Being, Becoming, and the Trinity
Creedal Orthodoxy as the Solution to the Dilemmas of Ancient Hellenic Metaphysics

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This essay discusses the philosophical question of being and becoming in the early Greek philosophical tradition and the later Christian Church's Trinitarian confession. In response to the problem of being and becoming, the pre-Socratic philosophers were generally one-sided; many claimed that either all reality could be explained by becoming or the principle of unchanging being. Post-Socratic Greek philosophy in many ways improved on the earlier models by attempting to account for both being and becoming by systematically relating them to one another. Nevertheless, such accounts remain unsatisfactory due to what we will refer to as their essentially "tragic" understanding of reality. By contrast, the Christian creedal tradition answers the question of being and becoming by fully affirming and reconciling both principles through its doctrines of the Trinity and creation ex nihilo.

Key Words: Being, Becoming, Comic, Tragic, Ecstatic, Nihilism

Introduction

Since the beginning of the western philosophical tradition, the question of being and becoming has vexed philosophers and theologians alike. In the following essay, we will argue that ancient Christian orthodoxy as it is presented in the Nicene Creed not only represents a solution to the problem of soteriology, but also a fulfillment to the pre-Christian Greek philosophical quest for a resolution to the problem of being and becoming.

In proffering this solution, the Nicene Fathers replaced the "centered" Greek metaphysic of "tragedy," with an "ecstatic" and "comic" one.[1] By "tragic" and "centered" we refer to the tendency of Greek metaphysics to define entities according to a centered reality internal to them (such as an essence), and to view any movement outward from that center of reality as representing a tragic falling away from its originating centered purity. By "ecstatic" and "comic," we refer to the tendency that we find in later Nicene Christianity of defining entities according to relationships external to themselves. In contrast to the tragic metaphysic, the comic metaphysic holds that entities find their true reality when they move outward from the center of their being toward that which is external and supplemental to them.

In investigating our subject, we will unfortunately not have space to discuss all the complexities of each philosopher or theologian. Instead, while being care-

ful as best we can not to oversimplify the subject material, our focus will be very narrowly on the question of being and becoming, and the manner in which these metaphysical categories relate to and ultimately find their fulfillment in the broad assumptions shared by the post-Nicene consensus of the ancient Church.

Pre-Socratic Philosophy: Being or Becoming?

We will begin our investigation with the thought of the pre-Socratics. Before we begin, it is important to recognize that most of what we say is based on the educated guesses of the best scholarship. We possess only a few fragments of their writings, or in some cases, second or third-hand accounts from later philosophers (notably Aristotle). Therefore, our description below should be primarily understood as an educated guess.

As far as we can reconstruct their position, with regard to the question of being and becoming, broadly speaking this class of thinkers tended to fall into two main perspectives: those who proposed a model of reality wherein most, if not all phenomena were described as a manifestation of becoming and, conversely, ones who described all phenomena as a manifestation of immutable being. In this preliminary section we will examine the main thinkers in both sides of the metaphysical debate and offer a critical evaluation of their thought.

Among the camp that held to the primacy of becoming over being were the Milesians and the early Atomists. Regarding the Milesians, it must be recognized that they could (by modern standards) be classified as either philosophers or primitive scientists. The main goal of these early investigators was to determine the original Ur-stuff upon which all reality was based. As is clear, this question could be viewed as either a metaphysical or scientific one (that is to say, in the modern sense of these terms) depending upon what grounds upon which it was to be answered.[2]

Thales (ca. 624-ca. 546 BC) represents the first systematic attempt to relate all reality to a unitary underlining element. According to his proposal, water was the Ur-stuff that formed the basis of all other entities and elements within the world.[3] By contrast, Anaximenes (ca. 585- ca. 528 BC) understood the basis of reality to be the element of air, which he reasoned could explain everything from the "flat disk" of the earth to the heavenly bodies.[4] Lastly, Anaximander (ca. 610- ca. 546 BC) claimed that the world was made up of an indefinable substance without qualities.[5] Nevertheless, like the other Milesians, he still asserted that the basis of all this world's phenomena was a unitary element, even if he found himself incapable of defining it. These models were appealing because they represented a naturalistic and materialistic alternative to the mythological accounts of reality offered by the Greek poets. Moreover, as explanatory models, they could account for the phenomena of flux over time through reference to the changing of patterns and subdivisions of the original material of creation.

Following a similar line of reasoning to that of the Milesians, Leucippus (ca. early 5th century BC) and his pupil Democritus (ca. 460– ca. 370 BC) held that all reality was made up of what they referred to as "the void" and atoms. The void served as the principle of motion through which atoms moved about. Although atoms (that is, the smallest and most simple unit of material reality) occasionally came together within what

appeared to be meaningful patterns, the flux of atoms within the void was in actuality random and lacked intrinsic meaning.[6]

In contrast to this belief that reality is made up of the endless flux of becoming, the Eleatic school asserted that all reality was a changeless oneness. In particular, Parmenides (ca. early fifth century BC) argued that all being was unitary and immutable.[7] Change, stated Parmenides, was, in fact, merely illusion. That which is not cannot come into being. Conversely, it is equally clear that that which is cannot cease to be, since that would be to claim that nothing comes from something. As a result, Parmenides reasoned, that although things appear to change (that is, they arise and also dissolve), nothing in itself actually does change. Consequently, no entity was different or separate from any other, and the whole of reality was constituted by simple, immutable, and undifferentiated being. Although, in light of this, we cannot say with dogmatic certainty that Parmenides considered all empirical investigation to be meaningless, there appears to be at very least an implicit rejection of the datum of the senses as a true source of knowledge. If it is the case that our senses represent reality to us as a sequence of becoming when logically no such becoming can take place, then by implication they must be less than helpful to us in giving us the knowledge of true things.

If we interpret the pre-Socratics in the manner that we have above (which, again it must be cautioned, is largely an educated guess), several difficulties present themselves. First, from the perspective of speculative reason, the accounts of reality offered by the pre-Socratics tend to explain away contrary data rather than incorporate it into their overall theoretical framework. As previous noted, the datum of experience presents the human subject with elements of both being and becoming within the world. Therefore, our explanatory models of reality must take into account both phenomena. This is similar to the manner in which a scientific paradigm must also be able to incorporate all the data gathered with regard to a specific object of investigation. If it cannot, then it is difficult to see how that paradigm might function as an appropriate heuristic tool for future discovery.

Whereas the Atomists and Milesians were able to account for the flux and becoming of reality, from what has come down to us there is very little suggestion that they were able to account for the phenomena of the persistence of identity over time. With the Atomists in particular, apart from the vaguely defined principle of motion, they seem to have an inability to account for the genesis of meaningful order or uniformity within the natural order. According to Aristotle's later (and possibly second or third-hand) account, many of the pre-Socratic philosophers could only account for material causes, but lacked the ability to explain the formal, instrumental, or final causes.[8]

Nevertheless, this, of course, should be qualified that in many of our sources there are slight indications that some might have thought that there was a divine principle behind reality. For example, Aristotle reports that "Thales came to the opinion all things were full of gods,"[9] and Cicero later states that for Thales ". . . water is the principle of all things; and that God is that Mind which shaped and created all things from water."[10] This would suggest that there was, in a sense, some sort of organizing divine and formal principle behind the temporal order. However, such evidence is neither direct

nor conclusive. Even if this is an accurate report, there is no indication from other fragments regarding how Thales might have related this presence of divinity to the problem of being and becoming.

The opposite complaint can be made regarding Parmenides and Eleatic school, which upheld the recognition of the intelligible structure of being discernible by human reason, but denied the flux and change presented to the human mind in empirical experience as illusory. The question nevertheless remains unanswered: If there is no change or differentiation within reality, then why do we experience these phenomena?

Secondly, on the level of practical reason, both positions ultimately lend themselves to a form of nihilism. As the Roman Catholic philosopher and theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar notes, human life and activity is only meaningful insofar as it is able measure its success over against an eternally stable standard of truth and meaning.[11] Collapsing all reality into becoming relativizes the good that any one endeavor may exemplify. All beings and their activities are simply waves within a universal ocean of eternal flux, with no standard to recommend one wave as superior to the others. Conversely, Balthasar notes, the meaning of all temporal endeavors is lost when it is made illusory by being subsumed under absolute unity and immutable being. Balthasar sees this tendency in the forms of Greek philosophical theology and Hinduism.[12] Human action must, in fact, be real to be meaningful, not merely phenomenal. If becoming is itself merely illusory, then it lacks meaning as well. To stave off nihilism then, the full reality of both being and becoming must be affirmed.

Plato and Aristotle: Being and Becoming Systematically Related

Plato (424/423 BC–348/347 BC) and Aristotle (384 BC – 322 BC) were in many respects more successful than their predecessors in accounting for both the reality of being and becoming. Nevertheless, before we enter into a discussion of their respective metaphysical systems, it should be noted that certain pre-Socratic philosophers did point in the right direction, notably Heraclitus (ca. 535-ca. 475 BC) and Pythagoras (ca. 570- ca. 495 BC). To an extent, their answer to the overall question of ontology anticipates that of the post-Socratic philosophers.

In his interpretation of Socrates' thought, Plato improved on these early attempts greatly. He was able to systematically relate being and becoming through his theory of the forms in a more comprehensive fashion than the earlier tradition had. For the Plato, the structure of reality was divided between the spiritual realm of being (that is, the realm of the forms) and the material realm of becoming (i.e., the temporal world).[13] The forms served as immutable and unchanging archetypes of all temporal and mutable realities.[14] To use a common example, all temporal triangles are in one way or another imperfect. They may also degenerate and change over time. But the idea and mathematical definition of a triangle remains immutably and eternally fixed. For this reason, Plato posited that all temporal triangles participate in and reflect the single archetypical reality of the archetypal triangle in the intelligible realm of the forms.[15] All transcendent forms participated in supreme archetypical reality of the form of the "Good." The Good is above all forms and serves as the immutable foundation of the total structure of reality.[16] In *The*

Republic, Plato uses the metaphor of the sun and its illumination of all other objects of the senses as an image of the participation of all forms in the form of the Good.[17]

Positing the existence of a realm of both being and becoming nevertheless leaves open the question of how these realms came to be and related to one another. Moving from logos to mythos in his later dialogue of the *Timaeus*, Plato propagates a new creation story. In the beginning, the realm of the forms and the realm of transitory matter had originally been separate.[18] The latter had been pure chaos until it had been shaped according to the similitude of the forms by Plato's god, the Demiurge. The Demiurge served as a middleman between the realms of being and becoming. In that the realm of the forms was both impersonal and frozen in changeless immutability, it could not of itself act upon the realm of becoming. As a result of looking upon the forms, the Demiurge's intellect had been filled up with their images. Equipped with this knowledge, he set to work shaping the sensible world of matter into an inferior version of the intelligible world of forms.[19] The order and harmony of this world persists over time through the Demiurge's creation of the "world soul," which serves as an immanent organizing principle for the temporal world.[20]

Aristotle was also able to systematically relate being and becoming, although in a somewhat different manner than his teacher Plato. Aristotle rejected the notion that the formal reality of temporal entities existed in a distant realm above the world of sense. Rather, all forms were embedded within matter, and could only be known and experienced through matter. All existing substances within the world were a union of form and matter (hylomorphism).[21] Form was the inner universal actuality of a given entity, whereas matter was a purely inert potency which individuated form.[22] When matter was united with a form, the form actualized the pure potency of matter into the reality of an individually subsisting entity.[23] In this, the form was not conceptualized as stable and immutable because it was an eternally frozen above time (in the manner of Plato), but rather because it was pure and ceaseless activity (i.e., the ceaseless activity of form communicating itself to matter). To use one possible simile: Aristotle's forms are more like fire, whereas Plato's are more like ice.[24]

This description also had the advantage of explaining how individual entities changed and developed. Aristotle recognized that the informing relationship between form and matter actualized itself over time. For example, an acorn contains within itself the full formal reality of the oak tree. Nevertheless, it is only over time that it comes to fully express itself in the reality of a mature tree. Aristotle therefore stated that all entities move from "potency" to "act" as a form transformed matter towards its full reality.[25] Here he overcomes Parmenides' critique of the notion of the movement from nonbeing to being with the middle term of potency.[26]

According to Aristotle, all entities in the universe are in a constant process of moving from a state of potentiality to actuality. This means that all things are in a state of motion. Motion is the process of a potency undergoing a movement to act.[27] Since motion is something communicated in various ways (Aristotle distinguishes between "natural" and "forced" motions[28]), it calls for a casual chain of movers that must have an ultimate and single source in a first mover. Being pure

potency, matter is inherently incapable of self-motion.[29] For this reason, there must be some ultimate basis for all motion and actuality in an "un-moved mover.[30] As the source of all actuality, such an entity would himself be "pure act" (*actus purus* of the later medieval scholastic tradition) without the admixture of potency.[31] This therefore is how Aristotle comes to think of God. As pure actuality he has no need of and pays no attention to temporal realities and their potentiality.[32] As the source of all motion, he has moved creation from time immemorial and will do so similarly into eternity.[33]

The strength of both Plato and Aristotle was that they were both able to account for and relate being and becoming within their systems in a manner that the pre-Socratics appear not to have been.[34] Their accounts nevertheless suffer from significant weaknesses in several respects. The chief of these is that what both philosophers present what one might call a "tragic" metaphysic. Such a tragic metaphysic, as we will argue below, lends itself in many respects to the same difficulties that accompanied the nihilistic monism and quasi-monism we encountered in the pre-Socatics.

To reiterate and clarify further what we are referring with the phrase "tragic metaphysics," by such a phenomenon we mean an ontology that asserts that the structure of reality is something that starts off well (that is, within its own center) and then degenerates for the worse, much like the literary genre (as it is described in Aristotle's classic definition in the *Poetics*[35]). In that for both Plato and Aristotle being is the fundamental basis of all reality, and becoming is only derivative and inferior, all becoming is necessarily an inauthentic falling away from the authenticity of being. This differs in some significant ways from the nihilistic metaphysic, but ultimately ends in the same place. Unlike the nihilistic metaphysic, the tragic metaphysic asserts that temporal activity can have a meaning. Nevertheless, it only has this meaning insofar as it is aimed at its own negation through a return to (or the fulfillment of) the authenticity of being. For this reason, as in the nihilistic metaphysic, becoming is denigrated and ultimately lacks meaning.

As can be observed from our earlier discussion, this understanding of being and becoming is fundamentally what both Plato and Aristotle in one way or another propose. For Plato, the Good is the unitary, relationless, archetypal ground of all being. The translation of this original changeless ground of being into the world of becoming by the Demiurge can represent nothing but a fall from primal unity and purity to the world of change and multiplicity. Plato himself was quite explicit about this.[36] All becoming was for him either the movement away from perfection or towards perfection. Things become more like the Good or less like it. The Good itself cannot change because this would entail becoming less perfect, which was impossible, or, conversely, more perfect, which was equally impossible in that one cannot improve on perfection.[37]

Such a concept of metaphysics is fundamentally centered. In it, being maintains itself in a state of authenticity when remains within itself, relationless and without the admixture of becoming. Entering into relation, becoming, and otherness, being abrogates its centered authenticity. By implication then, the truth of a being is defined by something internal to its reality and therefore moving out and away from that internal center of identity

means a tragic descent into inauthenticity. In a word, the relational, the other, or the supplemental is a threat to the integrity of being. In a similar vein, Derrida famously suggested (in reference to the discussion of the origin of writing in the *Phaedrus*) that Plato had difficulty with what he referred to as the "supplementary," that is, the different or the other (in Derrida's example, writing makes audible speech inauthentic).[38] Though we cannot examine and validate this claim with the detailed analysis necessary here, on the surface there is much to recommend this interpretation.[39] In light of Plato's understanding of the structure of reality (as described in the texts we have already briefly examined), it is clear that insofar as the temporal realm of becoming is an imperfect copy of the realm of the forms, it is therefore inauthentic by comparison.

In some respects, Aristotle is far less worthy of criticism on this point than is his teacher. For Aristotle, God is *actus purus* and therefore is the most ontologically complete being in that he is the most active. Through this description, Aristotle in some measure overcomes the Platonic view of ultimate reality as inert and frozen. Like Plato's Good, the Aristotelian God does immutably and eternally persist, but he also necessarily acts in the fullest and most real sense possible. What this seems to imply is that being subsists in an eternal act of fully actualized becoming.

This being said, Aristotle still views temporal becoming (i.e., the movement from potency to act) as a form of inauthenticity. In that Aristotle's God is a concentration of pure thinking relationlessness actuality,[40] moving out into the world of particularity, relation, and potency would constitute for him a loss of his pure authenticity. Temporal becoming does have meaning, but this meaning and authenticity comes from the fact that becoming represents advancement from potency to act. The full and true reality of any substance resides in its centered actuality as form. For Aristotle, matter possesses a clear role in individuating substances, which as Adrian Pabst points out, is an improvement over Plato view of matter as organized chaos.[41] Nevertheless, as potency it is the very definition of inauthenticity within the Aristotelian metaphysic.

For this reason the temporal realm is inherently less authentic when compared to God.[42] This is the case in that it is by its very nature less actualized because of its individuation and potency. By implication, temporality is merely an inferior version of ultimate reality, much as it was with Plato. This is the reason why God, as the universal intellect, utterly lacks interest in anything outside of his own pure actuality. Pabst has argued that Aristotle is actually somewhat incoherent on this point in that he cannot explain why particular things exist. In other words, if everything is moving towards God as pure actuality and the ultimate good, then why has form taken a detour (so to speak) into the potency of matter? Ultimately, within Aristotle's system, the question goes unanswered: why are there individual things in the first place?[43]

The tragic metaphysics of Plato and Aristotle also have significant implications for personal and collective eschatology. In early dialogues like the Phaedo, Plato tells us that human beings originated as purely spiritual entities in the realm of the forms.[44] As punishment, these immortal souls had been driven out of the unitary and immutable world of the forms into the world of multiplicity and change. To use Christian theological termi-

nology, for Plato creation is conflated with the Fall. In this sense, the Fall of human origins parallels the Fall of the ontic order as it is described in the Timeaus. Just as the material copies of eternal forms are inferior and alienated versions of eternal spiritual realities, so too the descent of the human soul into the realm of matter represents a form of self-alienation and inferior existence. It is a tragic falling away from an original integrity.

According to Plato's later dialogue, the *Phaedrus*, the solution to the inherent fallenness of temporal human existence was the restoration of the original state. As long as the human soul is enamored with the things of the material world, it is limited and enslaved by them. For this reason, the human soul is dragged from one body to another in a series of reincarnations.[45] Only gradually could the human soul be weaned off its attachment to material things and brought back to the ground of all being through an erotic desire for divine wisdom.[46] Through this movement, Plato tells us, the human soul that has become a philosopher ascends back upon a "winged chariot" to its original enjoyment of the Good.[47]

Though Aristotle was more restrained in his claims about personal eschatology, he nevertheless offered an account with a number of similarities to that of Plato. For Aristotle the mind and its contemplation of actuality is the most authentic aspect of the human person. The contemplative life is indeed superior to the active life.[48] Since forms are incapable of individuation without matter and the soul serves as the form of the body, the death of the material body also means the annulment of one's individuality.[49] Hence, the active intellect lives on and is integrated into the universal divine intellect from whence it originated.[50] Therefore, much like Plato's intellectual ascension of the soul, the active intellect and its contemplation of formal reality survives in the universal intellect.

As is evident, these accounts of personal eschatology are perfectly in keeping with what we referred to earlier as a "centered" nature of being. Insofar as the world of multiplicity and becoming is by definition inauthenticity, human destiny is not the fulfillment of becoming, but rather its reversal. Humanity does not look forward to a "new heaven and new earth" (as in biblical eschatology), but only to the fulfillment of a "myth of the eternal return."[51] Since the fulfillment of human existence is the abrogation of becoming and relationality, the original and hoped for eternal state is not one of fellowship with the diversity of one's fellow creatures, as, for example, in the vision of heaven we find at the end of the book of Revelation. Rather, for Plato the multiplicity of becoming entails a falling away from the original unitary reality of the Good. Redemption means enjoyment of the Good in the splendid isolation of pure contemplation. Similarly, for Aristotle personal eschatology means integration into the unitary contemplation of the universal intellect of the un-moved mover.

In operating with such metaphysical presuppositions, Plato and Aristotle were by no means isolated within their culture. Peter Leithart notes the Greek prejudice in favor of a tragic worldview runs very deep and finds expression in much of later Western culture.[52] For example, Hesiod describes the cycle of world history as one of perpetual degeneration.[53] The first age is one of gold, followed by silver, bronze, and finally, at the end, an age corresponding to the most base metal of them all, that of iron. World history is therefore a tragedy, beginning with best

and declining through the movement of time to the worst.[54]

Leithart also discusses the presence of this tragic theme in Greek literature and then moves on describe its celebration in subsequent Western culture. Among many examples from the Greek and Western canons, one thinks particularly of the theme of the tragic love, a genre that remains popular even in our own day (i.e. the films *Titanic*, *Moulin Rouge*, etc.). Like Hesiod's view of history, the genre of tragic romance presupposes the degeneration of the initial purity of being through becoming. Tragic love is appealing because the movement from the original purity of the relationship to its perceived decline is stopped by the death of one or both of the members the couple. The couple's initial excitement and desire is never blunted, but is rather eternally frozen. They die still enraptured with one another, enjoying the eternal beauty of youth and vivacity.[55] One can also see a similar phenomenon in the Greek idolization of youthful beauty, present originally in the *Kouros* sculptures and continued in the later sculptures of athletes.[56] Again, contemporary culture has preserved something of this in the cult of celebrities who died at an early age (John Lennon, James Dean, Marilyn Monroe, etc.).

All this being said, our evaluation of Plato and Aristotle cannot be entirely negative. In spite of their tragic ontology, there remain aspects of their thought that point ahead to a transcendence of its limitations. As we have already noted, Aristotle's concept of God as pure actuality does give the strong impression of a positive assessment of becoming, even if it is ultimately subverted by other elements of his thought. In spite of the fact that as we have shown Plato's vision of being is one that is fundamentally centered, both Catherine Pickstock[57] and Adrian Pabst[58] are correct to point to ecstatic and non-centered elements. For Plato, all forms do finds their reality external to themselves through their participation in the form of the Good. Similarly, in order to overcome the vicissitudes of earthly existence the human person must move out of him or herself and thereby ecstatically find true authenticity in the vision of the Good. While these positive elements are not ultimately capable of overcoming all difficulties, they do nevertheless point ahead to something better.

The Nicene Creed: The Ecstasis of Being and the Comedy of Creation

In this last section we will explore the ontological content and implications of the Christian creedal tradition as it is represented in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (325/381 AD). As we will argue below, in light of its centered concept of being, the Hellenic philosophical tradition could offer very little beyond a nihilistic or tragic metaphysic. The Christian tradition's doctrine of God as Trinity (as articulated in the first two ecumenical councils), overcame the centered concept of being with an ecstatic one and hence was able to offer a comic, rather than the tragic view of reality. Because what is at the very center of reality is ecstatic being (i.e., the Trinity), the creature is able to overcome its tragic centerness by finding its identity ecstatically in the creative Word of God. This divine Word created the world out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*) and therefore is not bound to the present creation's limitations and possibilities. For this reason, God in his omnipotence may offer the human person a new creation and new identity outside himself. This ecstatic movement is summarized and interpreted in the Creed as the comic

history of the world extending from the initial tragedy of the Fall to the cosmic reversal of the everlasting kingdom.

Nevertheless, many early theologians within the Christian tradition interpreted of the doctrine of God along the lines of the tragic metaphysic that we have already encountered. In reading the Ante-Nicene Fathers, one becomes acutely aware that many of the theologians of the second and third centuries heavily imbibed Platonism's cultural assumptions from in the surrounding environment. This is primarily expressed in their uncritical acceptance of the Platonic denigration of what Derrida called "supplementation." This mainly expresses itself in their understandings of the Trinity, which most historians of dogma have typically described as a form of "subordinationism."[59] Broadly speaking, according to this line of thought, the Father is considered the arche of being and hence the Son and the Holy Spirit are necessarily inferior in that they are derivative and therefore supplemental. It should be noted this Platonic way of conceptualizing the reality of the biblical God was already present in a different, yet similar, form in earlier Hellenistic Jewish theologians, such as Philo of Alexandria.[60]

The history of pre-Nicene speculations about the Trinity is rich and varied. Unfortunately, we cannot go into details as to the various forms that it took, but rather for the purposes of present subject, we will focus on the question of subordinationism and its relationship to the earlier Greek metaphysics.

Two prime examples of the subordinationist tendency in pre-Nicene thought may be found in Justin Martyr (100–165 AD) and Origen's (184/185 – 253/254 AD) doctrines of the Trinity. Beginning with Justin, the martyred Christian philosopher drew heavily upon the conceptual resources present to him in Middle Platonism. The Middle Platonists continued the trajectory of Plato's thought in the *Timaeus* by developing a connection being and becoming through the conceptual mechanism of a mediating principle. Nevertheless in contrast to Plato, many of the Middle Platonists (notably Antiochus of Ascalon[61]) replaced the Demiurge (and so some extent, the world-soul also) with the Stoic Logos as the mediating principle.[62] For Stoic philosophy, the Logos was the world-reason, much as it had been earlier for Heraclitus. In this system, the Logos served as an organizing principle that pervaded the material world.[63] Taking over this concept, many of the Middle Platonists believed the Logos contained within itself a derivative copy of the intelligible reality of the Good. Just as Plato had understood the Demiurge's intellect as containing within itself the images of the forms, the Middle Platonists saw the Logos as a channel through which forms of the intelligible world passed into and organized the sensible world.[64]

In his doctrine of the Trinity, Justin largely takes over this description of the relationship between the Good and the Logos and applies it to his understanding of the Trinity.[65] For the apologist, God the Father assumes the role of the Middle Platonic Good and God the Son becomes the mediating principle of the Logos.[66] In fact, one of Justin's favorite designations for the Son is the "*Logos Spermatikos*."[67] This *Logos Spermatikos* was present and active as the mediator of creation and continues to serve as a mediator between the immutable creator and his mutable creatures.[68] Often Justin directly speaks of the Logos as God,[69] but other times he describes him as "another God and

Lord."[70] The Logos is ontologically subordinate to the Father in that he is a product of the Father's will to beget him.[71] Throughout the history of the human race, the *Logos Spermatikos* has enlightened the great philosophers of ancient Greece (Socrates directly is mentioned among others) through his presence within them.[72] Nevertheless, he was only fully and personally incarnate in Jesus, the Jewish Messiah. For this reason, Christ surpasses all of his predecessors as the embodiment of reason and wisdom.[73] The Holy Spirit is only mentioned in passing and is left largely undeveloped by Justin.

Origen's description drew on similar strains of thought within the Hellenistic environment. The major difference between Origen and many of the other Ante-Nicene Fathers is that for him the Logos was "eternally begotten" of the Father.[74] By contrast, most Ante-Nicene Fathers held that the Logos had existed inner word in the mind of the Father prior to being spoken-forth at the time of creation. The rationale for Origen's view was that as an eternal and immutable being, the Father could never have been without his wisdom. In that the Son was the wisdom of the Father, it stood to reason that he had been eternally begotten of the Father.[75] Nevertheless, this did not mean that Origen was less prone to subordinationism in his treatment of the Son.[76] According to his system, the Son was ontologically inferior to the Father and, in a sense, as derivative aspect of the Father's being.[77] That is to say, Origen implicitly understood the Son as an aspect of the Father's reality, namely his wisdom. Likewise, the Spirit was inferior to the Son.[78] The Godhead is therefore a hierarchy of various degrees of being, with the Father at the top as the most ontologically real and complete and the Spirit at the bottom as the least.[79]

Both the Son and the Spirit served as mediating principles between the ineffable Father and the world of created spirits. Origen held that if the Father was eternal and immutable in all the facets of his reality, logically he must eternally and immutably be the creator as well. Therefore, from eternity he created a world of finite spirits.[80] This world of spirits stands at a still lesser degree in the hierarchy of being than does the Holy Spirit. At some point in the past, sin originated in this world of spirits.[81] As can easily be observed, this directly parallels Plato's fall of human spirits from the realm of the forms.[82] Having entered into different levels of apostasy and therefore guilt, these spirits had come to make up the hierarchical structure of the material world. The material world was created by Father through the Son and the Spirit as a kind of prison house for them. The spirits that had sinned in lesser degrees became angels or heavenly bodies; spirits that had sinned in greater degrees became plants, animals, humans, and demons.[83]

A single created spirit, the soul of the human Jesus, did not fall into sin. Instead, through the contemplation of divine wisdom he was united in the utmost degree with the Logos and became a single subject with him.[84] In order to redeem humanity, he became incarnate in the material world. By dying on the cross, he paid a ransom to the Devil and thereby released the human race from his bondage.[85] As a result, all creatures will eventually return to the way of virtue and enter again into their original state.[86] Here again Origen's eschatology mirrors almost directly Plato's myth of the eternal return.

As can be observed in these Ante-Nicene descriptions of the Trinity, the

tragic account of being and becoming is conspicuously present. Becoming, is an inferior derivative reality, and represents a falling away from the fullness of being. For this reason, in identifying God the Father as being and therefore arche of the whole ontic order, the early Christian apologists and theologians were bound to understand the Son and the Spirit as inferior expressions of divine reality. In their supplementarity and otherness they necessarily represented less authentic versions of the Father's unitary, centered reality. In this regard, Origen is probably the most consistent of the Ante-Nicene Fathers in his superimposition of the Platonic worldview onto the biblical. As we observed above, not only are the Son and Spirit inferior to the Father, but creation itself is conflated with the Fall and eschatology must therefore be consistent with the myth of the eternal return that we found earlier in Plato.

Moving ahead to the Arian controversy of the early fourth century, it should be noted that although it is still hotly debated what the intellectual sources of the Arianism were,[87] it is not unreasonable to suggest that one may discern a similar logic in their teaching regarding the Godhead that we found in many of the Ante-Nicene Fathers. Indeed, what appears to be the case is that the Arians took the earlier tradition's subordinationism to the extreme and worked it out with an absolute consistency. Arius' teaching on divine reality and its relationship to the mutable world was clear: Divine reality must be unitary (the Father was consistently described by the Arians as the supreme "monad") and immutable.[88] As unitary and immutable, the monadic Father is a supremely centered being who cannot move out from beyond himself into a real and meaningful relationship with the world of becoming. For this reason, he must have a go-between or mediating principle to allow him to interact with the world of becoming.[89] Hence, the Son cannot really be God (not even in the inferior sense of the subordinationists), but rather is a mere creature brought into being order to serve the purpose of a mediating principle. In this scheme, the Holy Spirit is also a creature and serves a same purpose for the Son as the Son does for the Father.

Though we cannot go into detail regarding historical background of the Nicene decision, there are a number of ontological implications that can be drawn from the written text of the Creed as it was originally formulated by the council in 325 and subsequently modified and elaborated at Constantinople in 381. First, from the perspective of the Creed, otherness, derivativeness, and supplementarity do not mean inferiority and inauthenticity. As derivative and supplemental, the Son is not inferior to the Father, but is rather co-equal and co-eternal with him. He is "God of God, light of light, true God of true God."[90] Here, the tragic metaphysic's insistence on the sole authenticity of being over becoming is rejected. The derivative, the other, and the supplementary are not a falling away authenticity, but are in themselves authentic.[91]

Beyond this, if we follow Nicaea creed (and its subsequent interpreters), we will recognize that God's being is immutable not because it is frozen and relationless, but rather because it is fully actualized in an eternal event of becoming.[92] There are several aspects of this that should be recognized. First, Post-Nicene Christian theology has historically understood the immutability of the divine essence as something energetic, rather than static. In asserting the dynamism of the divine

nature, the Nicene Fathers and their immediate interpreters did not reject the idea of divine immutability, as many contemporary philosophers and theologians have. Though the idea has frequently been criticized as Platonic and foreign to Christianity, there are many statements in Scripture to support the claim of the Nicene Fathers and the mainstream classical Christian tradition ("I the Lord do not change" Mal 3:6, etc.).[93] God's immutability as described by Nicaea is more like Aristotle's energetic pure actuality, than Plato's frozen Good. Such a description works well with the biblical descriptions of God as "living and active" (Heb 4:12) and a "consuming fire" (Deut 4:24). As Paul Hinlicky points out, for the Cappadocians and other defenders of Nicaea, the emphasis always lay on the dynamism, energy, and living quality of the divine essence.[94] In the West, Thomas Aquinas and other Latin scholastic theologians would hit on a similar theme by adapting Aristotle's metaphysics in their description of God as *purus actus*.[95]

Therefore, God's being is located in his eternal and (somewhat paradoxically) immutable event of becoming. This is true not of only the divine essence (as described energetically in differing ways by both the Cappadocians and Aquinas), but also of Nicaea's main point of interest, God's eternal life as Trinity. The Son's reality as Son subsists in an eternal and immutable event of becoming ("begotten from the Father before all ages"[96]). Therefore the relationship between the Father and Son is not immutable because it is somehow eternally frozen, but rather because the Father is continuously and eternally generating the Son.

Similarly, the Second Ecumenical Council at Constantinople (381 AD) would later assert that the Spirit possesses an eternal reality in "proceeding" from the Father. Much like the Son, the Spirit's reality subsists in the eternal event of procession, not in a static relationship actualized once-upon-a-time. Similar to the Son as well, this becoming of procession does not make him inferior to the Father in any way. He is precisely that which the Father is. Just as the Father is the "maker of heaven and earth," the Spirit is "the holy, the lordly and life-giving one, proceeding forth from the Father, co-worshipped and co-glorified with the Father and the Son."[97] In this, the principles of being and becoming are eternally reconciled in God's life as Trinity.[98]

Hence, God's being subsists in and through an eternal event of self-donation. The centered concept of being we discovered earlier in tragic metaphysics presupposed that God needs to hold onto and conserve himself, lest he lose himself in the relationality and multiplicity of becoming. The Nicene Christian account of the divine being maintains that God is so infinite and boundless in his sufficiency that he can completely give himself away and yet infinitely retain himself. The Father eternally possesses all things and therefore is capable of infinitely giving himself away in the begetting of the Son. The Son possesses all things, and therefore he, with the Father (at least in the western/Augustinian account) may return the fullness of their being infinitely in the mutual love of the Holy Spirit.[99]

Therefore, what Nicaea's description of the Trinity implies is what might be called an ecstatic, rather than centered ontology. By this we mean that according to Nicaea's description, the Trinitarian persons live external to themselves in and through the other persons. The Son and the Spirit find themselves in their eternal relationship of begetting and procession

with the Father. Their reality as divine persons is not something centered, but externalized in their eternal subsisting relations with the Father. Likewise, as Athanasius observed, the Father's identity as Father is not something found within himself. He is not Arius' supreme and centered "monad," defined by his eternal relationlessness. Rather, to be the Father means to have a Son and so the Father's eternal identity is something to be found external to his own person in the person of the Son.[100] The same implication could be drawn regarding the identity of the Spirit, who in Augustine's later account, subsists in the mutual love of the Father and the Son. Not only does the Holy Spirit ecstatically find his personhood in the relationship between the Father and the Son, but, by implication, the Father and the Son only find their relationship of love outside of themselves in the person of the Spirit.

In the structure of the Creed, the description of God's ecstatic existence is not limited to the teaching regarding the Trinitarian relations, but is also included in its lengthy description of the Incarnation in the second article. Being an eternal event of unity in otherness, God may, without self-alienation, move beyond himself and enter into the existence of the other (i.e., the life of his creatures). By becoming incarnate, the infinite God reveals his true all surpassing nature by communicating himself to the finite by becoming the historical person of the human Jesus. He may even go beyond this and enter into the power of nothingness and death itself, while remaining unconquered by it: "For us humans and for our salvation he came down and became incarnate, became human, suffered and rose up on the third day."[101] As the supremely ecstatic self-donating God, he reveals in time that which he is in eternity by donating the fullness of his being to humanity.

This ecstatic rather than centered account of the divine being has implications for creaturely existence as well. God's ecstatic existence gives rise to the possibility of a comic, rather than tragic metaphysics.[102] In the structure of the Creed, this is particularly expressed by the first article's teaching regarding creation *ex nihilo* and the third article's teaching regarding the eternal kingdom. It should of course be mentioned in passing that prior to Nicaea, the first article in particular was developed by Christian thinkers in opposition to the tragic metaphysics of Gnosticism, even if we do not have the space to explore this point in detail.[103]

In that God eternally possesses and affirms otherness and becoming within himself, his act of creation *ex nihilo* is not a falling away from his original unity of being into the oblivion of becoming. Rather, it is according to the words of the Genesis "very good." For this reason, creation is not tragic, but comic. The act of creation is movement from non-existence to existence and therefore is in its essence comic rather than tragic. It begins badly (not existing) and ends well (coming into being).[104]

Moreover, in that God has created the universe *ex nihilo* through his Word, the creature's existence is not something self-contained, but is rather external to itself in God's address. Relatedness to the other therefore does not mean the loss of one's self, but rather means authentic existence in the purest sense. In fact, the existence of the other is constitutive of one's being. Just as the Father, Son, and Spirit live through the existence of each other, so creation lives through its relatedness to the Word of God. Therefore, within the

classical Christian tradition, the very definition of sin is the creature's abandon of ecstatic existence in favor of what Augustine would later describe as being "curved in on one's self" (*incurvatus in se*).[105]

For this reason also, redemption is the reassertion and fulfillment of the ecstatic existence of the creature. In light of the Fall into sin, the Creed describes God bringing about a new comic movement from sin and death to the eternal kingdom. This is not a myth of eternal return (i.e., a pure restoration), but the "new heaven and new earth" (Isa 65:17, Rev.21:1). As one who creates from nothing, the Creed affirms that God may bring about a new creation and new possibilities for the creature. He is not limited to the rearrangement of the Ur-stuff of the original creation and its possibilities. Such a limitation is implicit in the Greek's cyclical view of history (Hesiod) and the myth of return (Plato). Creation *ex nihilo* and an ecstatic account of being therefore allows for a comic ontology, in that God may offer a genuinely new movement from worse to better and not merely a reversal of the tragic movement of degeneration through becoming.

By living through a new possibility external to itself, the creature does not lose itself by moving out from its own center. On the contrary, the creature's reality is already constituted by something to be found external to itself in the Word of God. For this reason, a new form of ecstatic existence (narrated by that same Word) does not constitute self-alienation, but rather the fulfillment of one's true reality by entering into a proper fulfillment of one's relationship to God's gracious address. The unity of the Triune God's gracious narration of old and new creation can be found in the second article of the Creed that deals with Christ's life, death, and resurrection. Christ unites the old and new creations within himself. He does this first by taking upon himself the flesh of the original humanity and therefore the substance of the old creation. By the power of his resurrection, he actualizes the new creation, thereby proleptically anticipating the final human destiny.[106] For this reason, the creature finds its being outside of itself in Christ: "Your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3).

Conclusion

We cannot of course according to the canons of a neutral universal rationality demonstrate that the comic paradigm of Christianity is better than the Hellenic metaphysics which it fulfilled and transcended. What we can and will suggest though, is that the Christian metaphysical commitments as explicated and implied in the Nicaea Creed do offer an intellectually coherent alternative to the paradigms offered by the ancient Greeks, as well as contemporary philosophical accounts of ontology. Hopefully this essay may represent something of a starting point for a dialogue that recognizes this fact, and spurs on discussion regarding the possibilities for the appropriation of Christian Trinitarianism in the sphere of philosophical ontology.

Notes

1. My use of the distinction between "tragic" and "comic" metaphysic derives from Peter Leithart, *Deep Comedy: The Trinity, Tragedy, and Hope in Western Literature* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2006). I must thank Dr. Leithart in that his book directed me to much of the research that led to the writing of this article.

2. See the following recent scholarship on the Milesians in the following select works: Keimpe Algra, "The Beginnings of Cosmology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy*, ed. A. A. Long (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 45-65; Jonathan Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (New York: Routledge, 1983), 38-56; William K. Gutherie, *History of Greek Philosophy*, 6 vols. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1962-1981), 1:39-145; Edward Hussey, *The Presocratics* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing,1995); G. S. Kirk, E. Raven, and M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 76-213; Richard McKirahan, *Philosophy Before Socrates: An Introduction with Texts and Commentary* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2011), 18-78; Catherine Osborne, *Presocratic Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 29-50; James Warren, *Presocratics: Natural Philosophers before Socrates* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 23-40; Stephen White, "Milesian Measures: Time, Space, and Matter," in *The Oxford Handbook of Pre-Socratics Philosophy*, ed. Patricia Curd and Daniel Graham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 89-133.

3. Gutherie, *History of Greek Philosophy*, 1:39-71; Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 76-99; McKirahan, *Philosophy Before Socrates*, 21-31.

4. Gutherie, *History of Greek Philosophy*, 1:115-45; Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 143-62; McKirahan, *Philosophy Before Socrates*, 48-58.

5. Charles Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1994); idem, "Anaximander's Fragment: The Universe Governed by Law," in *The Pre-Socratics: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Alexander Mourelatos (New York: Anchor Press, 1974), 99-118; Gutherie, *History of Greek Philosophy*, 1:72-114; Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 100-42; McKirahan, *Philosophy Before Socrates*, 32-47.

6. See Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 342-77; Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 402-33; C.C.W. Taylor, trans., *The Atomists: Leucippus and Democritus: Fragments* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010). Also see the following pieces of secondary literature: Daniel Graham, "Leucippus' Atomism," in Curd and Graham, *Oxford Handbook of Pre-Socratics Philosophy*, 333-52; Gutherie, *History of Greek Philosophy*, 2:382-507; David Sedley, "Atomism's Eleatic Roots," in Curd and Graham, *Oxford Handbook of Pre-Socratics Philosophy*, 305-33; C.C.W. Taylor, "The Atomists," 181-204; Warren, *Presocratics*, 153-75.

7. See fragments in A. H. Coxon, *The Fragments of Parmenides: A Critical Text with Introduction, Translation, the Ancient Tesimonia, and a Commentary* (Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1986), 41-94. For secondary discussion of his philosophy, see the following: Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 155-75; Nestor-Luis Cordero, *By Being, It Is: The Thesis of Parmenides* (Los Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2004); Patricia Curd, *The Legacy of Parmenides: Eleatic Monism and Later Presocratic Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); Montgomery Furth, "Elements of Eleatic Ontology," in Mourelatos, *The Pre-Socratics*, 241-70; Gutherie, *History of Greek Philosophy*, 2:1-79; Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 402-33; Richard McKirahan , "Signs and Arguments in Parmenides, B8," in Curd and Graham, *The Legacy of Parmenides*, 189-229; idem, *Philosophy Before Socrates*, 145-73; Alexander Mourelatos, "The Deceptive Words of Parmenides' "Doxa," in Mourelatos, *The Pre-Socratics*, 312-52; G. E. L. Owen, "Plato and Parmenides on the Timeless Present," in Mourelatos, *The Pre-Socratics*, 271-92; John Palmer, *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Karl Reinhardt, "The Relation between the Two Parts of Parmenides' Poem," in Mourelatos, *The Pre-Socratics*, 293-311; David Sedley, "Parmenides and Melissus," in Long, *The Presocratic Philosophers,* 113-33; Warren, *Presocratics*, 153-74.

8. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 982b.24-984a.22 in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, 2 vols., ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 2:1555-7. Also see discussion in Harold Cherniss, *Aristotle's Criticism of Presocratic Philosophy* (New York: Octagon Books, inc., 1964), 218-88.

9. Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 411a.7; Barnes, *The Complete Works* 1:655.

10. Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods*, 1.10 in *The Nature of the Gods*, trans. Thomas Francklin (London: William Pickering, 1829), 17. Cicero indicates that the other Milesians taught that either the gods were mortal and therefore material in some sense, or that they identified them with a particular element.

11. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 5 vols., trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983-98), 1:38-9. Plato is implicitly praised for recognizing this truth. Also see 2:268. He writes: "Every worldly dramatic production must take its bearings from, and be judged by, the ideal nature of this coincidence of freedom and obedience or of self-being and consciously acknowledged dependence."

12. Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 1:137-8.

13. Plato, *Phaedo*, 109a-111c in *Plato: The Complete Works*, ed. John Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 93-5. Also see Plato, *Phaedrus*, 247c; Cooper, *Complete Works*, 525. For various interpretation of Plato's doctrine of the form and a critical assessment of them, see the following recent publications: R. M.

Dancy, *Plato's Introduction of Forms* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Francis Grabowski, *Plato, Metaphysics and the Forms* (London: Continuum, 2008); William Welton, ed. *Plato's Forms: Varieties of Interpretation* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2002).

14. See Plato, *Cratylus*, 389-390, 439; Cooper, *Complete Works*, 107-9. Also see Plato, *Symposium*, 210-211; Cooper, *Complete Works*, 492-494. The latter deals with the form of beauty.

15. See triangle example in Gail Fine, *The Oxford Handbook of Plato* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 220.

16. Plato, *The Republic*, 508c-509a; Cooper, *Complete Works*, 1128-9. See recent study of Plato's concept of the Good in Rosemary Desjardins, *Plato and the Good: Illuminating the Darkling Vision* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

17. Plato, *The Republic*, 507b-509c; Cooper, *Complete Works*, 1127-30.

18. Plato, *Timaeus*, 28-29; Cooper, *Complete Works*, 1234-6. Also see discussion in Sarah Broadie, *Nature and Divinity in Plato's Timaeus* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 243-77; Warman Welliver, *Character, Plot and Thought in Plato's Timaeus-Critias* (Leiden: Brill, 1977).

19. Plato, *Timaeus*, 28a-29a; Cooper, *Complete Works*, 1234-5.

20. Plato, *Timaeus*, 34b-37; Cooper, *Complete Works*, 1238-1241.

21. Aristotle, *Physics*, 194a.34-194b.29; Barnes, *Complete Works*, 1:331-2. See explanation in David Bostock, *Space, Time, Matter, And Form: Essays on Aristotle's Physics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Jeremy Kirby, *Aristotle's Metaphysics: Form, Matter, and Identity* (London: Continuum, 2008), 67-131; Frank Lewis and Robert Bolton, ed., *Form, Matter, and Mixture in Aristotle* (Malden, Ma: Blackwell Publishers, 1996); Christopher Shields, *The Oxford Handbook of Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 72-4.

22. Aristotle, *Physics*, 194b.27-29; Barnes, *Complete Works*, 1:332. Also see comment in Aristotle *On the Soul*, 412a.9; Barnes, *Complete Works*, 1:656.

23. Aristotle, *Physics*, 193a.32-193b.12; Barnes, *Complete Works*, 1:330.

24. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1050b.34-1051a.2; Barnes, *Complete Works*, 2:1659-60. Aristotle makes the argument that Plato's forms are causally meaningless because of their static nature.

25. Aristotle, *Physics*, 193a.10-193b.21; Barnes, *Complete Works*, 1:329-30. See Zev Bechler, *Aristotle's Theory of Actuality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 5-27; Charlotte Witt, *Ways of Being: Potentiality and Actuality in Aristotle's Metaphysics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 38-58, 75-96.

26. Giovanni Reale, *A History of Ancient Philosophy: Plato and Aristotle*, trans. John Catan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 285.

27. Aristotle, *Physics*, 201a.10-12; Barnes, *Complete Works*, 1:343.

28. Aristotle, *Physics*, 254b.8–256.a.3; Barnes, *Complete Works*, 1:425-7. See discussion in Bechler, *Aristotle's Theory of Actuality* 28-47.

29. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1071b.30; Barnes, *Complete Works*, 2:1693.

30. Aristotle, *Physics*, 258b.10-159a.19; Barnes, *Complete Works* 1:432-3. See discussion in Adrian Pabst, *Metaphysics: The Creation of Hierarchy* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2012), 9-12; Theodore Scaltsas, *Substances and Universals in Aristotle's Metaphysics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 122-5; Jiyuan Yu, *The Structure of Being in Aristotle's Metaphysics* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2003), 188-200.

31. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1072b.12-29; Barnes, *Complete Works*, 2:1693.

32. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1074b. 15-1075a.10; Barnes, *Complete Works*, 2:1698-1699.

33. Aristotle, *Physics*, 259b.22-260a.19; Barnes, *Complete Works*, 1:434.

34. See Pabst, *Metaphysics*, 2. Pabsts summarizes the strengths of Plato and Aristotle over against the pre-Socratics well: "Prior to Aristotle, Plato had already outlined a metaphysical of relationality and participation that avoids an ontological dualism, pluralism, or atomism without lapsing into monism. The Platonist distinction of the world of things and the world of ideas is qualified by the higher unity of the Good and the participation of immanent particulars in transcendent universal forms. As the form of all forms, the Good is best understood as a relational absolute that ordered the other universals. Matter-form compounds are best described as relational beings that are endowed with existence and essence by the Good. Moreover, against the pre-Socratic poets and philosophers Aristotle followed Plato's cosmological argument in favor of the existence of a single immaterial first cause: just as Plato's good is the Form of all forms that orders everything in the world of things ..., so Aristotle's Prime Mover is the final end of all substances in the sublunary world."

35. Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1453a.12-15; Barnes, *Complete Works*, 2:2325. "The perfect plot [of a tragedy], accordingly, must have a single, and not (as some tell us) a double issue; the change in the subject's fortunes must be not from bad fortune to good, but on the contrary from good to bad . . ."

36. Plato, *The Republic*, 380e-383c; Cooper, *Complete Works*, 1019-22.

37. Plato, *The Republic*, 380e-383c; Cooper, *Complete Works*, 1019-22.

38. See Jacques Derrida, *On Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976); idem, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1978); idem, "Plato's Pharmacy," in *Disseminations*, trans. Barbara Johnson (London: Athlone Press, 1981), 63-171.

39. For an alternative reading of Plato to that of Derrida, see Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 20-3.

40. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1074b. 15-1075a.10; Barnes, *Complete Works*, 2:1698-1699.

41. Pabst, *Metaphysics*, 53.

42. Pabst, *Metaphysics*, 3.

43. Pabst, *Metaphysics*, 38.

44. Plato, *Phaedo*, 73–80; Cooper, *Complete Works*, 63-71.

45. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 248–250; Cooper, *Complete Works*, 526-8.

46. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 249d-257b; Cooper, *Complete Works*, 527-33.

47. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 246a - 254e; Cooper, *Complete Works*, 524-32.

48. Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1176-1177; Barnes, *Complete Works*, 2:1858-1861.

49. Aristotle. *On the Soul*, 413a.2-7; Barnes, *Complete Works*, 1:657.

50. Aristotle. *On the Soul*, 430a.24-25; Barnes, *Complete Works*, 1:684.

51. See Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Cosmos and History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971). We might say that for Plato Eliade's mythic *Urzeit* is replaced by humanity's pre-temporal existence. The point is that the work of philosophy and that of primitive ritual share the same goal: return to the original time and its purity. Historic time for both represent an inauthentic falling away.

52. Leithart, *Deep Comedy*, 3-36.

53. Ibid., 46. ". . . for Hesiod, later was necessarily worse; for Platonists and Neoplatonists, everything derives from the One or the forms is necessarily decadent. Platonism is Hesiod's view of history turned vertically into a chain of being; Hesiod is Plato made horizontal."

54. Leithart, *Deep Comedy*, 3-6. Also see Hesiod, *Works and Days*, trans. M. L. West (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1988), 40-3.

55. Leithart, *Deep Comedy*, 54-6. Leithart describes this phenomena as the "eroticization of death."

56. See brief discussion in Jeffrey M. Hurwit, *The Art and Culture of Early Greece*, *1100-480 B.C.* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 179-202. It should of course be remembered that Kouros sculptures were markers of graves.

57. Pickstock, *After Writing*, 27-32.

58. Pabst, *Metaphysics*, 33.

59. R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318-38*1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), xix. ". . . with the exception of Athanasius, virtually every theologian, East and West, accepted some form of subordianationism at least up to the year 355; subordinationism might indeed, until the denouement of the controversy, have been described as accepted orthodoxy." Though we cannot argue about this point at length, it is in some respect an overstatement. Nevertheless, it is correct that belief in subordinationism was very widespread in the Ante-Nicene period.

60. See discussion in Ronald Cox, *By the Same Word: Creation and Salvation in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2007), 87-141; Peder Borgen, "Philos of Alexandria," in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus*, ed. Michael Stone (Minneapolis and Assen: Fortress and Van Gorcum Press, 1984), 264-6.

61. Borgen, "Philos of Alexandria," 264; Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Greek Philosophers of the Hellenistic Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 140 ff.

62. David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 189-90.

63. It should be noted that the Logos has not only many similarities with the Platonic Demiurge, but also the world-soul. See Plato, *Timaeus*, 34-36; Cooper, *Complete Works*, 1238-40.

64. See description and discussion in Cox, 28-55; John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220 (Syracuse: Cornell University Press, 1996), 200-2.

65. See Carl Andersen, "Justin und der Mittlere Platonismus," *Zeitschriftjur die NeutestamentlicheWissenschaft* 44, (1952): 157-95; Dawson, *Allegorical Readers*, 190-3.

66. Dillion, *The Middle Platonists*, 134; William J. Hill, *The Three-Personed God: The Trinity As a Mystery of Salvation* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1988), 31-2.

67. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 61 in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10 vols., ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 1:227-8; Justin Martyr, *The First Apology*, 46; ANF, 1:178. Here after "Ante-Nicene Fathers" will be cited as "ANF."

68. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 61; ANF, 1:227.

69. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 61; ANF, 1:227.

For He can be called by all those names, since He ministers to the Father's will, and since He was begotten of the Father by an act of will; just as we see happening among ourselves: for when we give out some word, we beget the word; yet not by abscission, so as to lessen the word [which remains] in us, when we give it out: and just as we see also happening in the case of a fire, which is not lessened when it has kindled [another], but remains the same; and that which has been kindled by it likewise appears to exist by itself, not diminishing that from

which it was kindled. The Word of Wisdom, who is Himself this God begotten of the Father of all things, and Word, and Wisdom, and Power, and the Glory of the Begetter.

70. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 56; ANF, 1:223. Also see Justin Martyr, *The Second Apology*, 13; ANF, 1:193. "For next to God, we worship and love the Logos who is out of the unbegotten and ineffable God . . ."

71. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 61; ANF, 1:227. ". . .He ministers to the Father's will, and since He was begotten of the Father by an act of will . . ."

72. Justin Martyr, *The First Apology*, 46; ANF, 1:178.

73. Justin Martyr, *The First Apology*, 46; ANF, 1:178.

74. Origen, *On First Principles*, 1.2:1-3, in *Origen: On First Principles*, trans. G. W. Butterworth (Glouceter, Mass: Peter Smith, 1973), 15-7.

75. Origen, *On First Principles*, 1.2:2; Butterworth, *Origen*, 15-6.

76. The characterization of J. W. Trigg, *Origen* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 23. Also see the study J. Nigel Rowe, *Origen's Doctrine of Subordination: A Study in Origen's Christology* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987).

77. Origen, *On First Principles*, 1.2:13; Butterworth, *Origen*, 27-8.

78. Origen, *On First Principles*, 1.3:5; Butterworth, *Origen*, 33-5. Here Origen claims that although the Father and the Son are active in all creatures, the Spirit is inferior and therefore possesses a smaller sphere of activity in the believers.

79. See full discussion of Origen's doctrine of the Trinity in Trigg, *Origen*, 95-102.

80. Origen, *On First Principles*, 1.4:4-5; Butterworth, *Origen*, 42-3. See discussion in Trigg, *Origen*, 103-8.

81. Origen, *On First Principles*, 1. 8:1; Butterworth, *Origen*, 67-8.

82. See the parallel drawn here: Henri Crouzel, *Origen* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Publishers, 2000, 78.

83. Origen, *On First Principles*, 1.5-8; Butterworth, *Origen*, 45-75.

84. Origen, *On First Principles*, 2.6:1-3; Butterworth, *Origen*, 108-111.

85. Origen, *Commentary on Matthew*, 13:9; ANF, 9:480-1. See discussion in Ronald Heine, *Origen: Scholarship in the Service of the Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 234-6; Trigg, 108-15.

86. *On First Principles*, 1.7:5; Butterworth, Origen, 63-5. See discussion in Trigg, *Origen*,115-20.

87. See the following recent treatments: Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Robert Gregg, *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981); R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318-381* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic); Maurice Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism through the Centuries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002).

88. John Behr, *The Nicene Faith*, vol. 2 (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 138; Gregg, *Early Arianism*, 87-88; Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1988), 225 ff ; Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 86-7; Gregory Riley, *The River of God: A New History of Christian Origins* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001), 73.

89. G.C. Stead, "The Platonism of Arius," *Journal of Theological Studies* 15 (1964): 16-31. Though as we have noted this is a hotly debated question, Stead argues forcefully for a Platonic connection. Also see comments in Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 223-4.

90. Norman Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2 vols. (London and Washington, D. C.: Sheed & Ward and Georgetown University Press, 1990), 1:5.

91. See similar argument in Peter Leithart, "Supplementary at the Origin: Trinity, Eschatology, and History," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 6, no. 4 (2004): 369-86. Also see John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), 311. Milbank writes in his critique of Derrida and presentation of the Christian alternative: ". . . the Son who is always given with the Father is a supplement at the origin; the Spirit who is always given with the Father and the Son is the infinite necessity of deferral."

92. Eberhard Jüngel, *The Doctrine of the Trinity: God's Being in Becoming* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1976). The phrase of "God's Being is in Becoming" is apt here. Nevertheless, the classical Christian tradition understands this differently than Jüngel with his Hegelian-Barthian sensibilities. As an eternally fully actualized becoming, God does not become himself through his relatedness to history.

93. Unless indicated otherwise, all quotations come from the English Standard Version (ESV).

94. Paul Hinlicky, *Divine Complexity: The Rise of Creedal Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 201-36.

95. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a. q. 3, art. 1, in The Summa Theologiae, Black Friars Edition, 60 vols. (New York and London: McGraw-Hill, 1964-),2:21-3.

96. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1:24. This phrase was actually an addition by the First Council of Constantinople.

97. Ibid.

98. Likewise, (though this is a different argument) the principles of the one and the many are also reconciled. See Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1955), 25-6.

99. Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 15.17; NPNFa, 3:215. "And the Holy Spirit, according to the Holy Scriptures, is neither of the Father alone, nor of the Son alone, but of both; and so intimates to us a mutual love, wherewith the Father and the Son reciprocally love one another."

100. Athanasius, *Against the Arians*, 1.4.12; NPNFb, 4:313. ". . . the word 'Father' is indicative of the Son."

101. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1:5.

102. Leithart, *Deep Comedy*, 99-101. Leithart distinguishes between 'Christian' and 'Classical' comedy. The former is the movement from worse to better, whereas the latter deals primarily with the foolishness of persons of lesser virtue. For example of the latter, see Aristotle, Poetics, 1449a.31-5; Barnes, *Complete Works*, 2:2319.

103. See brief discussion in Alister McGrath, *The Science of God* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2004), 50.

104. The Jewish author George Steiner considers the Christian worldview fundamentally anti-tragic to the point of suggesting that "Christian tragedy" is a contradiction in terms. See George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), 331.

105. Indeed, Augustine divides the human race between those who are oriented towards God and the neighbor and those who are oriented towards themselves. See Augustine, *The City of God*, 14.28; NPNFa, 2:282. "Accordingly, two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self."

106. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus: God and Man*, trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe (Louisville: Westminster and John Knox Press, 1977), 157.