the relevant virtues that are proper to each part of the soul, crowned by justice, which is a virtue of the whole soul. This is the theory of the four 'cardinal virtues'. Evagrius takes over Plato's definition of justice, but attributes it to his own 'wise teacher'.¹² Palladius' above-mentioned definition of Nyssen in *HL* 86, as supremely wise and free from passions, is very close and possibly taken from Evagrius himself. It is usually assumed that this teacher in *Prakt.* 89.4 is Nazianzen, e.g. by Antoine and Claire Guillaumont.¹³ Columba Stewart¹⁴ admits that Nazianzen is unlikely to have conveyed this doctrine to Evagrius, but does not suggest another channel. Evagrius, I surmise, may have meant Nyssen, who used this doctrine extensively in *De anima* and elsewhere. As I offered, *De anima* was circulated in Egypt, and soon translated into Coptic, possibly thanks to the influence of Evagrius there. Evagrius' sympathy for this dialogue was also determined by its defence of the *apokatastasis* doctrine, which Evagrius too upheld.

⁹ Julia Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius Ponticus: The Making of a Gnostic* (Burlington, Vt., 2009), chs. 3-6.

¹⁰ Morwenna Ludlow, *Universal Salvation: Eschatology in the Thought of Gregory of Nyssa and Karl Rahner* (Oxford, 2000); my *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis* (2013), 372-440; now also Rowan Greer, *One Path for All: Gregory of Nyssa on the Christian Life and Human Destiny* (Eugene, OR, 2015).

¹¹ Kevin Corrigan, *Evagrius and Gregory: Mind, Soul and Body in the Fourth Century* (Burlington, 2009).

¹² Κατὰ τὸν σοφὸν ἡμῶν διδάσκαλον, 89.4.

¹³ Antoine and Claire Guillaumont, *Évagre le Pontique. Traité pratique ou Le moine* (Paris, 1971), 680-9.

¹⁴ Columba Stewart, 'Monastic Attitudes toward Philosophy and Philosophers', *SP* 47 (2010), 321-8, esp. 324.

If the 'wise teacher' of justice is Nyssen, 'Gregory the Just' mentioned in the epilogue of Evagrius' *Praktikos*, too, may be Nyssen. This is probably the same person mentioned in *Gnostikos* 44, where Evagrius, speaking again of Plato's cardinal virtues, adopts an agricultural metaphor that is likely to be inspired by Nyssen: 'There are four virtues necessary for contemplation, according to the teaching of Gregory the Just: prudence, courage, temperance, and justice ... The reception of the first planter's seed and the rejection of what is sown secondarily – this is the proper work of continence, according to Gregory's explanation'. Given the extensive allegory of God as the first planter in Nyssen's *De anima*, and given his description of passions and vice as *epigennēmata* that must be rejected in a life of virtue and asceticism (the very same depiction given by Nyssen), Gregory the Just, generally supposed to be Nazianzen, may be Nyssen.

Indeed, Evagrius draws on Nyssen's agricultural allegories also elsewhere. In *KG* 2.25 ('Just as this body is called the seed of the future ear, so will also this aeon be called seed of the one that will come after it'), Evagrius is relying on *1Cor.* 15, on which Nyssen commented at the end of *De anima*, explaining through the seed-ear imagery the mystery of the resurrection-restoration.¹⁵ In presenting God as the good cultivator who assists the process of development of his plants, liberating them from illnesses and weeds, *i.e.* sins and passions, Gregory was reminiscent of Philo's *De agricultura*,¹⁶ and of Origen, who also used agricultural imagery. Now Evagrius in *KG* 2.25 extends the seed-ear metaphor – used by Paul in *1Cor.* 15 and Nyssen in *De anima* with reference to the dead and resurrected body – to the present and the future aeon. Both the present body and the present aeon are the germ of the body and the aeon to come. Both continuity and transformation are implied here. The consequences of the moral choices of rational creatures in a given aeon will determine the shape and characteristics of the next.¹⁷

¹⁵ See my full commentary in *Gregorio di Nissa sull'Anima e la Resurrezione* (Milan, 2007), reviewed by Panayiotis Tzamalikos, *VC* 62 (2008), 515-23; Mark Edwards, *JHE* 60,4 (2009), 764-5; Miguel Herrero de Háuregui, *Ilū* 13 (2008), 334-6; Giulio Maspero, *ZAC* 15 (2011), 592-4; Francesco Corsaro, *Augustinianum* 51 (2011), 556-9; received by Mark Edwards, *Catholicity and Heresy in the Early Church* (Ashgate, 2009), 1 and 128; by Margaret Mitchell, *Corinthians, First Epistle to the*, in *EBR* (Berlin, 2009), 4:774-8; by Thomas Graumann, 'Zum Verhältnis von Staat und Kirche in der Spätantike. Studien zu politischen, sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Fragen', *JEH* 60,4 (2009), 763-4; by Alain Le Boulluec, 'La fonction des images et des comparaisons dans le Dialogue sur l'âme et la résurrection de Grégoire de Nyse', *Chôra* 9-10 (2011); by Ellen Muehlberger, 'Salvage: Macrina and the Christian Project of Cultural Reclamation', *Church History* 81 (2012), 273-97; by Ovidiu Sferlea, 'L'infinité divine chez Grégoire de Nyse', *VC* 67 (2013), 137-69, 161.

¹⁶ See the English translation and commentary by David Runia and Albert Geljon, *Philo of Alexandria, De Agricultura* (Leiden, 2012).

¹⁷ See *KG* 2.14 and my commentary in *Evagrius Ponticus' Kephalaia Gnostica* (Leiden-Atlanta, 2015).

Evagrius uses theologico-agricultural metaphors also in *KG* 4.1: ‘God planted rational creatures for himself. His Wisdom, in turn, has grown in them, while she read them writings of all sorts’. The Divinity created the *logika/noes* for itself, that they might be recipients of it.¹⁸ God’s Wisdom, Christ-Logos, who is their creator, must grow in them through education, here expressed by the ‘reading’ metaphor – along the lines of Christ’s characterisation as *παιδαγωγός* and teacher, dear to Clement and Origen. The agricultural metaphor of God-planter, who planted the *logika* for himself and oversees their growth, was developed by Nyssen with respect to both protology and eschatology. Evagrius seems to have had Gregory’s theological imagery at the back of his mind.

In *KG* 1.24, too, Evagrius draws on Paul’s assimilation of human bodies to seeds and crops in *1Cor.* 15, on which Nyssen also heavily drew in *De anima*. The seed is the human mortal body, which returns to the earth and dies; the ear is the resurrected body, which comes from the seed, that is, from the death of the mortal body. The risen body is still liable to purifying punishment in the other world if this is needed. Nyssen even allegorised this purification by means of the imagery of God the farmer who takes care of the wheat plants in the ways they need, including the most drastic ways, and this metaphor used by him at the end of *De anima* was taken over by Evagrius at the end of his *Letter to Melania*, in a similar eschatological context.¹⁹ Once purification has taken place, everyone will have back its initial ear, as planned by God. This represents the incorruptible, glorious, and luminous spiritual body that characterised rational creatures before the fall and will characterise them at apokatas-tasis. The conclusive metaphor in Evagrius’ *Letter to Melania* is that of God as a merciful farmer: ‘the earth will be blessed, and the farmer, the soil, and those who have been fed will sing glory and praise to the First Farmer, to whom all the seeds of blessing belong, in eternity’. The same metaphor concludes Nyssen’s *De anima*: God, the good farmer, will take care even of the most damaged seeds and make sure that absolutely all of them become fruitful. All these ‘agricultural’ convergences further suggest that Gregory the Just, who spoke about the first planter’s seed and the rejection of what is sown secondarily, may have been Nyssen.

Nyssen is probably also the ‘wise teacher’ mentioned by Evagrius in *KG* 6.51: ‘If it is true that the intelligent part is the most excellent among all the faculties of the soul, because this alone is joined to wisdom, then the first of all virtues is knowledge. Our wise teacher, indeed, called this too “spirit of filial adoption”’. Being adopted by God as children means, according to Evagrius and his

¹⁸ Cf. *KG* 2.80 and *KG* 3.24 and the relevant commentaries in my *Evagrius*.

¹⁹ See the analysis of this letter I provide in the introductory essay of *Evagrius*; for *De anima*, see *ead.*, ‘Gregory of Nyssa on the Soul (and the Restoration): From Plato to Origen’, in *Gregory of Nyssa: Historical and Philosophical Perspectives* (Oxford, forthcoming).

unnamed teacher, reaching knowledge. This is clear if one keeps in mind Evagrius' definition of the Trinity as 'essential knowledge'. The identification of the spirit of adoption (*Rom.* 8:15) with knowledge is here attributed to Evagrius' 'wise teacher'. Now, Nyssen commented on *Rom.* 8:15 thrice: *In Cant.* 4 (115.14); *Eun.* 1.572; and *Eun.* 3.8.53. In the first passage, Gregory links the acquisition of the spirit of filial adoption with the third ascent of the soul, in which the soul looks at the Father and Son and becomes daughter of the Father and sister of the Son. This ascent is performed through knowledge and coincides with the acquisition of the spirit of adoption. Evagrius appears to be very much in line with this. If Nyssen inspired Evagrius here, and is therefore identifiable with his 'wise teacher', as he may be identifiable with 'Gregory the Just', this would point again to a greater importance of Nyssen in Evagrius' thought than is generally assumed.

Nyssen might also lurk behind an allusion in *KG* 6.45: 'Not one of the worlds/aeons was more excellent than the first. This, indeed, they say was made out of the principal/original mixture/quality. And that in it all the aeons will be perfected, a minister and gnostic taught us'. Syriac *gzry*', which Guillaumont tentatively translated 'athlète',²⁰ is rendered by Michael Sokoloff 'magistrate' in reference to officers who carry out judgment.²¹ In a spiritual sense, this may well refer to a minister of the church, or a spiritually advanced person endowed with judgment. The conceptual framework in which this *kephalaion* must be read seems to be that of *apokatastasis*, since it appears to link the ultimate *telos*, in which all the aeons will find their perfection, with the beginning. The 'gnostic' to whom Evagrius refers as an authority might be Origen, or Nyssen, or some other Origenian, all being supporters of *apokatastasis*. Both Origen and Gregory were ministers in the church; Origen was a presbyter and Gregory even a bishop.

Rufinus translated Evagrius' works as well as those by Origen. Melania and Rufinus, with their scriptorium and their relations, likely also contributed to the spread of Evagrius' Greek works. Others, too, translated some of Evagrius' oeuvre into Latin, as the existence of two Latin versions of Evagrius' *Ad virginem* indicate. Jerome also was an admirer of Evagrius, at least for a while; in Letter 4.2 he called him 'reverend presbyter'. However, after his abrupt U-turn against Origen, he became hostile to Evagrius as well. This obviously means that he perceived Evagrius as a close follower of Origen, as Nyssen also was. These two, Origen and Nyssen, together with Nazianzen, also an Origenian, arguably exerted the strongest influence on Evagrius.

²⁰ Antoine Guillaumont (ed. and trans.), *Les six centuries des Kephalaia gnostica* (Paris, 1958), 235.

²¹ *A Syriac Lexicon. A Translation from the Latin, Correction, Expansion, and Update of C. Brockelmann's Lexicon Syriacum* (Winona Lake, 2009), 224.

As is well known, Antoine Guillaumont deemed the S_2 redaction of Evagrius' *Kephalaia Gnostika* original, and S_1 expurgated.²² I basically agree with this view, received by virtually all scholars, although I doubt the validity of the related claims by Guillaumont that Philoxenus of Mabbug was the author of S_1 ²³ and, especially, that Evagrius' own ideas were condemned under Justinian. Casiday is right to question this last point, which I also doubt, although his argument that S_1 is Evagrius' original redaction and S_2 a later reworking in a radicalising Origenistic sense²⁴ is far from certain. I have shown throughout my commentary on the *Kephalaia Gnostika* that S_2 is perfectly consistent with Origen's authentic ideas (rather than being a radicalised version close to sixth-century Origenism of the kind condemned under Justinian), with Nyssen's ideas, and with other works by Evagrius himself, including his very 'Cappadocian' *Letter on Faith* and his *Letter to Melania*.

Thus, in the *Kephalaia Gnostika*, S_2 , I see not so much what was condemned by Justinian, as Evagrius' original reception of Origen's and Nyssen's ideas. This is likely to be Evagrius' own product. S_1 is probably an expurgated version, possibly very ancient (Evagrius himself might have provided an alternative redaction, though I do not deem this too probable), but expurgated in an anti-Origenian sense, just as we have expurgated versions of the *Dialogue of Adamantius*, the *Historia monachorum in Aegypto*, or of Eriugena's translations of Nyssen's *De hominis opificio*. In these works, as I have argued elsewhere, the parts that were dropped in the expurgated redactions were all expressions of Origenian ideas, mainly those concerning *apokatastasis*.²⁵ This is why in my recent translation and commentary I chose to translate S_2 , exclusively sticking to the Syriac. For 'none of the surviving Greek fragments of the *Gnostic Chapters* can be dated before the Second [sc. Origenistic] Controversy'.²⁶ As a consequence, these cannot be taken to be always and necessarily direct quotations from Evagrius.

The vigorous Origenian Eriugena interestingly traced a core doctrine of Evagrius back to Nyssen, thus pointing to Evagrius' indebtedness to Gregory. Evagrius' notion of the eschatological transformation of body into soul and soul

²² He argued so for the first time in 'Le texte véritable des *Gnostica* d'Évagre le Pontique', *RHR* 142 (1952), 156-205.

²³ See John Watt, 'Philoxenus and the Old Syriac Version of Evagrius' Centuries', *Oriens Christianus* 64 (1980), 65-81; *id.*, 'The Syriac Adapter of Evagrius' Centuries', *SP* 17.3 (1982), 1388-95; Ilaria Ramelli, 'Philoxenus and Babai. Authentic and Interpolated Versions of Evagrius's Works?', in *ead.*, *Apokatastasis* (2013), 512-4.

²⁴ Augustine Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus* (Cambridge, 2013), 49, 69-70, and *passim*.

²⁵ See my *Apokatastasis* (2013), 215-21 on the *Dialogue*, 773-815 on Eriugena, and in more detail about the *Dialogue*: 'The *Dialogue of Adamantius*: A Document of Origen's Thought? Part One', *SP* 52 (2012), 71-98; 'Part Two', *SP* 56 (2013), 227-73.

²⁶ A. Casiday, *Reconstructing* (2013), 67.

into intellect, and this finally into God at the stage of *θέωσις* and unity,²⁷ according to Eriugena (who made the most of it) comes straight from Nyssen, Evagrius' teacher. Eriugena significantly chose to cite Nyssen's theory, taken over by Evagrius, in reference to the eventual deification, which for Nyssen will be universal, like the resurrection-restoration: 'In a similar way, Gregory without hesitation argues that at the time of resurrection the body will turn into soul, the soul into intellect, and the intellect into God'.²⁸ This is indeed an important element of inspiration provided by Nyssen to Evagrius. This idea of the subsumption of what is inferior into what is superior with a view to unification, which is so clear in Evagrius and came from Nyssen, became prominent in Maximus the Confessor, profoundly influenced by Nyssen in turn, and in Eriugena himself, who followed both Nyssen and Maximus closely.

Nyssen, indeed, inspired Evagrius with the concept of unified soul as *nous*: 'When the soul becomes simple [*ἀπλῆ*], unitary [*μονοειδής*], and perfectly similar to God [*θεοεικελος*], it will find the truly simple and immaterial Good'.²⁹ This is exactly Evagrius' view as well, and within this concept of the unified *nous* it is necessary to read Gregory's and Evagrius' notion of the subsumption of body into soul into *nous*. Gregory's notion that the superior component assimilates the inferior to itself (so does intellect with soul and soul with body) was already embraced by Origen:³⁰ within the human being, the inferior nature must assimilate itself to the superior, which is in the image of God. This idea will return prominently in Evagrius and later in Eriugena, in connection with *apokatastasis*. For Nyssen, too, the assimilation of human nature to the divine will take place at *apokatastasis*: 'The two must become one, and the conjunction will consist in a *transformation into the better nature* [*τὸ κρεῖττον*]'.³¹ Nyssen's idea of unified soul as *nous*, which impacted Evagrius, must be read against the backdrop of Origen's notion of souls as a result of the decadence of intellects and their future return to the level of intellects.³² This theory is taken over by Evagrius very clearly.

Nyssen likely inspired Evagrius' concept of the subsumption of body into soul and soul into *nous*, *i.e.* the subsumption of the inferior into the superior, also from another perspective: namely, with his theory of the subsumption of the (inferior) human nature into the (superior, infinite) divine nature in Christ.³³ In Nyssen as in Evagrius, the superior element undergoes no change or diminution; only the inferior does, by its elevation to the superior level.

²⁷ *Letter to Melania* 22, *KG* 2.17; 3.66; 3.68; 3.15; 1.65.

²⁸ *Periphyseon* 5.987C: *Gregorius similiter et incunctanter astruit mutationem corporis tempore resurrectionis in animam, animae in intellectum, intellectus in Deum.*

²⁹ *De anima* 93C *GNO* 3.3, 69.16-8.

³⁰ *Dial. Her.* 12 and *passim*.

³¹ *Beat.* 7. Cf. *Beat.* *GNO* 7.2, 160.11-20: body and *nous* 'must become one'.

³² *Princ.* 2.8.2-3.

³³ *Eun.* 3.3.68, *GNO* 2, 132-3; see also his *Letter to Theophilus*.

The subsumption of the body into the soul and the intellect is its elevation and transformation with a view to unification, not its destruction. I give just one example of the current interpretation of Evagrius' radically dualistic anthropology, which in my view should be dramatically nuanced: 'In the End of Things, all shall be saved (the Devil included), while bodies and material beings shall be destroyed'.³⁴ A more positive evaluation of the body in Evagrius is in order, which is supported by many arguments, as I endeavoured to show,³⁵ and does not surprise in a follower of Nyssen.

Eriugena was therefore right to trace Evagrius' doctrine of the subsumption of body into soul and soul into intellect back to Nyssen. Actually, this is far from being the only derivation of Evagrius' ideas from Nyssen's. Among many others, one big cluster of notions that Evagrius inherited from Nyssen – and, through Nyssen, from Origen – much more than from Basil or Nazianzen, is related to the *apokatastasis* theory. This was beginning to be contested in their day, so Nyssen felt the need to defend it as 'orthodox' Christian doctrine, even related to Christological anti-subordinationism, as I extensively argued elsewhere.³⁶ Let us therefore turn briefly to the *apokatastasis* doctrine in Gregory and Evagrius.

Evagrius' *Letter to Melania*, *Kephalaia Gnostika*, and other works, teach *apokatastasis*.³⁷ Although this doctrine is more prominent in works by Evagrius whose Greek original is lost, nevertheless also in the extant Greek works Evagrius does use the terminology of *apokatastasis*, both ἀποκαθίστημι and ἐπιστρέφω (the latter already used by Origen in relation to *apokatastasis*). He uses the simile of gold purified from spurious matter with reference to *apokatastasis*;³⁸ this was a typical simile used by supporters of *apokatastasis* such as Origen and Nyssen. According to Evagrius, just as gold becomes purer when thrown into the furnace, so also the monk, in coenobitic life, has his habits purified, learns obedience and patience, and is restored to brightness and joy.³⁹ This is obviously a reference to realised *apokatastasis*. Evagrius uses

³⁴ J. Konstantinovskiy, *Evagrius* (2009), 368 – but the book as a whole is very fine.

³⁵ 'Evagrius Ponticus, the Origenian Ascetic (and not the Origenistic "Heretic")', in *Orthodox Monasticism, Past and Present*, ed. John A. McGuckin (New York, 2014 = Piscataway, 2015), 147-205, reviewed by Doru Costache, *Phronema* 31.2 (2016), 109-18, 115-8; Johannes van Oort, *VC* 70 (2016), 604.

³⁶ 'Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology in *In Illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*: His Polemic against "Arian" Subordinationism and Apokatastasis', in Volker Henning Drecoll and Margitta Berghaus (eds), *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarianism* (Leiden, 2011), 445-78; 'Origen's Anti-Subordinationism and Its Heritage in the Nicene and Cappadocian Line', *VC* 65 (2011), 21-49.

³⁷ See my *Apokatastasis* (2013), 461-514.

³⁸ *Tractatus ad Eulogium*, PG 79, 1133.51.

³⁹ Νέηλος μοναχὸς ἐν κοινοβίῳ τὰ ἥθη ἀναχωρευόμενος παιδρὸς ταῖς καρτερίαις ἀποκαθίσταται· διὰ γὰρ τῆς ἐπιταγῆς τῶν ἀδελφῶν τὴν ὑπακοὴν μανθάνειν κατεργάζεται· διὰ δὲ τοῦ ἐπιπλήττοντος ἐτοιμάζεται τὴν φύσιν μακροθυμίαν ἔχειν.

ἐπιστρέφω ten times in the extant Greek works.⁴⁰ And I have demonstrated in my commentary that in some *Kephalaia Gnostika*, such as 3.60, the original reference to *apokatastasis* is transparent and the Greek lexicon of *apokatastasis* underlies the Syriac.⁴¹ Moreover, one need not rely on terminology alone, since the concept itself emerges clearly, in particular from the *Kephalaia Gnostika* and the *Letter to Melania*.

Evagrius' conception of the *telos*, like those of Origen and Nyssen, is closely related to the rest of his thought. This is, indeed, entirely oriented toward the *telos*, i.e. the realisation of God's plan for all rational creatures and the whole of God's creation. In *Sentence* 58 Evagrius, reminiscent of Origen and Nyssen as well, identifies the true identity of each rational creature with what it was at the beginning, in God's plan, before its fall. What rational creatures were in the ἀρχή, before their fall, will be restored in the end, at *apokatastasis*, when their soul has achieved impassibility, *apatheia*. Their souls will then become intellects (in the aforementioned subsumption of bodies into souls and souls into intellects), and intellects will become fully pure in turn and will be immersed in divine life and knowledge:

And there will be a time when the body, the soul, and the intellect will cease to be separate from one another, with their names and their plurality, since the body and the soul will be elevated to the rank of intellects. This conclusion can be drawn from the words, 'That they may be one in us, just as You and I are One'. Thus, there will be a time when the Father, Son, and Spirit, and their rational creation, which constitutes their body, will cease to be separate, with their names and their plurality. And this conclusion can be drawn from the words, 'God will be all in all'. (*Letter to Melania* 22)

Like Origen and Nyssen, Evagrius corroborates every argument by Scripture. Both scriptural quotations used here were among the favourite of Origen and Nyssen in reference to the *telos*: *John* 17:22 for the final ἕνωσις, and *1Cor.* 15:28 for unity in *apokatastasis*.

Notably, Evagrius uses the same biblical passage (*Matth.* 18:23-5; *Luke* 7:41) as Nyssen to establish that otherworldly punishments will stop after 'the full payment of one's debt'. In *De anima* 101-4 (GNO 3.3, 74-7), Gregory through Macrina observes that punishment in the next world⁴² will be exactly commensurate to one's sins: thus, everyone will certainly pay his or her debt 'up to the very last coin', but there will come a last coin sooner or later, and so all

⁴⁰ *Schol. in Eccl.* 21.10: τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο ἀπὸ τοῦ χοῦς καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐπιστρέφει εἰς τὸν χοῦν; *Praktikos* Prol. 61 = *Expositio in Proverbia*, p. 122.11 = *Scholia in Proverbia* (cat.) 377: ἡ γὰρ ταραχὴ τῶν οἰκείων ἐπιστρέφειν αὐτὸν εἶωθε πρὸς τὰ ἀφ' ὧν ἐξελέγηλυσεν; *De octo spiritibus malitiae* PG 79, 1160.20; *Expositio in Proverbia* p. 116.4 = *Scholia in Proverbia* (cat.) 324; *Schol. in Eccl.* (cat.) 41: καθὼς ἐξήλθεν ἀπὸ γαστροῦ μητροῦ αὐτοῦ γυμνός, ἐπιστρέφει.

⁴¹ Evagrius (2015), 175-6 and *passim*.

⁴² Κόλασις αἰώνιος, i.e. punishment in the next world/aeon (in Evagrius' *KG* 4.34, Syriac 'lm' renders Greek αἰών).

punishments will eventually come to an end. Macrina stresses that even the smallest sin will have to be repaid through a minimum amount of suffering; there will be a complete and exact retribution, but this very exactitude implies a precise measure: if punishment will be exactly commensurate with sins, this means that it will not be infinite and that it will cease for each person at a certain point. Evagrius refers to the same parable in *KG* 4.34, providing the same eschatological exegesis as Gregory does: ‘In the future world no one will escape from the house of torment into which he will fall. For it is said: “You will not go out from there until you have given back the very last coin”, that is, up to the smallest amount of suffering’. After giving back the last coin, *i.e.* the last amount of deserved suffering, all will be allowed to abandon the house of torment. Evagrius shared this conviction, also because of his fundamental assumption of the ontological priority of the Good and the limitedness and non-subsistence of evil, and of the limitedness of human earthly life and capability to sin – a motif particularly developed by Nyssen. Origen already stated both that purification for one’s sins will last until the smallest sin has been abolished – insisting on this, like Macrina in Nyssen, for a pedagogical purpose – and that there will surely come an end for this purification.⁴³ Evagrius is obviously following Origen’s and Nyssen’s line.

Another biblical passage with which Evagrius buttressed his *apokatastasis* theory is *1Tim.* 2:4-6, cited in *Gnostikos* 22: one must want all humans to be saved and to attain the knowledge of truth, which is what God wants. Evagrius maintains here that the awareness of what Scripture reveals concerning the *telos* brings joy – evidently because the Bible, according to him, announces *apokatastasis*. This persuasion, that universal restoration is revealed by Scripture and wanted by God, was shared by Origen and Nyssen. They would not have espoused this theory if they had not deemed it based on Scripture. Hence also their conviction, which I pointed out elsewhere,⁴⁴ that *apokatastasis* depends on Christ. Because of his radical metaphysical and eschatological optimism, the same as Nyssen’s, Evagrius exhorts his disciples to hope, joy, and confidence, *e.g.* in *Praktikos* 12. Consistently, he warns against wrath, hatred, affliction, memory of suffered injuries, sadness, and lack of confidence, and urges to hope in God; lacking hope in God’s Providence is a serious sin, a yielding to the devil.⁴⁵

At *apokatastasis*, when aeons will be over,⁴⁶ evil, which does not properly exist, will completely vanish. This notion, which Evagrius expresses in the last

⁴³ *C.Rom.* 5.2.170-6.

⁴⁴ In *Apokatastasis* (2013).

⁴⁵ *Praktikos* 20, 25-6, 27-8, 46-7.

⁴⁶ *KG* 5.89. For Origen’s doctrine of the aeons see my *Apokatastasis* (2013), introductory chapter, and the section on Origen. See also *ead.* and David Konstan, *Terms for Eternity* (new editions Piscataway, 2011; 2013), with the reviews by Carl O’Brien, *CR* 60.2 (2010), 390-1; Danilo Ghira, *Maia* 61 (2009), 732-4; Shawn Keough, *ETL* 84 (2008), 601; *Internationale*

sentence of *KG* 1.9 and elsewhere, perfectly corresponds to Origen's and Nyssen's idea of *apokatastasis* as the end of all aeons and the final eviction of evil, which befits its ontological non-subsistence.⁴⁷ According to Evagrius, as to Origen and Nyssen, the *telos* is the removal of evil and ignorance, the restoration of intellectual creatures, and deification, that is, entering the life of the supreme Good, God. In *KG* 1.40 Evagrius avers: 'There was a time when evil did not exist, and there will be a time when, likewise, it will no more exist, whereas there was no time when virtue did not exist, and there will be no time when it will not exist. For the germs of virtue are impossible to destroy'. Origen's argument that evil did not exist in the beginning and therefore will not exist in the end had already been taken up by Nyssen: 'The help of the Lord has not permitted that we be residents of Hades; this is also because, in proportion to the multitude of pains deriving from sin, we have received the cure from the Physician: and here he makes an even greater philosophical point, asserting as doctrine that evil is not *ab aeterno*'.⁴⁸ Therefore, it cannot subsist eternally:⁴⁹ 'Thus, it has been demonstrated that evil is not *ab aeterno*, nor will it remain forever. For that which has not been forever will not continue to exist forever either'.⁵⁰ Evagrius' equation between God, Good, and Being (as opposite to evil which has no ontological consistence), so that being outside of the Good (*i.e.*, in evil) is being outside of Being (*i.e.*, nonexistence), was already clear in Origen and is emphasised by Nyssen, *e.g.* in *Mos.* 2.175: Christ became a human being 'in order to draw back into Being that which had ended up outside of Being'. The pole of the Good is the ontologically positive one; evil's non-existence also implies its non-eternity.

In *KG* 1.41, Evagrius draws on Philo, the New Testament, Clement, Origen, and Nyssen, when speaking of the illness and death of the soul⁵¹ as secondary to its life and health; again, the positive pole is primary; the negative one, adventitious, spurious, and not subsisting from the beginning, cannot endure forever. Origen and Nyssen insisted on the therapy for the ill soul that Christ-Physician provides. In *Princ.* 3.6.5 Origen even corrected Plato (who maintained that some people have committed such grave injustices as to become ἀνίατοι): 'nothing is impossible for the Omnipotent; no being is incurable

Zeitschriftenschau für Bibelwissenschaft und Grenzgebiete 54 (2007/2008), 444, 1901. See also my *Tempo ed eternità in età antica e patristica: filosofia greca, ebraismo e cristianesimo* (Assisi, 2015).

⁴⁷ See my 'Αἰώνιος and αἰών in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa', *SP* 47 (2010), 57-62; 'Christian Soteriology and Christian Platonism. Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Biblical and Philosophical Basis of the Doctrine of Apokatastasis', *VC* 61 (2007), 313-56.

⁴⁸ *Inscr. Ps.*, GNO 5, 100.21-5.

⁴⁹ See my 'Christian Soteriology' (2007).

⁵⁰ *Inscr. Ps.*, GNO 5, 100.3.

⁵¹ See my 'ΚΟΙΜΩΜΕΝΟΥΣ ΑΠΟ ΤΗΣ ΛΥΠΗΣ (Luke 22,45): A Deliberate Change', *ZNW* 102 (2011), 59-76; 'Philo's Doctrine of Apokatastasis: Philosophical Sources, Exegetical Strategies, and Patristic Aftermath', *StPhilo* 26 (2014), 29-55.

[*insanabile*, ἀνίατον] for the One who created it'.⁵² For 'in souls, there is no illness caused by evilness [κακίας] that is impossible to cure [ἀδύνατον θεραπευθῆναι] for God-Logos, who is superior to all' (*Cels.* 8.72). Nyssen was so sure of this as to maintain that Christ will heal even the devil (*Or. Cat.* 26). Evagrius inherited this conviction. In *KG* 1.41 he refers to the parable of Dives and Lazarus,⁵³ adduced by Nyssen, too, in *De anima*, to argue that even in hell people maintain germs of virtue, because virtue, unlike evil, is indestructible. It is the same argument put forward by Origen and Nyssen, of the indestructibility of God's image in us: it may be blurred by all sorts of dirt, *i.e.* evil, but will never disappear, and will shine forth again in the *telos*. Evil, on the contrary, did not exist from the beginning, was not created by God, and will not subsist eternally.

The germs of virtue are indestructible – Evagrius claims in *KG* 1.40, cited above – because they were planted by God in souls, whereas God never planted germs of vice, which do not belong to our nature: they were not part of God's original plan for humanity, and this is why they will not endure in the end. This argument derives from Origen.⁵⁴ The above-mentioned metaphor of God as farmer – echoed by Evagrius also in *KG* 1.40-1 with the idea of the germs/seeds of virtue planted by God in souls – in connection with protology and eschatology was dear, as I mentioned, to Nyssen, who used it extensively in *De anima* 65 (GNO 3.3, 45-6), and especially at the end of that dialogue (GNO 3.3, 120-3), to illustrate how God will purify his plants, *i.e.* his creatures, to enable them to enjoy *apokatastasis*. Origen also spoke of this agricultural purgation carried out by God with a view to the eternal life for his creatures.⁵⁵

Evagrius tackles the motif of the death of the intellectual soul, a Philonic, Origenian, and Nyssian theme, not only in *KG* 1.40-1, which is all about the priority of life over death and good/virtue over evil(ness)/vice, but also in *KG* 1.64: 'The true life of rational creatures is their natural activity, whereas their death is their activity against nature. Now, if the one who is naturally made to cast away the true life is mortal of this kind of death, which of the beings is immortal? This is because every rational nature is liable to opposition'. The life of a rational creature is its adhesion to the Good; the opposite, *i.e.* adhesion to evil, is its death. The soul is mortal of the real death, which comes from the soul's adhesion to sin (as Origen already maintained in the *Dialogue with Heraclides* and elsewhere, and Nyssen had too). Rational creatures should be immortal, and were meant to be so, but they fell into death because of sin. Sin is against the nature of rational creatures, which is good, since they were created by God and for virtue. Death is contrary to their nature.

⁵² See my *Apokatastasis* (2013), 388-90.

⁵³ *Luke* 16:19-31.

⁵⁴ *C.Rom.* 6.5.78-102.

⁵⁵ *C.Rom.* 5.9.65-72; see 1.15.54-66.

This is the opposition that Evagrius mentions, which is also related to rational creatures' being constitutively suspended between the choice of Good and evil. Only God, indeed, is absolutely Good, Good itself;⁵⁶ creatures are good insofar as they are created by God and participate in this primal Good. If rational creatures choose not to participate in Good, they fall into its opposite, evil, which is against their nature.

Both Origen and Nyssen, followed again by Evagrius, adopted the Stoic theory of *oikeiōsis* to express this idea that the Good is familiar and natural for rational creatures (being the Stoic *πρῶτον οἰκεῖον*), while evil is alien. This also comes to the fore in *KG* 5.73: 'The intellect is in awe when it sees the objects, and in the contemplation of these it is not troubled, but it runs as toward relatives and friends'. Evagrius stresses how contemplation is connatural/familiar with the intellect. The simile with relatives and friends points again to Evagrius' use of the notion of *oikeiōsis*. Origen and Gregory Nyssen were the Christian philosophers who made the most of the doctrine of *oikeiōsis*, and Gregory developed it even further than Origen did.⁵⁷ Evagrius, once more, would seem to have received Gregory's ideas.

In *KG* 3.68 Evagrius states: 'Just as the first rest of God indicates the removal of evil and the vanishing of thick bodies, likewise the second, too, indicates the vanishing of bodies, secondary beings, and the diminution of ignorance'. Heavy bodies at the resurrection will disappear by being transformed into fine, immortal bodies, as they were before the fall. Then the diminution of evil will also occur, which is the premise of *apokatastasis*, for Origen and Nyssen as well as for Evagrius.⁵⁸ Origen, followed by Nyssen especially in *In illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius*, argued from 1Cor. 15:28 that, since God 'will be all in all', in the *telos* 'we cannot admit of evil, lest God be found in evil'.⁵⁹ The final eviction of evil is also a consequence of its aforementioned ontological negativity, a tenet of Origen's and Nyssen's thought. This is precisely the notion that Evagrius posits in *KG* 1.1 and repeats everywhere: the absolute ontological priority of Good/God over evil, which is nonbeing. At the second rest of God and the final θέωσις, rational creatures will be freed from ignorance, which is the counterpart of evil, and from bodies, which are not evil but will be subsumed into souls and thence into intellects.

⁵⁶ *KG* 1.1.

⁵⁷ See *KG* 5.73, and, for Origen, my 'The Stoic Doctrine of Oikeiosis and its Transformation in Christian Platonism', *Apeiron* 47 (2014), 116-40; for Nyssen, *ead.*, 'Οἰκειώσις in Gregory's Theology: Reconstructing His Creative Reception of Stoicism', in Johan Leemans and Matthieu Cassin (eds), *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium III. An English Translation with Commentary and Supporting Studies* (Leiden, 2014), 643-59.

⁵⁸ See my 'Christian Soteriology' (2007).

⁵⁹ *Princ.* 3.6.2-3; see my *Apokatastasis* (2013), 143-4.

Evilness (κακία) is not proper to the body, but to the rational faculty,⁶⁰ which can choose between virtue and vice. The latter is assimilated by Evagrius to the ‘dirtiness’ of the rational nature (KG 3.75). Likewise in KG 4.36: ‘The intelligible fat is the thickness that, due to evilness, sticks to the intellect’. A similar image was used by Nyssen in *De anima* 100A (GNO 3.3, 73): the evil committed by each one is a thick, dirty glue or mud that sticks to the soul. This will be difficult and painful to remove for the sinner to return clean in the end, which is the goal that God wants to achieve with this painful purification.⁶¹

In KG 3.79 Evagrius uses the same sense of ‘underworld’, related to demons, as is found in Origen’s and Nyssen’s interpretation of *Phil.* 2:10-1 on the bending of all knees before Christ, in heaven, on earth and in the underworld, denoting the voluntary submission of all rational creatures to Christ, angels (in heaven), humans (on earth⁶²), and demons (underneath). I think especially of Nyssen, *In Illud* 20 Downing, and Origen, *Princ.* 1.2.10 and 1.6.2, where everyone’s submission to Christ in heaven, on earth, and in the underworld (angels, humans and demons) is understood as the salvation of all, since it is voluntary and entails conversion and spontaneous adhesion. Evagrius wholly agrees that ‘submission is the assent of the rational nature’s will toward the knowledge of God’ (KG 6.68). The equation between submission to Christ and God and salvation was thus drawn by Origen and Nyssen,⁶³ and followed closely by Evagrius. For this equation to stand, one must posit that submission will be voluntary. This is what Origen and Nyssen postulated, and what Evagrius too makes clear in the quotation from KG 6.68, speaking of the assent of rational creatures’ will. That salvation coincides with the knowledge of God not only was upheld by Origen and Nyssen, but was suggested by 1Tim. 2:4 – to which most supporters of *apokatastasis*, including Nyssen and Evagrius, appealed.

Evagrius takes over again Origen’s and Nyssen’s identification of the eventual submission of all to Christ as universal salvation in KG 6.15: ‘Christ’s feet are practical virtue and contemplation. Now, if he ‘puts all his enemies under his feet’, all of them will know practical virtue and contemplation’. 1Cor. 15:25, remarkably, is part of the eschatological revelation of 1Cor. 15:24-8 that Origen and Nyssen used as a major Biblical pillar for *apokatastasis*.⁶⁴ Evagrius here focuses on v. 25 and interprets the submission of all under Christ’s feet as their acquisition of practical virtue (the goal of *praktikē* or ascetic life) and contemplation (*theōria*). This will lead to their perfection. Also in KG 6.27,

⁶⁰ KG 3.75-6; 3.53.

⁶¹ Commentary in my *Gregorio di Nissa sull’Anima* (2007).

⁶² I read ‘brw in the Syriac, after a suggestion by Sebastian Brock, whom I warmly thank. See my commentary in *Evagrius* (2015) *ad loc.*, 189-90.

⁶³ See my ‘Christian Soteriology’ (2007) and ‘*In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius...* (1 Cor 15,27-28): Gregory of Nyssa’s Exegesis, Its Derivations from Origen, and Early Patristic Interpretations Related to Origen’s’, *SP* 44 (2010), 259-74.

⁶⁴ See my ‘Christian Soteriology’ (2007) and *Apokatastasis* (2013), 137-215, 372-440.

Evagrius, like Origen and Nyssen, interprets the eschatological universal submission to Christ and God as universal salvation, in that this submission will be voluntary: 'If it is the case that "all peoples will come and worship before the Lord"', it is evident that the peoples who want war will also come. Now, if this is true, the whole nature of rational creatures will adore the Name of the Lord, him who reveals the Father who is in him. For this is the Name that is "above all names". Here the universal adoration before the Lord is described in the words of *Ps.* 85:9, and it is understood as universal salvation, including the enemies who are said to be subjected in the end (*1Cor.* 15:24-6), given that it will be the adoration of the Name that reveals the Father, which for this reason is said to be superior to all names in *Phil.* 2:9. Consequently, even the enemies will know the Father – and this knowledge, according to Evagrius' ethical intellectualism, which he shared with Origen and Nyssen (see below), entails voluntary adhesion.

Like Nyssen and Origen, Evagrius teaches that the submission of all to Christ, who will submit to God (*1Cor.* 15:28), will take place at the end of all aeons, in the *telos*, when all will be brought to unity: 'When Christ will no longer be imprinted on the various aeons and in names of every sort, then he too "will submit to God the Father", and he alone will rejoice in the knowledge of God, a knowledge which is not distributed over the aeons and the progresses of rational creatures'.⁶⁵ Evagrius' conception of several aeons before the final *apokatastasis* is close to Origen's and Nyssen's. During the aeons, rational creatures increase their virtue and knowledge, and get purified; after this has been accomplished, all aeons will cease and the fullness of divine αἰδιότης will remain. Evagrius adheres to Origen and Nyssen in claiming that the succession of aeons is not infinite, but it had a beginning and will thus have an end.⁶⁶ Aeons are necessary to rational creatures' spiritual and intellectual development.

Evagrius in *KG* 6.27 and elsewhere interprets *1Cor.* 15:28 exactly in the same way as Nyssen did in *In illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius*.⁶⁷ The eventual subjection of the Son to the Father, mentioned and interpreted by Evagrius, is announced in *1Cor.* 15:28, the same passage Gregory comments on in *In illud* to support *apokatastasis*. Developing Origen's argument, Nyssen interpreted the final subjection of the Son to the Father not as a sign of subordination, but as the subjection of humanity or even all *logika*, i.e. the creatural component assumed by Christ-Logos (his "body"), not the divine one. Nyssen thereby joined anti-subordinationism and the *apokatastasis* doctrine, as Evagrius also did, who followed both theories.

⁶⁵ *KG* 6.33.

⁶⁶ *KG* 5.89. On the aeons in Origen and Nyssen see my 'Αἰώνιος and αἰών' (2010) and *Apokatastasis* (2013), sections on Origen and Nyssen.

⁶⁷ See my 'Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology' (2011), 445-78.

Siding with Origen and Nyssen, who overtly defended Origen's allegoresis still in his last work,⁶⁸ Evagrius often uses allegoresis, and specifically noetic exegesis, in support of *apokatastasis*, e.g. in *KG* 6.64: 'Just as by means of the physical healing of the paralytic⁶⁹ our Saviour has illuminated us about the intelligible healing, and by means of the evident has affirmed the hidden, in the same way by means of the physical exodus of the children of Israel he has indicated to us the exodus that (occurs) from evilness and ignorance'. The interpretation of Jesus' miracles on the intelligible/noetic plane parallels that of the Hebrews' exodus. The association between evilness and ignorance, as the negative counterpart of that between virtue and knowledge, surfaces often in Evagrius – and, as we shall see, is closely related to his ethical intellectualism, another tenet that Evagrius shares with Origen and Nyssen. The abandonment of evilness and ignorance, symbolised by the exodus from Egypt (which represents evil in *KG* 6.49), leads to the *telos*. This is 'the complete eradication of evil(ness)' already according to Origen (*Cels.* 8.72). For 'evil(ness) must necessarily be eliminated, absolutely and in every respect, once and for all, from all that exists', as Nyssen insisted.⁷⁰ Evagrius is exactly on the same line, as is also clear from *KG* 1.40-1.

Both ascetic discipline and torments are intended for purification, according to Evagrius as to Origen and Nyssen: 'The *telos* of the *praktikē* and of the torment is the heritage of the saints. Now, what is opposed to the first is the cause of the second. And the *telos* of this is the heritage of those who are opposed'.⁷¹ *Praktikē* indicates moral life and development, aimed at the attainment of *apatheia* through ascetic discipline and the obedience to commandments; the torment is purifying suffering. The *telos* will coincide with full spiritual development and, as a consequence, the end of all torments, since purification will have been achieved. What is opposed to moral and spiritual development is the cause of purifying sufferings, which will end in the *telos*. In *KG* 3.18 Evagrius describes torment as 'the fiery suffering that purifies the part of the soul that is liable to passions'. Nyssen in *De anima* had likewise insisted that punishment is not God's own aim; God's purpose is the attraction of the soul to Goodness, while the soul's suffering in this process is a side effect produced by the evil in which the soul is imprisoned.⁷²

The purifying nature of punishment is a tenet of Evagrius', Nyssen's, and Origen's *apokatastasis* theory. Therefore, they were all convinced that this

⁶⁸ *In Cant.* pref. See my 'Apokatastasis and Epektasis in *Hom. in Cant.*: The Relation between Two Core Doctrines in Gregory and Roots in Origen', in Giulio Maspero and Miguel Brugarolas (eds), *Proceedings of the XIII International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa, Rome, 17-20. IX.2014* (Leiden, forthcoming).

⁶⁹ *Matth.* 9:2-7.

⁷⁰ *De anima* 101, GNO 3.3, 74.14-75.2.

⁷¹ *KG* 1.18.

⁷² See my commentary in *Gregorio di Nissa Sull'Anima* (2007).

purification will finally come to an end (see above my remarks about *KG* 4.34, with an exegesis coming straight from Nyssen). This is also clear from *KG* 5.5: 'Two of the aeons purify the part of the soul that is liable to passions, one of them by means of the *praktikē*, and the other by means of harsh torment'. The present aeon is that in which ascetic training purifies the soul from passions. The future one is that in which torments (the Biblical *πῦρ αἰώνιον*) will purify sinners. Evagrius, too, like Origen and Nyssen, understood expressions like *πῦρ αἰώνιον* or *κόλασις αἰώνιος* as 'fire/punishment in the world to come', not as 'eternal fire/punishment'.⁷³ Evagrius, like Origen and Nyssen, deems punishment purifying, not retributive. What has not been purified in the present world shall have to be purified in the next in a more drastic way.⁷⁴

In *KG* 5.9 Evagrius foresees that 'Some among humans will feast together with angels, whereas others will mingle with the hosts of demons, and yet others will be tortured along with contaminated humans'. The common feast of humans and angels is described by Nyssen at the end of *De anima*.⁷⁵ That refers to *apokatastasis*; Evagrius here seems to refer to a stage before *apokatastasis*, in the aeon to come, in which the purification of sinners will take place. The 'contaminated humans' are those who have sullied themselves with sin, which both Evagrius and Nyssen metaphorically represent elsewhere as a kind of dirty glue, mud, or fat that sticks to evildoers (see above). It is likely that Nyssen inspired Evagrius with this image of an eschatological common feast of humans and angels.

Evagrius, like Origen and especially Nyssen, regarded *apokatastasis* as the restoration of the divine image in the human being; that was created by God in the beginning, but became blurred because of sin. The image of God in humans is not in the body, nor in the inferior faculties of the soul subject to passions – as Philo, Origen, and Nyssen all agreed (since God is both incorporeal and free from passions) – but in the intellect, which is susceptible of the knowledge of God. *KG* 6.73 and 3.32 make it clear that the image of God is the intellect, due to its receptivity of the Unity, *i.e.* God, through knowledge, which is also tantamount to its incorporeality.

Remarkably, here, as elsewhere, Evagrius uses the same 'zetetic' method as Origen deployed: first he presents an explanation for the intellect's characterisation as image of God, *i.e.*, because the intellect is susceptible of God through knowledge; then he presents another explanation, which apparently excludes the former, *i.e.* because the intellect is incorporeal, but finally he shows that both in fact are compatible and are even the same thing. Evagrius

⁷³ See I.L.E. Ramelli and D. Konstan, *Terms for Eternity* (2011).

⁷⁴ See my *Apokatastasis* (2013), the chapters on Clement, Origen, Nyssen, and Evagrius.

⁷⁵ See my 'Harmony between *arkhē* and *telos* in Patristic Platonism and the Imagery of Astro-nomical Harmony Applied to the Apokatastasis Theory', *IJPT* 7 (2013), 1-49; now also Ilaria Vigorelli, 'Soul's Dance in Clement, Plotinus and Gregory of Nyssa', in this volume, pp. 59-75, although without analysis of the passage in *De anima*.

is reasoning by considering different possibilities, in this case a thesis (the intellect is in the likeness of God not because it is incorporeal, but because it is susceptible of God), an antithesis (the intellect is in the likeness of God because it is incorporeal), and finally a synthesis (being incorporeal and being susceptible of essential knowledge are the very same thing). The final exhortation to the reader to consider and decide the question personally also resembles what one often finds also in Origen. In turn, Origen's heuristic approach was appreciated and applied by Nyssen, as well as praised and defended by Nazianzen.⁷⁶

Indeed, Evagrius' zetetic spirit is one of the many factors that draw him close to Origen and Nyssen. Evagrius recommends investigation or zetesis, for instance, in *KG* 3.82: 'Blessed is the one who by means of objects receives the demonstration of God's grace, but blessed also the one who by means of knowledge can perform an investigation concerning them'. The knowledge of God, in the present state, comes through creation, as Evagrius also makes clear in his *Letter to Melania*, and implies an investigation, and active examination. In this, Evagrius takes over Origen's fundamentally investigative conception of knowledge, which was also appreciated by Nyssen and subsequently tended to disappear in Patristic philosophy.

Likewise, the exhortation to investigate (ἐρευνᾶν) in the closing sentence of Evagrius' *Kephalaia Gnostika* – a prominent location – is in a clearly 'zetetic' spirit: 'Investigate our words, our brothers, and interpret with diligence the riddles of these Discourses/Centuries, which are in the number of the six days of creation'. The underlying Greek verb was likely ἐρευνάω – more probably perhaps than ἐξιχνεύω, proposed by Dysinger – because in the relatively scarce extant Greek works of Evagrius ἐρευνάω and cognates, διερευνάω and ἔρευνα, occur seven times,⁷⁷ while there is no occurrence of ἐξιχνεύω. Moreover, ἐρευνάω belongs to the terminology of both Origen and Nyssen, Evagrius' great inspirers. Origen applied investigation to Scripture or some philosophical problems, and exhorted his public to do so, while here readers, primarily monks, are encouraged to investigate and interpret Evagrius' own enigmatic words. Very interestingly, while there are only six occurrences of ἐρευνάω and related

⁷⁶ A work is in preparation on Origen as a 'zetetic' and the tradition of philosophical enquiry. On Nazianzen's defence of Origen's zetetic method, see his *C. Eun. or. prodial.* 27.10, commented on in *Apokatastasis* (2013), 445-6.

⁷⁷ *Sent. ad mon.*, *Sent.* 108: Ἀνὴρ σοφὸς ἐρευνήσῃ λόγους θεοῦ; *Eulog.*, PG 79, 1116.8, twice: Ὁ τὰς ἐτέρων σκέψεις πειρώμενος ἐρευνᾷ, τὰς ἑαυτοῦ πράξεις ἔργῳ οὐκ ἐρευνᾷ; PG 79, 1132.19: ὅσον γὰρ ἐπὶ πλεῖον σκληραγωγεῖς σου τὸ σῶμα, τοσοῦτον διερευνᾷς σου τὸ συνειδός; *Schol. in Prov.*, *Schol.* 221: φῶς κυρίου πνοῇ ἀνθρώπων, ἡ λύχνος ὃς ἐρευνᾷ ταμίεια κοιτίας; *Schol. in Eccl.*, *Schol.* 68 line 2: Ὁ μὲν ἄνθρωπος προσάγει τῇ καρδίᾳ τὰ πράγματα πρὸς τὴν ἔρευναν αὐτῶν ἀποκλίνων; *On Evil Thoughts*, chap. 19 line 20: ταῦτά σου διερευνωμένον, φθαρῆσεται μὲν ὁ λογισμὸς εἰς τὴν ἰδίαν ἀναλυόμενος θεωρίαν, φεύζεται δὲ ἀπὸ σοῦ τὸ δαιμόνιον, τῆς διανοίας σου ὑπὸ ταύτης τῆς γνώσεως εἰς ὕψος ἀρθείσης.

terms in Gregory Nazianzen's vast corpus,⁷⁸ and these come mainly from Scriptural quotations, like the 27 occurrences in Basil's huge corpus, there are 33 occurrences of ἐρευνᾶω and related terms in Nyssen's far less extensive corpus, which likely were, once again, on Evagrius' mind.⁷⁹

In *KG* 6.73, Evagrius also refers to *Gen.* 1:26, where the Divinity declares that it will make the human being in its own image (εἰκόν) and after its likeness (ὁμοίωσις). This passage was fundamental for Origen's and Nyssen's 'theology of the image'. Origen stressed more the distinction between image, an initial datum for all humans, and likeness, to be acquired by personal endeavour in virtue (since in *Gen.* 1:27 likeness is not mentioned as a datum, from which Origen deduced that it is posited as a target).⁸⁰ Evagrius here uses 'image' and 'likeness' rather indifferently, as Nyssen did much more often than Origen. So Evagrius seems closer to Nyssen here.

Evagrius' tenet of the perfect synergy of Providence and freewill, which leads to the eventual restoration, is exactly the same as Origen's and Nyssen's.⁸¹ Universally salvific Providence does not contradict freewill, but divine

⁷⁸ *Or. in laud. Basilii* (or. 43) 65.4: πάντα μὲν ἐρευνᾶν, καὶ τὰ βάθη τοῦ Θεοῦ; *Carm. mor.* col. 866.8: Γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης ἐξερευνάσθω βάθη; 932.4: Ἐρεῦνα σαυτὸν πλεῖον, ἢ τὰ τῶν πέλας; 947.15: Λόγος δ' ἔρευνα τῶν νοδῶν τυπωμάτων; 960.4: Ἡ πεῖρα δ' ἦν ἔρευνα τῆς Θεοῦ πλοκῆς; *Carm. de se ipso* col. 1425.6: Ἐρεῦνα σαυτὴν ἥτις ἦ.

⁷⁹ *Eust.*, GNO 3/1, 11.3: τὴν τῆς θείας φύσεως ἔρευναν; *Maced.*, GNO 3/1, 108.29: ἀεὶ τὰ βάθη τοῦ θεοῦ ἐρευνᾷ; *Inst. Chr.*, GNO 8/1, 75.4: δεῖ βλέπειν ἀεὶ καὶ τὸ ἔνδον τῆς ψυχῆς διερευνᾶν; *In Eccl.*, GNO 5, 278-279.1: δεῖν ἐρευνᾶν τὰς γραφάς ... τοῦ ἐρευνᾶν τὴν ἐντολὴν; 401.9: ἐρευνᾷ ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς τὸ ζητούμενον; *CE* 1.1 (376.3): μὴ ἐν τῇ κτίσει τὸν μονογενῆ υἱὸν καὶ τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πνεῦμα δεῖν διερευνᾶσθαι; 2.1 (97.5): τὸ μὲν γὰρ τῶν ἀδήλων καταστοχάζεσθαι καὶ τινα τῶν ἀποκρύφων γνῶσιν ... ἐρευνᾶσθαι; 2.1 (190.3): τὰ ὄντως ὄντα καὶ ἀληθῶς ὑφesseτῶτα διερευνᾶσθαι οὐ δύναται; 2.1 (218.3): πάντα ἐρευνᾷ, καὶ τὰ βάθη τοῦ θεοῦ ... τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον πάντα, φησὶν, ἐρευνᾷ, καὶ τὰ βάθη τοῦ θεοῦ; 3.1 (107.3): τῶν ἐρευνᾶν ἐπιχειρούντων δυνάμεως ἐστὶν ὑψηλότερα; 3.8 (21.8): διερευνᾶται τὴν αἰώνιον ζωὴν; *In Cant.*, GNO 6, 10.1: προτροπὴν ἡμῖν τοῦ χρῆναι διερευνᾶν τὰς θείας φωνὰς καὶ προσέχειν τῇ ἀναγνώσει καὶ κατὰ πάντα τρόπον ἀνιχνεύειν; GNO 6, 40.9: διερευνᾶν τοῦ θεοῦ τὰ βάθη; GNO 6, 193.16: τοῦ θεοῦ προστάγματος τοῦ ἐρευνᾶν τὰς θείας γραφάς; GNO 6, 278.20: τὸ βάθος τοῦ πλούτου καὶ τῆς σοφίας καὶ τῆς γνώσεως τοῦ θεοῦ διερευνᾶσθαι δυνάμενοι; GNO 6, 457.15: διὰ τὸν ἐρευνᾶν τὰς γραφάς ἡμῖν νομοθετήσαντα; *Ep.* 17.28: ἀναζητεῖν δὲ καθὼς ἂν ᾖ δυνατόν, τῷ λύχνῳ τοῦ πνεύματος πρὸς τὴν ἔρευναν κεχηρμένους; *Cr.hom.* 1, 17.12: τοὺς βυθοὺς διερευνᾶται. πελάγη; 19.15: τὰ ἐν τῷ βυθῷ διερευνᾶται; 17a.13: τοὺς βυθοὺς διερευνᾶται = 19a.15; *Vit. Moys.* 2.110: ὅσα τοιαῦτα ὑπὸ τῶν περιέργων ἀνερευνᾶται, ταῦτα τῷ ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι συγχωρεῖν μόνῳ γινώσκειν, τῷ τὰ βάθη τοῦ Θεοῦ διερευνῶντι; 2.111: ἰσχυρότερα σου μὴ ἐρεῦνα; 2.173: ἐκείνοις οἱ διὰ τοῦ Πνεύματος τὰ βάθη τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐρευνᾶν δύναμιν ἔχουσιν; *Imag. Dei*, PG 44, 1333.39: Τὸ Πνεῦμα πάντα ἐρευνᾷ, καὶ τὰ βάθη τοῦ Θεοῦ; *De an.*, PG 46, 149.40: ἀναγκαῖον ἂν εἴη τῷ κριτῇ πάθος καὶ λῶβην ... καὶ πλοῦτον, καὶ πέναν διερευνᾶσθαι; *Ep. can.*, PG 45, 233.56: Τὸ δὲ διερευνᾶσθαι τὴν κόνιν; *Theognos.*, PG 130, 261.51: ὥστε διαναστῆναι τὸν νοῦν ἡμῶν πρὸς τὴν ἔρευναν τοῦ προσώπου; *Apol. Hex.* 68.21: τὰ θεῖα βάθη διερευνᾶσθαι; *Hom. op.*, PG 137, 41: πάντα ἐπακούει τὸ Θεῖον, καὶ πάντα διερευνᾶται; *Or. cat.* 11.14: διερευνᾶν παραιτούμεθα.

⁸⁰ See, e.g., Georgios Lekkas, *Liberté et progrès chez Origène* (Turnhout, 2001).

⁸¹ I pointed this out in *Apokatastasis* (2013), chapters on Origen and Nyssen.

justice rewards each one according to his or her deeds, and Providence operates at the same time with a view to universal salvation, but without ever forcing each one's free will: 'God's Providence accompanies the freedom of will; God's Judgement takes into consideration the order of rational creatures', which in turn depends on the merits and demerits that each rational creature has accumulated through the exercise of freewill.⁸² But both work together infallibly. This conviction is a pivotal premise of the *apokatastasis* theory, in Evagrius just as in Nyssen and Origen. It enabled these theologians to keep God's justice and goodness together, thus saving at the same time theodicy and universal restoration. Evagrius stresses this by describing the *logoi* of judgement as secondary *vis-à-vis* those of Providence.⁸³

This harmony of Judgment and Providence, of divine justice and divine mercy, is indeed a key conviction of Evagrius, which was already stressed by Origen and Nyssen within their overarching doctrine of universal restoration. Origen polemicised against the separation of divine justice and mercy hypothesised by 'Gnostics' and Marcionites.⁸⁴ The triumph of divine justice is in the judgments after the various aeons, and the triumph of divine mercy and Providence will be the final *apokatastasis*. It is significant that Evagrius quotes with respect and approval a saying by a faithful Origenian, Didymus, that it is necessary to reflect on both God's Judgement and God's Providence: 'Always exercise yourself in the meditation of the doctrines concerning Providence and Judgement – said Didymus, the great "gnostic" teacher – and endeavour to remember their materials, since almost all people err in these topics. As for the rationale of Judgement, you will find that this lies in the variety of bodies and worlds; that concerning Providence, instead, lies in the turns that from evilness and ignorance bring us back to virtue or knowledge'.⁸⁵

That for Evagrius God's Judgement is inseparable from God's Providence is also clear from Scholium 8 on *Ps.* 138.16, where the *logoi* of Providence and Judgement are again joined. Providence provides for the spiritual healing of rational creatures and works on their intellects, which take care of their own souls.⁸⁶ This healing is soteriological, in that it annihilates sins.⁸⁷

⁸² *KG* 6.43.

⁸³ *Gnostikos* 48; *KG* 1.27, with my commentary in *Evagrius* (2015), 27-8. On Evagrius's *logoi* of Providence and Judgment, see Luke Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus* (Oxford, 2005), 171-95.

⁸⁴ See my 'La coerenza della soteriologia origeniana: dalla polemica contro il determinismo gnostico all'universale restaurazione escatologica', in *Pagani e cristiani alla ricerca della salvezza. Atti del XXXIV Incontro di Studiosi dell'Antichità Cristiana, Roma, Istituto Patristico Augustinianum, 5-7 maggio 2005* (Rome, 2006), 661-88.

⁸⁵ *Gnostikos* 48.

⁸⁶ *Praktikos* 82.

⁸⁷ *KG* 1.28.

Evagrius parallels the providential effect of God's judgment and that of physical death (which also turns out to be God's providential remedy): 'That which sense-perceptible death customarily performs in us, well, in the same way "the righteous judgment of God" will realise this in the other rational creatures, in the time in which God is going to judge the living and the dead, and will reward each one according to his or her deeds'.⁸⁸ For Nyssen, too, physical death is a good, since it puts an end to human sins and prevents them from growing in infinitum, and therefore from needing an infinite purification – tantamount to an eternal punishment.⁸⁹ The destruction of the mortal body, liable to passions, will provide a point of departure for its rebuilding into a glorious and incorruptible body, free from passions and evil.⁹⁰ The other rational creatures, who have no mortal body, clearly cannot benefit from death in this way, but Evagrius asserts that God will provide them too with something equivalent, and therefore equally salvific, in the eschatological scenario. Indeed, the Judgment is aimed for Evagrius at restoration, and therefore at the triumph of God's mercy. The contemplation of the Judgment, indeed, in Evagrius' view, corresponds to the penultimate stage, the last one being the contemplation of God's providential mercy.⁹¹ This is the last word in the salvific economy.

Another strong element of convergence between Nyssen and Evagrius, which is closely related to their *apokatastasis* theory, lies in their so-called ethical intellectualism. This maintains that the choice for evil ultimately depends on ignorance; evil is not chosen qua evil, but because it is mistaken for a good. Ethical intellectualism, originally a Socratic-Platonic doctrine also shared by the Stoics, was later embraced by Origen, Nyssen, and Evagrius.⁹² One important consequence of this is that instruction and the illumination of the intellect cannot but lead to the voluntary adhesion to the Good, since will depends on the intellect. This obviously paved the way for the eventual universal restoration (essentially thanks to an illumination performed by angels, other rational creatures, and especially Christ-Logos-Wisdom).

Especially Nyssen applied ethical intellectualism even to the so-called original sin. Adam and Eve committed their sin, which was evil, because it *looked* good, and it appeared good because they were deceived by the devil. Gregory claims that the very name of the forbidden tree, 'of the knowledge of good and evil', is said to express the double nature of the fruit: 'it *seems* [δοκεῖ] to be good, but, in that it causes the ruin of those who taste it, it turns out to be the culmination of all evil'.⁹³ The devil's deception is vividly described as a dulling

⁸⁸ *KG* 1.82.

⁸⁹ See my *Apokatastasis* (2013), chapters on Nyssen and Methodius.

⁹⁰ This point by Nyssen is also found in Macarius of Magnesia, *Apocr.* 4.16.12.

⁹¹ *KG* 1.27.

⁹² See *Apokatastasis* (2013), the chapters on them.

⁹³ *Hom. Op.* 20.

of reasoning: ‘the adversary, having mingled evilness [κακία] to the human faculty of choice [προαίρεσις], produced an *obfuscation* and *darkening* of the capacity for reasoning well [εὐλογία]’.⁹⁴ Sin comes from an obfuscation of the intellect. Indeed, for Gregory the demons’ main tempting work consists precisely in deception (ἡ ἀπατηλὴ τῶν δαιμόνων), in giving to evil an appearance of good,⁹⁵ deceiving humans through oracles, divination, *etc.*,⁹⁶ and having humans judge superficially, without a proper exercise of freewill.⁹⁷ This notion of the deception of demons, too, which was dear to Nyssen, occupies a prominent place in the philosophico-theological reflection of Evagrius, who is one of the main patristic theorists of the tempting action of demons on humans.⁹⁸

More broadly, Evagrius followed in Nyssen’s footsteps in embracing ethical intellectualism. It is within this theoretical framework that we should read his overarching tenet, which underlies a number of his *Kephalaia Gnostika* and other passages, that there cannot be virtue without knowledge, or knowledge without virtue.⁹⁹ This approach, indeed, is ultimately indebted to ethical intellectualism, which, going back to Socrates and Plato, had also an important part in the thought of Origen’s fellow disciple at Ammonius Saccas’ school: Plotinus, who pithily describes will as an intellectual act: ‘Will is the intellection / the intellectual activity [ἡ δὲ βούλησις ἡ νόησις]. The latter is called will because it conforms to the intellect. For we maintain that the will follows what conforms to the intellect’.¹⁰⁰ For Origen, Plotinus, Nyssen, and Evagrius, the choices of our free will depend on our knowledge; if the intellect is obfuscated, free will is less free. True freedom, for Evagrius just as for Plato, Origen, and Nyssen, is the freedom to choose the Good.

Even the association of true freedom, leading to salvation, and confidence (παρρησία) is exactly the same in Evagrius and Nyssen. In a saying addressed to monks and collected in the *Apophthegmata patrum*,¹⁰¹ Evagrius depicts the righteous, who are saved, as characterised by παρρησία before God: ‘Bring to mind the goods stored up for the righteous, confidence [παρρησία] before God the Father and Christ’. Likewise, Gregory in *De anima* insisted on freedom and confidence as the condition of salvation (in what I called elsewhere Gregory’s ‘theology of freedom’¹⁰²), since freedom is freedom from sin and thereby freedom

⁹⁴ *Or.cat.*, GNO 3.4, 26.3-5.

⁹⁵ *C.Fatum*, GNO 3.2, 59.6-12.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 59.15-6.

⁹⁷ *Greg.Thaum.*, PG 46, 937.30.

⁹⁸ See, e.g., Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford, 2000), and my review in *Aevum* 77 (2003), 217-21.

⁹⁹ Documentation in my ‘Evagrius, the Origenian Ascetic’ (2015).

¹⁰⁰ *Enneads* 6.8.6, 36-8.

¹⁰¹ Evagrius 1, PG 65, 173AC, from *Rerum monachalium rationes* 9.

¹⁰² See my *Social Justice and the Legitimacy of Slavery: The Role of Philosophical Asceticism from Ancient Judaism to Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2016), 177-85.

from punishment, the state of the saved. Gregory stressed the necessity of a liberation from passions and sins, which enslave people to evil: freedom from passions, ἀπάθεια, is the authentic condition of humans – as Evagrius will also maintain. It was planned by God at the beginning and will be fully recovered in the end, when all have liberated themselves from sin and enslavement to sin, which produces suffering here and punishment in the next world. In propounding this argument, Gregory reinterprets the parable in *Matth.* 18:23-5 and *Luke* 7:41 in the following way, in the light of Plato's claim that virtue is 'something that admits of no masters' (ἀδέσποτον)¹⁰³ and bears the stamp of freedom:

God's right judgment is applied to all, and extends the time of restitution of the debt according to its amount ... the complete repayment of debts does not take place through a money payment, but the debtor is handed to the torturers, until he has paid his whole debt ... through the necessary suffering, he will eliminate the debt accumulated by means of participation in miserable things, which he had taken upon himself during his earthly life ... after taking off all that which is alien to himself, *i.e.* sin, and *getting rid of the shame deriving from debts*, he can achieve a condition of freedom [ἐλευθερία] and confidence [παρησία]. Now, freedom is assimilation to what has no master and is endowed with absolute power, and *at the beginning it was given us by God*, but then it was covered and hidden by the shame of debts. Thus, as a consequence, everything that is free will adapt to what is similar to it; but *virtue admits of no masters* [ἀρετὴ δὲ ἀδέσποτον]: therefore, everything that is free will turn out to be in virtue, since what is free has no master [ἀδέσποτον δὲ τὸ ἐλεύθερον]. Now, God's nature is the source of all virtue; so, *in it will be those who have attained freedom from evil*, that, as the Apostle says, '*God may be all in all*'.¹⁰⁴

The end of all will be the realization of all humans' freedom, in virtue and in God who is the source of all virtues, once all rational creatures will have voluntarily rejected sin entirely, and evil will have definitely disappeared. Nyssen's line, which brings straight to *apokatastasis*, was taken over by Evagrius.

Evagrius offers a further, strong ontological foundation for the doctrine of restoration, and one that, again, seems to come directly from Nyssen, in *KG* 1.1: 'There is nothing that is opposed to the First Good, because it is Goodness in its very essence; now, there is nothing that is opposed to the Essence'. Now, here too Evagrius clearly echoes Nyssen, who in *Moys.* 4 stated this same principle: 'The Divine admits of nothing opposed to itself'. This principle is for Gregory the point of departure to deduce the infinity of God, which he also found in Plotinus, and which provides the main grounds for his apophatic theology and his *epektasis* doctrine: since the Divinity has nothing opposed to itself, 'the divine nature is unlimited and infinite'. In *KG* 1.71, 'the end of

¹⁰³ *Resp.* 617E: 'Virtue is something that admits of no master. Each one will have more or less of it by honouring it or not. The responsibility is with the person who chooses; God is not responsible' (θεὸς ἀναίτιος: God is not responsible for moral evil – this is the principle of theodicy).

¹⁰⁴ *1Cor.* 15:28. *De anima* 101-4, GNO 3.3, 74-7. See my 'Christian Soteriology' (2007).

natural knowledge is the holy Unity, whereas the end of ignorance does not exist, as it is said: “for there is no limit/aim to its magnitude”’, Evagrius, who was well aware of Gregory’s principle of the infinity of God, is playing on the double meaning of τέλος: both ‘end’, *i.e.* goal, perfection, and ‘limit’. While knowledge is oriented to an end of perfection, which is the blessed *telos* of *apokatastasis*, in which Unity will prevail, ignorance has no orientation to an end, because it is not constructive, there is no progress in it. In the quotation from *Ps.* 144(145):3, τέλος bears the second meaning, *i.e.* end as limit – moreover, it refers to God, whose greatness and majesty are said to have no limit, and not to ignorance. But Evagrius also superimposes the first meaning to it, given that the first meaning underlies his initial declaration that the end/goal of natural knowledge is Unity. Unity is the aim and perfection of knowledge (according to a Platonic scheme that Christian Platonism took over¹⁰⁵). But ignorance has neither goal nor perfection, being pure negativity, like evil.

The definition of evil – the counterpart of ignorance (*KG* 4.29) – as ἄπειρον, indefinite, was well known to Evagrius from Plotinus, who described as ἄπειρον absolute evil,¹⁰⁶ in turn following Plato. Nyssen posited God as ἄπειρον and evil as limited insofar as it is the opposite of God. He may have thereby intended to ‘correct’ Plotinus: ‘Only what is contrary to Beauty and the Good is limited, whereas the Good, whose nature is not susceptible of evil, will progress toward the unlimited and infinite’.¹⁰⁷ Gregory probably sensed the risk that, if evil is ἄπειρον and Good/God too is ἄπειρον, the two end up being the same. Evagrius, very likely instructed by Nyssen, realised the difficulty, and took ἄπειρον in a different sense if it refers to God/Good, meaning ‘infinite, unlimited’ because there is nothing opposed to the first Good,¹⁰⁸ and if it refers to evil, meaning ‘indeterminate, indefinite’ and ‘without goal, aimless’.

Evagrius, in line with Origen’s and Nyssen’s henology, and probably not without Plotinian resonances, describes God as One: ‘That which is without mediation is One. And yet this One for the intermediaries is in all’.¹⁰⁹ God is One in the proper sense, in that the divinity is perfect unity and has no multiplicity in it. Thus, it is present in its wholeness in everything for the creatures who live in mediation, so Evagrius can say that God is ‘in all’, an idea that Nyssen developed: the divinity, in its power and Providence, διὰ πάντων διήκει, as Nyssen typically stated. The presence of the divinity in all will be perfectly fulfilled in the eventual *apokatastasis* and *theōsis*, when God comes to be ‘all in all’ (1*Cor.* 15:28) thanks to the vanishing of all evil and all apparent goods. For Origen, this is made possible by Christ-Logos, who is, not ‘simply one’

¹⁰⁵ See I.L.E. Ramelli, ‘Harmony between *arkhē* and *telos*’ (2013).

¹⁰⁶ *Enn.* 1.8.9.

¹⁰⁷ *De anima* 97AB, GNO 3.3, 71.

¹⁰⁸ *KG* 1.1.

¹⁰⁹ *KG* 1.12.

(ἀπλῶς ἓν, what God the Father is), but ὡς πάντα ἓν, 'all things as One', in that, as Logos, it contains the *logoi* of all things, and subsumes this multiplicity into a superior unity. As I argued elsewhere, Origen here was developing a point by Clement, and was closely followed by Nyssen in turn.¹¹⁰ Evagrius was likely inspired by Nyssen, or by all of them.

Evagrius' typical notion of intellections (νοήματα, νοήσεις), too, seems indebted to Nyssen. Intellections as acts of knowledge by intuition of the intellect are νοήσεις; intellections as the content of these intuitions are νοήματα. In *KG* 1.19 ('The knowledge that is in the four is the knowledge of the intellections of creatures, but the knowledge of the One is the knowledge of that who only Is'), the knowledge of God is differentiated from that of creatures. God is characterised by unity, as we have just seen, and is the only completely immaterial being (as already Origen and Nyssen maintained¹¹¹); creatures are characterized by multiplicity and matter (the four elements). The knowledge of material entities is the knowledge of the (immaterial) νοήματα of (material) creatures; the knowledge of God, the entirely immaterial One, is the knowledge of the only true Being. For Nyssen, there are intellections located in Christ-Logos, which also functioned as the intelligible paradigms of the world in the creation. Nyssen indeed described Christ-Logos-Wisdom as the seat of all νοήματα of realities before the creation of the world,¹¹² in a fashion that reminds one of Origen and is in turn rooted in Middle Platonism. Through God's *dynamis* (i.e. Christ-Logos: *dynamis* was one of the *epinoiai* of Christ already in Origen), these intellections became creatures, works of God: ἔργα τὰ νοήματα γίνεται. Origen had stated that they became substances, οὐσίαι.¹¹³ The causes of all things are their *logoi* or intellections in the mind of God. Like Evagrius after him, Origen maintained that an important factor of the eschatological blessedness will be the knowledge of these causes. In *Princ.* 1.1.7, Origen telescopes the knowledge of the causes or principles of all things and the knowledge of God, because the causes or *logoi* of all things, which are also their intellections, are and were in the mind of God. Evagrius will follow along this line, as I shall show now (and later Eriugena also will).

Like body soul and intellect, which – as I have illustrated above – will be subsumed, the inferior into the superior, intellections will also undergo an elevation, from the intellections of creatures to the intellections of God. In *KG* 1.20

¹¹⁰ 'Clement's Notion of the Logos "All Things As One". Its Alexandrian Background in Philo and its Developments in Origen and Nyssen', in Zlatko Pleše (ed.), *Alexandrian Personae: Scholarly Culture and Religious Traditions in Ancient Alexandria* (Tübingen, 2017).

¹¹¹ See my *Origen of Alexandria as Philosopher and Theologian: A Chapter in the History of Platonism* (Cambridge, forthcoming), ch. 3.

¹¹² *Perf.* 260B.

¹¹³ *C.Io.* 1.19.114-5. See Ilaria Ramelli, 'Divine Power in Origen of Alexandria: Sources and Aftermath', in *Divine Powers in Late Antiquity*, ed. Anna Marmodoro and Irini Fotini Viltanioti (Oxford, 2017), 177-98.

(‘When only the intellections of all those things that have come to existence by accident will remain in us, then only the One who is known will be known, only he, by the subject who knows’), Evagrius is referring to the final perfection: when all that which has come to existence by accident has disappeared, only the relevant intellections will remain in us, and only the knowledge of God will subsist, containing all intellections and being knowledge of the One who never passes away. In the *telos*, rational creatures will know only God primarily, and will know everything in God through the intellections of all. This is Evagrius’ gnoseological interpretation of 1Cor. 15:28, ‘God will be all in all’, a passage largely deployed by Nyssen, too, in reference to *apokatastasis*. As God will be all goods for each *logikon* (according to Origen’s and Nyssen’s interpretation of this passage¹¹⁴), so will God be the one object of knowledge of all *logika*, and this one will subsume in itself all objects of knowledge, just as God, the supreme Good, subsumes all goods.¹¹⁵

Another aspect of Evagrius’ gnoseology is closely related to Nyssen. Evagrius belongs to a line of Greek theology that was aware of the limits of human knowledge of God; this line goes back to Origen, who was inspired by Philo, and has Nyssen as one of its main exponents.¹¹⁶ Evagrius stresses in *KG* 1.38 that our knowledge of God is very pale in comparison with the knowledge that will be gained by direct experience in the *telos*, or perhaps in mystical experience as realised eschatology: ‘Just as, when we are awake, we say this and that concerning sleep, but then, when we are asleep, we come to know them by experience, likewise of all those things that we hear regarding God when we are apart from God, we shall have the demonstration by experience when we are in God’. What we can know here concerning God is not what God is, but are things that are ‘*regarding/around*’ God, because we are not yet *in* God. This is the same notion that was developed by Nyssen, when he insisted that we can know and express only things that are *περὶ Θεοῦ*, but not God’s own nature, so we do not know what God is, but we can know what is ‘around’ God. Evagrius assimilates the direct knowledge of God by experience, not to a state of wakefulness, but to a state of sleep, since human senses and even human intellect are asleep when they experience God. This theme in the mystical tradition was present already in Philo and was underscored by Nyssen (and later Dionysius).

The same distinction between seeing/knowing God and grasping something ‘concerning God’ is hammered home by Evagrius in *KG* 5.26. Evagrius, like Nyssen, insists that one cannot know ‘God’s nature’, but only God’s Wisdom,

¹¹⁴ See my ‘Christian Soteriology’ (2007).

¹¹⁵ See my ‘Clement’s Notion of the Logos’ (2017), where I argue that this notion in Origen and Nyssen derives from the (essentially Middle Platonic) idea of Christ-Logos ὡς πάντα ἐν, already deployed by Clement.

¹¹⁶ See my ‘The Divine as an Inaccessible Epistemological Object in Ancient Jewish, “Pagan”, and Christian Platonists: A Common Cognitive Pattern across Religious Traditions’, *JHI* 75 (2014), 167–88.

'not the essential one, but that which is manifested in the existent beings, that which those who are experts in these matters usually call 'natural contemplation'. And if this is so, what is the foolishness of those who claim that they know the nature of God?'¹¹⁷ Evagrius also uses the metaphor of silence in reference to apophaticism: 'Every proposition has a predicate or a genus, or a distinction, or a species, or a property, or an accident, or that which is composed of these things. But on the subject of the Blessed Trinity, nothing of what has been said [here] is admissible. In silence let the ineffable be adored!'¹¹⁸ This train of thought, too, has a long history in ancient apophatic tradition and especially, again, in Nyssen, who is very likely to have inspired Evagrius also in this respect.¹¹⁹ Maximus the Confessor will follow suit. This is the backdrop against which to interpret the puzzling 'missing chapters' of the *Kephalaia Gnostika*: they are 'silent chapters' pointing to the ineffability of God.¹²⁰

Evagrius stresses the impossibility of knowing the Trinity's nature by means of discursive reason ('in ascents and descents') because of the non-dualism that characterises the Trinity, supreme Unity, and its knowledge. Both corporeal and incorporeal creatures are divisible, bodies into matter (ὕλη) and form (εἶδος) – the basic Aristotelian division – and incorporeal creatures into common contemplation and substance liable to opposition, but the Trinity is absolutely simple, indivisible, and not susceptible of opposition.¹²¹ The simplicity of God was a tenet of Origen's, Basil's, and Nyssen's theology.¹²² Evagrius follows the tradition of apophaticism in *KG* 3.63 too, where he also echoes Nyssen's core notion of God as infinite: God possesses infinite knowledge and is the object of infinite ignorance, being infinite. In *KG* 2.37 Evagrius teaches that 'One is, among all beings, without name, and its place is unknown'. Divine ineffability depends on divine transcendence, which also makes God adiasematic, and our impossibility to know God's essence – a theme that Nyssen abundantly developed.

¹¹⁷ *KG* 5.51. See my 'Mysticism and Mystic Apophaticism in Middle and Neoplatonism', in Annette Wilke (ed.), *Constructions of Mysticism: Inventions and Interactions Across the Borders* (Wiesbaden, 2017).

¹¹⁸ *Gnostikos* 41.

¹¹⁹ See Ilaria Ramelli, 'Silenzio apofatico in Gregorio di Nissa: un confronto con Plotino e un'indagine delle ascendenze origeniane', in *Silenzio e Parola* (Rome, 2012), 367-88.

¹²⁰ See my *Evagrius' Kephalaia Gnostika*, introduction, and Monica Tobon, 'Reply to Kevin Corrigan', *SP* 57 (2013), 27-9, 28: 'the "missing chapters" are in fact "silent chapters", corresponding to the passage of the contemplative *nous* beyond the words of human teachers to the Word himself, beyond image and sign to the unconstrained and uncontainable infinity of God'; *ead.*, 'A Word Spoken in Silence: The "Missing" Chapters of Evagrius' *Kephalaia Gnostika*', *SP* 72 (2014), 197-210.

¹²¹ *KG* 5.62. See also *KG* 1.1.

¹²² Especially for Basil and Nyssen – who both influenced Evagrius – see Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Transformation of Divine Simplicity* (Oxford, 2009).

Another point of contact between Evagrius and Nyssen is related to their apophatic theology. For Evagrius, ‘the whole ministry of the Son and the Spirit is exercised through creation, for the sake of those who are far from God’.¹²³ Those with whom the Son and the Spirit cannot communicate directly, because they are far from God due to sin, are instructed by them and drawn close to God through creation. Something similar was maintained by Nyssen, who, as mentioned, claimed that God’s creation and operations play a core role in the acquisition of the knowledge of God: humans cannot know God’s essence/nature (οὐσία), but they can know God’s activities and operations (ἐνέργειαι), of which creation is the main expression.¹²⁴

Evagrius insists that creatures allow one to know the Wisdom of God: ‘Everything that has come into being declares ‘God’s Wisdom, full of modalities/varieties’.¹²⁵ However, among all beings, one that gives information concerning God’s nature does not exist’. Evagrius, again like Nyssen, explains that it is impossible for us to know the nature/essence of God, but from the creation we can come to know the Wisdom of the Creator, *i.e.* Christ-Logos-Wisdom, the agent of creation.

Another issue related to apophaticism may reveal a further element of indebtedness of Evagrius toward Nyssen: his notion of prayer, which, at its highest level, is apophatic prayer: ‘Prayer is a state of the intellect destructive of every earthly intellection and produced only by the light of the Holy Trinity’.¹²⁶ Now, Evagrius’ definition of prayer ultimately goes back to Clement of Alexandria,¹²⁷ but may also easily come, more directly, from Nyssen, who reproduced Clement’s definition closely. Evagrius describes prayer as ‘the intellect’s conversation [ὁμιλία] with God’ in *On Prayer* 3, a definition that is so important as to be repeated in *Skemmata* 28 and 31 and in *Scholia on Psalms* 140(141):2, and echoed in *On Prayer* 4, 34, and 55. According to Columba Stewart,¹²⁸ ‘Evagrius’ use of that definition of prayer inherited from Clement of Alexandria is more than just a bow to tradition. Prayer is an encounter with a personal God, and Evagrius keeps biblical words and imagery in play even in his description of the highest stages of prayer’.¹²⁹ What has generally escaped scholars, however,

¹²³ *Ep.Mel.* 5.

¹²⁴ See my ‘The Divine as Inaccessible Object’ (2014) and for the reflections of this idea in Evagrius see J. Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius* (2009), 47-76.

¹²⁵ *KG* 2.21, quoting *Eph.* 3:10, also echoed in *KG* 2.2. Already Origen interpreted *Eph.* 3:10 in connection with Christ-Logos-Wisdom (see my commentary on *KG* 2.2 in *Evagrius* [2015]).

¹²⁶ *Skemmata* 26-7.

¹²⁷ *Strom.* 7.39.6; see 7.73.1-3. On this definition of prayer in Clement see Henny Hägg, ‘Prayer and Knowledge in Clement of Alexandria’, in *The Seventh Book of the Stromateis* (Leiden, 2012), 131-42, 132-5.

¹²⁸ ‘Imageless Prayer and the Theological Vision of Evagrius Ponticus’, *JECS* 9 (2001), 173-204, 191.

¹²⁹ On Evagrius’s teaching on prayer see Irenée Hausherr, *Les leçons d’un contemplatif: le Traité de l’oraison d’Evagre le Pontique* (Paris, 1960); Gabriel Bunge, *Das Geistesgebet. Studien*

is that Nyssen also defined prayer as 'conversation [ὁμιλία] with God and contemplation of the invisible'.¹³⁰ He may well have conveyed Clement's definition to Evagrius, or the latter may have been under the influence of both.

Evagrius' apophatic theology, which he mainly inherited from Nyssen, very probably led him also to leave his masterpiece, the *Kephalaia Gnostika*, unfinished. Already the Syriac Babai († 628), who commented on this work, remarked that, instead of the 600 *kephalaia* promised, Evagrius wrote only 540 and a supplement to them is found in Evagrius' *Skemmata*. Socrates, when listing Evagrius' works only forty years after Evagrius' death, designated the *Kephalaia Gnostika* as ἑξακόσια προγνωστικά προβλήματα, 'six hundred gnostic problems'.¹³¹ Either he knew of a complete edition, now lost and unknown to Babai over one century later, or he ignored that the *Kephalaia Gnostika* in fact had missing chapters. What matters most here is the question, whether this incompleteness seems to be structural. The work was aimed at representing the limits of human theological discourse and what can be expressed of God.¹³² If so, Evagrius is perfectly in line with Gregory's theology of silence by leaving the work unfinished.

This is all the more significant in an encompassing work such as the *Kephalaia Gnostika*. The rationale for the number of Discourses, six, under which all the *kephalaia* or propositions are grouped, is explained by Evagrius at the very end of his work; it coincides with the Hexaemeron: 'Investigate our words, our brothers, and interpret with diligence the riddles of these discourses/centuries, which are in the number of the six days of creation'. Therefore, Evagrius' reflections are meant to have a wideness that encompasses that of creation. This suggests the intention of producing a foundational work on the principles of reality. In this sense the closest work one can think of – albeit the propositional structure of Evagrius' work is different – is Origen's *Περὶ ἀρχῶν*, the first Christian treatise of systematic theology and theoretical philosophy, which will remain unmatched in its design and ambition until Eriugena's *Periphyseon*.¹³³

zum Traktat *De oratione des Evagrius Pontikos* (Köln, 1987); *id.*, 'Aktive und kontemplative Weise des Betens im Traktat *De oratione des Evagrius Pontikos*', *Studia Monastica* 41 (1999), 211-27; A. Casiday, *Reconstructing* (2013), 136-66.

¹³⁰ *Or.dom.* 208.19.

¹³¹ *HE* 4.23.

¹³² See M. Tobon, 'A Word Spoken in Silence' (2014).

¹³³ See my 'Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism: Re-Thinking the Christianisation of Hellenism', *VC* 63 (2009), 217-63, received *e.g.*, by Christoph Marksches, *Hellenisierung des Christentums: Sinn und Unsinn einer historischen Deutungskategorie* (Leipzig, 2012), 119 and 138; Panayiotis Tzamalikos, *The Real Cassian Revisited* (Leiden, 2012), 288, 486, 505; Mark Scott, *Journey Back to God: Origen on the Problem of Evil* (Oxford, 2012), 180; Aaron Johnson, 'Philosophy, Hellenicity, Law: Porphyry on Origen, Again', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 132 (2012), 55-69; Eliezer González, *The Fate of the Dead in Early Third Century North African Christianity* (Tübingen, 2014), 71; Arthur Urbano, *The Philosophical Life: Biography and the*

Evagrius in *KG* 5.16 refers to *Ex.* 20:21 and the ‘darkness’ in which God was, a passage that was deployed by Nyssen, after Philo, as an allusion to God’s unknowability.¹³⁴ Evagrius here identifies the ‘intelligible darkness’ with ‘spiritual contemplation containing in itself the *logoi* of Providence and of the Judgment of those on earth’. This passage is related to *KG* 5.13, but also to *KG* 5.4 and *KG* 5.7, in which the *logoi* of divine Providence and of the Judgment are said to have been given to angels and archangels. They are the contents of the spiritual *theōria* that is proper to them. We shall soon return to spiritual contemplation and the path that leads to it, since this bears on another conspicuous element of probable influence of Gregory Nyssen on Evagrius.

One more of such elements seems to reside in Evagrius’ and Gregory’s notion of vices and passions (πάθη, bad emotions¹³⁵). In *KG* 4.22 Evagrius describes vices as ‘bestial movements of the soul’, while virtues pertain to ‘the natural activities of the soul’. These natural activities are oriented to the Good; evilness is against nature; it was not implanted by God at the beginning in humans (Evagrius is again reasoning in terms of the above-mentioned οἰκειώσις-ἀλλοτριώσις dialectics, which was so important to Nyssen too). Evil is no creature of God, and is unnatural for a soul. Now, the same description of vices and passions as unnatural to the soul and accretions against nature is found in Nyssen’s *De anima*.¹³⁶ Evagrius details that the *nous* is hindered from knowing God by tempting thoughts ‘which attack it from the irascible and the

Crafting of Intellectual Identity in Late Antiquity (Washington, 2013), 71; George Karamanolis, *The Philosophy of Early Christianity* (Durham, 2013), 286 and 307; Travis Proctor, ‘Daemonic Trickery, Platonic Mimicry: Traces of Christian Daemonological Discourse in Porphyry’s *De Abstinētia*’, *Vigiliae Christianae* 68 (2014), 416–49, 419; Matthew Crawford, ‘Ammonius of Alexandria, Eusebius of Caesarea, and the Origins of Gospels Scholarship’, *NTS* 61 (2015), 1–29; Peter Martens, ‘Embodiment, Heresy, and the Hellenization of Christianity: The Descent of the Soul in Plato and Origen’, *HTR* 108.4 (2015), 594–620, 599, 619; Elizabeth DePalma Digeser, ‘The Usefulness of Borderlands Concepts in Ancient History: The Case of Origen as Monster’, in *Globalizing Borderland Studies in Europe and North America*, ed. Michael North and John Lee (Lincoln, 2016), 15–32: 29 n. 2 and 31 n. 42; George Karamanolis, ‘Early Christian Philosophers on Aristotle’, in Andrea Falcon (ed.), *The Brill Companion to Aristotle’s Reception* (Leiden, 2016), ch. 23; J. Warren Smith, Introduction to *Plato and Christ: Platonism in Early Christian Theology*, special topics issue of *Religions* 2017, <http://www.mdpi.com/journal/religions/special_issues/Platonic_Influence>; Arthur Urbano, ‘Difficulties in Writing the Life of Origen’, in Ronald Heine and Karen Jo Torjesen (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Origen* (Oxford, 2017). A commentary on *Περὶ ἀρχῶν* as the first Christian treatise of systematic theology and theoretical philosophy will eventually be offered.

¹³⁴ I.L.E. Ramelli, ‘Philosophical Allegoresis of Scripture in Philo and Its Legacy in Gregory of Nyssa’, *StPhilo* 20 (2008), 55–99; ‘The Divine as Inaccessible Object’ (2014); Ann Conway-Jones, *Gregory of Nyssa’s Tabernacle Imagery in its Jewish and Christian Contexts* (Oxford, 2014).

¹³⁵ Several Patristic Platonists followed the Stoic-Middle-Platonist definition of πάθη. See, e.g., David Konstan and Ilaria Ramelli, ‘The Use of XAPA in the New Testament and its Background in Hellenistic Moral Philosophy’, *ExClass* 14 (2010), 185–204.

¹³⁶ See my commentary in *Gregorio di Nissa Sull’Anima* (2007).

concupiscible/appetitive faculties of the soul, which assail it, going against what properly belongs to (human) nature'.¹³⁷ Evagrius conceives of these tempting thoughts to be inspired by demons, availing himself of a notion and terminology already found in Origen, for instance: *sunt ergo huiusmodi cogitationes* [λογισμοί] *quae a daemonibus iniciuntur cordibus hominum*.¹³⁸ But the idea that λογισμοί and passions, coming from the *thymikon* and the *epithymētikon*,¹³⁹ are against human rational nature, was especially developed by Nyssen in *De anima*. In *KG* 6.85 Evagrius follows again Nyssen concerning the secondary, later, and adventitious nature of the inferior faculties of the soul liable to passions (Gregory used terms such as ἐπιγεννήματα in this regard, and images stemming from Plato, *Rep.* 10.611D: 'barnacles, seaweed, and stones', that encrust the soul in the Glaucus metaphor). They are parts of those animal elements that invaded human life after the fall, when it became mortal and shared in 'bestial' life, as Gregory also put it: human beings after the fall assumed, instead of the angelic life, the irrational life of beasts.¹⁴⁰ So Evagrius: 'If it is true that all those faculties that we have in common with animals belong to the mortal corporeal nature, it is evident that the irascible and appetitive faculties do not seem to have been created together with the rational nature before the movement', *i.e.*, in Origenian terms, the movement of will that determined the fall. Gregory treated this point in *De anima*. The inferior faculties of the soul, just as mortality, did not exist before the movement of free will toward evil, and will not exist in the *telos*. The irascible faculty of the soul (θυμός, θυμικόν) and the concupiscible, appetitive, or desiderative faculty (ἐπιθυμητικόν), characterised by greed and lust, are the two main headings under which passions are (Platonically) classified. Evagrius calls them 'bestial' in *KG* 5.27 ('The irascible faculty, when it is troubled, blinds the seer; the concupiscible, when bestially moved, hides the visible objects') in that the irrational movements and faculties of the soul assimilate humans to animals. This notion was dear to Nyssen, who developed it in *De anima*, and is taken over by Evagrius also in *Letter to Melania* 46.

To Evagrius' mind, then, just as to Nyssen's,¹⁴¹ the ideal of *apatheia* or eradication of passions / bad emotions (πάθη) is closely related to the conception of passions as adventitious in rational creatures, secondary, and against nature (again, in the order of ἀλλοτρίωσις vs οἰκείωσις). Evagrius argues that, since all the faculties that humans have in common with animals belong to the mortal corporeal nature, then clearly the irascible and concupiscible faculties

¹³⁷ *KG* 6.83.

¹³⁸ *C.Cant.* 4.3.4.

¹³⁹ Evagrius often follows Plato's terminology for the tripartition of the soul into rational, irascible, and concupiscible or appetitive: see also, *e.g.*, *KG* 1.53, 1.68, 1.84, 3.35, 3.59, 4.73, 4.79, 5.27, 5.39, 5.66, 6.41, 6.84, and 6.85.

¹⁴⁰ *Hom. Op.* 18.

¹⁴¹ See my *Gregorio di Nissa sull'Anima* (2007).

were not created together with the rational nature before the movement of will that determined the fall.¹⁴² They are subsequent accretions; they do not belong to the authentic human nature, which is the prelapsarian nature of the *logika*. Evagrius squarely declares them to be ‘against nature’.¹⁴³ Their major fault is that they produce *logismoι* that prevent the intellect from knowing God. Intellects were created by God that they might know God; this is their nature. What obstacles this knowledge is therefore against nature. This is why, since passions were not at the beginning – being not included in God’s plan for rational creatures – they will not endure in the end.

Under the ideal of *apatheia* Evagrius tends to comprehend all virtues, since *apatheia* is the goal of the whole *praktikē* or ascetic endeavour (namely, Evagrius’ ethics). For rejecting passions means achieving virtues. One prominent virtue within the cluster of *apatheia* is chastity. And here, too, the broad meaning of chastity as the mortification of passions, which Evagrius theorises in *KG* 6.38, is perfectly in line with the comprehensive meaning that chastity/virginity assumes in Methodius¹⁴⁴ and especially Nyssen. For Nyssen, exactly as for Evagrius later, virginity is a holistic virtue, and a privileged path for the restoration. This is why Gregory’s *De virginitate* extols virginity to such an extent,¹⁴⁵ and Evagrius makes it the way to *apatheia* or moral perfection, which leads to knowledge and restoration.

Evagrius also warns, like Nyssen in *De anima*, that what is really evil are not the inferior faculties of the soul in themselves, which were anyway created by God after the fall, but their bad use, namely their use against nature, since from this comes evilness/vice (κακία): ‘If all evilness is generated by the intellect, by the irascible faculty, and by the appetitive one, and of these faculties it is possible to make use in a good and an evil way, then it is clear that it is for the use of these faculties against nature that evils occur to us. And if this is so, there is nothing that has been created by God and is evil’.¹⁴⁶ Evagrius’ concern here is manifestly theodicy, the same that guided Origen’s and Nyssen’s theology. Plato’s all-important principle, θεὸς ἀναίτιος, was insistently repeated by Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Nyssen. Evagrius also absorbed it.

¹⁴² See the above-quoted *KG* 6.85.

¹⁴³ *KG* 6.83.

¹⁴⁴ On Methodius, see my ‘L’Inno a Cristo-Logos nel *Simposio* di Metodio’, in *Motivi e forme della poesia cristiana antica tra Scrittura e tradizione classica* (Rome, 2008), 257-80; *Apokatastasis* (2013), 271-2; Maria Benedetta Zorzi, ‘The Use of the Terms ἀγνεία, παρθενία, σωφροσύνη and ἐγκράτεια in the *Symposium* of Methodius’, *VC* 63 (2009), 138-68.

¹⁴⁵ I do not deem Gregory’s praise of virginity ironic. Hans Boersma, *Embodiment and Virtue in Gregory of Nyssa* (Oxford, 2013), and Amy Hughes, ‘The Legacy of the Feminine in the Christology of Origen of Alexandria, Methodius of Olympus, and Gregory of Nyssa’, *VC* 70 (2016), 51-76, agree with me.

¹⁴⁶ *KG* 3.59.

Evagrius too, like Origen and Nyssen, attaches much weight to ἀγάπη and is certainly well aware of his predecessors' treatment. Love will characterise *apokatastasis* and guarantee that there will be no further falls. Origen developed a long argument to this end in *Commentary on Romans*, claiming that love will prevent further falls from the final blessedness on the grounds of Paul's declaration, ἡ ἀγάπη οὐδέποτε (ἐκ)πίπτει.¹⁴⁷ Reminiscent of this, and of Nyssen's treatment of love's role in restoration and infinite *epektasis*,¹⁴⁸ Evagrius too explains the reason why love will prevent further falls: because the object of the soul's strongest love is the knowledge of God: 'Charity-love [ἀγάπη] is the excellent state of the rational soul, a state in which the soul cannot love anything which is among corruptible beings more than the knowledge of God'.¹⁴⁹ This will prevent the soul from choosing any other object of love as preferable to the knowledge of God.

Evagrius, therefore, identifying charity-love as the perfect state of the rational soul and making the knowledge of God the object of this love, shows that not only knowledge, but also love pertains to the *telos* and perfection of rational creatures. In *KG* 4.50, too, knowledge and love are inseparably joined together.¹⁵⁰ The same was the case for Nyssen, whose treatment of love and knowledge in both *De anima* and *In Canticum* probably inspired this *kephalaion* of Evagrius. Gregory, indeed, concluded, exactly like Evagrius later, that love and knowledge pertain to the eschatological perfection of rational creatures, since they pertain to God, and rational creatures will be united with God – to the point that 'knowledge becomes love'.¹⁵¹ Gregory observes that after the fall love, instead of being directed to intelligible realities, and primarily God, became oriented toward sense-perceptible objects.¹⁵² But we should use it to unite ourselves with God, which will be achieved perfectly in the *telos*. Likewise,

¹⁴⁷ On this see the commentary in *Apokatastasis* (2013), 170-3.

¹⁴⁸ On which I have to refer to Ramelli, 'Apokatastasis and Epektasis' (forthcoming).

¹⁴⁹ *KG* 1.86.

¹⁵⁰ See also *KG* 3.58.

¹⁵¹ *De anima* 96D-97B, GNO 3.3, 69-71: 'The Divinity knows itself, and this knowledge immediately becomes love, because what is known is beautiful and good by nature, and to what is really beautiful and good insolent satiety does not pertain. And because satiety does not interrupt the disposition to loving what is beautiful and good, divine life will always be realised through love: this life is both beautiful and good by nature, and is naturally disposed to loving what is beautiful and good, and has no satiety of the activity according to love, because it is also impossible to grasp a limit of the beautiful and good, so that, together with the end of the beautiful and good, love also should come to an end. Indeed, only what is opposed to the beautiful and good is circumscribed, whereas that Good whose nature is not susceptible of evil will progress toward the unlimited and infinite. Thus, since every nature is such as to attract to itself what has an affinity to it, and what is human has some affinity to God, in that it bears in itself the likeness of the archetype, then the soul is necessarily attracted toward the divine, which is related to it. For it is necessary that in every respect and in every way what belongs to God be reserved for God'.

¹⁵² *De anima* 65, GNO 3.3, 45. Macrina is speaking here.

we should put all natural impulses in the service of virtues, not of passions and vices.

If passions result from a use against nature of the soul's faculties, and must therefore be eradicated, what about ἀγάπη?¹⁵³ Will it have to disappear as well? Love plays a core role in the restoration in Evagrius', Origen's, and Nyssen's perspective. They insist that ἀγάπη will endure eternally. Origen, as I have explained, adduced Paul's argument that 'ἀγάπη never falls'. This is compatible with the eschatological disappearance of passions because Evagrius, like Nyssen, thinks that ἀγάπη is no πάθος. Charity-love is so far from being a passion that 'ἀγάπη is the product of impassivity' or *apatheia*.¹⁵⁴ Since impassivity is the goal of *praktikē*, ἀγάπη can be seen as the result of asceticism: 'The end of asceticism [πρακτική] is charity-love; that of knowledge is the doctrine concerning God, and the principles of both are faith and natural contemplation'.¹⁵⁵ Love not only stems from asceticism and impassivity, but, reciprocally, also overcomes passions: 'Bodily passions are overcome by continence; those of the soul are overcome by spiritual love [ἀγάπη πνευματική]'.¹⁵⁶ The interdependence between love and impassivity is hammered home in *Eulogius* 22: 'Charity-love is the bond of impassivity and the expunging of passions ... Love possesses nothing of its own apart from God, for God is Love itself'.

Evagrius, therefore, explicitly links *agapē* and *apatheia*. Now, remarkably, this very association was already drawn clearly by Nyssen, for instance in *In Canticum* GNO 6, 134-5: humans should strive to imitate the purity of angels through impassivity (διὰ τῆς ἀπαθείας), but the impassivity of the angels (τῆς ἀγγελικῆς ἀπαθείας) can be achieved by humans only through ever-growing, greater and greater love (τῆς ἀγάπης πρὸς τὸ μείζον ἐπαυξομένης). This is the framework in which both Gregory and Evagrius also stressed the identification of *apatheia* with the angelic life. For Gregory, one can become ἰσάγγελος διὰ τῆς ἀπαθείας.¹⁵⁷ Thus, Gregory describes Macrina as an angel, specifically because she remained in *apatheia*.¹⁵⁸ Evagrius likewise associates angels with *apatheia* and insists on the necessity for humans to imitate angels in *apatheia*, and in the help that angels offer to humans towards reaching *apatheia*.¹⁵⁹ This is, therefore, another remarkable convergence between Nyssen and Evagrius.

¹⁵³ See my 'Love', in Angelo Di Berardino (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity* (Downers Grove, 2014), 2,611-26.

¹⁵⁴ *Praktikos* 81.

¹⁵⁵ *Praktikos* 84.

¹⁵⁶ *Praktikos* 35.

¹⁵⁷ *In Cant.*, GNO 6, 29-30; likewise *ibid.* 6, 253-4. See also Giulio Maspero, 'Isoangelia in Gregory of Nyssa and Origen on the Background of Plotinus', in this volume, pp. 77-100.

¹⁵⁸ *Macr.* 22, GNO 8.1, 396.

¹⁵⁹ E.g., *KG* 2.48; 6.35.

Interestingly, besides that of angelic life, Evagrius also takes up the theme of angelic teaching,¹⁶⁰ already present in Origen and especially Nyssen. Origen thought of instruction by angels preceding that by Christ-Logos,¹⁶¹ and Gregory in *De infantibus* imagined angels in the other world teaching babies who died too early to achieve maturity and knowledge on earth. Evagrius speaks of an instruction provided by angels already here on earth to humans, who subsequently, in the other world, will enjoy the fruit of this instruction, because they have already been able to make spiritual progress thanks to the angels' teaching.

Concerning *apatheia*, which Evagrius links to the angelic life, this will be one prominent characteristic of the *telos*. According to Evagrius, all pleasures will pass away, like all πάθη, in the *telos*; only the intellectual pleasure that accompanies knowledge will remain,¹⁶² because this is no πάθος (like ἀγάπη). It is rather coextensive with the constitution or σύστασις of the *nous*, in that it follows knowledge, the peculiar activity of the intellectual soul. Knowledge will not pass away with the passing away of the aeons, in the eventual *apokatastasis*, and the noetic pleasure that accompanies it will not pass away. An analogous argument is developed by Nyssen, as has been seen: all πάθη will disappear in the *telos*, in that they belong to the inferior faculties of the soul and not to the very nature of the soul, which is the intellectual nature. They are external and posterior accretions, spurious. But ἀγάπη will not pass away, because ἀγάπη is no πάθος. It belongs to the intellectual soul itself.¹⁶³ And knowledge as well as love will be, for both Nyssen and Evagrius, the main constituent of the eschatological blessedness.

That Evagrius' argument parallels that of Nyssen concerning ἀγάπη is confirmed by the immediately following (and closely linked) *kephalaion*, *KG* 4.50, in which Evagrius precisely refers to ἀγάπη and its permanence in the *telos*, exactly on the grounds that this belongs to the intellect proper and is directly related to knowledge: 'There is one good kind of love, which is forever: that which true knowledge chooses, and it is said to be inseparable from the intellect'. It seems to me that this is one of the many instances in which Evagrius is closely inspired by Nyssen. Just as the pleasure of knowledge in *KG* 4.49, likewise ἀγάπη here is associated with true knowledge, and the *nous* which pursues true knowledge.

In *Praktikos* 81 and 84, too, Evagrius talks of love as the offspring of *apatheia* and the end of *praktikē*.¹⁶⁴ Love is indeed described by Evagrius as the

¹⁶⁰ *KG* 3.65, 6.35, and 6.76.

¹⁶¹ Documentation in my *Apokatastasis* (2013), chapter on Origen.

¹⁶² *KG* 4.49.

¹⁶³ See my commentary in *Gregorio di Nissa sull'Anima* (2007) and my 'Tears of Pathos, Repentance, and Bliss: Crying and Salvation in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa', in Thorsten Fögen (ed.), *Tears in the Graeco-Roman World* (Berlin, 2009), 367-96.

¹⁶⁴ See K. Corrigan, *Evagrius and Gregory* (2009), Ch. 9.

source of all virtues and of *apatheia*, the goal of *praktikē*.¹⁶⁵ Evagrius, thus, posits a deep interrelation between charity-love and *apatheia*, and thereby between love and *praktikē*. In *KG* 4.50, however, love is not just connected to *praktikē*, but to knowledge (*gnōsis*), which for Evagrius is one step further and bears on the *telos* (we shall return soon to the *praktikē*-*gnōsis* and purification-knowledge sequence and its implications). This goes in the direction of Nyssen, who located both love and knowledge straight in the ultimate *telos*.

A strong form of love, which Evagrius, like Origen, Nyssen, and later Ps. Dionysius, calls desire (ἐρως), is posited by him as the main factor in the continual growth of the intellect in knowledge and in the approximation to God (close to Nyssen's epestatic, infinite movement of progress and development of rational creatures): 'the intellect, when it approaches the intellections of beings, will be full of spiritual desire and will never detach itself from admiration'.¹⁶⁶ Love, the propeller of this spiritual development, is the only movement that will remain in the end, in the infinite *epektasis*. The love of intellectual creatures will always strive for the Love that God is. The intellections of beings arouse unquenchable awe and spiritual desire.

Evagrius is obviously relying on a concept of infinite contemplation and desire that was developed especially by Nyssen: the notion of *epektasis* and of the endless desire of each intellectual soul for God. I have endeavoured to demonstrate that Gregory's doctrine of *epektasis* was inspired by Origen.¹⁶⁷ Evagrius was well acquainted with Gregory's and Origen's writings and may have been inspired by both here, as in many other cases, but Gregory's influence would be primary. The more the intellect contemplates the existing beings and receives their intellections, the more it fills with awe and desire for more knowledge. And this progressively leads to God. The passage from the contemplation of created things to the knowledge of the divine power is the very same in Gregory Nyssen and Evagrius. Gregory has it in *Mos*. 2.169: 'The growth into the knowledge of divine power, which comes from the contemplation of all existing things'. Evagrius seems to have been inspired by him also in this respect.

Indeed, for Evagrius, contemplation (*theōria*) causes the soul to grow.¹⁶⁸ The intellectual soul is nourished by knowledge; it grows thanks to the intellections of the objects of knowledge. The dynamic conception of the continuous growth of the soul was especially highlighted by Nyssen, who centred his *apokatastasis* doctrine in it, joining it to the notion of infinite *epektasis* and making other-worldly life strongly dynamic. In *KG* 2.54, Evagrius remarks that knowledge advances in the regions of knowledge. This, at first sight, seems a tautology, but Evagrius focuses once again on the progression of knowledge, which

¹⁶⁵ *Eulogius* 30.32.

¹⁶⁶ *KG* 5.29.

¹⁶⁷ 'Apokatastasis and Epektasis' (forthcoming).

¹⁶⁸ *KG* 2.32.

advances under the right conditions (see also *KG* 2.51 about the vehicle of knowledge as opposed to that of ignorance). The progressive movement of knowledge is dynamic and increases. This notion, again, was dear to Nyssen, and Evagrius very probably elaborates on his ideas.

For Nyssen, the infinity of the epestatic movement depended on the infinity of God. This is also what Evagrius seems to think. Evagrius maintains that God has no place (*KG* 2.37), *i.e.* that he divinity is adiatematic, because 'God has neither beginning nor end',¹⁶⁹ nor has anything opposed to Godself (*KG* 1.1). God's infinity as well as eternity, which Evagrius supports, was developed especially by Nyssen, who grounded in it the eternal growth of rational creatures (the model is Moses in *V.Mos.* 112-3), to the point that he identified human perfection (τελειότης) with 'wishing to attain ever more in the Good' (*ibid.* 4-5). For 'no limit could cut short the growth in the ascent to God, since no boundaries can be found to the Good, nor does the progression of desire for the Good end, because it is ever satisfied' (*ibid.* 116).

The very fact that God never ceases to satiate intellects points to God's infinity. Evagrius is depicting the final unity, which 'will be an indescribable peace. There will be only bare intellects who continually satiate themselves from God's impossibility to satiate'.¹⁷⁰ This passage is again influenced by Nyssen's notion of infinite *epektasis*, in the mention of 'pure intellects who continually satiate themselves from its impossibility to satiate'. The intellects will continually tend toward God, who is infinite, achieving a unity among them and with God that is not static, but always dynamic. The theme of satiation also is Origenian: God will never fill the intelligences with *koros* in the end.¹⁷¹ This is essential, because *koros* was the cause of the fall of the *noes* at the beginning, but in the end there will be no new fall, and this thanks to love, as mentioned above. Like Origen and Nyssen, moreover, Evagrius also sees *apokatastasis* as unity (primarily of wills) and peace (since the wills of all rational creatures shall be oriented toward the Good), as is clear from the above *kephalaion* as well as from the *Letter to Melania*.¹⁷² These are also momentous elements of convergence, all the more precise in that they are almost technical within the doctrine of *apokatastasis*.

¹⁶⁹ *Ep.Mel.* 30; see 25.

¹⁷⁰ *KG* 1.65.

¹⁷¹ The right meaning here is 'impossibility to satiate' rather than 'insatiability', which is the translation of Guillaumont (p. 49: 'insatiabilité'), followed by Dysinger, who ascribes this 'insatiability' to the intellects ('their insatiability'), even though the possessive suffix in Syriac is singular, -h, which refers back to the unity and state of peace mentioned by Evagrius soon beforehand. 'Insatiability' is rather ascribed by Evagrius, after Plato, repeatedly to the concupiscible-appetitive faculty, *e.g.* in *Eight Evil Thoughts* 1.27.

¹⁷² I cannot expand here on these important points, on which see at least my 'Origen, Bardaisan, and the Origin of Universal Salvation', *HTR* 102 (2009), 135-68, and *Apokatastasis* (2013), the chapters on Origen and Nyssen.

Evagrius makes a great deal of the concept of ‘bare intellect’, meaning an absolutely pure intellect. And here, again, the influence of Nyssen seems to be paramount. For Evagrius’ concept finds parallels not only in Plotinus,¹⁷³ but especially in Nyssen, e.g. in *H.Cant.* 10. Here Gregory states that, when the intellectual soul ‘rejoices in the contemplation of what really exists’, it can ‘receive the vision of God with pure and bare mind.’ Likewise, in *KG* 3.6 Evagrius explains that a ‘bare’ *nous* is ‘that which, by means of the contemplation that regards it, is joined to the knowledge of the Trinity’. In *KG* 3.8 he explains how a *nous* that has ‘the last garment’ is: it ‘knows the contemplation only of all secondary beings’. The latter condition is obviously inferior to the former: the bare *nous*, after shedding even the last garment, i.e. the contemplation of creatures, enjoys the knowledge of God. Indeed, the *theōria* of secondary beings is inferior to that of primary (i.e. intelligible) beings and God, which pertains to the bare *nous*. Origen and Nyssen, too, had used the imagery of the garment/tunic (χιτών) of the intellectual soul in connection with the ‘skin tunics/garments’ mentioned by Genesis as the clothes given by God to the protoplasts after their fall. Evagrius equates it with the contemplation of secondary, i.e. corporeal beings, which is the postlapsarian condition of humans. But Porphyry too – who was well acquainted with Origen’s ideas and works, and in turn was known to Evagrius – spoke of the last garment of the soul as a skin tunic.¹⁷⁴

The final contemplation of God, requiring a bare *nous*, will be unified as the intellect itself will at that point be, and consequently will be no longer dispersed in the economic *epinoiai*. Indeed, in the *telos*, the divine *epinoiai*, such as ‘gate’, ‘shepherd’, ‘rock’, etc., will disappear, since they exist exclusively for the sake of the salvific economy.¹⁷⁵ Evagrius derived this conviction from Origen¹⁷⁶ and Nyssen, but Nyssen, like Evagrius, spoke more of *epinoiai* of God than of *epinoiai* of Christ alone. This is one of the cases in which Evagrius seems to adhere specifically to Nyssen more than to Origen (another example concerns the exegesis of the witch of Endor: see below). Also in *KG* 6.20, Evagrius attributes to God the *epinoiai* of Christ, just as Nyssen had done: ‘Before the movement, God was good and powerful and wise, and creator of incorporeal beings, and father of rational creatures, and omnipotent. But after the movement God has become creator of bodies, and judge and ruler and physician and shepherd and teacher, and merciful and patient, and also door/gate, way, lamb, high priest, together with the other epithets that are said in

¹⁷³ E.g. *Enn.* 6.8.4-5.

¹⁷⁴ ‘In the Father’s temple, that is, this world, is it not prudent to keep pure our last garment, the skin tunic, and thus, with this tunic made pure, live in the Father’s temple? ... We must remove these many garments, both this visible garment of flesh and those inside, which are close to those of skin’ (*Abst.* 2.46; 1.31).

¹⁷⁵ *Ep.Mel.* 24-5.

¹⁷⁶ E.g., *Princ.* 4.4.1.

modes. But Father and Principle he is also before the creation of the incorporeal beings: 'Father of Christ, Principle of the Holy Spirit'. God has both pre-economic, intra-Trinitarian *epinoiai* ('Father of Christ, Principle of the Holy Spirit') and economic *epinoiai*, which in turn are divided into prelapsarian ('omnipotent, father of the *logika*', *etc.*) and postlapsarian ('creator of [mortal] bodies, judge, ruler, physician, shepherd' *etc.*). If Christ's *epinoiai* (such as the postlapsarian ones of physician, shepherd, teacher, door/gate, way, lamb, high priest, *etc.*) are presented by Evagrius as God's *epinoiai*, this obviously means that Christ is God. On this point Evagrius follows Origen and the Cappadocians, as his *Letter on Faith* and a correct interpretation of some of his *Kephalaia Gnostika* shows.¹⁷⁷ Origen, often accused (from the Origenistic controversy onward) of being the inspirer of the Arians, was the inspirer of the Cappadocians, and especially Nyssen's, Trinitarian theology and anti-'Arianism'.¹⁷⁸ Evagrius followed in their footsteps.

Another point concerning *apokatastasis* and contemplation seems to reveal a direct line from Origen to Nyssen to Evagrius. In *Luke* 22:30, Jesus promises his disciples that they will eat and drink at his table in his Kingdom and will judge the tribes of Israel. On Evagrius' noetic exegesis, Christ's table is God,¹⁷⁹ so that to eat the food of that table is to participate in God/Good. This mainly eschatological point is on the same line along which Origen and Nyssen interpreted *1Cor.* 15:28: God will eschatologically be 'all in all', in the sense that God will represent all goods for all, and all will enjoy the summation of goods in God.¹⁸⁰ The corporeal and the incorporeal natures are said to be the table of those who are glorified, probably because they will gain the knowledge of these natures (according to the metaphor of knowledge as the nourishment of the intellect, dear to Evagrius). This is suggested by the immediately following *kephalaion*, *KG* 2.61, on the contemplation of incorporeal things and of earthly bodies.

Spiritual contemplation is obviously superior to material contemplation. Evagrius expands on it in one example of his noetic exegesis: 'The intelligible mountain is spiritual contemplation, that which lies on a high peak to which it is hard to come close. Once the intellect has arrived at it, it will be a seer of all the intellections of the objects that are beneath it'.¹⁸¹ The Biblical reference may be the mountain on which Moses met the Lord in Sinai,¹⁸² after the liberation of the Hebrews from Egypt. Moses' ascent to the mountain was a major

¹⁷⁷ I have endeavoured to offer such an interpretation in 'Evagrius Ponticus, the Origenian Ascetic' (2015), and *Evagrius* (2015), *e.g.* lxx-lxvi, 323-4 especially on *KG* 6.14.

¹⁷⁸ 'Origen's Anti-Subordinationism' (2011) and 'Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology' (2011), 445-78.

¹⁷⁹ *KG* 2.60.

¹⁸⁰ See my 'Christian Soteriology' (2007).

¹⁸¹ *KG* 5.40.

¹⁸² *Ex.* 19:3ff.

mystical metaphor for Nyssen in *Vita Moysis*, with which Evagrius was very well acquainted (see also the next paragraph about Evagrius' noetic interpretation of the high priestly vestments and the heavenly tabernacle of Moses' vision as likely inspired by Nyssen). For both Gregory and Evagrius, the ascent to the mountain represents spiritual contemplation, although Gregory may seem to emphasise negative theology more. Evagrius highlights the difficulty of spiritual contemplation, but not an impossibility. The intellect can arrive at the summit of the mountain and attain spiritual contemplation. Note, however, that the intellections that the intellect will attain are said to be those of beings below, and not of the divinity. Here Evagrius, indeed, presents spiritual contemplation as subsuming inferior contemplations.

Numerous exegetical points are also common to Evagrius and Nyssen. Of course, not all of these are exclusive to them, so caution should be applied. But some examples are in order and appear significant. In his interpretation of the high-priestly garments as virtues, Evagrius is likely to have had in mind the similar allegorisation of those garments offered by Nyssen in *V.Moys.* 2.190-201.¹⁸³ Nyssen too, for instance, interpreted the ephod as virtues.¹⁸⁴ More generally, he interpreted the priestly vestments as 'the graces of virtues'.¹⁸⁵ Evagrius allegorises the propitiatory as spiritual knowledge, but in *KG* 4.18 he closely associates Christ with the spiritual knowledge of the holy Unity (see also 4.21). And Origen and Nyssen¹⁸⁶ had interpreted the propitiatory spiritually as Christ.

Also, in *KG* 4.66 Evagrius identifies 'the intelligible pectoral/girdle' as 'the hidden knowledge of the mysteries of God'. Nyssen interpreted the pectoral as representing virtues and steadfastness in the Good, but also as a 'covering of the heart' that symbolises contemplation.¹⁸⁷ This may easily have influenced Evagrius' exegesis. Nyssen also singled out justice as the noetic counterpart of the high priest's garments, but more with reference to the shoulder pieces.¹⁸⁸ A probable, specific reference to *Ex.* 28:13-4 and 25 (LXX), read through Nyssen, can be detected in *KG* 5.31: 'The intelligible 'shield' is practical knowledge, which preserves the part of the soul subject to passion without harm'. What these Septuagint verses call 'little shields' (ἀσπίδισκαί) in the garments of the high priest, Gregory in his comments on this passage¹⁸⁹ called 'shields' (ἀσπίδες). These, hanging from the shoulders, were interpreted by Gregory as symbols of

¹⁸³ For a commentary on Gregory's passage, see A. Conway-Jones, *Gregory of Nyssa's Tabernacle* (2014) and my review in *Journal of Religion* 97 (2017), 106-8.

¹⁸⁴ *V.Moys.* 2.190, 196.

¹⁸⁵ *Or.Dom.* 3.

¹⁸⁶ *C.Rom.* 3.8.3-5 and elsewhere; *V.Moys.* 2.182-3.

¹⁸⁷ *V.Moys.* 2.199-200.

¹⁸⁸ *V.Moys.* 2.198.

¹⁸⁹ In *V.Moys.* 2.197-9.

'the double nature of the armoury against the adversary', the weapons of righteousness that protect the soul from the devil's darts.

Sometimes, as it also happens in other respects (see above about image and likeness and about the *epinoiai* of Christ or God), Evagrius appears to side with Nyssen's exegesis against Origen. For instance, this happens in *KG* 6.61: 'If God is the God of the living and not of the dead, and on the other hand, according to the word of the holy Moses, necromancers ask the dead questions, the female necromancer did not evoke Samuel from among the dead, if it is true that he is not dead, but living'. The witch of Endor episode in *1Sam.* 28:7-20 was hotly debated among patristic exegetes, not least because of the controversy over Origen's interpretation and the criticisms of Eustathius.¹⁹⁰ Evagrius sticks to Nyssen's exegesis: 'Since Samuel is great among the saints but sorcery is an evil attainment, I am not persuaded that Samuel, established as he was in so great a place of his own rest, would have passed over that trackless chasm¹⁹¹ and removed the saint who was in the chorus of the holy ones'.¹⁹² According to Gregory, it was a demon who appeared to the sorceress, because necromancy was invented by demons. Thus, Evagrius seems to align with Gregory Nyssen rather than Origen here.

But there are a number of exegetical points, both large and small, in which Evagrius comes close to Gregory. Just to give one example of a general convergence, the Biblical book of Ecclesiastes, or Qohelet, is often referred to, and commented on, by Evagrius; we also have an entire work, the *Scholia*, devoted to this book by him.¹⁹³ Gregory Nyssen had also devoted a whole work to this Biblical book: the *Homilies on Ecclesiastes* (GNO 5). It is remarkable that in this connection one more convergence is to be found between Evagrius and Nyssen: both of them identified the Ecclesiastes, or Preacher, with Christ himself, as is clear from Evagrius' first *Scholium on Ecclesiastes*.

Also in his reflection on what is diastematic (*i.e.*, subject to measure, space, and time) and what is adiastrumatic, Evagrius seems to be indebted to Nyssen. What he calls primary beings, *i.e.* intelligible beings, are not mortal bodies, and therefore cannot be diastematic.¹⁹⁴ This of διαστήματα is a theme that was particularly developed by Nyssen. Before the creation of the present world, rational creatures were not in a place, but, when they acquired a mortal body, they became diastematic, and thus situated in time and place. As Evagrius also remarks, bodies are subject to the laws of space and time (*i.e.* dimensions, *diastēmata*, hence their being diastematic), but what is incorporeal is not: 'The

¹⁹⁰ See Rowan Greer and Margaret Mitchell (trans.), *The Belly-Myther of Endor* (Atlanta, 2007).

¹⁹¹ *Luke* 16:26.

¹⁹² *Letter to Theodosius*, GNO 3, 103; trans. Greer and Mitchell.

¹⁹³ See Paul Géhin, 'L'Ecclésiaste à l'épreuve de l'allégorie', in *La réception du Qohélet*, ed. L. Mellerin (Paris, 2016), 133-48.

¹⁹⁴ *KG* 1.61.

movement of bodies belongs to time, whereas the transformation of incorporeal beings is without time'.¹⁹⁵ This distinction, again, between diastematic and adiastrumatic, sense-perceptible and intelligible, was particularly momentous for Nyssen.¹⁹⁶

Evagrius reflects on it also in *KG* 6.9: 'If it is together with genesis and destruction that time is contemplated, it is without time that the genesis of incorporeal beings is, because genesis for them was not preceded by a destruction'. The contemplation (θεωρία) of time, a dimension, cannot be set apart from that of γένεσις and φθορά. Where these elements do not exist, time as a dimension cannot subsist, but there is rather eternity (ἀϊδιότης), which is adiastrumatic, beyond time and space. Evagrius' point here may actually depend on Nyssen, who regarded intelligible beings as adiastrumatic, like Evagrius. Although these beings began to exist out of nothing, and this is why Evagrius speaks of genesis also in their case, nevertheless they are adiastrumatic and were not created in time (otherwise they should also perish in time, according to the Platonic 'perishability axiom', well known also to Christian Platonists such as Origen, Basil, and Nyssen¹⁹⁷). Declaring them created (so as to distinguish them from God), but not in time, was a way around the perishability axiom. This is also clear from *KG* 2.87 and *Discip.* 25: the intellect 'pre-exists [προϋπάρχει] the body, but not chronologically [χρόνῳ], since time pertains to the corporeal nature'. The coming into being of the *logika* as independent substances was not preceded by any destruction, because there were no corruptible bodies before them. These arose only as a result of the fall of the *logika*, but before that there was no destruction. This does not rule out that the *logika* at their creation as independent substances were equipped with incorruptible bodies, which entail no destruction. On this point it is possible that Evagrius agrees with Origen and Nyssen, but this thorny argument would require a monographic treatment.¹⁹⁸ Evagrius, at any rate, is clear that bodies alone are created in time, but, as Origen and Nyssen also seem to have maintained, there was no time in which intellects existed without bodies. As Evagrius states, indeed, the *nous* did not preexist the body in any time.

Bodies in turn come in different types, immortal or mortal, prelapsarian or postlapsarian, angelic, human, animal, or demonic. Evagrius often reflects on

¹⁹⁵ *KG* 2.87.

¹⁹⁶ See my *Gregorio sull'Anima* (2007); 'Αἰώνιος and Αἰών' (2010); Hans Boersma, *Embodiment and Virtue in Gregory of Nyssa* (Oxford, 2013).

¹⁹⁷ I.L.E. Ramelli, 'The ἀρχή and τέλος of Rational Creatures in Some Origenian Authors: "Pre-Existence of Souls"?', *SP* 56 (2013), 167-226; 'Gregory of Nyssa's Purported Criticism of Origen's Purported Doctrine of the Preexistence of Souls', in *ead.* and Svetla Slaveva Griffin (eds), *Lovers of Souls and Lovers of Bodies: Philosophical and Religious Perspectives in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA, forthcoming).

¹⁹⁸ Some arguments will be given already in 'Origen' and 'Gregory of Nyssa', in *A History of Mind and Body in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, forthcoming).

various kinds of bodies, also using terminological distinctions that have been regularly overlooked by scholarship but that I have endeavoured to point out, on account of their momentous implications for Evagrius' anthropology.¹⁹⁹ Evagrius also speculates on what happens to bodies at death, e.g. in *KG* 3.25: 'The spiritual body and that which is opposite to it will not be made of our limbs or our parts, but of an (immortal) body. For it is not the case that death is a change from (given) limbs into (other) limbs, but one from a good or bad mixture/quality to a good or bad transformation'. Nyssen, especially in *De anima*, maintained exactly the same: that the resurrected body will be the same as the dead body, with the same matter, but transformed in its quality and texture, so as to result in a fine, incorruptible, glorious body, 'more beautiful and worthier of love'.²⁰⁰ Evagrius likewise states that the transformation of the body from death to resurrection is not a passage from the limbs of the mortal body to other limbs of another, resurrected body, but it will be a change in mixture and texture of elements within the same body. It will depend on the goodness of the subject to acquire a spiritual body or its opposite in the resurrection. Evagrius in the above quotation seems to call 'spiritual body' (Syriac *gwšm'*, which includes immortal bodies, and not *pgr'*, which would indicate only mortal bodies) that of the blessed, and 'that which is opposite to it' that of the wicked, who will have to undergo purification and thus will be immortal, but not yet glorious. Rather, they will represent the wicked characters of their owners. The difference depends on each *logikon*'s spiritual progress. This picture does not describe the ultimate stage, which will come after the purification of all sinners.

In *KG* 6.58, Evagrius invites readers to investigate philosophically the question of resurrection: 'Among bodies, those which will have been re-established by the transformation are said to result in spiritual bodies. However, whether it is from the matter or from the organs that were at the end that this will take place, you too, please, investigate this in truth'. This is what Nyssen did in *De anima et resurrectione*, inspired in turn by Origen's *De resurrectione*: he endeavoured to present the Christian doctrine of the resurrection in a philosophically sustainable manner. Evagrius, with his inquiry into the threefold resurrection (see below), did much the same. Moreover, Evagrius, describing the resurrection as the 'reestablishment' of mortal bodies through their transformation into spiritual bodies, adheres to Nyssen's line, who in *De anima* described the resurrection as a reestablishment of a dead body as a spiritual body, within the allegoresis of the feast of the Tabernacles.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ I systematically draw attention to this neglected facet in my commentary on the *Kephalaia Gnostika: Evagrius* (2015).

²⁰⁰ *De anima*, 108 GNO 3.3, 79.16-7.

²⁰¹ See my *Gregorio di Nissa sull'Anima* (2007) and 'Gregory on the Soul (and the Restoration)' (forthcoming).

Evagrius also shared a number of other psychological and anthropological tenets with Nyssen (albeit of course not all of these represent exclusive convergences), such as that the *nous* sees and knows, not the senses. This is a point on which Nyssen, with Macrina, insisted particularly in *De anima*,²⁰² a dialogue that seems to have been very well known to Evagrius, who may even have played a role in its diffusion in Egypt and early translation into Coptic, as suggested above. In *KG* 2.48, Evagrius warns that ‘the intellect, if it goes straight along its own path, meets the holy powers, whereas if (it goes along the path) of the instrument of the soul, it will run into the demons’. The instrument of the soul is the body; this is Aristotelian wording, taken over in Neoplatonism too. Here the Syriac word for ‘instrument’ itself is the transliteration of Greek ὄργανον – hence the frequent expression σῶμα ὀργανικόν, which means either ‘body that is the instrument’ of the soul, or ‘body endowed with organs’ such as those of sense-perception.

This very expression occurs in Nyssen’s definition of the soul: οὐσία γεννητή, οὐσία ζῶσα, νοερά, σώματι ὀργανικῷ καὶ αἰσθητικῷ δύνάμιν ζωτικὴν καὶ τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἀντιληπτικὴν δι’ ἑαυτῆς ἐννεῖσα, ἕως ἂν ἡ δεκτικὴ τούτων συνεστήκη φύσις, ‘a created substance, a living, intellectual substance, which, by virtue of itself, infuses vital force and the faculty of apprehending sense-perceptible objects, into an instrumental body equipped with organs of sense-perception, as long as the nature susceptible of these faculties subsists’, i.e. as long as the mortal body is alive.²⁰³ After the death of the body, the soul continues to exist as a created, living, and intellectual substance, but it ceases to infuse into the ‘organic’ body the faculties of life and sense perception. The full relation between the soul and its body will be restored at the resurrection.

Evagrius speaks again of the body, and specifically the mortal body, as instrument (ὄργανον) in *KG* 4.60, as elsewhere,²⁰⁴ and defends its goodness: ‘To those who blaspheme against the Creator and speak ill of this mortal body of our soul, who will show them the grace that they have received, while they are subject to passions, to have been joined to such an instrument? But to witness in favour of my words are those who in visions of dreams are scared by demons, and when they awake they take refuge as among angels, when the mortal body suddenly awakes’. The mortal body is a gift that God has given to human souls in the present condition; being created by God, it cannot be evil,

²⁰² 32AB, GNO 3.3, 16-7.

²⁰³ *De anima* 29B, GNO 3.3, 15.6-9. I use the text established in my edition, *Gregorio di Nissa Sull’anima* (2007), here different from Migne’s text, which has ἐννοῦσα instead of ἐννεῖσα; this was my Italian translation: ‘L’anima è una sostanza generata, una sostanza vivente, intellettuale, che in un corpo strumentale dotato di organi di senso immette, in virtù di se stessa, la forza vitale e la facoltà di percepire gli oggetti sensibili, finché sussiste la natura suscettibile di queste’. George Karamanolis, *The Philosophy of Early Christianity* (Durham, 2013), 279 expressly follows my reading ἐννεῖσα, which is now also kept by Ekkehard Mühlenberg in GNO 3.3, 15.8.

²⁰⁴ *KG* 1.67, 2.48, 2.80, 3.20, 3.45, 3.51, 6.72.

for reasons of theodicy. That Evagrius thinks of the mortal body alone as *organikon* – exactly as in Gregory's definition of soul quoted above – is clear from *KG* 6.72, where he distinguishes this from the spiritual body, which is not *organikon* (surely because it is not endowed with organs of sense perception, and possibly also because it is not instrumental): 'One thing is the intellection of matter, and another is that of the mixtures which reveal it. And one is that of their inside, which is close to the elements, and another is that of sense-perceptible elements. And one is the contemplation of the spiritual body, and another is that of the human *organikon* body'. Evagrius is not differentiating six single elements (as it would seem from Guillaumont's translation, followed by Dysinger and Fr Theophanes), but is distinguishing two elements within three couples. The intellection of matter is distinguished from the intellection of the mixtures that compose matter and give rise to its qualities. Nyssen, as I mentioned, reduced matter to its qualities, and Evagrius appears to have received his ideas.²⁰⁵ Matter is made up of mixtures of the various sense-perceptible elements that compose it and that are mentioned in the following sentences; these correspond to qualities. Different mixtures/qualities constitute different bodies.²⁰⁶ Finally, the spiritual body, or the body tout court, is contrasted with the human mortal body, the σῶμα ὀργανικόν), which is an ὄργανον of the soul and is equipped with ὄργανα of sense-perception. This is the way Nyssen also had described it, as pointed out above.

According to Plato's conception, then, taken up by Nyssen and Evagrius in the above-mentioned *KG* 2.48, the *nous* must proceed along its own path, without inclining toward the body and the inferior powers of the soul. The meeting with the holy powers, mentioned by Evagrius, represents the elevation of the intellect to the angelic state, also a theme very dear to Nyssen. A sanctified life – which Origen, Nyssen, and Evagrius interpreted as true philosophical life – is an angelic life.²⁰⁷ Humans can choose to live the life of angels, if they pursue virtue, or of demons, if they fall into vice. This idea was emphasized by Nyssen, and I have already pointed out above that the way in which Evagrius identifies *apatheia* with the angelic life is very likely indebted to Nyssen.

Another instance of how Evagrius can come close to Nyssen may be found in *KG* 1.45. Here Evagrius observes: 'There is nothing among incorporeal realities that is in power/potency in bodies; for our soul is incorporeal.' In the Syriac text, the word for 'bodies' is not *pgr*, 'mortal bodies', but *gwšm*, which comprises the bodies of angels and all spiritual bodies, including those of the

²⁰⁵ In my edition, I corrected the singular 'mixture' in the ms., preserved by Guillaumont (who translates 'qualité', followed by Dysinger and Fr Theophanes: 'quality'), into the plural 'mixtures' (which merely entails the addition of a diacritical mark, easily lost in the ms. tradition), because 'their inside' or 'their inner part' seems to refer to 'mixtures'. If 'mixture' were singular, there would be no plural to which 'their' could refer.

²⁰⁶ See also *KG* 6.78 and the relevant commentary in *Evagrius* (2015).

²⁰⁷ See, e.g., my 'Theosebia: A Presbyter of the Catholic Church', *JFSR* 26.2 (2010), 79-102.

resurrected. That souls, which are incorporeal, and especially intellectual souls, are not ‘in power in bodies’ may mean that, when a soul is in a body, it is not in its full power. Macrina stressed this in Nyssen’s *De anima*, which, not accidentally, is a Christian remake of Plato’s *Phaedo*. Indeed, this very idea comes from the *Phaedo*.²⁰⁸ Evagrius may be thinking here with Nyssen’s remake at the back of his mind. Another possible interpretation, supported by *KG* 1.46, is that an intellectual soul is not ‘in potency/potentiality’ in a body, as opposite to ‘in actuality’, within the Aristotelian dialectic between potency/potentiality vs. act/actuality. The soul is not in potency in a body, being – according to the Aristotelian definition – the actualisation (ἐντελέχεια) of a body that has life in potency.

I have already pointed out how Evagrius used noetic exegesis in support of his *apokatastasis* theory, as Origen and Nyssen had already done, and I have also adduced some examples of very probable influence of Nyssen’s exegesis on that of Evagrius. Evagrius in fact inherited from Origen and Nyssen an allegorico/noetic/spiritual Biblical exegesis. So, the influence is both methodological and, at times, involves specific exegetical details. This is clear from many passages of Evagrius’ *Kephalaia Gnostika* and scholia, e.g. *KG* 6.49: ‘Egypt indicates evil; the desert, practical virtue; the land of Judah, the contemplation of corporeal beings; Jerusalem, that of incorporeal beings; and Zion is the symbol of the Trinity’. Here allegory finds an ascending route to perfection, from evil and vice to *praktikē* (which pursues virtue through the purification of the soul subject to passions and the achievement of *apatheia*), up to the contemplation of corporeal and then incorporeal realities, and finally God, who is essential knowledge. The negative symbolism of Egypt is found often in Evagrius, who sees Egypt as ‘the symbol of every evilness’ (κακία).²⁰⁹ This allegorisation of Egypt has a long history going back to Philo, Origen, and Nyssen – although, while Philo seems to have thought that evil souls will vanish (unless he posited reincarnation in such cases as an esoteric doctrine), Origen did not admit of the ontological annihilation of souls.²¹⁰ Nyssen for his own allegorisation of Egypt followed Origen more than Philo, insofar as he avoided an exegesis in which the body per se is judged negatively, as in Philo’s equation of Egypt with corporeality; thus, like Origen, he transfers all negativity to vices and the passions rather than corporeality as such.²¹¹

Nyssen interpreted Pharaoh’s tyranny over the Hebrews in Egypt as a symbol of the tyranny of passions and sin over the human being, who is an image of

²⁰⁸ Commentary on this in my *Gregorio di Nissa sull’anima* (2007).

²⁰⁹ *KG* 5.88; see also 4.64, 5.6, and 5.21.

²¹⁰ See my ‘Philo’s Doctrine of Apokatastasis’ (2014); on the possibility that Philo upheld metempsychosis as an alternative, or in addition, to annihilationism, see now Sami Yli-Karjanmaa, *Reincarnation in Philo of Alexandria* (Atlanta, 2015). This issue is thorny and cannot be decided with certainty.

²¹¹ See my ‘Philosophical Allegoresis’ (2008), 55-99.

God and thus has freedom as an essential feature.²¹² This image was blurred by the fall, and human freedom was partially lost, but both can be recovered through *apatheia* – which was central to Nyssen's thought as it is to Evagrius'. Thus, the exodus from Egypt is the liberation of the soul from the tyranny of passions. Consistently, Gregory interprets the making of bricks in Egypt as material enjoyment and the pursuit of pleasures, and Pharaoh as a lover of the material life.²¹³ Gregory, again, seems to follow Origen in dropping the negative characterisation of the body tout court. Like Gregory, in turn, Evagrius also sees in Egypt a symbol of evil and wickedness rather than a symbol of matter and corporeality, which Philo tended to associate with evil. Therefore, once more, Evagrius seems to be close to Nyssen in his exegesis.

Another case of noetic exegesis related to virtue and vice in which Evagrius comes very close to Nyssen and appears to have drawn inspiration from him is *KG* 5.37: 'The intelligible hook is the spiritual teaching, that which raises up the rational soul from the depths of evilness toward virtue'. In *Job* 41:1-2, the Lord asks Job: 'Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook, or press down his tongue with a cord? Can you put a rope in his nose, or pierce his jaw with a hook?' This sea monster is identified with the devil on the basis of *Isa.* 27:1. In *Job* 40:25, likewise, in reference to Behemoth, God asks Job whether it is possible to take him with hooks. Since Behemoth can also be interpreted as the devil, it is all the more relevant here that Nyssen used the metaphor of the fishhook to illustrate the action of Christ on the devil.²¹⁴ Gregory claims that, when the divine fishhook was gulped by the devil, 'life was introduced into the house of death, and light shone forth in darkness; thus, that which is diametrically opposed to light and life vanished, for it is not in the nature of darkness to remain when light is present, or of death to exist when life is active'. The argument that life (*i.e.*, Christ), being opposed to death, will make it vanish, was adduced by Origen, *C.Rom.* 5.7.78-88. Gregory added that the deception of the devil by means of the hook was for him salvific, since it enabled his healing by Christ. Evagrius too allegorises the fishhook as a drawing force that acts upon the rational soul, dragging it upwards from evilness to virtue.²¹⁵ The closeness of Evagrius' train of thought to Nyssen's further suggests that the latter inspired Evagrius' ideas at many levels and in many respects.

I have mentioned above, in connection with *KG* 6.49, the passage theorised by Evagrius from *praktikē*, *i.e.* the purification of the inferior faculties of the soul, to knowledge and contemplation (*gnōsis*, *theōria*), which involve the

²¹² *V.Moys.* 2.26-7.

²¹³ *V.Moys.* 2.54-62; 2.35 respectively.

²¹⁴ *Or.Cat.* 24.

²¹⁵ The act of drawing upwards to the Good is ascribed to Christ thanks to his cross in *John* 12:32.

intellectual soul or *nous*.²¹⁶ This purification-knowledge scheme, which is very prominent in Evagrius, was common to Neoplatonism, and Plotinus insisted on the preliminary purification (κάθαρσις) of the part of the soul subject to passions (τὸ παθητικόν).²¹⁷ Clement of Alexandria linked the cathartic-purifying to the epoptic-contemplative method, joining it to analysis and abstraction.²¹⁸ But specifically Nyssen, like Evagrius later, presents the sequence purification => seeing God, based on the macarism in *Matth.* 5:8, that the pure in heart will see God. Gregory interprets that the pure in heart will see God in the divine Beauty that will shine forth in their purified soul, which is God's image:

I think that in this short saying the Logos expresses some such counsel as this: there is in you, human beings, a desire to contemplate the true Good. But when you hear that the divine majesty is exalted above the heavens, that its glory is inexpressible, its beauty ineffable, and its nature inaccessible, do not despair of beholding what you desire. It is indeed within your reach; you have within yourselves the standard by which to apprehend the divine. For He who made you did at the same time endow your nature with this wonderful quality. For God imprinted on it the likeness of the glories of His own nature, as if moulding the form of carving into wax. But the evil that has been poured all around the nature bearing the divine image has rendered useless to you this wonderful thing that lies hidden under vile coverings. If, therefore, you wash off by a good life the filth that has been stuck on your heart like plaster, that beauty which is in the image of God will again shine forth in you ... Hence, if a person who is pure of heart sees herself, she sees in herself what she desires; and thus she becomes blessed, because when she looks at her own purity, she sees the archetype in the image.²¹⁹

Evagrius seems to rely more directly on this cluster of notions of Nyssen.

Only purification from evil allows rational creatures to attain knowledge. Perfection and salvation is often represented by Evagrius as a passage from vice and ignorance to virtue and knowledge: 'Whoever has been held worthy of spiritual knowledge will help the holy angels and bring back rational souls from evilness to virtue and from ignorance to knowledge'.²²⁰ Not only angels and heavenly bodies,²²¹ but also those human beings who have attained spiritual knowledge help drag other rational souls to salvation. As usual, Evagrius associates the ethical and the cognitive planes, virtue and knowledge, as already Origen had done (*e.g.* *C.Cant.* 1.6.7: 'it is absolutely unbecoming that there be still any trace of iniquity/injustice in the person who has reached the perfection

²¹⁶ On the levels of spiritual progress in Nyssen, see Giuseppe Ferro Garel, *Gregorio di Nissa: l'esperienza mistica, il simbolismo, il progresso spirituale* (Turin, 2004), 152-236; my 'Evagrius, the Origenian Ascetic' (2015).

²¹⁷ *Enn.* 3.6.[26.]5.22-9.

²¹⁸ *Strom.* 5.71.2. See also *Protr.* 10.2-3, where, albeit very briefly, Clement posits purification as a prerequisite for seeing God. Nyssen very probably was aware of this.

²¹⁹ *H.Beat.* 6.

²²⁰ *KG* 6.90.

²²¹ *KG* 6.88.

of spiritual and mystical doctrine'²²²). There cannot be virtue without knowledge, or knowledge without virtue. This conception is ultimately related to ethical intellectualism, which Evagrius embraced no less than Origen and Nyssen, as I have already pointed out above.

Also in his reflection on death, Evagrius seems to have kept Nyssen at the back of his mind. In *KG* 1.58, Evagrius describes three meanings of 'death': the first is the death of the body, affecting all mortal creatures that have come into existence through birth. This is necessary by nature and is a liberation from the mortal body (*pgr*', which in Syriac also means 'corpse'). The second is the death of the soul, due to sin, which is the worst death; it is a condemnation, represented as performed by the saints against sinners. Sin is described as injustice, as opposite to justice, which for Plato was the main virtue of the soul, deriving from the equilibrium of its faculties, and the first of the cardinal virtues.²²³ Evagrius takes over the definition of justice given by Plato, but attributing it to his own 'wise teacher', who is likely to be Nyssen, as suggested above: 'Justice effects a certain symphony and harmony among the [different] parts of the soul'.²²⁴ In this case, the whole (Platonic, but Christian Platonist) teaching about justice would have come down to Evagrius from Nyssen.

The third kind of death, Evagrius continues in *KG* 1.58, is death to sin, which is a good. Remission of sins brings about this kind of good death. Deliverance from sins, indeed, effects death to sin. Evagrius' whole classification parallels Origen's classification of the three kinds of death in *Dialogue with Heraclides* and elsewhere.²²⁵ Death to sin, according to Evagrius, is the life of virtue that is pursued by the *praktikos*, the person who practices asceticism: 'To separate the body from the soul [*i.e.* physical death] belongs exclusively to the One who united them [*i.e.* God], but to separate the soul from the body belongs to anyone who desires virtue. The life of withdrawal has been called by the fathers a preparation for death and flight from the body'.²²⁶ Evagrius refers to 'the fathers', though the concept is ultimately Plato's μελέτη θανάτου and flight from the body. In this respect, Plato's *Phaedo* is the most prominent text, and among Christian thinkers Nyssen, as I have mentioned, had offered a Christian remake of it. It is therefore probable that Evagrius, when speaking of 'fathers', had Nyssen in mind first of all, all the more so if his 'wise teacher' of justice, as I have surmised, was precisely Nyssen.

²²² *Inconveniens omnino esse ut aliquid adhuc resideat iniquitatis in eo qui ad perfectionem spiritalis et mysticae doctrinae pervenerit.*

²²³ On justice in Plato, see Irini-Fotini Viltanioti, *L'harmonie des Sirènes du Pythagorisme ancien à Platon* (Berlin, 2015), 145-89; on justice in philosophical asceticism, Greek and Christian, see my *Social Justice* (2016).

²²⁴ *Praktikos* 89.4.

²²⁵ See my 'Origen's Exegesis of Jeremiah: Resurrection Announced throughout the Bible and its Twofold Conception', *Augustinianum* 48 (2008), 59-78.

²²⁶ *Praktikos* 52.

Consistently with the appreciation and ‘Christianisation’ of Plato’s *Phaedo* by Nyssen, Evagrius also assimilates the mortal body to the ‘prison’ of *Ps.* 141:8: ‘It is not for everyone to say: “I will take my soul out of prison”, but this belongs to those who, because of the purity of their soul, can, even without this mortal body, get close to the contemplation of beings’.²²⁷ This imagery notoriously goes back to Plato and was taken up by Nyssen in his ‘Christian *Phaedo*’. Evagrius is on this line when he presents the soul that, free from the boundaries of the body, can more easily attend to contemplation (*theōria*), the highest intellectual activity. Like Origen and Nyssen, Evagrius integrates Plato’s vision and Biblical quotations. The purity of the soul refers to the intellectual soul, when it is uncontaminated by passions pertaining to the inferior faculties. Contemplation (which corresponds to Plato’s contemplation of the Ideas) is a state that Evagrius too, like Plato and Nyssen in *De anima*, present as a *praeparatio mortis*.²²⁸ I have already pointed out that the way Evagrius theorises, here as elsewhere, the passage from purification to contemplation is very close to that in which Nyssen theorised it, especially with reference to the beatitude of the pure in heart, who will see God.

Also in *KG* 4.86, Evagrius resumes the discourse of Plato, taken up by Nyssen in *De anima*, on the soul that contemplates the Ideas all the better, the further it is removed from the body (especially the earthly body) and from passions: ‘The intellect that possesses a body does not see incorporeal realities, and when it will be without a body, it will not see bodies’. The issue here is noetic vision: the *nous*, while in a body, cannot see incorporeal realities; in the *telos*, it will no longer be in a body – since bodies will be elevated to the rank of souls, and souls to intellects, as we have seen at the beginning – and it will be unable to see bodies.

In *KG* 5.42 Evagrius continues, from *KG* 5.41, his reflection on the intelligible world or κόσμος νοητός – not primarily that in Christ-Logos-Wisdom, but the one impressed in human intellects (a notion which Eriugena will further develop): ‘That world which is built up in mind is regarded as difficult to see during the day. For the intellect is distracted by the senses and by sense-perceptible light, which shines forth. However, during the night it is possible to see it, when during prayer time it is luminously impressed’. Evagrius takes up the Platonic tension between sense-perceptible and intelligible, which was developed also by Origen and Nyssen, in *De anima* and elsewhere. Sense perception, as mentioned, distracts the intellect and blunts its sight. During prayer, sense perception is driven out, so the *nous* can focus on the intelligible world. Indeed, in Evagrius’ view, the ascetic life that imitates the life of angels – just as in Nyssen’s view, as I have pointed out – consists especially in prayer. The ascetics’ imitation of the angelic life passes primarily through prayer, the fruit

²²⁷ *KG* 4.70.

²²⁸ See my commentary in *Gregorio di Nissa sull’Anima* (2007).

of both practical virtue and knowledge.²²⁹ Evagrius is clear that prayer is more important in asceticism than other practices such as vigil, fasting, *etc.*, because the latter need also the body and cannot be performed continuously, while prayer only needs the intellect and must be incessant according to 1*Thess.* 5:17.²³⁰ Even more: it only needs God. Indeed, Evagrius defines prayer as 'a state of the intellect destructive of every earthly intellection and produced only by the light of the Holy Trinity'.²³¹ Evagrius' *On Prayer* is the earliest treatise on apophatic prayer,²³² which in turn situates itself very well within Nyssen's apophaticism.

Evagrius, like Origen and Nyssen (what did not escape Maximus the Confessor), conceived resurrection as not simply the reconstitution of the dead body, but as a holistic renewal of the whole human being, including soul and intellect,²³³ with their purification and the rejection of evil (the cause of death). This enables *apokatastasis*. The mortal body at the resurrection will pass from a bad to a good quality,²³⁴ from mortality to immortality, corruptibility to incorruptibility, illness to health, ugliness to beauty, *etc.* Evagrius is on the line of Origen, the *Dialogue of Adamantius*, and Nyssen, in maintaining that the individual body is the same, but its qualities are transformed into better.²³⁵ Evagrius identifies the resurrection of the body with the transformation of the same body from one mixture to another, keeping the same elements. As Nyssen suggested, the body remains the same, but its texture is finer. The elements remain the same, but their composition and mixture change.²³⁶

The resurrection of the soul is 'the return from the condition of vulnerability to passions to the condition without any passions'.²³⁷ The inferior faculties of the soul, in accord with Plato's division, adopted by Evagrius in *KG* 5.27 as by Nyssen in *De anima* and elsewhere, are the *epithymētikon* and *thymikon*. Since these are vulnerable to passions, their resurrection consists in their passage to

²²⁹ *On Prayer*, 72 and 111, PG 79, 1181D and 1192C.

²³⁰ *Praktikos* 49.

²³¹ *Skemmata* 26-7.

²³² See Monica Tobon, 'From Evagrian Prayer to Centering Prayer', in Anders-Christian Jacobsen (ed.), *Origeniana Undecima* (Leuven, 2016), 659-78.

²³³ *KG* 5.19; 5.22; 5.25.

²³⁴ *KG* 5.19.

²³⁵ See my 'Pre-Existence of Souls' (2013).

²³⁶ For Origen and Nyssen, see my 'Origen's Exegesis of Jeremiah: Resurrection Announced throughout the Bible and its Twofold Conception', *Augustinianum* 48 (2008), 59-78, received by Johannes Arnold, *Der wahre Logos des Kelsos: Eine Strukturanalyse* (Münster, 2016), 593, and my *Gregorio di Nissa Sull'Anima* (2007). On the 'triple resurrection' of *KG* 5.19, 5.22, and 5.25 see Monica Tobon, 'Raising Body and Soul to the Order of the Nous: Anthropology and Contemplation in Evagrius', in *SP* 57 (2013), 51-74. Her analysis is sound; I deem important to add that this notion of threefold resurrection and its relation to restoration comes from Origen and Nyssen. It is also from Origen that Evagrius derived the close correspondence and dependence of the kinds of bodies and souls from the choices of the *nous*.

²³⁷ *KG* 5.22.

impassivity. *Apatheia* is the ethical ideal of Evagrius just as it is of Clement, Origen, and Nyssen. This pertains to the *praktikē*. Evagrius does not mention a ‘passage’ to *apatheia*, but a ‘return’. The reference is clearly to the ἀνάστασις understood as ἀποκατάστασις, according to Nyssen’s very definition, the restoration to the original state, in which the soul was not liable to passions. This comes through the restoration and renovation of the faculties of the soul, which accompanies the transformation of the body. This is also the way Maximus maintained that resurrection should be understood in the writings of Nyssen: much more than the mere reconstitution of the body.²³⁸ The restoration of the soul is its restoration to impassibility or *apatheia*, i.e. to life after death, and Evagrius is clear in *KG* 1.41 that the death and illness of the soul are posterior to its life and health; its restoration, therefore, will be a return to its primeval condition of life. This is why it is its resurrection from death.

The resurrection of the intellect (the third resurrection postulated by Evagrius) is ‘the passage from ignorance to knowledge of the truth’.²³⁹ For gnosis is the perfection of *nous*. In his *Letter on Faith*, which is very much under the influence of Cappadocian theology, Evagrius also reflects on the resurrection of the intellect, taking Jesus’ promise of resurrecting his saints as a reference to the resurrection of the intellect: ‘What does Jesus say in the Gospel? “And I will resurrect him in the last day”, meaning by “resurrection” [ἀνάστασις] the transformation from material knowledge to immaterial contemplation, and calling “the last day” that knowledge [γνῶσις] beyond which there is no other. Our mind will have been resurrected and roused to the height of blessedness only when it will contemplate the Logos as Monad and Henad’. The resurrection of the *nous* takes place in the *telos*, when it attains perfect knowledge and contemplates the Logos as divine, but it has its anticipation here.

Evagrius’ holistic concept of the resurrection, as mentioned, has its roots in Nyssen, who defined the resurrection (ἀνάστασις) as ‘the restoration of our nature to its original state’ (ἡ εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον τῆς φύσεως ἡμῶν ἀποκατάστασις, an expression that Gregory repeats quite often).²⁴⁰ This restoration entails not only the resurrection of the body, but also purification from sin, impassivity, illumination, and knowledge, respectively for the inferior faculties of the soul and the intellect. The final vivification mentioned in *KG* 5.20 is again the resurrection, of the body, soul, and intellect/spirit. On each of these planes there will be a return from death to life: ‘Life has vivified at the beginning living beings; subsequently, those who are alive and those who die; in the end, it will vivify also the dead’. In the beginning, before the fall, all existing beings, God

²³⁸ See my *Apokatastasis* (2013), 738-57.

²³⁹ *KG* 5.25.

²⁴⁰ *De anima* 148A, GNO 3.3, 112.18-9; 156C, GNO 3.3, 119.21-2; *In Ecclesiasten*, p. 296.17; see also (all pages keyed to the GNO edition, both print and online): *De mortuis*, p. 51.17; *Oratio catechetica*, p. 67.9-10; *De virginitate*, p. 302.6; *Contra Eunomium* 3, p. 21.19.

and *logika*, were alive of spiritual life: no *logikon* had yet chosen evil and experienced spiritual death. All of them were in the life of God, the Good, and will return to it in the end, in the eventual deification (θέωσις), after the purification and disappearance of evil, which is the primary cause of death, spiritual and physical. The death of the body is followed the death of the soul *velut umbra*, in Origen's words.²⁴¹ Those alive and those dying' belong to the present state of things, during the aeons, after the fall and before *apokatastasis*. Some *logika* are spiritually alive, since they stick to God, the Good, and virtue and knowledge are the life of the soul and intellect. Some *logika*, instead, are dying, insofar as they choose evil. Evagrius says that they 'die' or 'are dying', while in the last sentence he uses 'the dead', because during the aeons spiritual improvement is always open, and eventually there will be the resurrection of the dead. In the end death, spiritual and physical, will disappear; all the dead will be vivified, in body, soul, and spirit. Spiritual resurrection will entail full knowledge, the rejection of sin, and life in God.

Also from the exegetical viewpoint, in the doctrine of the resurrection there are elements of close continuity between Origen, and especially Nyssen, and Evagrius. For example, *Luke* 13:32 ('today and tomorrow he works miracles, and on the third day he is done / is perfected') is a favourite quote of Evagrius in reference to the resurrection-restoration,²⁴² just as it was of Origen²⁴³ and Gregory Nyssen, who made the most of it in *De tridui spatio* 285-6. Here Nyssen was commenting on the three days between the death and the resurrection of Christ, after which Christ has accomplished his work. On the first day he removes sin from men, on the second from women, and on the third day from the demons and the devil, after which his work of the removal of evil is completed. Here clearly the reference is to the universal restoration performed by Christ. Indeed, I have thoroughly argued elsewhere for the Christological foundation of *apokatastasis* in most of the patristic thinkers who supported it, and in particular precisely in Origen, Nyssen, and Evagrius.²⁴⁴

Evagrius' strong assertion of the eventual resurrection of the entire human being, in all of its components, perfectly corresponds to the conviction that death, whether physical or spiritual, cannot be the ultimate reality. One of Origen's arguments in this connection was drawn from *Rom.* 8:38: death will be unable to separate anyone from God forever. This applies also to spiritual death, the death of sin that separates the soul from God.²⁴⁵ Now Paul affirms that not even this death will ever be able to separate souls from God's love.

²⁴¹ *C.Rom.* 5.7. On evil being the cause of death in Origen see my 'Death', in Angelo Di Berardino (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL, 2014), I, 673-81.

²⁴² E.g. in *KG* 1.90.

²⁴³ E.g. in *C.Cant.* 4.3.13.

²⁴⁴ In *Apokatastasis* (2013).

²⁴⁵ *C.Rom.* 7.10.48-53.

Thus, even after such a death, there will be a (spiritual) resurrection. Evagrius' ideas about the resurrection-restoration are remarkably close to those of Origen and, especially, of Gregory Nyssen, both from the theological and from the exegetical viewpoint.

Another sphere in which Evagrius shows a special closeness to Nyssen is that related to creation. First of all, Evagrius too, like Origen and Nyssen, supports *creatio ex nihilo*, the creation of beings from nonbeing by the Trinity, denoting God's goodness, power, and wisdom: 'The mirror of God's goodness, and power, and wisdom, is those that were originally brought into being, something from nonbeing'; 'The Holy Trinity is uniquely worthy of worship because of itself, since from it at a certain point the incorporeal nature and the corporeal one, from the beginning, from nothing became something'.²⁴⁶ Origen argued that *Gen.* 1:1 proves that God is *principium omnium*, so that it is excluded that there is another principle coeternal with, and independent of, God, such as matter or the Ideas (within a Platonic framework).²⁴⁷ Origen declared that matter originally lacked in form and order, and was not coeternal with God,²⁴⁸ and rejected the hypothesis of the coeternity of matter with God precisely within an argument that aims at demonstrating that God created all things.²⁴⁹ Origen brought about also another argumentation to demonstrate that matter was created by God.²⁵⁰ What is more, Origen's *creatio ex nihilo* theory is proved by his Greek *C.Io.* 1.17 (4.22.14), where he polemicised against those who considered matter to be ἀγέννητος – 'pagan' philosophers but also Christians, mainly 'Gnostics' and Marcionites.²⁵¹ Accordingly, Origen attacked those 'Gnostics' who assumed the coeternity of matter with God,²⁵² but Justin also had referred to a creation ἐξ ἀμόρφου ὕλης.²⁵³ Origen contended that God created all beings from non-being: ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων τὰ ὄντα ἐποίησεν ὁ Θεός. Consistently with his refutation, Origen held that God created both matter and its qualities,²⁵⁴ and claimed that no substance can exist without qualities.²⁵⁵ This was obviously crucial to his argument concerning the creation of matter *ex nihilo* against the thesis of its pre-existence without qualities.²⁵⁶ Origen goes on to refute those

²⁴⁶ *KG* 2.1 and 5.50 respectively.

²⁴⁷ *H.Gen.* 1.1. This point is likely to have been developed to a greater extent in Origen's lost *Commentary on Genesis*.

²⁴⁸ *Princ.* 4.4.6.

²⁴⁹ *Princ.* 1.3.3.

²⁵⁰ *Princ.* 2.4.3. That Origen maintained that God created all realities, including matter, is also attested by Rufinus, *Apol.Anast.* 6.

²⁵¹ *Tert., Adv.Marc.* 1.15.

²⁵² *Princ.* 2.1.4.

²⁵³ *Apol.* 10.2.

²⁵⁴ *Princ.* 2.1.4.

²⁵⁵ *Princ.* 4.4.7.

²⁵⁶ See my 'Maximus on Evil, Matter, and God: Arguments for the Identification of the Source of Eusebius *PE VII 22*', *Adamantius* 16 (2010), 230-55; *Dialogue of Adamantius* (2012-3).

who think that a preexistent matter was subsequently given qualities. Matter without qualities can only be contemplated 'hypothetically and merely mentally' (*Princ.* 4.4.8).

Now, this point was taken over by Nyssen, according to whom matter consists in the union of intelligible qualities, which explains how God created it while being totally immaterial and intelligible; Gregory ruled out the pre-existence of a material substratum without qualities.²⁵⁷

And Evagrius seems precisely to reflect Nyssen's solution that God created immaterial, intelligible qualities, and these constituted matter: 'Just as it is not fire itself that is in our bodies, but rather its quality has been constituted in them [*sc.* by God], so in the bodies of demons is it not earth itself, or water itself, but their qualities that the Creator has inserted in them'.²⁵⁸ Evagrius, exactly like Nyssen, insists that God has not created the elements themselves as constitutive of human and demonic bodies, but rather has created their qualities, or 'mixtures' of them (the Syriac word for 'mixture' also means 'quality').

Evagrius, drawing on Philo, Origen, and Nyssen, thinks of an intellectual and a material creation,²⁵⁹ as is clear, for instance, from *KG* 2.64: 'Some among the beings came to existence before the judgment, and some after the judgment. And regarding the former, nobody has given an account. Regarding the latter, on the other hand, the one who was on the Horeb offered a description'. The account that Moses gave in Genesis refers to the second creation; Evagrius does not think that Scripture describes the first creation. The 'judgment', or 'act of justice', that separates these two creations followed the fall. Evagrius often repeats that every aeon is the result of a divine judgment and its arrangement depends on the moral choices of rational creatures – a typical Origenian tenet.²⁶⁰

Evagrius reflects again on the creation and its agent, Christ-Wisdom-Logos: 'In the secondary natural contemplation (*theōria*) we see Christ's Wisdom, full of varieties, that which he used and in which he created the worlds/aeons, whereas in the knowledge that is about rational creatures we have been instructed concerning his substance'.²⁶¹ Christ's creative Wisdom gave rise to the aeons after rational creatures' fall, and the knowledge of the aeons and all that is in them is identified by Evagrius with the 'secondary natural contemplation', *i.e.* contemplation of the secondary nature, material and postlapsarian. This kind of

²⁵⁷ See Cinzia Arruzza, 'La matière immatérielle chez Grégoire de Nysse', *FZPhTh* 54 (2007), 215-23; Anna Marmodoro, 'Gregory of Nyssa on the Creation of the World', in *ead.* and Brian Prince (eds), *Causation and Creation in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2015), 94-110; G. Karamanolis, *The Philosophy of Early Christianity* (2013), 101-6.

²⁵⁸ *KG* 6.26.

²⁵⁹ On this topic see, *e.g.*, my 'Creation, double', in Paul van Geest *et al.* (eds), *Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* (Leiden, forthcoming).

²⁶⁰ See *e.g.* *KG* 2.75 and my *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, chapter on Evagrius.

²⁶¹ *KG* 2.2.

contemplation reveals Christ's Wisdom as 'full of varieties'²⁶² in reference to the multiplicity of postlapsarian creation. But the contemplation of the primary nature, prelapsarian *logika*, reveals Christ's substance as divine Logos. The *logika* are related not to the postlapsarian creative work of the Logos, but to its substance, the *logos* that is the substance of all *logika*. As Origen had it, these were decorations on the Logos'/Wisdom's body before they acquired independent substance as creatures endowed with free will and liable to falling. Origen refers to the same Scriptural passage as Evagrius, *Eph.* 3:10, to support the notion of the ideal paradigms or *logoi* of all creatures as decorations on Christ's-Wisdom's body.²⁶³ These were decorations on the body of Christ-Wisdom as the creator of the world, and formed his 'intelligible Beauty with many decorations' (πολυποίκιλον νοητὸν κάλλος,²⁶⁴ taking πολυποίκιλος in *Eph.* 3:10 to mean 'full of various decorations').

The Christian Middle Platonist Bardaisan of Edessa, too, shortly before Origen, used this peculiar image of decorations to represent the Ideas or *logoi* of all beings on the surface of the body of Christ-Logos-Wisdom: in a fragment from his *De India* reported by Porphyry, these are the figures of all existing beings chiselled on the surface of a statue symbolising the cosmic Christ. This bears an impressive similarity to Origen's image of the *logoi* of creatures initially found as decorations on the surface of the body of Christ-Logos-Wisdom. The notion of Christ-Logos' body covered with decorations that represent the Ideas of creatures is identical in Origen and in Bardaisan, and is not found in other previous authors.²⁶⁵ Origen might have read Bardaisan's treatise shortly after its composition in AD 220-222, or at least this section. This was interesting to him because of the interpretation of the *Timaeus* and *Genesis*, and the Christianisation of Middle Platonism found in it. For the same reason, it was also interesting to Porphyry, who quoted it shortly after Origen. If it was known to Porphyry and probably in Plotinus' school, it is possible that Origen read it in the same Greek translation or redaction available to Porphyry. Or they may depend on a common, unknown source. Nyssen and Evagrius, too, may have known not only Origen's, but also Bardaisan's passage, all the more so in that Nyssen surely knew and utilised Bardaisan's treatise against Fate.²⁶⁶

This evidently refers to Christ's role in creation as both the agent and the paradigm (as κόσμος νοητός). Evagrius explains: 'Christ, qua Christ, possesses the essential knowledge [*i.e.* God the Trinity]; qua creator, he possesses the *logoi* of the aeons; and qua incorporeal, he possesses the *logoi* of the incorporeal

²⁶² *Eph.* 3:10.

²⁶³ *C.Io.* 19.22.147.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 1.9.55.

²⁶⁵ Clement cited *Eph.* 3:10 in *Strom.* 1.3.27.1, but without referring it to the *logoi* of creation on the body of Christ-Logos-Wisdom.

²⁶⁶ See the commentaries on *KG* 3.22 and 1.43 in my *Evagrius* (2015) and my *Bardaisan of Edessa* (Piscataway, 2009).

realities'.²⁶⁷ Christ is creator, for Evagrius, and Christ is the Logos, who is the creator according to the Johannine prologue. Christ-Logos, for Evagrius just as already for Clement, Origen, and Nyssen, has in himself all the *logoi* or paradigms of all creatures, which he also created as substances.²⁶⁸ This is why Christ-Logos-Wisdom is both the efficient and the paradigmatic cause of the creation. The fact that Christ possesses the essential knowledge, *i.e.* the Divinity, God the Trinity, deserves to be noted, with a view to what I shall remark below about Evagrius' supposed subordinationism – which is contradicted by the present statement. If Christ possesses the Divinity, Christ is fully divine, although of course, in his human component he is also human.

Evagrius reflects again on the creative activity of God: 'God is said to be in the mortal bodily nature just like the architect in those things that were (made) by him. And likewise he is said to be as in a statue, if he happens to make for himself a statue of wood'.²⁶⁹ God is in mortal bodies *qua* their Cause, their Creator. This is a causal presence, which keeps God's transcendence intact. Evagrius is elsewhere clear that Christ is the creator of the corporeal nature and of the aeons.²⁷⁰ The metaphor of the architect was used especially by Philo and Origen to explain how God the Logos created the world on the basis of a project devised by him, and assimilated to the noetic world of the divine Logos itself.²⁷¹ A statue that represents Christ-Logos, both as the Creator and as the created world and its ideal model, as I mentioned, was a prominent feature in Bardaisan's work *On India*, two authentic fragments of which survive thanks to Porphyry's *De Styge*.²⁷² It is one of these fragments in which Christ-Logos-Wisdom's body is represented as having the *logoi* of all beings on himself.

Evagrius clarifies that Christ, *qua* creator, holds the *logoi* of all beings, including their first *logos*, which even angels, being creatures, cannot reach.²⁷³ Consistently, Evagrius declares that the *logoi* of God are found in the nature of all creatures (in a saying that he attributes to Antony the Great): 'One of the sages of that time came to Antony the Just and said: "Father, how can you endure being deprived of the comfort of books?" And Antony replied: "My book, o philosopher, is the nature of created beings, and it is there when I want

²⁶⁷ *Skemmata* 1.

²⁶⁸ See my 'Clement's Notion of the Logos' (2017).

²⁶⁹ KG 6.82.

²⁷⁰ See KG 2.2; KG 2.21-2, *etc.*, with the relevant commentaries in *Evagrius* (2015).

²⁷¹ See my 'Cristo-Logos in Origene: ascendenze filoniane, passaggi in Bardesane e Clemente, e negazione del subordinazionismo', in Alfredo Valvo and Roberto Radice (eds), *Dal Logos dei Greci e dei Romani al Logos di Dio. Ricordando Marta Sordi* (Milan, 2011), 295-317.

²⁷² For a detailed analysis of the statue passage in Bardaisan and its philosophical significance see my *Bardaisan of Edessa: A Reassessment of the Evidence and a New Interpretation* (Piscataway, 2009), 107-24, and new remarks in 'Pre-Existence of Souls' (2013), the section on Bardaisan.

²⁷³ *Gnostikos* 40.

to read the *logoi* of God”’.²⁷⁴ Another momentous conclusion can be drawn here: if the *logoi* of God are in creatures, and if the *logoi* of all creatures are in Christ, this suggests again that Christ is God – like Evagrius’ above statement that Christ possesses the Divinity. We shall soon return to this point, since it bears heavily on the theological continuity between Nyssen and Evagrius.

Evagrius supports the distinction between the eternal existence of the *logoi* of all creatures in God’s Logos – what Origen and Bardaisan represented as decorations on the body of Christ, as indicated – and their creation as substances only at a certain point: ‘I do not mean that rational creatures were eternally in God in their substance, since, although they were completely united to God in God’s Wisdom and creative power, their actual creation did have a beginning’.²⁷⁵ This distinction clearly derives from Origen, *Princ.* 1.4.4-5, and seems to have been taken over by Nyssen too.²⁷⁶

A related, and essential, element of continuity between Nyssen and Evagrius can be seen in Christology, against the current understanding of Evagrius’ Christology as heavily subordinationistic, exemplified by statements such as: ‘Christ is not the divine Logos but is created’.²⁷⁷ Indeed, it is often assumed that for Evagrius Christ is not divine. This would introduce a clear element of discontinuity with Nyssen’s Christology, but in fact the assumption about the subordination, and even the non-divine nature, of Christ in Evagrius is very probably misguided.

Indeed, Evagrius, who has mentioned the body and soul of God in the *Letter to Melania*,²⁷⁸ speaking of the body and soul of Christ in *KG* 2.5, calls him, qua God, ‘the One who Is’, with reference to *Ex.* 3:14. This obviously implies the divinity of Christ. The body of Christ is interpreted as the contemplation of creatures, the soul of Christ as the knowledge of God as Unity, and the proto-logical and eschatological unity of all *logika* with God.²⁷⁹ Origen and Nyssen built very much on the idea of humanity itself as ‘the body of Christ’ and its eschatological consequences.²⁸⁰ Evagrius here speaks of the body of Christ in terms of knowledge: those who constitute the body of Christ (‘the body of the

²⁷⁴ *Praktikos* 92.

²⁷⁵ *Ep.Mel.* 30.

²⁷⁶ See my ‘Gregory of Nyssa’s Purported Criticism’ (forthcoming); ‘Origen’ and ‘Gregory of Nyssa’ (forthcoming).

²⁷⁷ Julia Konstantinovskiy, ‘Pontike, Evagrius’, in *The Concise Encyclopedia of Orthodox Christianity*, ed. John McGuckin (Malden-Oxford, 2014), 367-8. However, this is a widespread assumption, and Konstantinovskiy’s own work on Evagrius as a whole is very valuable.

²⁷⁸ Commented on in my *Evagrius* (2015), esp. the introductory essay.

²⁷⁹ ‘The body of the one who is, is the contemplation (*theōria*) of the beings, whereas the soul of the one who is, is the knowledge of the Unity. And whoever knows the soul is called the soul of the one who is, whereas those who know the body are called body of this soul’.

²⁸⁰ See my ‘Clement’s Notion of the Logos’ (2017).

soul of Christ') are those who know the body of Christ, that is, the contemplation of the beings, and those who constitute the soul of Christ are those who know the soul of Christ, which is the knowledge of the Unity. This knowledge is superior to the contemplation of creatures. Origen also spoke of the 'soul of Christ', insisting that Christ-Logos had not only a human body, but also a rational soul: his creatural component is a *logikon*.²⁸¹ Nyssen developed and emphasised this point.²⁸²

Christ is a compound of creature (a rational creature, *logikon*) and God, as is also clear from *Skemmata* 5: 'Christ is the *logikon* who has in himself what is symbolised by the dove descending upon him', namely God the Spirit. And the Logos is God, as per *John* 1 and as confirmed by Evagrius' *Letter on Faith*, which is entirely in line with the Christology of Gregory Nyssen and all the Cappadocians (which in turn was inherited from Origen²⁸³): 'Our mind has been resurrected and roused to the height of blessedness only when it shall contemplate the Logos as Monad and Henad,' *i.e.* as God. Augustine Casiday finds the definition of the Logos as Monad and Henad 'a decidedly odd expression',²⁸⁴ but this description is in fact a further proof that Evagrius is following Origen's line (which Nyssen also followed) and that for Evagrius Christ-Logos is God. For *Μονάς τε καὶ ἐνός* is Origen's very definition of God, ὁ θεός; given the technical nature of this expression, Rufinus preserved the original Greek here.²⁸⁵ That 'Monad and Henad' is the definition of God also for Evagrius himself, is clear from another passage of Evagrius' *Letter on Faith*: 'The Monad and Henad indicates the simple and incomprehensible substance' of God (2.41-2). Therefore, the Logos for Evagrius is God, and is the divine component of Christ, who in his creatural component is a *logikon*, and more specifically a human being.

Evagrius' Trinitarian 'orthodoxy', as expressed in his *Letter on Faith*, is consistent with his Christology, as elaborated especially in his *Kephalaia Gnostika* and his *Letter to Melania*. Evagrius' Christology is probably not really subordinationistic, as is generally purported to be. Actually, as a follower of Origen and Nyssen, neither of whom in fact advocated a subordinationistic Christology, Evagrius can well be expected to reject a subordinationistic view of Christ. Yet, according to the most widespread interpretation, as mentioned,

²⁸¹ See on this, *e.g.*, Christopher Beeley, *The Unity of Christ. Continuity and Conflict in Patristic Tradition* (New Haven, CT, 2012), the chapter concerning Origen; my 'Atticus and Origen on the Soul of God the Creator: From the "Pagan" to the Christian Side of Middle Platonism', *JRPh* 10 (2011), 13-35.

²⁸² *E.g.* *Or.Cat.* 11; 26.

²⁸³ See my 'Origen's Anti-Subordinationism' (2011) and 'Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology' (2011).

²⁸⁴ *Reconstructing* (2013), 214.

²⁸⁵ *Princ.* 1.1.6.

Evagrius maintained that Christ was not consubstantial with the Trinity, and consequently that Christ was not even divine.²⁸⁶

However, this debatable interpretation principally rests on a reading of *KG* 6.14 that is not warranted and clashes with the statements about Christ's divinity that I have pointed out above and with Evagrius' *Letter on Faith*. If interpreted differently (and in my view correctly), *KG* 6.14 yields quite another meaning:

Christ IS NOT *homoousios* [consubstantial] with the Trinity; indeed, he is not essential knowledge as well.

BUT Christ is the only one who always and inseparably possesses essential knowledge in himself. What I claim is that Christ is the one who went together with God the Logos; in spirit, Christ IS the Lord [*i.e.*, God]. He is inseparable from his body and in unity IS *homoousios* [consubstantial] with the Father.²⁸⁷

The adversative conjunction 'but', which I have highlighted, signals that what comes before it is a thesis, to which Evagrius opposes an antithesis. It is rather common for Evagrius to reason in such a dialectic way – and this in itself was a heritage of Origen, whose 'zetetic' spirit was picked up also by Nyssen. Evagrius' own position is introduced by 'What I claim is...' Indeed, the last sentence, which expresses Evagrius' own view, Christ 'IS *homoousios* with the Father' and 'IS the Lord' God, obviously counters the initial thesis, that 'Christ is NOT *homoousios* with the Trinity'. Of course, Christ 'is the Lord' in his divine, spiritual nature ('in spirit'), and not in his human nature – and Christ is both divine and human for Evagrius just as for all 'orthodox' theologians.

I have already indicated that Evagrius called Christ-Logos 'Monad and Henad', that is, God (according to Origen's definition), and that in *Skemmata* 1 he claimed that Christ possesses the essential knowledge, that is, the Divinity, God the Trinity. It is also important to note that Evagrius regarded as heretics those who did not believe in the consubstantiality (*homoousia*) of the Persons of the Trinity (*Exh. ad mon.* 45), which is thoroughly consistent with his *Epistula de fide* and with the conclusion of *KG* 6.14: Christ 'is *homoousios* with the Father'. I think that in fact Evagrius' Trinitarian orthodoxy is perfectly compatible with the Christology that is found in his *Kephalaia Gnostika* and his *Letter to Melania*. This is not really, as often assumed, a subordinationistic Christology – not any more than the Christology of any 'orthodox' theologian is, since all of them acknowledge both a divine and a human component in Christ –, and it is just natural that it is not so in a follower of Origen and Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory Nazianzen, none of whom was a subordinationist,

²⁸⁶ E.g., Antoine Guillaumont, *Un philosophe au désert: Évagre le Pontique* (Paris, 2004), 375; Claudio Moreschini, *I Padri Cappadoci: Storia, letteratura, teologia* (Rome, 2008), 307, who ascribes to Evagrius 'un subordinazionismo alla maniera origeniana', while neither Origen nor Evagrius were subordinationists; J. Konstantinovskiy, *Evagrius* (2009), 144-5.

²⁸⁷ Translation mine, from *Evagrius* (2015), 323-4.

but all of whom combated Christological subordinationism. It may also be observed that in KG 6.14, the adverb 'inseparably', in reference to Christ, who possesses 'inseparably' the essential knowledge that is God (according to Evagrius' definition of God as 'essential knowledge'²⁸⁸), is the same as the adverbs that at Chalcedon will describe the inseparability of the two natures of Christ, human and divine (ἀχωρίστως, ἀδιαιρέτως). And 'inseparable' is used here by Evagrius precisely to describe the union of the divine and human natures in Christ. Christ is both God and human; the fact that he is a rational creature (a *logikon*), and in particular a human being, does not mean that he is not divine or that he is God only incompletely. Indeed, Evagrius in KG 6.14 spells out that Christ is *homoousios* with the Father.

Therefore, KG 6.14 does not really prove that, as is frequently stated, Evagrius did not consider Christ to be consubstantial with the other persons of the Trinity. On the contrary, it demonstrates that Evagrius criticised such a position and regarded Christ, in his divine nature, as God and consubstantial with the Father. This, as I indicated, was already Origen's and Nyssen's view, received by Eusebius too, who might even have conveyed Origen's teaching on the *homoousia* of the Father and the Son (who is Christ in his divine nature) to Nicaea through Constantine.²⁸⁹ Nyssen, for his part, introduced Origen's teaching on 'one essence, three individual substances' to Constantinople.²⁹⁰ Evagrius is also on this line when in his *Letter on Faith* 3 he declares that the Father and the Son have the same essence or substance (*ousia*) – the very same teaching that Evagrius' last sentence in KG 6.14 yields. Christ in his divine nature is the Son, while in his human nature he is a human being, a *logikon*. That Christ in his divine nature is the Son, and thereby is God, is clear from KG 3.1: 'The Father, and only he, knows Christ, and the Son, and only he, the Father'. It is highly significant that here Christ and the Son occupy the same position in the equation: *Father : Christ = Son : Father*. From this equation there results the identity between the Son and Christ in his divine nature.

For this reason, Evagrius in *Letter on Faith* 4 also states that Christ has God the Logos in himself: this is his divine component (which Evagrius also stresses when he states that Christ possesses the essential knowledge, *i.e.* the Divinity); then Christ has in himself also a creatural component. Christ, as a compound of divine and human, has both elements in himself. And in *Skemmata* 1, likewise, Evagrius claims again that Christ qua Christ – that is, qua compound of creatural and divine nature – possesses the essential knowledge, that is, possesses God, who constitutes his own divine nature. Consistently with this, Palladius in his biography of Evagrius depicts him as supporting, against 'heretics' such as 'Arians' and Eunomians, the full divinity of Christ-Logos, the Son of God,

²⁸⁸ In KG 1.89 and elsewhere.

²⁸⁹ As suggested in my 'Origen's Anti-Subordinationism' (2011).

²⁹⁰ Demonstration in I.L.E. Ramelli, 'Origen, Greek Philosophy' (2013).

who also assumed a human body, soul, and intellect. Thus, Christ is at the same time God and a *logikon*. Palladius' biography reports an epigram that praises Evagrius' orthodoxy with respect to both the Son and the Spirit, and their position within the Trinity.

Evagrius also shared Origen's and Nyssen's viewpoint that possessions exceeding one's needs are tantamount to iniquity and theft.²⁹¹ This principle, which is different from that espoused, *e.g.*, by Clement of Alexandria, was also advocated by John Chrysostom. In his Homily on 1Tim. 12:3-4,²⁹² John claims that 'it is utterly impossible to be rich without committing injustice' (οὐκ ἔστιν, οὐκ ἔστι μὴ ἀδικοῦντα πλουτεῖν). Likewise, in a homily on 1Cor. 40:5, he states that one cannot become rich unless another first becomes poor. John is actually making the same point as Gregory Nyssen, Origen his inspirer, and Evagrius their follower made, namely that wealth exceeding one's needs is tantamount to theft. For 'its origin must have come from an injustice [ἀδικία] against someone'. Chrysostom describes this injustice with emphasis in several passages, *e.g.* another homily on 1Cor. 11:10, where he contrasts the hungry and freezing pauper with the rich in soft garments, cheerful and satisfied with food, and yet unwilling even to give the poor something to eat. The link between greed for money and injustice was already established in the Pythagorean ascetic tradition, well known to Origen, who was probably inspired by it: the man who loves the body will also love money (φιλοχρήματος), but the man who loves money is necessarily also unjust (ἄδικος).²⁹³

Evagrius is likely to have been inspired by Nyssen also in his respect. A theological argument underlies Nyssen's critique of the extreme poverty of the many and the wealth of the few: God has given the goods of this world to all humanity, not just to some humans to the exclusion of others; so, those who possess more than they need are in fact depriving other people of what they need.²⁹⁴ This means, again, that wealth is tantamount to theft – an idea that will also be espoused by Evagrius. Therefore, Gregory exhorts his flock to refrain from unjust acquisitions and love for riches: 'Stay away from iniquitous gain [κέρδους ἀδίκου], starve your idolatrous greed for riches: let nothing be stored up in your house that comes from violence and robbery [ἀρπαγῆς]'.²⁹⁵ For Gregory 'iniquitous gain', coming from 'robbery', is riches exceeding one's needs, because it means depriving others of what they need. Gregory claims that those who have more than necessary are thieves who have stolen

²⁹¹ See my *Social Justice* (2016), ch. 6; <<https://blog.oup.com/2017/02/inequality-oppression-new-slavery/>>.

²⁹² PG 62, 561-4.

²⁹³ *Sent.Pyth.* 110c-d. This line was kept by the Christianised Pythagorean *Sentences of Sextus*. See my *Social Justice* (2016), introduction.

²⁹⁴ See also Basil, *Hom.* 6 (cf. 7; 8) and Nazianzen, *Or.* 14.24-6. Nyssen, however, is more radical, as he is in his rejection of slavery.

²⁹⁵ *Benef.* 94.

the necessities from the poor. He is following Origen, who insisted that whatever one acquires must be acquired with justice; if one acquires a great deal of wealth, this is necessarily acquired by means of injustice: 'They do not consider whether they gain in the right way, with justice [*cum iustitia*] ... One of the following two alternatives must necessarily be the case: either to gain a lot by means of injustice [*multa acquirere cum iniustitia*], or only a little, but with justice [*modicum cum iustitia*] ... abundant riches are tantamount to iniquity [*multae divitiae in iniquitate censentur*]'.²⁹⁶ Evagrius shared the same perspective.

Gregory probably inspired Evagrius with the idea that ascetic practices such as fasting or abstinence are useless and not appreciated by God if one is oppressing one's brothers. He highlights the cruelty of this behaviour: taking away from the poor what they need means 'biting your brother with wickedness' and 'drinking their blood out of evilness'. Gregory remarks that Judas too fasted, but his greed for money (φιλαργυρία) caused him even to sell Jesus. Gregory thus implies that greed for money is worse than failing to practice asceticism. The devil himself does not eat, and this could be reckoned as fasting, but this is not a pious practice: for he is so evil that his wickedness occasioned his fall, and the same is the case with all demons, who endeavour to draw all humans to evil out of envy and malevolence (a point that Evagrius will continually make).²⁹⁷ Gregory's assimilation of the rich to Judas, the demons, and the devil is a deliberate choice and is particularly striking and harsh.

Asceticism must therefore be pursued for the sake of justice, Gregory explains with an argument that Evagrius shared entirely, and fasting was ordered for the pureness of one's soul and intellect: 'What is the usefulness of corporeal fasting, if the *nous* is not purified? It is useless that the chariot is strong and the horses are in good order, if the charioteer is mad'²⁹⁸ ... This self-restraint is useless, unless it includes all the other aspects of justice [τὴν ἄλλην δικαιοσύνην] as inseparable and consequent ... Isaiah asks: To what end do you fast, while you strike the poor with your fists?'²⁹⁹ The true and good asceticism according to Gregory, as well as to Evagrius, is that which pairs acts of self-restraint and purification, such as fasting, with justice toward the poor. And in their view, the very fact of possessing riches beyond one's needs represents an injustice toward the poor, based on their principle that excessive wealth is equivalent to theft. Therefore, Gregory invites his flock to share their food and houses with the poor: the fact itself that they are poor, he declares, is a grave ἀδικία.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁶ *Hom. 3 in Ps. 36:6.*

²⁹⁷ *Benef. 94-5.*

²⁹⁸ Note the clear Platonic reminiscence.

²⁹⁹ Καθαρότης ψυχῆς.

³⁰⁰ *Benef. 96-7.*

Gregory's idea that wealth exceeding one's needs is intrinsically unjust and is tantamount to theft, and that asceticism is primarily a matter of justice, surfaces again in Evagrius. He bluntly declares: 'Whoever keeps excessive wealth must know that he *has stolen* the food and dress of the blind, the cripples, and the lepers, and will have to give account of this to the Lord on the day of the judgment'.³⁰¹ Evagrius, like Gregory, links this radical position to the very foundations of asceticism. He explains that the ascetic life or *πρακτική* is opposed above all by three kinds of vices inspired by demons: love of money, gluttony, and love of human glory. Love of money produces anger, sadness, and 'pride, this first offspring of the devil, unless one has uprooted the love of money ... which is "the root of all evil"; since Poverty brings a man low according to the wise Solomon'.³⁰² Greed for possessions is the contrary of asceticism and even of virtuous life in general, and undermines it seriously. The same notion that love of money produces anger and sadness is repeated elsewhere, which attests to the importance of this connection for Evagrius: 'The houses of the lovers of money [*φιλαργύρων*] will be filled with wild beasts of anger [*ὀργῆς*]; and the birds of sadness [*λύπης*] will rest in them'.³⁰³

Therefore, Evagrius exhorts people to live in poverty and even in rags, as a form of extreme asceticism: 'Living in poverty and rags, let us day by day rid ourselves of all that fills us with self-esteem. If anyone thinks it shameful to live in rags, he should remember St Paul, who in cold and nakedness, patiently awaited the crown of righteousness'.³⁰⁴ Poverty and avoiding love of money are the main hallmark of the ascetic according to Evagrius, just as according to Nyssen in his depiction of Macrina and her fellow nuns' asceticism:³⁰⁵ ascetics, essentially monks, 'wear the sheepskin and, carrying around in their bodies the death of Jesus and muzzling all the irrational passions of the body, they also cut back the wickedness of the soul by loving poverty and fleeing from love of money as the mother of idolatry'.³⁰⁶ The negative judgment on the possession of material goods in *KG* 6.47 is also in line with Evagrius' asceticism. Here he states that those who possess too many material goods, precisely due to 'the abundance of their possessions', will be unable to enter the Holy Land or Promised Land, which in *KG* 5.30 is interpreted as the Kingdom of Heavens. They will have to stay outside, on the banks of the River Jordan.

For Evagrius, love of money is so pernicious to the spiritual life and salvation of rational creatures because wealth cannot coexist with charity-love (*ἀγάπη*), which is the very essence of God; charity-love destroys not only

³⁰¹ *On Evil Thoughts* 32.

³⁰² *Eight Evil Thoughts* 1; references to 1Tim. 6:10 and Prov. 10:4.

³⁰³ *Skemmata* 67.

³⁰⁴ *Evil Thoughts* 6, with references to 2Cor. 11:27; 2Tim. 4:8.

³⁰⁵ On which see I. Ramelli, *Social Justice* (2016).

³⁰⁶ *Letter to Anatolius* 6, with a reference to Col. 3:5.

wealth, but even a human's life in this world.³⁰⁷ The incompatibility of wealth and charity-love reflects the incompatibility of wealth (Mammon, wealth as an idol) and God proclaimed by Jesus.³⁰⁸ In this connection, Evagrius tells the significant story of a monk who had one single possession: a copy of the Gospels, and he sold it and gave the money to feed the hungry, because the Gospel itself exhorts to sell what one has and give the revenue to the poor.³⁰⁹ Evagrius recalls more than once Jesus' exhortation to sell one's possessions and give the revenue to the poor in *Mark* 10:21, as a prerequisite of monastic life, since only so will one be able to pray uninterruptedly.³¹⁰

Evagrius' two groups of works, on theology and metaphysics and on spiritual ascent and asceticism respectively, have been kept artificially separate, as I have remarked at the beginning. His ascetic works were cherished, but his metaphysical and eschatological speculations, especially in the *Kephalaia Gnostika* and the *Letter to Melania*, were rejected as dangerously Origenistic. Yet, Evagrius' thought cannot be split into two and can only be understood in a holistic way. This is also crucial to an evaluation of his indebtedness, not only to Nazianzen and Basil, but also, and primarily, to Origen and especially Nyssen, as is emerging more and more clearly from painstaking research. Evagrius' ideas reveal remarkable points of contact with those of Origen and Gregory Nyssen, in many respects – actually, many more than I could outline here.

This, although it seems to have escaped scholarship so far, is not too surprising, since Evagrius absorbed Origen's and the Cappadocians' theology, as well as that of Didymus, another close follower of Origen, whom Evagrius may have frequented personally. And Gregory Nyssen was the most insightful follower of Origen. Besides, I suspect that Evagrius' biographical and intellectual closeness to Nyssen – in addition to Nazianzen – is more substantial than is commonly thought. A careful reassessment of the relation of Evagrius' true thought to Nyssen's is showing that Evagrius was, like Nyssen, authentically Origenian, and not radically 'Origenistic', as he has often been depicted on the basis of the identification of the Origenistic tenets condemned under Justinian with Evagrius' own ideas.

The close intellectual relationship between Evagrius and Origen and, especially, Nyssen impacts most aspects of their theology and philosophy. This is a remarkable path of investigation and is yielding results that are among the most significant in the field of patristic philosophy and theology in general, and more specifically within the extremely rich Origenian tradition.

³⁰⁷ *Praktikos* 18: 'Just as it is impossible for life and death to occur at the same time in the same individual, so also is it impossible for charity-love to coexist with money/wealth [ἀγάπην χρήμασι συνυπάρξαι] in anyone, since love eliminates not only money/wealth, but also our very life in this world'.

³⁰⁸ *Matth.* 6:24 and *Luke* 16:13.

³⁰⁹ *Praktikos* 97, with reference to *Matth.* 19:21.

³¹⁰ *On Prayer* 17.

