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# Origen and the Stoic View of Time

*Panayiotis Tzamalikos*

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I. One of the striking features of Origen's *Contra Celsum* is his awareness of Stoic philosophy. The debate about the extent of his dependence on this usually concentrates on the area of ethics as well as his quasi-Stoic theory of recurrent worlds.<sup>1</sup> Yet one aspect of his thought overlooked by scholars is his concept of time, which is a key to his entire philosophy and theology. Crucial cosmological, anthropological, moral, and eschatological ideas as well as Origen's attitude to death are all intimately related to the way in which time is perceived and given meaning. Indeed, the notion of time constitutes the core of any entire philosophy.

Hence, the way thinkers conceive of time derives from their overall view of reality, their fundamental philosophical premises, their notion of being, and their methods and dialectics. Yet there is also mutual influence: not only does any philosophy presuppose a certain conception of time, but also any given view of time determines the nature of a general philosophical attitude: how to live, the purpose of life, how to face death, the basis of hope, the concept of God, a *Weltanschauung* and destiny, if any, the question of creation, and all the secular implications that the notion of creation involves—all these are notions bound to the concept of time.

The questions about time which Origen had to face may initially seem simple, but they are not, for the philosophical tradition had not produced any consensus. It is no accident that although the questions related to space resulted in agreement for lengthy periods, the problem of time has always been highly controversial. On looking, for example, at the question of the *reality* of time, one sees that since the period of the Eleatic philosophers discussions placed very much in doubt the real existence of time. Aristotle's syllogisms also reinforced this.<sup>2</sup> To the Stoics time was just a "something" between being and non-being.<sup>3</sup> But to the Gnostics, time had

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Dr. W. Ian P. Hazlett, of the Department of Theology and Church History, University of Glasgow, who revised the English language of the paper. Dr. Hazlett was co-supervisor of my Doctoral Thesis at the University of Glasgow.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Physics*, 4.10, 217b29-218a30; *Metaphysics*, 3.5, 1002a28-b11.

<sup>3</sup> *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* (hereafter *SVF*), II, 166, 8-10 (volume, page, verse).

no complete reality, so that their tendency is to negate and nullify it. Time for them is not a Platonic “image” of eternity nor even a Plotinian “imitation” of it. At best it is a caricature of eternity, and it is so far removed from its model that in the final analysis it is regarded as a lie.<sup>4</sup> This example adumbrates questions which Origen had to answer in formulating his own view of time, and contributes, I think, to a better appreciation of his achievement.

The argument in this paper is that Origen’s point of departure was the fundamental early Stoic perception of time as *extension*. He formed his own view of time in line with his general theological principles. Although he employed certain Stoic ideas, Origen’s view was distinctive and original, and was destined to have a decisive impact (though still unacknowledged) on subsequent Christian writers.

II. Early Stoic thought considers time as a kind of *extension* (διάστημα). Zeno is quoted as saying “. . . that time is an extension of motion [κινήσεως διάστημα] and the criterion of fastness and slowness. And it is in time that events occur and everything that becomes and all beings are.”<sup>5</sup> In another passage it is also stated that “of the Stoics, Zeno [says] that time is in general the extension of any motion” (πάσης ἀπλῶς κινήσεως διάστημα).<sup>6</sup>

Chrysippus defines time as the “extension of the motion of the world” (διάστημα κοσμικῆς κινήσεως).<sup>7</sup> This is certainly a more precise definition than Zeno’s, but we see no reason why this should be considered as introducing an essential modification of Zeno’s view, as John Rist claims.<sup>8</sup> Zeno’s essential conception of time here has undergone no mutation; in fact it is at the very core of Chrysippus’s definition. Besides, there is at least one passage where the definition of Chrysippus is stated as complementary to that of Zeno: “[a]nd Chrysippus [says] that time is the extension of motion [κινήσεως διάστημα] and that is why it is sometimes said to be the measure of fastness or slowness; or, [time] is the extension which closely attends the motion of the world [τὸ παρακολουθοῦν διάστημα τῇ τοῦ κόσμου κινήσει] and it is in time that everything is moving as well as being.”<sup>9</sup>

Rist reckons that if taken literally, this definition may be closer to Aristotle (time is the measure or number of motion), though the spirit of

<sup>4</sup> H. C. Puech, “Gnosis and Time,” in *Man and Time*, Papers of the *Eranos Yearbooks*, III (Princeton, 1973), 83.

<sup>5</sup> *SVF*, I, 26, 11-15; ap. Stobaeus, *Eclogue*, I. 8.

<sup>6</sup> *SVF*, I, 26, 14-15; ap. Simplicius, in *Aristotelis Categorias commentarium*, 80a4.

<sup>7</sup> *SVF*, II, 164, 14ff.

<sup>8</sup> J. M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1969), 278ff.

<sup>9</sup> *SVF*, II, 164, 15-18. Here is how Apollodorus defines time, too: “Time is the extension of the motion of the world” (χρόνος δ’ ἐστὶ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου κινήσεως διάστημα). *SVF*, III, 260, 18-19.

this definition may well be related to that of Plato (time as the moving image of eternity).<sup>10</sup> Rist is in fact uncertain about whether Zeno's definition is more related to Aristotle or to Plato. I maintain that the Stoic perception of time should be considered as independent of Aristotle or Plato.<sup>11</sup> Zeno's notion is in fact a third and alternative understanding, at least to the extent that the Platonic definition of time is a metaphysical as well as a theological one, while Aristotle's is of a more scientific character.

Zeno does not regard time as something related to the Beyond, as Plato did; nor does he define it as a sort of scientific finding. While he holds that time may *also* be "a criterion of fastness and slowness," he clearly considers it as an extension *in essence*. Accordingly he associates time only with a natural reality (that is, motion). In his view then, time is neither a Platonic *image* of a transcendent reality nor in essence an Aristotelian *number* or measure, but is a sort of extension which is indispensable for motion to take place and to make sense.

It is true that Aristotle describes periods of time as *διαστήματα*. There are, however, certain substantial differences. Unlike Zeno and Chrysippus, Aristotle never granted that *διάστημα* portrays the ontological reality of time proper: being the *number* of motion is one thing, but being the *extension* of it is quite another. He used the term in the everyday sense of "something which joins two points." In this sense *διάστημα* may have an either temporal or spatial meaning, but on no account does this constitute a definition of time proper. According to common usage, Aristotle and Plato employed the term *διάστημα* in the ordinary sense of *parts*, or periods, of time, and never suggested that time *itself* was an extension. Only the Stoics explicitly defined *διάστημα* as ontologically indicating time proper. Indeed, the portrayal of time as *διάστημα* is exactly what *moving image* is to Plato and *number* of measure is to Aristotle.

The Aristotelian definition of time as number or measure has a serious implication: time could not exist if there were no soul at all. For if there is no one to count, then nothing can be counted, and so there can be no number. Only the soul has the ability to count, and so the Aristotelian definition requires two presuppositions, as evident in the last book of his *Physics*: first, motion or change, and second, the soul, which is the counting agent and which grants number (that is, time) its very existence. On the other hand Philo attributes to the Stoics the notion of postulating time in the absence of days and nights, as during a universal conflagration,

<sup>10</sup> *Op. cit.*, 273-74.

<sup>11</sup> P. Tzamalikos, "The Autonomy of the Stoic View of Time," *Philosophia, Yearbook of the Center for the Research of Greek Philosophy at the Academy of Athens*, 19 (1989), 353-69.

that is, virtually in the absence of any counting agent.<sup>12</sup> To Aristotle, therefore, motion, or change, has ontological priority to time. To the Stoics the ontological definition of time is *extension*. Time may be *also* a measure, but this is an additional property of it, not its indispensable ontological property. In effect this represents a *third* and autonomous definition of time quite independent of either the Platonic or Aristotelian one. It was Proclus who later pointed out that the Stoic view is actually “far too” different from those of either Plato or the Peripatetics.<sup>13</sup>

It is nonetheless true that the Stoic definition has received little attention from scholars. John Callahan, for example, in a work purporting to deal with certain conceptions of time in antiquity, does not treat the Stoic view,<sup>14</sup> while the brief discussion of Anton Hermann Chroust concludes that the Stoic definition of time was merely an echo of the Aristotelian one.<sup>15</sup> This may all be due to the lack of any detailed Stoic treatment of the question.

Plutarch upbraids the Stoics for their indefiniteness, remarking that they define time as an “extension of motion” (διάστημα κινήσεως) “and nothing else” (ἄλλο δ’ οὐδέν). He adds that they regard it as a mere attribute resulting from the notion of motion, a consequence of motion (ἀπό συμβεβηκότος ὀριζόμενοι), while they “fail to consider its essence and its faculty” (τὴν δ’ οὐσίαν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν δύναμιν οὐ συννορῶντες).<sup>16</sup>

Plotinus in the *Enneads* is similarly critical, arguing that the Stoics stopped short of actually defining time:

but if someone were to say that the extension of motion is time, not in the sense of extension itself, but that in relation to which the motion has its extension, as if it were running along with it, what this is has not been stated. For it is obvious that time is that in which the motion has occurred. But this was what our discussion was trying to find from the beginning, what time essentially is; since in fact this is like the same as an answer to the question “What is time?”—which says that it is extension of motion in time. What, then, is this extension which you call time and put outside the proper extension of the motion? Then again, on the other side, the person who puts the extension in the motion itself, will be hopelessly perplexed about where to put the dimension of rest. For something else could rest for as long as something was moved, and you would say that the time in each case was the same, as being, obviously, different from both. What,

<sup>12</sup> Philo, *De Aeternitate Mundi*, 1,4; 10,54.

<sup>13</sup> *SVF*, II,166,6-10. There is a view objecting to the proposition that if there is no one to count, then there can be nothing to be counted, and thus there is no number, but discussion of this opinion is beyond our scope.

<sup>14</sup> John Callahan, *Four Views of Time in Ancient Philosophy* (New Haven, 1968.)

<sup>15</sup> Anton Hermann Chroust, “The Meaning of Time in the Ancient World,” *The New Scholasticism*, 21 (1947), 42.

<sup>16</sup> *SVF*, II,165,20-22. A. Armstrong regards Plutarch as “a very hostile witness” of the Stoics: *An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy* (London, 1981), 120.

then, is this extension, and what is its nature? For it cannot be spatial, since this also lies outside movement.<sup>17</sup>

It is plain that this assessment of Plotinus refers to the earliest of the Stoic accounts of time, namely, that of Zeno; but his criticism applies to later Stoics as well. Chrysippus defined time as “an extension which accompanies the motion of the world” (τὸ παρακολουθοῦν διάστημα τῇ τοῦ κόσμου κινήσει).<sup>18</sup> While Plotinus does not refer to any Stoic philosopher by name, it is obvious that the following passage from the *Enneads* is actually directed against Chrysippus:

As for calling it an accompaniment of motion, this does not explain at all what it is, nor has the statement any content before it is said what this accompanying thing is, for perhaps just this might turn out to be time. But we must consider whether this accompaniment comes after motion, or at the same time as it, or before it (if there is any kind of accompaniment which comes before), for whichever may be said, it is said to be in time. If this is so, time will be an accompaniment of motion in time.<sup>19</sup>

It is true that the Stoics do not offer any elaborate account of their essential idea of time as an extension. The foregoing criticism, which focuses on this dearth of elaboration and proposes to offer a cluster of puzzles in the attempt to discredit the Stoic definition, comes from rival Middle-Platonic and Neoplatonic schools of thought. A. Armstrong is quite right to call Plutarch “a very hostile witness” of the Stoics, although his criticism downgrades the *ontological* character of the Stoic διάστημα. Whether the Stoics really regard time as a *consequence* of motion, or time as the indispensable element for motion to make sense and indeed to take place, is a question beyond my scope. My view is that διάστημα has an absolute ontological priority over motion as well as over any other notion involved in the early Stoic definitions of time. It is neither accidental nor due to negligence that they did not elaborate their conception. Indeed it can be maintained that not to elaborate too much is an inherent proclivity of the Stoic view of time.

In Stoicism the notions of *reality* and *corporeality* are closely related. The old Stoic general tenet was that it is only bodies which are real (*real* in respect of doing or suffering), and so they would have regarded time as real only in so far as they hold it to be a body. Since time is obviously

<sup>17</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.8. We have in general followed the translation of A. H. Armstrong, but with some substantial change, translating διάστασις as “extension,” not as “distance,” which does not really mean διάστασις, but ἀπόστασις. Also, the expression ὅσον γάρ means “as long as”; Armstrong’s translation as “for the same space” would create confusion, as he obviously means “space of time” exactly at the point where Plotinus makes the crucial distinction between space and time.

<sup>18</sup> *SVF*, II, 164, 16-17.

<sup>19</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.10.

not a body, the automatic Stoic reaction would be to reject the idea of the existence of time. But this is too self-defeating, since it contradicts normal human experience or at least a basic awareness of time.

The Stoics solved the problem by conceding the existence of four “incorporeals”: time (ὁ χρόνος), space (ὁ χώρος), an expression (τὸ λεκτόν), and the void (τὸ κενόν).<sup>20</sup> Yet it is apparent that in the Stoic philosophy the term “incorporeal” is a cause of embarrassment and that further analysis of the question of time might increase their perplexity. This is precisely what they sought to evade. To the Stoics time always remained a “something” (τι) located between being and non-being, in a state between existence and non-existence.

The Stoics distinguished in general three degrees of reality: the ὄντα (beings) were regarded as wholly real and bodies only. The incorporeals were called τινά (somethings), but they were not regarded as ὄντα. Below them, the οὐτινα (nothings) were mere conceptions (ἐννοήματα). Time belongs to the second grade of reality.<sup>21</sup> Another way of distinguishing between degrees of reality was between what is ὑφ'εστώς (subsisting) and what is ὄν (being). The former seems to correspond to τινά (somethings).<sup>22</sup> This is why Proclus remarks that the Stoic conception of time diverged too much from that of either the Platonists or the Peripatetics: “time was one of what they called incorporeals, which are despised by them as inactive and not being, and existing only in the pure mind.”<sup>23</sup>

In Stoic philosophy a theory ascribed to Chrysippus was that only something “fully real” should be regarded as “existing” (ὑπάρχειν). A distinction was made between ὑπάρχειν and ὑφ'εστάναι.<sup>24</sup> The latter is not a complete but only a “potential” reality. “Fully real” is an event which is taking place *in actuality*: for example, “walking” exists fully only as long as one walks, not when one is lying or sitting.<sup>25</sup> In this context the Stoics assert that only the present time is completely real. At the same time they hold time to be infinite in both directions (namely, past and future) and infinitely divisible. Clearly, they can infer infinite divisibility from their fundamental view of time as a continuum.<sup>26</sup> According to a testimony of Plutarch, the Stoics consider the “present” as time so infinitely small, that it is “crushed” between past and future (which are not

<sup>20</sup> *SVF*, II, 117, 18-24. With reference to the Stoic thought, for the translation of τὸ λεκτόν as “an expression”: Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford, 1983), 1037.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *SVF* 2, 329-35 and 521. Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos*, 10.218; Cf. J. M. Rist, *op. cit.*, ch. 9; also, Pasquale Pasquino “Le Statut ontologique des incorporels,” in Jacques Brunschwig (ed.), *Les Stoïciens et leur logique* (Paris, 1978).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Richard Sorabji, *Time, Creation and the Continuum* (London, 1983), 23.

<sup>23</sup> *SVF*, II, 166, 4-10.

<sup>24</sup> *SVF*, II, 164, 27.

<sup>25</sup> *SVF*, II, 164, 26-30.

<sup>26</sup> *SVF*, II, 164, 23-25.

regarded as fully real). Ultimately, time itself is extinguished and does not really exist. What survives from this “crushing” are past and future, which in turn are not considered as “full” but “potential” realities.<sup>27</sup> This is the Stoic reasoning, which subtracts reality from the present. It explains why Plutarch ascribes to the Stoics the opinion that time itself is not “being.”<sup>28</sup>

Such were the issues surrounding the question of time. Platonists, for example, asserted that it is the very continuity which assigns unreality to time.<sup>29</sup> However, Chrysippus rejects the idea that time as a continuum means that the present time or present events are unreal and subsequently develops a battery of arguments on this subject. What the Stoics actually did was to distinguish between what *exists* (e.g., material objects, or an action—which actually happens) and what is *real* (which includes material objects as well as incorporeals like time). Perhaps this distinction eluded Proclus when he recorded the Stoic view of time.<sup>30</sup> In any event the foregoing assessment applies more to the old Stoic view rather than that which obtained in Origen’s era and represented chiefly by Marcus Aurelius.

In regard to the concept of time, Victor Goldschmidt claims that Marcus Aurelius is actually a follower of Chrysippus and diverges only from early Stoicism in his pessimism.<sup>31</sup> Rist holds that in Marcus’s era (shortly before Origen) the problem of time was conceived differently than it had been among the early Stoics.<sup>32</sup> For Zeno and Chrysippus, time is a problem of physics arising from the natural observation of bodies and is not related to morality. From this standpoint then, time is regarded as a problem of secondary order. Yet for Marcus Aurelius time itself is a moral problem, for what meaning can moral life have when all actions and accomplishments will vanish into near-nothingness?<sup>33</sup> The Stoicism of this period was trapped in a *cul-de-sac*, from which it never really escaped. This is also the period when time itself is related to ethics. In his *Meditations* Marcus nowhere refers to definitions of time proposed by earlier Stoics such as Zeno, Chrysippus, and Apollodorus; nor is the definition of time of interest to Marcus when he deals with this problem. It has been argued that in Marcus’s time Stoicism had degenerated into an arid moralism. While regarding this as a misleading generalization, Rist concedes that Marcus Aurelius, for all his awareness of many of the theories of the early Stoa, was unable to appreciate their import; and he

<sup>27</sup> *SVF*, II, 165, 37–43.

<sup>28</sup> *SVF*, II, 117, 42–43.

<sup>29</sup> J. Rist, *op. cit.*, 280.

<sup>30</sup> *SVF*, II, 166, 4–10.

<sup>31</sup> Victor Goldschmidt, *Le Système stoïcien et l'idée de temps* (Paris, 1953), 197.

<sup>32</sup> J. Rist, *op. cit.*, 287.

<sup>33</sup> Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 4.43; 4.48; 4.32.



asserts further that the fundamental interrelationship of ethics and physics eluded Marcus.<sup>34</sup>

Besides the Stoic tradition (which was one among several Greek concepts of time) there was the biblical notion. Whether a specific Hebraic view of time actually existed, or not, is for me a moot question which I have discussed elsewhere.<sup>35</sup> What did obtain, however, was an intense orientation towards the future and the expectation of the fulfillment of the divine promises in the Old Testament. Being primarily a religion of salvation, Christianity establishes a mode of thought oriented towards the infinite future time. This attitude is found throughout the Bible, especially after the meaning acquired by Scripture in the New Testament. However, the issue of time proper was not treated in such a manner, and so one could not speak of a “*tradition*” before Origen. The exception was Tatian (c. A.D. 120-73), who upheld the idea of static time, that all the notions about a temporal flux are but a subjective impression based on the illusion that time moves. He contends that it is not time that moves but human beings that move through time. Time neither moves nor changes. The feeling that it moves is like the impression experienced by people in a ship who imagine that it is the land, and not they, which moves. Yet on no account can Tatian’s view be regarded as a developed view of time. This was all he had to say on the matter in his polemical work “Against the Greeks,” which attempts to survey all Greek philosophers, all persons (mythological or real), and all the questions which the Greeks dealt with. It is a vituperative, wholesale attack on Greek thought without serious discussion of philosophical problems. In the relevant passage Tatian postulates an inverted view—it is human beings, and not time, who move—thereby taking up the notion of static time. But this is too general a statement to be regarded as an adequate statement of time. It is certainly non-Platonic but not particularly non-Greek, for both Aristotle and the Stoics would be quick to endorse the opinion that time itself does not move. Nonetheless, the psychological division into past-present-future cannot at all be denied. About this, all Tatian seems to say is that such a threefold distinction is only subjective illusion.

A. Chroust is wrong in claiming that Tatian’s passage represents a “phenomenalistic” and “subjectivistic” interpretation of time, for it is precisely the “phenomenalistic” and “subjectivistic” concept of time which Tatian contemptuously rejects, regarding it as an illusion.<sup>36</sup> Tatian’s view resembles that of the Aristotelian Alexander of Aphrodisias (*fl.* c.

<sup>34</sup> *Op. cit.*, 283-88.

<sup>35</sup> P. Tzamalikos: *The Concept of Time in Origen* (New York, 1991), ch. 5.

<sup>36</sup> Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos*, 26. J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, VI, 862. Cf. A. H. Chroust, *op. cit.*, 68.

A.D. 205), who held that the “generation” of what is called “instant” “is in the mind.”<sup>37</sup>

The term *διάστημα* was also used by Athenagoras, the first master in the chair of the Alexandrian Catechetical School, who was succeeded by Clement and then Origen.<sup>38</sup> This is found in the expression “equal extensions of time” (*ἰσομέτροις χρόνου διαστήμασιν*).<sup>39</sup> However, it can be disputed whether this constitutes an outright Stoic influence, for the mere use of the term *διάστημα* alone does not provide a solid basis for inferring Stoic influence on the issue. There is no significant contribution by Athenagoras towards a specific Christian view of time. In his day there just was no sophisticated view of time approaching that developed later on by Origen.

The diversity on this point during early Christianity can be better illustrated by considering the views of another Christian writer, overlooked until now, that of Justin, a contemporary of Athenagoras. In a work designed to refute certain views of Aristotle, Justin quotes Aristotelian passages and then posits his own arguments against them. Yet while Justin does reject certain Aristotelian tenets (such as beginninglessness and infinity of time), he remains essentially faithful to the Aristotelian view of time as a “number” of motion.<sup>40</sup> Thus, in Athenagoras’s and Justin’s time (c. fifty years before Origen) Christian writers were groping for a new view of time, but no definite *Christian* concept was established.

III. It is reasonable to affirm that Origen was aware of both the Stoic treatment of time and criticism of it on the basis not only of his widely-acknowledged erudition but also of the actual intimate knowledge of Stoic thought evident in his *Contra Celsum*. Origen encountered Stoicism at a time when this philosophy, as expressed by Marcus Aurelius, betrayed symptoms of degeneration and stagnation; and he was well aware of the whole historical process, in particular the evolution of ideas which had led this philosophy into such an inescapable quandary. On the subject of time, although Origen produced no treatise on time proper, a study of his entire work (particularly that preserved in the original Greek text) reveals that he did formulate a certain concept of his own which pervades his entire theology and conditions it decisively.

Origen never uses terms which would be even remotely reminiscent

<sup>37</sup> Robert Sharples, in collaboration with F. W. Zimmermann, “Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On Time*,” *Phronesis*, 27 (1982), 58-109.

<sup>38</sup> Athenagoras, *De Resurrectione Mortuorum*, PG, VI, 1005.

<sup>39</sup> Athenagoras, *op. cit.*, 1005. It is remarkable that M. Spanneut deems that Stoic influence upon the early Christian writers does not go further than Clement of Alexandria (*Le Stoïcisme des Pères de l’Église* [Paris, 1957], 356).

<sup>40</sup> Justinus Martyr, *Philosophus, Confutatio quorundam Aristotelis dogmaticum*. PG, VI, 1525Dff. The points to which we refer are 1525D, 1528B-C, 1529A, 1532C, 1533A etc.

of either the Platonic or Aristotelian concept and consistently speaks of time as a kind of *extension* (διάστημα), as “this temporal extension” (τὸ χρονικὸν τοῦτο διάστημα),<sup>41</sup> and as “the temporal extension itself” (αὐτό δέ τὸ χρονικὸν διάστημα).<sup>42</sup> He also (quoting and explaining the parable in Matt. 20:1-16) refers to “extensions [διαστήματα] between the third, the sixth, and the ninth hour,” and the “extension” (διάστημα) from the time of Moses until the time of Jesus Christ.<sup>43</sup> In the same work he reflects on the deeper meaning of the scriptural “three equal extensions [τρία ἴσα διαστήματα] [between] the third and sixth and ninth hour,” of the “smaller extension” (ἐλαττον διάστημα) between the eleventh and twelfth hour, and of the “extension [διάστημα] from the dawn until the third hour.”<sup>44</sup> Accordingly, the “extension of one day” (μιας ἡμέρας διαστήματος) is compared to the duration of “an entire aeon” (τόν ὅλον αἰῶνα).<sup>45</sup> In regard to this, he reflects on scriptural terms considering them as possibly alluding to actual “temporal extensions” (χρονικῶν διαστημάτων).<sup>46</sup>

It is apparently because time is regarded as extension that human life becomes a kind of “road” (ὁδός): “this life is a *road* being walked by all men” (ὁδός γάρ ὁ βίος, ὑπὸ πάντων ἀνθρώπων παροδευόμενος).<sup>47</sup> In the same vein he refers to “*length* of time” (μῆκος χρόνου).<sup>48</sup> Following from this concept of time as extension, human action in time is represented as a mode of walking. He remarks on those who “did not *walk* the *way* they ought to, neither did they carry out the works they ought to” (οὔτε γὰρ ἦν ἔδει πορείαν περιεπάτησεν οὔτε ἅς ἐχρῆν πράξεις ἐπετέλεσεν).<sup>49</sup> Similarly, he speaks of the *walking* towards the realization of “virtue” (δέον ὁδεῦσαι ἐπὶ τὸ πέπειρον καὶ γλυκεῖαν ποιῆσαι τὴν τῆς ἀρετῆς σταφυλήν).<sup>50</sup>

In the *Commentary on John*, the eschatological perception of acting in time is portrayed through the expression “the *road* which leads above all heavens” (τὴν φέρονσαν ὁδὸν ἐπὶ τὰ ὑπεράνω πάντων τῶν οὐρανῶν).<sup>51</sup> In the same work Origen ponders on the different meanings of the term ἀρχή in order to arrive at an exegesis of the passage of John

<sup>41</sup> *Fragmenta in Matthaëum (FM)* 487. Citations of Origen’s works: *Fragments* are cited by the number of the fragment. Numbers for other works indicate *book* (or chapter) and *paragraph* (or, section) of the original Greek text, which are standard for all the editions.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Commentary on Matthew (CM)*, 15, 34.

<sup>44</sup> *CM*, 15, 28.

<sup>45</sup> *De Oratione (Or)*, XXVII, 13.

<sup>46</sup> *Or*, XXVII, 14.

<sup>47</sup> *FM*, 102, II; our italics.

<sup>48</sup> *Selecta in Psalmos (SP)*, 22; our italics.

<sup>49</sup> *CM*, 17, 24.

<sup>50</sup> *CM*, 17, 24. Similarly in *FM*, 227.

<sup>51</sup> *Commentary on John (CJ)*, 19, XX.

1,1, “In the beginning was the Logos” (Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος).<sup>52</sup> The significance of ἀρχή as *beginning* is understood neither as a beginning of movement (of a Platonic moving image of eternity) nor as a beginning (of any Aristotelian number) but rather as “something like the beginning of a road.”<sup>53</sup> Although the term to be explained at this point is a temporal one (namely, beginning), the text is full of spatial portrayals of time as *extension*.

Yet in discussing time Origen is not entirely happy with the term extension (διάστημα) alone, or at least he does not feel that by employing this term he can fully represent his concept of time. In order to complete his analysis he introduces the term συμπαρεκτείνεσθαι (to be stretched out alongside with) into the vocabulary of thought about time. This term refers to time or indicates a temporal function. Thus, “by the term aeon he means the period of human life similar to Paul’s use when he says: ‘I will eat no meat in the aeon, so that I will not occasion a temptation to my brother,’<sup>54</sup> calling aeon that which is stretched out alongside with the structure of his life” (τὸ γὰρ συμπαρεκτεινόμενον τῇσυστάσει τῆς ζωῆς αὐτοῦ).<sup>55</sup> In a similar fashion, he speaks of time as “measured alongside with” (παραμετρούμενος) everyone’s life.<sup>56</sup> It should be noted that Origen does not refer to time with a noun; his participial συμπαρεκτεινόμενον illustrates time itself.<sup>57</sup> The figure is also employed in another case:

... and when it is said to him [the son of God] the word “You are my Son, I have begotten you today,”<sup>58</sup> for him “today” is always [ἀεί]; for to God there is no evening and, I think, there is no morning either; but the time, so to speak, which is stretched out alongside with [ὁ συμπαρεκτείνων] his unbegotten and timeless [ἄιδίω] life, this is the day called today, on which the son has been begotten; for there can be neither beginning nor any birth-day.<sup>59</sup>

Everything referring to time, including duration or presence in time, is predicated by the term συμπαρεκτείνων or συμπαρεκτεινόμενος. In the *Commentary on Matthew* Origen describes the incapacity of human nature to attain perfect apprehension of God in the following manner:

<sup>52</sup> *CJ*, 1, XVI.

<sup>53</sup> *CJ*, 1, XVII. An account of this conception is given in *CJ*, 1, XVI.

<sup>54</sup> I Cor.8:13.

<sup>55</sup> *Exposita in Proverbia (EP)*, 10. Cf. a definition of αἰών by Aristotle: τὸ τέλος τὸ περιέχον τὸν τῆς ἐκάστου ζωῆς χρόνον ... αἰών ἐκάστου κέκληται; *De Caelo*, 279a25.

<sup>56</sup> *SP*, 60.

<sup>57</sup> The Greek term for “noun” is οὐσιαστικόν, which means the name of the οὐσία (essence) of a person or thing. Origen does not use noun (οὐσιαστικόν), that is, he does not give any outright indication of essence (οὐσία) of time proper other than διάστημα.

<sup>58</sup> Ps.2:7.

<sup>59</sup> *CJ*, 1, XXIX.

“for we cannot keep a memory which could be enduring [διαρκῆ] and stretched out alongside with [συνπαρεκτεινομένην] the nature of ap-perceptions [θεωρημάτων], due to the myriads of them.”<sup>60</sup> What the term “stretched out alongside with” suggests here is a temporal apprehending, extended throughout the period of a lifetime, an apprehension which would have *duration*. This is why, in the foregoing passage, the terms “enduring” (διαρκῆ) and “stretched out alongside with” (συνπαρεκτεινομένην) are interchangeable. Temporal presence is indicated by the same term. In the *Commentary on John* Origen argues that the Logos of God is present both in the divine timelessness and, as indicated by the term *συνπαρεκτείνεσθαι*, in the temporal world. According to Origen, Christ “is so powerful as to be invisible because of his divine nature, to be present in each individual man and to be also stretched out alongside with the whole world [παντί δέ καί ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ συνπαρεκτεινόμενος]; this is what is declared by the ‘He has stood in the midst of you.’”<sup>61</sup>

The employment of the term *συνπαρεκτείνεσθαι* is a very significant innovation. While Origen does not abandon the initial Stoic view of extension, he does, in formulating the Christian concept, offer further refinement and clarification of the relevant terminology. The introduction of the term *συνπαρεκτείνεσθαι* constitutes an embracing analysis of what time proper is, and it points to the relation of time to space proper (called at one point “structure of this world”).

The verb did not exist in classical Greek.<sup>62</sup> It first appears in the Hellenistic period, especially in the first centuries of Christianity. Among those before Origen who had already used the term it was Galen,<sup>63</sup> Asclepiodorus Tacticus (first century A.D.), and the mathematician Cleomedes, (second century A.D.). The meaning ascribed to it was “to have the same extension with something else.” Of the Stoics, Marcus Aurelius had used the term *συνπαρεκτείνειν* in the sense of “extending parallel to” and thus “to contrast” or “to compare.”<sup>64</sup> The term was used certainly in the subsequent centuries, and Suidas (960 A.D.) included it in his lexicon, but it was Origen who first employed the term *συνπαρεκτείνεσθαι* in order to designate a certain perception of time proper and its relation to space.

The verb is a compound one, consisting of the words σύν-, παρά-, ἐκ- and -τείνεσθαι. The first three are prepositions, the fourth is a verb. What we have therefore is a verb predicated by three prepositions. The

<sup>60</sup> *CM*, 12, 6.

<sup>61</sup> John, 1:26. *CJ*, 6, XXX.

<sup>62</sup> There was only the verb *παρεκτείνω*. Cf. Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1334 and *supp.*, 115.

<sup>63</sup> Galen (163 A.D.), *Περὶ Χρείας Μορίων*: *συνπαρεκτεινόμενον ὅλῳ τῷ μήκει τῆς ράχεως*.

<sup>64</sup> Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 7,30: *συνπαρεκτείνειν τὴν νόησιν τοῖς λεγομένοις*.

main body of the term is clearly the verb *τείνεσθαι*, which means “to be stretched” or “to be spread.” The preposition *ἐκ* means “out”; thus, the verb *ἐκ-τείνεσθαι* means “to be stretched out” or “to be extended.” Up to this point the fundamental Stoic notion of time as extension is maintained. (In fact a Greek word for extension [which is *ἔκτασις*] is precisely the noun derived from the verb *ἐκ-τείνεσθαι*.) The next step by Origen is to introduce the preposition *παρά* (side by side with, parallel to). Zeno does not seem to have made use of it, as we have seen, but it is found in the vocabulary of Chrysippus and Apollodorus (*παρ-ακολουθοῦν διάστημα*). Origen discarded the term *παρακολουθοῦν* because of its implication that time “follows,” as it were, space. Instead he retained only the preposition *παρά*, which renders the verb *παρ-εκ-τείνεσθαι* meaning “to be stretched out beside.” Finally, he retained the preposition *σύν* (with): thus he signals time to be an extension which “is stretched out beside” and yet *with* the “structure of the world.” This means that time accompanies, not follows space.

The Stoics Chrysippus and Apollodorus had endeavored to grasp the relation of time to the world through the term *παρακολουθοῦν διάστημα*. The word *παρακολουθοῦν*, however, means “that which subsequently accompanies,” and it implies a notion of “coming behind, or after.” In this sense time is regarded as “standing beside” the “world,” yet “following” it.<sup>65</sup> The Stoics seem to be uncertain as to whether time was created “together with” the “world” (*σύν αὐτῷ*) or “after it” (*μετ’ αὐτόν*). Subsequently, they appear uncertain as to whether time “was the same age as the world” (*ἰσῆλικα τοῦ κόσμου γεγονέναι*) or “younger” than the world (*ἢ νεώτερον ἐκείνου*).<sup>66</sup> Philo inherited this uncertainty; the only thing he seems to assert for sure is that time could not be “older” than the world, “for it is not befitting a philosopher to dare affirm” this.<sup>67</sup> The Stoics regard God as the creator of time, but they consider the world as the “father” of time, since time is generated from the motion of the world.<sup>68</sup> Stoic usage of the term *παρακολουθοῦν διάστημα* therefore, suggests this notion: time accompanies the world, yet it comes “after,” since time is generated *out of* the cosmic motion. This is actually a corollary of their definition of time, according to which the “extension”-time lends itself to the cosmic motion, so that this motion can make sense and indeed take place at all. It is obvious though that the Stoics never managed to transmit a precise account of the relation between time proper and space.

<sup>65</sup> This is denoted by the preposition *παρά* in the term *παρ-ακολουθοῦν*.

<sup>66</sup> *SVF*, II,165,4-9. As we saw, this is a point on which Plotinus criticizes the Stoics for their failure to define whether this *παρακολουθήμα* is “later or contemporary or earlier” to motion. *Enneads*, III,7.10.

<sup>67</sup> *De Opificio Mundi*, I,26-27: *πρεσβύτερον δ’ ἀποφαίνεσθαι τολμᾶν ἀφιλόσοφον*.

<sup>68</sup> *SVF*, 165,10-12.

By contrast Origen expressed his own view by introducing the term *συμπαρεκτεινόμενος*. He is very much alive to the fact that time does not follow space, a point which allows him to escape the kind of criticism levelled by Plutarch against the Stoics. Even if it is reasonable to doubt Plutarch's fairness to the Stoics, he did remark (as we have seen) that they define time as a consequence of motion. Origen, once he dropped the term *παρακολουθοῦν*, is beyond the range of such a criticism.

There is a further distinction which should be made: Plotinus too held the notion that time "runs together *with* life and keeps pace in its course" (*ἢ συνθεῖ καὶ συντρέχει*).<sup>69</sup> In his mythological portrayal of the beginning of temporality, he speaks of "a restlessly active nature, which wanted to control itself and be on its own, and chose to seek for more than its present state, this moved, and time moved with it."<sup>70</sup> Although the term "with" is not actually used in the Greek text it is nevertheless stated that "once this nature moved, time moved, too" (*ἐκινήθη μὲν αὐτή, ἐκινήθη δὲ καὶ αὐτός*). Hence the notion of *accompanying* is indeed implied but the difference is that the Neoplatonic conception of time moving with the world maintains the essential *dynamic* notion—time itself *moves*. In Plato this is a *moving* image; indeed time is described as travelling: Plato refers to something (the One) travelling with time from the past, via the now, to the future. This suggests that the now stands still and is overtaken.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, for Plotinus, time *runs*; it originates in the *motion* of the Soul. Origen entertains no such notion. On no account does the term *with* (inherent in the term *συμπαρεκτείνων*) suggest any movement of time proper, from which the notion of motion is consistently barred. The definition of time as in essence *διάστημα συμπαρεκτεινόμενον* is exactly what establishes this radical difference from both the Platonic and the Neoplatonic dynamic conception of time.

Although Origen took over the Stoic perception of time as *διάστημα*, he derived the term *συμπαρεκτείνεσθαι* from a completely different root, viz., the verb *τείνεσθαι*, presumably because he was concerned to circumvent the primarily spatial notion implied by the term *διάστημα*, for he knows perfectly well (as doubtless the Stoics did, too) that this "extension" is not a spatial one: the term itself is but a metaphor, a figure. Since, therefore, this is not of a spatial nature, what is the relation of this extension to space proper?

The Stoics undoubtedly were conscious of the fact that time is some-

<sup>69</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.13.

<sup>70</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.11.

<sup>71</sup> Plato, *Parmenides*, 152A3. However, in the same work (152B4-D4) the now is described as always present to the One, which implies that the now travels along with the One. In any case, the dynamic notion is present in the Platonic conception of time.

thing different from space<sup>72</sup> and that this extension has no spatial purport. However, they did not manage to invent a terminology expressing this awareness very aptly (precisely the point on which Plotinus focused his criticism of them). If the extant fragments do justice to him, Zeno seems to have thought that it is obvious enough that the term extension is just a simile. Chrysippus and Apollodorus simply added the participle παρακολουθοῦν (being beside and following). This, however, confuses rather than elucidates the relation of time proper to space.

It is no accident that the alert Origen discards the term παρακολουθοῦν altogether, opting instead for prepositions of simultaneity: σύν (with) and παρά (beside). Thus time is illustrated as a kind of extension, which is stretched out “alongside with” space, being beside it. Time is something different from space, yet stretched out alongside together with it. There is no notion of “following” one another: they are just associated and linked “together.” This is how he resolved the ambiguities inherent in the Stoic definitions.

I have already indicated that the simple usage of the term διάστημα alone is not adequate to justify a Stoic influence; what is necessary is an ontological perception of time proper.<sup>73</sup> Only then can one speak of an approximation to Stoicism. In Stoic philosophy Origen found the essential perception of *what* time proper is, and he employed this to the principal doctrines of his theology. That the Stoic definition of time proper constitutes a springboard for Origen is best suggested by the further developments which he himself occasioned.

It can be argued that the term συμπαραεκτείνων actually demonstrates that Origen’s notion of time as διάστημα is in fact the Stoic ontological concept of time. But his use of the term διάστημα is an *indication* but not *evidence*, that he was adopting the Stoic view of time; and for this reason we have not endorsed the opinion of M. Spanneut<sup>74</sup> that the use of the term διάστημα by Athenagoras verifies a direct Stoic influence. But for Origen the indication becomes *evidence* once his term συμπαραεκτείνεσθαι is thoroughly analyzed and shown to reinforce the assertion that time proper is in essence perceived as *extension*. For the term “stretched out alongside with” (τὸ συμπαραεκτεινόμενον)<sup>75</sup> bears on his concept of time as well as its relation to space and, moreover, illustrates a certain relationship between Origen and the Stoics on the ontological concept of time proper. Moreover, further analysis suggests

<sup>72</sup> This was a problem for the Stoics, namely, whether time should be considered as a body or not and, subsequently, whether it should be regarded as a “being” or not.

<sup>73</sup> P. Tzamalikos, “The Autonomy of the Stoic View of Time,” *Philosophia*, 19 (1989), 353-69.

<sup>74</sup> M. Spanneut regards it as an indication of Stoic influence; *op. cit.*, 356.

<sup>75</sup> *Exposita in Proverbia (EP)*, 10; *CJ*, 1, XXIX; *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians (CE)*, §IX.



that the very term *συμπαρεκτείνων* on the one side, and certain other passages of Origen's writings on the other, represent time as a *dimension* of the world. It should be pointed out that in Greek the terms *διάστημα* (extension) and *διάστασις* (dimension) have the same root and that their meaning has an inner connection, *διάστασις* (dimension) being definitely an ideational *διάστημα* (extension), alongside which life is moving on. Besides, the notion of *διάστασις* is inherent in the term *συμπαρεκτείνων*, as we see below in relation to certain considerations offered by John Callahan. Significantly, Origen applies the term *ἀδιάστατος* (dimensionless) to the divine life. This is held to be the preeminent life, a state which is called "perpetual life" (*ἀειζωΐας*).<sup>76</sup> The same term is used to indicate the divine life as the final goal of all creation, a state described as "calm and dimensionless life" (*ἀταράχου καὶ ἀδιαστάτου ζωῆς*).<sup>77</sup> Thus the contrast between the atemporal divine life and the temporal world is highlighted by the term *ἀδιάστατος*. In a previous work I have shown that the radical transcendence of God vis-à-vis the world is depicted in terms of space and time.<sup>78</sup> The life of creation is contrasted with the divine life by virtue of the fact that the latter is spaceless and timeless and in this sense dimensionless.

Considering time as a *dimension* is the point where Origen's fundamental ontological definition of time as *διάστημα* (extension) and the notion of *διάστασις* (dimension) converge. For one thing, the two terms are closely related philologically and etymologically; for another, Origen himself correlates them in order to express a substantial facet of his concept of time. Like the term *διάστημα* (extension), the term *διάστασις* (dimension) applied to time is not an invention of Origen's. While the former has a special significance in the Stoic philosophy of time, the latter is a term used by the Neoplatonists when dealing with time. The term *ἀδιάστατος* can be found at numerous points of the *Enneads*, particularly in the section where the question of time and eternity is aired.<sup>79</sup> The term *διάστασις* (dimension) was used in the Neoplatonic treatment of time as well.<sup>80</sup> Plotinus regards time as a "dimension of life" (*διάστασις ζωῆς*),<sup>81</sup> whereas he holds "eternity" (*αἰών*) to be "dimensionless"

<sup>76</sup> *EP*, 16.

<sup>77</sup> *EP*, 2. The term *ἀδιάστατος* meaning *without extension or dimension* can be found in Plutarch, *Moralia*, ed. G. N. Bernandakis (7 vols.; Leipzig, 1888-96); II, 601c; Plotinus, *Enneads*, I.5.7.; and Alexander of Aphrodisias *In Aristotelis Tropicorum libros octo commentaria*, 31.18. (ed. M. Wallies, *Commentaria in Aristotelis Graeca*, iii, pars i [Berlin, 1891]). As regards the Christian writers, *ἀδιάστατος* meaning *without extension or dimension* is found in Gregory of Nyssa, *Adversus Eunomium*, 8 (*PG*, XLV, 796A), 9 (*PG*, XLV, 813Bff; 804A).

<sup>78</sup> *Op. cit.*, ch. 1.

<sup>79</sup> In reference to time and eternity, the term *ἀδιάστατος* can be found in *Enneads*, III,7-13; III.7.3; III.7.6; III.7.11; III.7.13.

<sup>80</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.8.

<sup>81</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.11.

(ἀδιάστατον) and “non temporal” (οὐ χρονικόν).<sup>82</sup> Not that this suggests that Origen’s views are in any way related to Neoplatonism. Origen was twenty years older than Plotinus and wrote his commentaries on the Proverbs (where the notion of dimension is found) probably around 238 A.D., before the *Enneads* had been written.<sup>83</sup> According to Plotinus, time was not created as a being out of non-being; rather it followed a “restlessly active nature” which was in “that quiet life”<sup>84</sup> and so this “nature . . . moved and time moved with it.”<sup>85</sup> Hence, time existed “before” time, as it were; it “was at rest with the eternity in real being,” and “although it was not yet time. . . , it kept quiet too.”<sup>86</sup> Time was made “according to the pattern of eternity, and as its moving image.”<sup>87</sup>

On this crucial point Origen’s view of time is essentially different from Plato, for whom time is a moving image of eternity. The very term “image” has a connotation that secular time was established by the Demiurge, so that a certain affinity exists between this world and the world of ideas. Time, as an image, is exactly the element through which an affiliation and resemblance is established between here and beyond. In stark contrast Origen’s thinking is antithetical, asserting, in terms of space and especially time, a radical schism between the transcendent God and the world.<sup>88</sup> Further, in Plotinus time is the *life* (of the Soul),<sup>89</sup> whereas in Origen it is but a *natural element*, an element of the structure of the world. So despite being a near-contemporary of Plotinus, Origen is remote from Neoplatonism on this issue.<sup>90</sup> The Stoics were materialists; they held no eschatological ideas. For them time was unrelated to anything transcendent or theological. Plotinus regarded the Stoic definition of time as extension with contempt, basing his criticism on the lack of elaboration of the Stoic definition and on what he sees as defective reasoning in its account. My view is that the controversial tone in Plotinus stems from a deeper motive: his disdain for materialism and so for the Stoic understanding of time only in relation to the *visible* material world. To all appearances, Plotinus challenges the Stoic tenet on the nature of reality, but I think that what he really contests is Stoic materialism, the lack of any notion of transcendence. In effect he attacks the absence of an acceptable theology and the Stoic insistence on making an essential link between

<sup>82</sup> *Enneads*, I.5.7.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Marguerite Harl, *Origène et la fonction révélatrice du Verbe Incarné* (Paris, 1958), 71.

<sup>84</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.10.

<sup>85</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.11.

<sup>86</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.11.

<sup>87</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.13; also, III.7.11.

<sup>88</sup> P. Tzamalikos, *The Concept of Time in Origen*, ch.1.

<sup>89</sup> *Enneads*, III.7.11.

<sup>90</sup> These are not the only differences; Origen’s conception of aeon is in essence a natural one (cf. *Selecta in Psalmos*, 5), whereas in Plotinus aeon is the timeless eternity.

what is real with what is a body. Indeed this censure is rooted in a fundamental incompatibility between Stoicism and Plotinus: according to the former, it is only in the most attenuated sense that incorporeality is granted reality; according to the latter, matter has so little hold on reality that material things do not deserve a distinct slot of their own in his scheme of being.

This kind of dispute is alien to Origen, who held notions both of *materiality* (of the entire world) and of (divine) *transcendence*. For him both corporeality and incorporeality are fully real, albeit pertaining to different ranks of being. Accordingly, he can avail himself of both the Stoic *διάστημα* and the Neoplatonic *διάστασις* and *ἀδιάστατος*, and yet he ascribes to time a meaning which is characteristic of his own thought. His own view is formed in conformity with his fundamental Christian convictions. He does not hesitate to utilize the vocabulary of pagan philosophical schools, but selectively and in a manner that best suits his own reasoning. He adopted the fundamental Stoic concept of time as extension, yet in a way appropriate to his own thought, accommodating the essential Stoic concept to his own objectives not only by putting pagan terms into new use, but also by inventing a terminology of his own, a differentiated vocabulary expressing subtle aspects of his own view of time. Thus, although pagan philosophical terms are actually found in Origen, they serve to couch his own view of time. The Stoic view of time as an element of this world sprang from both their lack of any notion of transcendence and their virtual proscription of incorporeality. Yet paradoxically, the full *reality* of time is somehow impugned because of the premises of the Stoic philosophy as a whole. Origen, on the other hand, avowed the complete reality of time as a being made by God out of non-being.

Origen refers to Ps. 54:20 (“God shall hear and will humiliate them, he who is before the aeons; for they have no changes, as they fear not God”) and comments, “since everything has been made through him [the Logos], it is well said that he exists before the aeons. And this is how we learn that aeons have come to being out of non-being.”<sup>91</sup> In the John commentary he also appeals to Paul, who “teaches us that God made the aeons through the son.”<sup>92</sup> The consequence of time as a “being” made out of non-being is that time is real.<sup>93</sup> Origen uses the present perfect participle *γεγόνασιν* which means “having been made,”<sup>94</sup> corresponding to the term used to denote the reality of creation’s existence. He states, for example, that God “is a creator because of the beings (*γεγονότα*) which

<sup>91</sup> *SP*, 54.

<sup>92</sup> *CJ*, 2, X.

<sup>93</sup> *SP*, 54.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

were brought out of non-being into being,”<sup>95</sup> and that “God as creator is in all beings” (γεγονόσιν).<sup>96</sup>

In the light of this George Florovski is wrong to assert that it was Augustine who “discovered” that “time should be regarded as a creature.”<sup>97</sup> In fact it was Origen who established the view that time itself is a creature. Further, Richard Sorabji incorrectly ascribes to Augustine the idea that “there was no time before creation.”<sup>98</sup> He points out that this is “the best of solutions offered by Jews and Christians”<sup>99</sup> to the so-called “why not sooner?” argument about creation. On this point Augustine was simply a follower of Origen.<sup>100</sup> In addition, the notions of *body* and *incorporeal* have in Origen a totally different import. For the Stoics incorporeal is a “something” between being and non-being. They resorted to the four incorporeals out of necessity,<sup>101</sup> neither conceding them to be bodies nor denying that they exist but assigning them an intermediate level of reality.

Origen’s view on this issue stands in stark contrast. First, incorporeal nature pertains to fully real existence. *Incorporeality* and *reality* are not incompatible ontological realities, as they virtually are for the Stoics, but are compatible: it is the incorporeal God who preeminently *is* being. Second, corporeality pertains to *fallen* rational creatures created at the Fall. Corporeal nature originates in moral causes, has a moral goal, and will be terminated after proper free moral action. Furthermore, corporeality is applied not only to the visible world but also to what is “not seen” and yet is regarded as material.<sup>102</sup> On account of this, there are two main differences between Origen and the Stoics. First, he considers the entire world as material, but does not contend that only what is body is a “being” (ὄν), like the Stoics.<sup>103</sup> Time is not a body, and yet it is explicitly described as a *being*. Origen does not wonder whether time is real: he finds it unequivocally all too real. He also maintains a notion of transcendence with respect to the world and affirms that what is incorporeal is real and, more, superior, since it is an essentially divine property. Second, the distinction between corporeality and incorporeality concerns Origen for theological rather than natural reasons. The only bodies of interest to him

<sup>95</sup> *SP*, 138.

<sup>96</sup> *SP*, 41.

<sup>97</sup> George Florovski, *Aspects of Church History* (Greek tr. by Panayiotis Pallis, Thessaloniki, 1979), 84.

<sup>98</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 234.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> This is not the only point on which Augustine follows Origen (see *infra*).

<sup>101</sup> Space (ὁ χωρὸς), time (ὁ χρόνος), an expression (τὸ λεκτόν), the void (τὸ κενόν); *SVF*, III, 117, 18-23.

<sup>102</sup> We give a detailed account of the notion of the Fall, which marks the actual beginning of the world, in *The Concept of Time in Origen*, ch.1, 3.

<sup>103</sup> *SVF*, II, 117, 5-6.

are those which have a theological significance, such as the bodies of rational creatures.<sup>104</sup> In the final analysis, corporeality is an attribute of the world as a “downfall” (καταβολή), and it underlines the radical transcendence and superiority of the incorporeal divine life over the entire world, which is corporeal.

Both the Stoics and Origen knew the simple and obvious phenomenological datum that time is not a body, but while the Stoics found this fact to be a source of embarrassment, Origen did not. For Origen, time is not a body in the same sense that space proper is not a body, and that the function of “speaking” (that is, expressing, phrasing, etc.) is not a body; “void” is not a body<sup>105</sup> in the same way that a “predicate,” an “axiom,” or the abstract notion of “to be attached” or “to be interwoven with”<sup>106</sup> are not bodies. The Stoic doctrine that only a body is real was alien to Origen. In his view it would be “absurd”<sup>107</sup> to wonder whether time is a body or not, just as he would find it absurd to wonder whether or not “length,” “height,” or “breadth” are bodies in themselves. This enables him to assert confidently that time is a creature of full reality, avoiding the perplexity that this issue caused for Stoic thought. At points his language is crisp and carefully contrasts Christian theology with the scope and understanding of pagan thought, for his reasoning derives from entirely different premises than those of the Stoics, who were trapped in perplexities of their own making. They preferred to remain tied to the visible world, adhering to their cardinal premises (materialism, no notion of transcendence). This is what Origen calls “the absurdities of the followers of Zeno and Chrysippus,” declaring that he does not share such views which would only cause him to “lapse into these absurdities.”<sup>108</sup>

The similarity of the term διάστημα aside, Origen had parted company with the Stoics almost right from the start of his thinking of time. For, in order to go the whole way, a Stoic would have to relinquish fundamental assumptions of his philosophy. Thus, while the initial use of the term διάστημα to signify time proper may mean that Origen was indebted to early Stoicism, he was nevertheless immune from the criticism directed against the Stoics. Following his own path, he was able not only to overcome the impasses of Stoicism but also to break new ground in formulating his own view of time and in elaborating the notion of time from a Christian point of view. In this way he anticipated critical notions which played a decisive role during the interplay between Christianity and paganism.

<sup>104</sup> We expound this in *op. cit.*, ch.1.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. *SVF*, II,117,20-22.

<sup>106</sup> *SVF*, II,117,40-43.

<sup>107</sup> *Contra Celsum* (*Cels*), VIII, 49.

<sup>108</sup> *Cels*, VIII, 49.

IV. The term *διάστημα*, indicating time proper, was later widely used during the Arian controversy by both sides in the quarrel.<sup>109</sup> It was taken up by John Chrysostom, as well as by Essaias Abbas and Olympiodorus of Alexandria in the same context and in the same sense as used in Origen.<sup>110</sup> In the vocabulary of late Christian writers both *διάστημα* and *συμπαρεκτείνεσθαι* were widely used terms. It can be seen clearly that Origen was the forerunner of both the conception and the terms which constitute the core of thinking on time in a vast number of Christian writers, including Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil of Caesarea, Theodoretus of Cyrrhenia, Hesychius of Sinai, Athanasius of Alexandria, Maximus Confessor, Cyrillus of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, Procopius of Gaza, and John of Damascus.<sup>111</sup>

Richard Sorabji considers that the views of Gregory of Nyssa on time and eternity, constitute a “fuller” account of the divine reality compared to that found in Origen.<sup>112</sup> Ironically, however, what he adduces as Gregory’s views (contrasting them with Origen’s)<sup>113</sup> are precisely Origen’s expres-

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Alexander of Alexandria, *Epistula ad Alexandrum Constantinopolitanum*, 6; PG, XVIII, 557A; Athanasius, *Orationes tres adversus Arianos*, 1.12; PG, XXVI, 37A; Basil of Caesarea, *Adversus Eunomium*, 2.13; PG, XXIX, 596B; *Liber de Spiritu sancto*, 59; PG, XXXII, 117B; Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium*, 1; PG, XLV, 357D-360B.

<sup>110</sup> John Chrysostom, *In pascha*, 5.2; Cf. *op. cit.*, 5.1; PG, LIX, 735ff; also *Homilia in Matt.*, 19.5; *Essaias Abbas*, *Orationes*, 10; PG, XL, 1135B; Olympiodorus of Alexandria defines time thus: χρόνος μὲν ἐστὶ τὸ διάστημα καθ’ ὃ πράττεται τι, *Commentarii in Ecclesiastem*, 3.1; PG, XCIII, 508A.

<sup>111</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium*, PG, XLV, 933A. Also *Oratio Catechetica*, PG, XLV, 80D; *Contra Eunomium*, 12; PG, XLV, 1064A. *Apologia in hexaëmeron*, 8.; PG, XLIV, 72A. *De infantibus qui praemature abripiuntur*, PG, XLVI, 172C. *Contra Eunomium*, 4; PG, XLV, 661B. For each meaning of the term *συμπαρεκτείνεσθαι* in these passages the same can be found in Origen’s works preceding them; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes*, 38.8; PG, XXXVI, 320B; Basil of Caesarea, *Adversus Eunomium*, 2.12; PG, XXIX, 593B; *ibid.*, 2.13 (PG, LXIX, 6B). Also, *Epistulae*, 204.1; PG, XXXII, 745A; Theodoretus of Cyrrhenia, *Commentarius in Isaiam*, 26.16; PG, LXXXI, 496ff. Here Theodoretus follows the meaning of *συμπαρεκτεινόμενον* as in Origen’s *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (CE), 1.8: ἀντιφιλοτιμούμενον καὶ συμπαρεκτεινόμενον κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν; (Fr. IV); Hesychius of Sinai, *De temperantia et virtute centuriae ad Theodulum*, 2.58; PG, XCIII, 1529Dff; Athanasius of Alexandria, *Orationes tres adversus Arianos*, 2.57; PG, XXVI, 268C; Maximus Confessor, *Opuscula theologica et polemica*, PG, XCI, 9A; Cyrillus of Alexandria, *Scholia de incarnatione*, 13; PG, LXXV, 1369ff; John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Genesim*, 27.10; PG, LIII, 23ff; Procopius of Gaza, *Commentarii in Proverbia*, 4,14; PG, LXXXVII, 1256D; John of Damascus, *De Fide Orthodoxa Libri Quattuor*, PG, XCIV, 864. In the last passage the wording is the same with that used by Origen in the *Commentary on John*, 1, XXIX.

<sup>112</sup> R. Sorabji, *op. cit.*, 123.

<sup>113</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium*, 1.359-64 (PG, XLV, 364); 1.370-71 (PG, XLV, 368); 1.685-89 (PG, XLV, 461-64); 2.459 (PG, XLV, 45.1064C-D) 8.5 (PG, XLV, 796A); 9.2 (PG, XLV, 809B-C); also *hom. in Eccl.* 7, (PG, LIV, 729C-D); in *Hex.* (PG, XLIV, 84D). On Gregory’s views, S. H. von Balthasar, *Presence et pensée* (Paris 1942), 1-10.

sions used by Gregory<sup>114</sup>: for example, the definition of time proper as *διάστημα*, its relation to space, portrayed by the term *συμπαρεκτεινόμενον*, the adumbration of the divine life by the term *ἀδιάστατος*, and in general the concept both of time and divine timelessness.<sup>115</sup> When this is granted, there can be no talk of a “fuller” account in Gregory. His views on time and divine reality are just a *repetition* of what is already in Origen.

On this issue, however, there is a very substantial difference which eluded some of these Christian writers. The epithet *αἰώνιος* (eternal, in the sense of timeless) is certainly applied to God throughout his writings. But nowhere does Origen apply the term *αἰών* to the divine life, which is after all a Platonic definition. When he does refer to the divine life, he simply uses the participle *συμπαρεκτείνων*, obviously as a figure. In stark contrast (and so establishing a direct affiliation with Platonism), some of his successors took over the term *συμπαρεκτείνων* in order to define the divine life as *αἰών*. At the end of the fourth century Gregory of Nazianzus states that “aeon is not time nor is it a part of time . . . but what to us is time . . . aeon is to the timeless, namely, that which is stretched out alongside with beings (*τὸ συμπαρεκτεινόμενον τοῖς ὄντιν*).”<sup>116</sup> As late as the eighth century, John of Damascus avails himself of Origen’s language but follows Gregory’s definition. He allows that the term aeon has many layers of meaning (a lifetime, a long period of time, etc.). In regard to the sense of the “aeon to come” (*αἰών ὁ μέλλων*), he states that this “endless state after the resurrection . . . is not time, neither is it a part of time. . . , but this is what is stretched out alongside with the timeless [*τὸ συμπαρεκτεινόμενον τοῖς ἀϊδίοις*]; . . . thus what time is to the temporal beings, aeon is to the timeless.”<sup>117</sup>

The *repetition* of the terminology established by Origen is striking, but it is important to notice the un-Origenist (even Platonic) distortion of his views by those who misused his formulations. Origen does not say that the *συμπαρεκτεινόμενον τοῖς ἀϊδίοις* (which indicates the divine life) constitutes a definition of *αἰών*. What he conceives as *αἰών* is a purely and exclusively *natural* reality, a spatio-temporal reality, which he ex-

<sup>114</sup> Richard Sorabji also includes the definition of time by Basil of Caesarea among these “fuller” accounts. On this he obviously follows a mistaken view of J. Callahan, which we discuss shortly below.

<sup>115</sup> B. Otis alleged that the usage of terms *διάστημα* and *διάστασις* for time itself “first comes into the Christian vocabulary with Methodius’ critique of Origen” and “The point of importance is that before the Cappadocians, *διάστημα* is used in a negative sense (as in Methodius).” *Studia Patristica*, 117 (1976), 199-222. It is now obvious that this is an erroneous assertion. B. Otis, “Gregory of Nyssa and the Capadocian conception of Time,” *Studia Patristica*, XIV, *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*, 117 (1976), 327-57.

<sup>116</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes*, 38.8; PG, XXXVI, 320B.

<sup>117</sup> John of Damascus, *De Fide Orthodoxa Libri Quattuor*, 2.1; PG, XCIV, 861B.

plains very clearly by means of an ad hoc definition.<sup>118</sup> In contrast both Gregory of Nazianzus and John of Damascus take the term αἰών to denote the divine life and to represent αἰών as a supernatural and timeless reality, not time but similar and analogous to time.

For Origen “aeon is a natural system” and so contrasts radically with the meaning attributed to it by Platonists and other Greeks, who assign αἰών to the divine realm rather than, as Origen, to the world. While Gregory of Nazianzus and John of Damascus did use Origen’s temporal terms, they ascribed to αἰών an obvious Platonic sense, quite antithetical to what Origen himself did. Philo also uses the term αἰών, referring it to God. Following Plato, he considers αἰών as the “exemplar and archetype of time” (τὸ χρόνον παράδειγμα καὶ ἀρχέτυπον).<sup>119</sup> Philo’s concept is in essence Platonic: time, by being an “imitation” of an “archetype,” time is something constituting an *affinity* between God and the world. But for Origen time is an element showing the difference between divine reality and the world, establishes no affinity between those two diverse states; and for this reason, in adumbrating the divine reality, he refrains from using the term αἰών. Gregory of Nazianzus and John of Damascus, who are supposed to be the exponents of Christian orthodoxy, take up Origen’s words, but ironically they reorient his views in a Platonic sense. Their formulations are in fact a striking example of dissent, albeit unconscious, from Origen. The difference is thorough and cannot be concealed by their literal use of Origen’s vocabulary, for such a formulation is wholly contrary to his natural and plainly un-Platonic concept of αἰών—and yet it was Origen who was anathematized as a Platonist!

Richard Sorabji also asserts that Philoponus “picks up the very words” which “Proclus and earlier Plotinus, Basil and Gregory” used in their discussions on time and divine reality.<sup>120</sup> Proclus certainly follows Plotinus, but as far as the Cappadocians are concerned, the “very words” that Philoponus actually “picks up” are not theirs, but Origen’s.

G. Florovski refers to the creation of the world and time asserting that it was Augustine who clarified this relationship, but he does not seem to be aware that it was actually Origen who originally arrived at a concrete concept of the relationship between space and time.<sup>121</sup> Florovski claims that Augustine was the first to declare the world was not created “in time” but “together with” time,<sup>122</sup> but it can be argued that Augustine

<sup>118</sup> Origen is quite clear in defining αἰών as a purely *worldly* reality: “aeon is a natural system”; *SP*, 5.

<sup>119</sup> Philo, *De Mutatione Nominum*, 267; *Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis*, 32; Cf. *Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres Sit*, 165: χρόνος is the βίος of the κόσμος αἰσθητός, αἰών is the βίος of God and the κόσμος νοητός. This is the same (Platonic) definition of αἰών given by Gregory of Nazianzus and John of Damascus.

<sup>120</sup> R. Sorabji, *op. cit.*, 117.

<sup>121</sup> G. Florovski, *Creation and Redemption*, (Gr. tr. Thessaloniki, 1980), 50.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, V. 5, *PL*, XXXVI, 325; Also, *De Genesi*



was anticipated by Origen in the thesis that time came into existence along with space.<sup>123</sup> In the passages quoted by Florovski, Augustine distinguishes between the “world” and “time,” but Origen had already made a subtler distinction between “the *structure* of the world” and “time.” This makes him not only a precursor of Augustine; he had actually provided a more differentiated articulation in his conceptual distinction between space and time.

The claim of John Callahan, who argues that the source of Augustine’s theory of time was Basil of Caesarea,<sup>124</sup> founders on the fact that he takes Basil’s statements to be original. Facing the insuperable difficulty of explaining how Augustine could have been familiar with Basil’s writings, Callahan admits that Basil’s influence on Augustine cannot be verified and speaks of a “puzzle”;<sup>125</sup> for there is no evidence that Basil’s refutation of Eunomius (the work in which Basil’s views of time are found, and which is adduced by Callahan as evidence) had at that time been translated into Latin, wholly or in part. He refers to the current opinions about Augustine’s limited knowledge of Greek, especially at the relatively early age when he wrote the *Confessions*, which suggest that Augustine would not have been able to read Basil’s Greek with a facility that would have enabled him to incorporate Basil’s ideas into the relevant chapter of the *Confessions*.<sup>126</sup> In the end he says that he cannot attempt any solution to this question<sup>127</sup> and concludes that Basil influenced Augustine “through some contact that cannot at present be determined.”<sup>128</sup> John Callahan wrote his work in 1958; as late as 1983, Richard Sorabji refers to these findings stating that he himself cannot solve this problem either, and so calls it a “mystery.”<sup>129</sup> He suggests Aristotelians as a possible source of influence upon Augustine;<sup>130</sup> yet he says that he is deterred from drawing conclusions due to Augustine’s slowness in acquiring Greek.<sup>131</sup>

On the basis of our discussions, an answer can be proposed to this problem. There is no need to search for some “contact that cannot at present be determined” between Basil and Augustine, for it was Origen who directly influenced the latter. His contact with Origen is easily ex-

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*contra Manichaeos*, J.2. *PL*, XXIV, 174,175; *De Civitate Dei*, XI, 6, *PL*, XLI, 321 and 322: also, *Confessiones*, XI,13, *PL*, XXXII, 815-16 et *passim*. Cf. P. Duhem, *Le Système du monde*, II (Paris, 1914), 462ff.

<sup>123</sup> *The Concept of Time in Origen*, Ch. 2.1.

<sup>124</sup> John Callahan, “Basil of Caesarea: A new source of St. Augustine’s theory of time,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 63 (1958), 437-54.

<sup>125</sup> *Op. cit.*, 438.

<sup>126</sup> For what he regards as a “difficult question” he cites the work by H. I. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* (Paris, 1949), 27-46, 631-37.

<sup>127</sup> *Op. cit.*, 440.

<sup>128</sup> *Op. cit.*, 450.

<sup>129</sup> *Op. cit.*, 94-95.

<sup>130</sup> *Op. cit.*, 248.

<sup>131</sup> *Op. cit.*, 290.

plained. In Augustine's time, Origen's works had been rendered into Latin: during Augustine's lifetime (354-430 A.D.) Jerome translated a large part of Origen's *Homilies on the Song of Songs* (380 A.D.) and Rufinus translated the *Commentary on the Song of Songs* (400 A.D.), *De Principiis*, and other works. It is also plausible that views of the Alexandrian might have been reported to Augustine, since the former was highly reputed. In any case Augustine seems to have been aware of the views of Origen, to whom, in other matters, he refers by name.<sup>132</sup>

The passage of Basil which Callahan believes influenced Augustine is out of *Adversus Eunomium*, I,21. Here Basil states that time is not the very movement of heavenly bodies, as Eunomius alleged; rather it is "the extension which is stretched out alongside with the constitution of the world" (χρόνος δὲ ἐστὶ τὸ συμπαραεκτεινόμενον τῇ συστάσει τοῦ κόσμου διάστημα).<sup>133</sup> There is no term or expression in this definition of Basil's which has not already been used by Origen. He reiterates Origen's formulation not only in spirit but also in the letter.<sup>134</sup> In a column alongside this section of *Adversus Eunomium*, Callahan quotes a passage from Augustine's *Confessions* (X,23ff). Comparing the two passages, he regards the definition of time as extension "stretched out alongside with" (συμπαραεκτεινόμενον διάστημα) as enabling Augustine to define time as *distentio*,<sup>135</sup> and in fact Callahan is undoubtedly correct in arguing that Augustine's use of the term *distentio* does correspond to συμπαραεκτεινόμενον τῇ συστάσει τοῦ κόσμου.<sup>136</sup> Indeed, an oblique reference to time as dimension is inherent in the expression συμπαραεκτεινόμενον διάστημα itself. Yet this does not reflect the influence of Basil on Augustine; for it is a notion of Origen's found (both in letter and in spirit) in the *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Fr. IX), as well as in the *Exposita in Proverbia*, 10, a connection that has escaped previous scholars. In any event Augustine's expression *spatium temporis*<sup>137</sup> is in reality a translation of Origen's expression χρονικόν διάστημα, used on two occasions in Fragment 487 of the *Commentary on Matthew*.

It is because Origen had considered time as something different from Plotinus's time as διάστασις ζωῆς (dimension of life) that Augustine's *distentio* is rightly regarded as a notion differing from the Plotinian concept of time. I agree with Callahan when he sees this view of time as a

<sup>132</sup> *De haeresibus*, XLIII.

<sup>133</sup> *Adversus Eunomium*, I,21.

<sup>134</sup> For the term διάστημα, s. Origen's *Fragmenta in Matthaeum*, 487(twice); *Commentary on Matthew*, 15,34; 15,28; *De Oratione*, XXVII,13; Time as "stretched out alongside the constitution of the world" is stated in the *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, Fr. IX.

<sup>135</sup> *Op. cit.*, 445.

<sup>136</sup> *Op. cit.*, 447, 450.

<sup>137</sup> *Op. cit.*, 447.

“radical transformation,”<sup>138</sup> for in introducing the term *συμπαρεκτείνων*, Origen made clear that this *διάστασις* (dimension) has nothing to do with the mental phenomena of memory, attention, and anticipation.<sup>139</sup> Time itself is a natural, objective element in the structure of the world. Therefore, presentness, pastness, or futurity are more than subjective experiences or mere psychological impressions. I also accept Callahan’s proposition that without the definition of time as *extension* “stretched out alongside with the constitution of the world,” Augustine’s affirmation of time as *distentio animi* would be regarded as simply a transformation of Plotinus’s *διάστασις ζωῆς*. Nonetheless the “radical transformation” of the Neoplatonic conception of *διάστασις* into a radically different notion is undoubtedly an achievement of Origen.

V. Origen lived in a political and spiritual environment in which he was faced with all kinds of challenges. Alongside with his pastoral and educational work, he also strove to enunciate dogmatic formulations of the new religion. This was at a time of State persecution of Christianity and an intensification of pagan polemic against Christians. Moreover, there were additional difficulties surrounding the complex issue of the abstruse notion of time. The intensive debate about it had never abated, and Origen was active in a period when Greek philosophy was still very much alive—not yet moribund or scholastic—and when different schools of thought vied with each other and eclecticism and syncretism were developing. This meant that the possibility of cross-fertilization between paganism and Christianity was constantly feasible. It is against this background that Origen’s pioneering feat of devising a radically new concept of time should be considered.

Origen’s background had a positive bearing on his formulation of the concept of time. He was the first Christian to introduce the notion of *διάστημα* as a deliberate and clarifying ontological conception of time. To be sure, this was of Stoic provenance. Yet Origen transformed it in such a way as to be authentically innovative rather than just somewhat more expanded, for the kernel of his achievement was not the initial application of the Stoic ontological notion of time. The decisive feature was the significant breakthrough he made: it was the startling new use to which he put existing philosophical terms. Further, he creatively introduced necessary fresh terminology into the discussion of time, handled not in an off-putting manner, but in a readable way. This is why the Neoplatonic critique of the Stoics does not affect Origen, since he is

<sup>138</sup> *Op. cit.*, 450.

<sup>139</sup> Augustine held that time as a *distention animi* has three aspects: memory, attention, anticipation; without them, past, present and future can have no meaning. (chs. 14-28 of the *Confessions*, XI). We have argued that Augustine, being unable to follow Origen’s conception of time all the way, finally succumbed to certain perceptions of Plotinus. *op. cit.*, chs. 2&5.

immune from this kind of objection. This represents an enormous stride towards the formation of a Christian doctrine of time.

From a Greek perspective, Origen's views represent an utterly bold theory of time, completely unknown to any Greek school of thought. For a Stoic to share this concept of time, more would have to be conceded on the Stoic's part, to the extent that principal Stoic doctrines would be infringed upon. The same is true for any Neoplatonist, for the sheer scope of argumentation bolstering up Origen's concept of time is firmly located and only comprehensible within the context of his theology.

Origen is the precursor of an important perception of time proper, as well as its relation to space. His remarks, it can be argued, were more astute than those of many of his successors. His innovations have never been superseded within Christian theology. Some of the accounts provided by later Christian writers were more extended, but they were not fuller or more substantial. Others fell short of being even a mere authentic echo of Origen's thinking on time. Even if they shared the same vocabulary, they failed to do justice to the thought embodied in it.

If later theories approximated Platonism or succumbed to Neoplatonism, this occurred because key elements in Origen's concept were missing. Indeed they were impoverished renderings of his views which introduced affinity with Platonism or Neoplatonism at points where Origen had instituted a sheer dissimilarity. For he conspicuously moves in a radically different sphere from pagan philosophy. Concerning the issue at least of time, the inveterate and traditionally ineluctable verdict about Platonism in Origen is open to serious criticism and can be refuted by his own texts. Another paper is necessary in order to justify more fully our assertion that Origen's concept of time constitutes on the whole a clean break with Platonism. The fact remains that he was anathematized in A.D. 553. The chief charge against him was Platonism. This is a tragic historic bias, which has conditioned the traditional historical preconception that vitiates Origen studies. Until now hardly anyone has been cognizant of the fact that Origen constructed an original theory of time. Consequently, he never received the credit he deserved for this accomplishment. But the universal lack of awareness of this inspired feat is not the worst which has happened to this tragic figure of early Christianity. Considering the misconceptions surrounding his thought which led to his anathematization, the general lack of appreciation of the genuine Origen is explicable, if regrettable.

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