

A Christian Approach to the Philosophy of Time

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Views in the philosophy of time are traditionally categorized into presentism, which regards only the present as real, and eternalism, which assigns reality equally to the past, present, and future. An intermediate view (that of the so-called “growing block universe”) assigns reality to the past and present, but not the future. I will not attempt to review here the various arguments for and against each of these views. The important point for my purposes is the sharply dichotomous terms in which they are presented: they invite us to assign reality *either* to the present alone, *or* to the entirety of time without distinction, *or* to some subdivision thereof.

There is a similar dichotomous character to contemporary discussions of the relationship between God and time. For classical theists, God does not so much act at different times as perform—or, perhaps better, constitute—a single eternal act that has many temporal manifestations. Likewise there is no succession in God’s knowledge, since all that occurs within time is eternally and unchangingly present to the divine mind. By contrast, process theologians and open theists maintain that God exists temporally and grows in knowledge. Here too there is also an intermediate view, namely that God exists eternally and timelessly prior to creation, but becomes temporal when He creates.

The common feature linking these controversies is the difficulty shared by participants on all sides in conceiving how time and eternity could be equally real. In the philosophy of time, this difficulty manifests itself as a tendency to believe either in the full reality of temporal succession, such that only the present is truly real, or in the full reality of eternity, such that our experience of temporal succession is merely a subjective epiphenomenon. In the philosophy of religion, there is a parallel tendency to believe either in the full reality of time—so that God, to be worthy of the name, must be temporal—or in the full reality of eternity, with time being merely a derivative appendage. In both cases we seem to be faced with the necessity of choosing

either time or eternity as the paradigm of reality. Such a choice inevitably renders the status of the other problematic.

My aim in this paper is to suggest a radically different way of thinking about time and eternity. It is drawn from the Greek Church Fathers. That I have turned to the *Greek* Fathers is no accident, for I believe that the source of the polarization I have mentioned lies in the Latin theological tradition. Augustine, Boethius, and those who followed them hold two views which together make a dichotomous separation between time and eternity inevitable. One is that eternity in the strict sense is solely an attribute of God; the other is that time (or temporal succession) is solely an attribute of creatures. Time and eternity thus stand as two sharply different modes of being which obtain of two sharply different kinds of entity. Each could conceivably exist without the other, for there is no intrinsic, genetic relationship between them.

This sharp division is itself a consequence of one of the most fundamental tenets of the Latin theological tradition, the doctrine of divine simplicity. Given divine simplicity as the Latin tradition understands it, God is identical with His own eternity, as He is identical with all of His essential attributes. This means that, as Augustine remarks, “eternity is the very substance of God.”¹ Plainly since eternity is the divine substance, it cannot be shared by creatures.²

It is important to recognize that in the Christian East neither Augustine nor Boethius had any appreciable influence.³ Accordingly one might expect to find there a somewhat different approach to the relationship of time and eternity. In order to explicate this alternative tradition I shall begin with St. Athanasius, the fourth-century Church Father who played a decisive role in defeating the heresy of Arianism. The Arian slogan, “there was when the Son was not,” was taken by the orthodox as implying the existence of a temporal interval (*διάστημα*) during which the Father had not yet begotten the Son.⁴ St. Athanasius vigorously attacks this allegedly Arian view. He observes that in Scripture Christ is the maker of all the ages (*αἰώνες*), and so must be before *any* sort of interval whatsoever:

The words addressed to the Son in the hundred and forty-fourth Psalm, “Thy kingdom is a kingdom of all ages,” forbid anyone to imagine any interval (*διάστημα*) in which the Word did not exist. For if every interval in the ages is measured, and of all the ages the Word is King and Maker (Heb. 1:2, 11:3), therefore, whereas no interval at all exists

prior to Him, it would be madness to say, “There was once when the Everlasting was not.”⁵

Creatures, he says, “have a beginning of existence connected with an interval” (*διαστηματικὴν ἀρχὴν τοῦ εἶναι ἔχει*), in that they were created “from some beginning when they were not yet.”⁶ The Word, by contrast, “has no beginning of its being . . . but has always been.”⁷ Thus Athanasius posits a general distinction between the existence of creatures, which is “diastemic” in that it is characterized by interval, and God, which is “adiastemic.”

This distinction was developed further by the primary defenders of Nicaea after Athanasius, the Cappadocian Fathers. According to St. Gregory of Nyssa, creation “journeys to its proper end through intervals of time (*χρονικῶν διαστημάτων*),” whereas the life of God “has no extension (*διαστήματος*) accompanying its course and therefore no span or measure.”⁸ Gregory views this as a philosophical truth grounded in God’s being what He is without participation. As he writes in his *Against Eunomius*:

Wide and insurmountable is the interval that fences off uncreated from created nature. The latter is limited, the former has no limit . . . The latter is stretched out by a certain degree of extension (*διαστηματικῆ τινι*), circumscribed by time and place; the former transcends all conception of interval (*διαστήματος ἔννοιαν*), baffling curiosity from every point of view . . . [It is] ever the same, established of itself, not traveling on by intervals from one thing to another in its life. Nor does it come to live by participating in the life of another, so that one could consequently conceive a beginning and limit of its participation. But it is just what it is, Life made active in itself (*ζωή ἐν ἔαυτῇ ἐνεργουμένῃ*), not becoming greater or less by addition or diminution.⁹

Elsewhere Gregory goes so far as to say that “*διάστημα* is nothing other than the creation itself.”¹⁰ He infers that, since creatures are bound by their own diastemic perspective, there is no possibility for a creature to apprehend the pre-eternal and adiastemic nature of God.¹¹

One question this distinction raises is how we are to understand the eternity of creatures such as angels. St. Gregory Nazianzen defines angelic eternity as “a certain timelike movement and extension (*διάστημα*)” that is coextensive with the angels, although not itself divided or

measured by any motion.¹² St. Basil likewise states that what time is for sensible objects, the nature of the eternal is for angels, so that διάστημα is the constitution common to both.¹³ Indeed, time as we experience it is an image (εἰκών) of this eternity. Commenting on the statement of Genesis 1:5 that “the evening and the morning were one day,” Basil observes that God made the week “revolve upon itself,” forming it out of one day revolving upon itself seven times. He notes, “such is also the character of eternity (αἰώνος), to revolve upon itself and to end nowhere.” The reason the Septuagint refers to “one day” rather than the “first day” is to show the kinship of this primordial day with eternity. The first created day is an image (εἰκόνα) of the angels’ eternity, and hence the “first fruit of days” that is the basis for all others.¹⁴

Thus even angelic eternity is diastemic. How then does it differ from time? The answer is that it does not involve the “knife-edge present” of temporal succession. Gregory of Nyssa develops this thought in a passage of his *Homilies on the Song of Songs*. Distinguishing God and the angels as two species of the “intellectual nature,” he explains:

The intellectual nature that is brought into being by creation always looks toward the first cause of beings and by association with its superior is forever kept in the good and in a manner of speaking is always being created (κτίζεται) because of its increase in goodness through its alteration for the better, so as never to possess any limit or be circumscribed in its growth toward the better by any boundary. But its ever present good—however great and perfect it may seem to be—is the commencement of an additional and greater good, so that in this respect the apostolic word seems to be true, when it speaks of forgetting the acquisitions of the past in reaching forth to the things that are before (Phil. 3:13). For he who is always finding a greater and supreme good and devoting all his attention to his share in it, is not allowed to look to the past, and just because of his enjoyment of what is more precious loses his memory of what is less so.¹⁵

For the angels, whatever good has been acquired is always only the beginning of an even greater good; hence they have no need of memory, for the past good is always contained within that of the present, even as they strain forward to the yet more comprehensive good to come. Thus although their state is diastemic, they are not constrained to the knife-edge of the present.

Gregory also gives a similar description of the life of the blessed in heaven, describing it as an ever-growing enjoyment of the good in which all need for memory or hope is left behind.¹⁶

This sheds some light on what it means to speak of time as an image of the eternity of the angels. We may think of time as narrowing into a moving point, as it were, the ever-growing enjoyment of the Good that constitutes the angelic life. Yet precisely as an image time also points forward to its heavenly archetype. Time is not only linear but also circular, “revolving upon itself” in a weekly pattern that points to what the Church Fathers called the “Eighth Day,” the day of the new creation.¹⁷ This means that time and angelic eternity are not entirely distinct modes of being, but constitute, respectively, a more partial and a fuller arena in which the ever-forward movement into God is accomplished.

Although these ideas are suggestive, they do not directly address the question of the relationship between *divine* eternity and time. For this we must turn to the writings of St. Dionysius the Areopagite (c. 500 A.D.). Dionysius takes the innovative step of regarding both time and eternity—meaning divine eternity, not that of the angels—as divine processions. ‘Procession’ is Dionysius’ term for the perfections that God imparts to creatures, such as goodness, beauty, being, unity, and life. At first glance his understanding of them appears somewhat paradoxical. On the one hand, he says that God *is* goodness, beauty, being, and so on, so that each of the processions in some sense is God. Yet he also states that God is beyond them as their source, which would suggest instead that they are acts that God performs. Putting these two aspects of his thought together, it would seem that the precessions are God *as He is manifest in His activity*.¹⁸ This need not be puzzling if we recall that the activity of God constitutes the reality and perfection of all things. As Dionysius puts it, God is the Life of the living, the Being of things that are, and so on.¹⁹ Created reality is thus for Dionysius a kind of theophany, one that is not only upheld in being by God’s activity, but quite literally *is* His activity. One can legitimately refer to each of its perfections as God, provided that in doing so one does not suppose that this perfection, or all of them together, is anything more than a manifestation of their transcendent source.

Let us see how Dionysius applies this pattern of thought to time and eternity. He writes:

Scripture does not call eternal (*αιώνια*) [only] things that are altogether and absolutely ingenerate and eternal (*ἀιδία*), and imperishable, immortal, immutable, and so forth. For

instance, there is “Rise up, you eternal gates ($\pi\delta\lambda\alpha\iota\alpha\iota\omega\nu\iota\o$)” (Ps. 24:7, 9), and the like . . . Yet we know that more properly Scripture discusses and denotes by eternity the things that are, and by time the things that come to be. It is necessary therefore to understand that the things called eternal are not simply co-eternal ($\sigma\nu\nu\alpha\iota\delta\iota\alpha$) with God who is before eternity ($\pi\rho\o\alpha\iota\omega\nu\o\zeta$). Following without deviation the sacred Scriptures, one must take such things as both eternal and temporal, in the ways appropriate to them, and as between the things that are and those that come to be; that is, as things which in one way partake of eternity, and in another of time. But one must praise God as both eternity and as time, as the cause of all time and eternity, and the Ancient of Days; and as before time, and beyond time and the immutable “seasons and times,” and again existing before the ages ($\pi\rho\o\alpha\iota\omega\nu\o\zeta$), inasmuch as He is before eternity and beyond the ages, and His kingdom “is a kingdom of all the ages.” Amen. (X.3 937C-940A)

Dionysius distinguishes “the things that are,” which are eternal in the proper sense, from those *called* eternal in Scripture. The reference to the “eternal gates” indicates that by the latter he has in mind primarily the angels and the heavenly realm.²⁰ The identity of the “things that are” is not immediately clear, but since they are “absolutely ingenerate” and thus cannot be creatures, I would suggest that he has in mind the divine processions.²¹ The angels and the heavens are “between the things that are and those that come to be,” partaking both of eternity and of time. By contrast, God is not to be located at any particular point within this structure. He permeates and encompasses the whole, being identical both to eternity *and* to time, and yet prior to them both. Thus God is eternal in a different way from that of creatures, by Himself being Eternity. He is also the *source* of eternity, for creatures are eternal, to the extent that they are, by participating in Him.

This raises an interesting question. Would it not follow by parity of reasoning that since God is also Time, He must be *temporal* in a way surpassing that of creatures? Dionysius in fact draws this very conclusion.

God is the source and measure of being and eternity ($\alpha\iota\omega\nu$), since He is before substance and being and eternity, and the substance-making source, middle, and end of all. That is why in Scripture the truly Pre-existent is multiplied ($\pi\o\lambda\alpha\pi\lambda\alpha\sigma\iota\zeta\epsilon\tau\alpha\i$) in

accordance with every conception of beings, and “was” and “is” and “will be” ($\tauὸ\,\etaὐ\,\kαὶ\,\tauὸ\,\xiστὶ\,\kαὶ\,\tauὸ\,\xiσταὶ$) and “became” and “is becoming” and “will become” ($\tauὸ\,\xiγένετο\,\kαὶ\,\gammaίνεται\,\kαὶ\,\gammaενήσεται$) are properly hymned of Him. For, to those who hymn them in a God-fitting way, all these signify that He exists supersubstantially in accordance with every conception, and that He is the cause of all that in any way are. (V.8 824A)

This passage is all the more striking because earlier Dionysius had explicitly denied that temporal language—including not only “was” and “will be,” but even “is”—applies to God (V.4 817D). Such simultaneous affirmation and denial is typical of Dionysius’ use of language as a way of reorienting the reader away from the attempt simply to describe God, and toward the attempt to render Him fitting praise. Temporal language, in particular, is for Dionysius a way of “multiplying” God, exhibiting God’s presence within the multiplicity of the created world.²² The “multiplication” here is much like that in Neoplatonism of each higher level of reality within the subsequent level.²³ The difference is that, since there is no distinction in hypostasis, any temporal affirmation must always be balanced by the apophatic insistence that God is beyond such multiplicity as its source. This tension is one that Dionysius embraces, for he finds in it the only language adequate to God as *both* truly present in creation *and* beyond it as its cause.

Viewing time and eternity as divine processions is a striking innovation, but it also raises many questions. Most obviously, what becomes of the traditional view that time is a feature of the physical cosmos? How can this be, if it is also a divine procession, and thus one way of apprehending God himself? For an answer can turn to the earliest Byzantine commentator on Dionysius, John of Scythopolis (writing in the mid-sixth century).

John follows the Cappadocians in defining divine eternity as “unextended ($\dot{\alpha}\deltaιαστάτοv$) and infinite life,” or more fully as “the life that is unshaken and all together at once, already infinite and entirely unmoving, standing forth as a unity.”²⁴ He also notes repeatedly that God is eternal by Himself being Eternity, whereas creatures are eternal by partaking of eternity.²⁵ Yet he does not neglect that God can also be identified with Time. Immediately after his definition of eternity, he continues:

Thus also time, being once at rest in He Who Always Is, shone forth in its descent ($\kappa\alpha\theta'\,\nu\piόβασιv$) when later it was necessary for visible nature to come forth. So the procession

(πρόοδον) of the goodness of God in creating sensible objects, we call time. For the movement of intervals (ἡ κίνησις τῶν διαστάσεων) into portions and seasons and nights and days is not time, but homonymous with time. Just as we are accustomed to call by the same name that which measures and that which is measured, so is it here—as for instance, when that which is measured by a cubit, such as a foundation or wall, we call a cubit. According to the verse, “let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for years” (Gen. 1:14), the motions of the stars were made by God for us for the sake of clear division and distinction [of time]. Hence the One who ordered them is Himself these things, supereternally (ὑπεραιωνίος) and timelessly, as their cause.²⁶

There are here two distinct ways in which God can be referred to as Time. One is in reference to time in the proper sense, “the procession of the goodness of God in creating sensibles.” Time in this sense is God just as any of the divine processions is God, although He also remains beyond it as its source. (Indeed, it was “once at rest in He Who Always Is,” prior to its shining forth in the creation of the sensible world.) Second there is time as “the movement of temporal intervals,” that which is measured by time in the first sense. God can also be called Time in this sense, just as He can be called by the name of any of His creatures, since they pre-exist in Him as their cause. By way of analogy, we might distinguish two ways in which God can be referred to as the Good: goodness as a divine procession, and “the good” as referring collectively to those creatures that partake of the Good in the first sense. John is careful to qualify this second way of referring to God as Time by the adjectives “supereternally and timelessly,” so as to make it clear that in using the name of creatures for God there is no diminishment of divine transcendence.

Even more striking is the light that this passage sheds on the relationship between divine eternity and time. Time *qua* divine procession is the unfolding of divine eternity—the life of He Who Always Is—within the act of creating sensible beings.²⁷ Contrary to the normal tendency in Dionysius, eternity and time are here decidedly asymmetric, for eternity is identified with the divine life, whereas time, although it is equally a divine procession, comes forth only as God creates. John may well have been inspired at this point by Plotinus, for whom eternity is the life of Intellect and time the life of Soul.²⁸ Unlike Plotinus, however, John does not assign time and eternity to separate hypostases, but views them both as different forms of divine self-manifestation. In fact the logic of John’s position would seem to call for a distinction between

types of eternity parallel to that between types of time. First there is eternity as a divine procession, albeit one that exists independently of creation; second, there is eternity as the “timelike movement and extension” (in the phrase of Gregory Nazianzen) that is coextensive with the life of the angels. Eternity in the second sense is the mode in which creatures partake of eternity in the first sense.

If we now draw together these various elements from the Cappadocians, Dionysius, and John, we arrive at a fourfold structure:

- (1) (a) Eternity as a divine procession, “the life that is unshaken and all together at once, already infinite and entirely unmoving, standing forth as a unity.”
- (b) Angelic eternity, the “timelike movement and extension” that is coextensive with the life of the angels.
- (2) (a) Time as a divine procession, “the procession of the goodness of God in creating sensible objects.”
- (b) Time as a creature, the “movement of intervals into portions and seasons and nights and days.”

There are several links binding this structure together. As I have mentioned, (2)(a) is the unfolding within the creative act of (1)(a), and in each pair (b) is the mode in which creatures participate in (a). Furthermore, according to Basil, (2)(b) is an image or icon (*εἰκών*) of (1)(b). One way to summarize these various relations is to recognize here a repeated pattern of procession and return. (1)(a) and (2)(a) are the processions of God within the intelligible and sensible realms, respectively; (1)(b) and (2)(b) the corresponding acts of return. In adopting this Neoplatonic language, however, one must be careful not to import any suggestion either of necessary emanation or of a hierarchy of being in which the lower levels serve only as a ladder to the higher. Both eternity and time are ways in which the unknowable God freely manifests Himself. It is true that time is an “icon” of eternity, but this means only that it finds there its final meaning and consummation, not that it is valueless in its own right.

One point which deserves further comment is in what sense time as a divine procession is the “unfolding” of divine eternity. Both are acts which God freely performs and which manifest His character, but this does not mean that they are entirely separate and independent. By analogy

we might consider the acts of a husband in loving his wife and kissing her. Both are acts which the husband freely performs. He could love her without kissing her, or kiss her without loving her; yet given that he does both, plainly the kissing is an expression of the love, its “unfolding” into a particular time and place. In this sense one might say that the act of kissing is “precontained” in the act of loving, not as an instrumental constituent (he does not love her *by* kissing her) but as one way, among many that are possible, of giving the act of loving particular, articulate expression. I take it that something like this is what John sees as the relationship between the act of divine eternity and the act of time.

Plainly, on the view that I have described time and eternity are not wholly separate and distinct ways of being. God is *both* Time and Eternity, and yet is beyond them both as their cause. Likewise creatures partake of both time and eternity, in different ways and according to their own appropriate measure. We need not choose between time and eternity as the paradigms of reality, for both are equally (although differently) real—much as are, in my analogy, the act of loving and the act of kissing. We also need not assume that God is to be described in terms only of time or eternity, but not of both. Surely God’s knowledge does undergo temporal sequence, for time is His action, and He knows it in the act of doing it. He knows that it is *now* 10:42 just as surely as, a few moments from now, He will know that it is *now* 10:43. Likewise He knows what I am now thinking and saying, not from some eternal perspective, but because He is Himself the temporal context of my utterance. Yet because eternity is *also* His action, of which time is the unfolded expression, He also knows time and all that takes place within time in an entirely different way. I am inclined to think that the Neoplatonists were right in holding that this other way of knowing ought not to be thought of as propositional: that it is more like the intuitive, all-at-once understanding that a master geometer has of a proof, as opposed to the laborious, step-by-step understanding of the novice.²⁹ Perhaps we can return to this point in discussion.

In closing I would like to leave aside philosophical controversies for a moment in order to observe that what the Greek Fathers are proposing is not only a different theory of time, but a different way of *experiencing* time, one which sees it as an icon of eternity. This iconic orientation is particularly evident in the Eastern liturgy, and may perhaps be better experienced than described. (One thinks, for example, of the Cherubic hymn, in which the body of worshippers are said to “mystically represent” the Cherubim around the throne of God.)

Nonetheless I would like to cite one passage where St. Basil speaks explicitly of time as an icon. He is discussing the practice, which was universal in the ancient church, of praying without kneeling on Sunday.

We make our prayers standing on the first day of the week, but all do not know the reason for this. For it is not only because we are risen with Christ and that we should seek the things which are above, that on the day of the Resurrection we recall the grace that has been given us by standing to pray; but also, I think, because this day is in some way the image (*εἰκόν*) of the future age. This is why also, being the first principle (*ἀρχή*) of days, it is not called the “first” by Moses, but “one.” “There was,” he says, “an evening and a morning, one day” (Gen. 1:5), as though it returned regularly upon itself. This is why it is at once one and the eighth, that which is really one and truly the eighth, of which the Psalmist speaks in the titles of certain Psalms [the “ogdoad”], signifying by this the state that will follow the ages, the day without end, the other aeon which will have neither evening, nor succession, nor cessation, nor old age. It is, then, in virtue of an authoritative claim that the Church teaches her children to say their prayers standing on this day, so that, by the perpetual recalling of eternal life, we may not neglect the means which lead us to it.³⁰

To pray without kneeling on Sunday is not only a commemoration of the Resurrection, but a foretaste of the age to come, as befits Sunday, which is itself an icon of that age. In such an act one deliberately lives within the iconic meaning of time, accepting time as the expression, within our current sensible existence, of the immeasurable fulness of eternal life. It is this iconic form of life that the eastern Church Fathers open up for us today.

¹ *Expositions of the Psalms*, Homily 2 on Psalm 101, ch. 10 (PL 37 1311).

² It is true that Aquinas speaks of angels and the blessed as “participating” in eternity, but on close examination this turns out to be an intentional rather than an ontological relationship. Such creatures participate in eternity only inasmuch as they take on the divine essence as an intelligible species. Given the identity of the act of understanding with its object, this means that they are united to God, as Aquinas puts it, not “in the act of being, but only in the act of understanding.” *Summa Contra Gentiles* III.54.9; cf. III.61.3.

³ The earliest translation of either author into Greek was in the late thirteenth century, when Augustine’s *On the Trinity* and Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy* were translated by Maximus Planudes. It is also likely that Maximus the Confessor read Augustine during his sojourn in Carthage, although the traces of Augustine’s influence in his work are rather scanty. See Dom E. Dekkers, “Les traductions grecques des écrits patristiques latins,” *Sacris Erudi* 5 (1953), 193-233; G.C. Berthold, “Did Maximus the Confessor Know Augustine?” *Studia Patristica* 17 (1982), 14-17.

⁴ Alexander of Alexandria, Epistle 6 (PG 18 557A-B); cf. the Symbol of Antioch set forth in 345 A.D. (PG 26 729A).

⁵ *Orations against the Arians* I.12 (PG 26 37A-B; tr. NPNF II.4, 313).

⁶ *Ibid.*, II.57 (PG 26 268C; tr. NPNF II.4, 379).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 269A.

⁸ *Ibid.*, I.365-66. For the text see *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, ed. Werner Jaeger et al. [= GNO] (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960-96), vol. 1, 135; tr. NPNF II.5, 69.

⁹ *Ibid.*, II.69-70 (GNO I, 246; NPNF II.5, 257).

¹⁰ *Homilies on Ecclesiastes* 7 (GNO V, 412).

¹¹ *Ibid.* (GNO V, 413-14). For further references and discussion of this theme in Gregory see Brooks Otis, “Gregory of Nyssa and the Cappadocian Conception of Time,” *Studia Patristica* 14.3 (1976), 327-57; David L. Balás, “Eternity and Time in Gregory of Nyssa’s *Contra Eunomium*,” *Gregor von Nyssa und Die Philosophie*, ed. Heinrich Dörrie, Margarete Attenburger, and Uta Schramm (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 128-55; T. Paul Verghese, “ΔΙΑΣΤΗΜΑ and ΔΙΑΣΤΑΣΙΣ in Gregory of Nyssa: Introduction to a Concept and the Posing of a Problem,” *Ibid.*, 243-60.

¹² *Orations* 38.8 (PG 36 320B); cf. *Orations* 29.3.

¹³ *Against Eunomius* II.13 (PG 29 596C).

¹⁴ *On the Hexaemeron* II.8 (PG 29 49C, 52B); see also a similar explanation at *On the Holy Spirit* XXVII.66 (quoted below).

¹⁵ *Homilies on the Song of Songs* 6 (GNO VI, 174). I use the translation of Otis, “Gregory of Nyssa,” 344, slightly modified.

¹⁶ *On the Soul and Resurrection* (PG 46 92A-96C), *Homilies on the Song of Songs* 8 (GNO VI, 245-47); cf. the discussion in Otis, “Gregory of Nyssa,” 344-46.

¹⁷ On the Eighth Day see Jean Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), 255-75.

¹⁸ See further my *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 179-82.

¹⁹ *Divine Names* I.3 589C.

²⁰ See Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, 304-07, and his *The Angels and Their Mission* (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1957), 38-41.

²¹ Dionysius most frequently uses τὰ ὄντα in an indefinite way, meaning “the things that are, whatever they may be.” There are at least two passages, however, where it must refer to the divine processions (DN V.4 817D1, V.5 820A9). The first of these exhibits both uses: God is the source of τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὖσιν ὄντα, “the things that are in the things that are.”

²² On such “multiplication” cf. DN II.11 649B.

²³ See Porphyry, *Sententiae* 33 (ed. Lamberz, 36.4), where the intelligible is multiplied (πολλαπλασιάσθεν) within sensible objects; Proclus, *Elements of Theology* Props. 27, 152, 155 (ed. Dodds, 32.8, 134.7, 15, 136.18).

²⁴ Τὴν ἀτρεμῆ ἐκείνην καὶ ὁμοῦ πᾶσαν ζωὴν, καὶ ἅπειρον ἥδη καὶ ἀκλινῆ πάντῃ, καὶ ἐν ἐνὶ, καὶ προεστῶσαν; *Scholia on the Divine Names* (PG 4 313D, 316A). The phrase ὁμοῦ πᾶσαν is an echo of Plotinus and ultimately derives from Parmenides. For John’s knowledge of Plotinus see Rorem and Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis*, 119-37.

²⁵ *Scholia on the Divine Names* 208B, 229A-B, 313D, 385C-D.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 316A-B.

²⁷ John frequently repeats the traditional derivation of αἰών from ἀεὶ ὂν, ever being (208B, 209A, 313C).

²⁸ *Enneads* III.7.11.43-57.

²⁹ See *Divine Names* VII.2 869A-C. I leave aside questions pertaining to divine foreknowledge and human freedom, which require a separate treatment.

³⁰ *On the Holy Spirit* XXVII.66 (PG 32 192A-B), tr. Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, 263.