

Who are You? Origen on the Development and Persistence of the Soul

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ABSTRACT

As a native Alexandrian, Origen encountered philosophy early in his life; his theology epitomizes a dialectical tension between Christian faith and philosophy. This tension is nowhere more evident than in his complex, and to some extent, rambling teaching on the soul and its relationship to the human body. In particular, using Origen's theological-philosophical constructs, how is it that a resurrected body might be numerically identical to the corporeal body of the person who died? How will Origen be able to identify his beloved, martyred father, Leonides, in the afterlife?

The method in the paper fuses Origen's thinking with the work of the philosopher Saul Kripke. Kripke's concept of "rigid designators" identifies persons and tracks them across possible worlds, making it possible for Leonides' physical body to be identical to his glorified spiritual body. That is, it is a necessary truth, holding true in every possible world, including the one in which we now live and a future heavenly one. The paper concludes that Kripke's rigid designator theory would mean for Origen that Leonides in the physical body is numerically identical to Leonides in the spiritual body.

INTRODUCTION

The Alexandrian theologian Origen (c. 185 – c. 254) is generally regarded as the first person to construct a system of Christian theology. *On First Principles*¹ appeared around the year 218 and is structured around "particular points clearly delivered in the teaching of the apostles."² And, yet, Origen's thinking and theological legacy epitomize a dialectical tension between philosophy and faith. Indeed, such tension is "the most astonishing sign of contradiction in the history of Christian thought."³ This tension is nowhere more evident than in his complex, and to some extent, rambling teaching on the soul and its relationship to the human body.

This paper centers on that relationship as Origen investigates and explains it primarily in

¹ Origen's systematic work is known variously as *On First Principles*, *De Principiis* and *Peri Archon*. In the *Peri Archon*, Origen, who entitled his work as such, transferred the middle-Platonic theory of first principles into his thinking on the Trinity; but, the emphasis behind it would be more appropriately entitled *Peri Triados*. So, Charles Kannengiesser, "Divine Trinity and the Structure of the *Peri Archon*," in *Origen of Alexandria: His World and His Legacy*, Charles Kannengiesser and William L. Petersen, eds. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 247. References here follow the edition of A. Cleveland Coxe, *Fathers of the Third Century*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979).

² Origen, *On First Principles*, Pref 4 (ANF 4:240).

³ Henri Crouzel, *Origen*, trans. A. S. Worrall (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), xi. William Placher heads up the chapter about Origen in his book, *A History of Christian Theology*, as "An Alliance with Philosophy." See Placher, *A History of Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster Press, 1983).

Books 2 and 3 of *On First Principles*.⁴ The paper discloses that *contra* his contemporaries, Origen develops a theological construct which demonstrates, *not* a distinction between the material and the immaterial, but a synergistic relationship between a loving creator God and the cosmos he created.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOUL

Origen begins his theological treatise with the notion of God as incorporeal or immaterial: “God cannot be understood to be a body”⁵ God, Origen explains further, “is not to be thought of as being either a body or as existing in a body, but as an uncompounded intellectual nature”⁶ The phrase “uncompounded intellectual nature” translates the Latin “*simplex intellectualis natura*” by which Origen understands God as “a simple and indivisible intellectual nature, permitting no addition of any kind.”⁷

Origen’s incorporeal or immaterial God directs not only his understanding of God but his trinitarian hermeneutic as well.⁸ Since God is simple and indivisible, he cannot “directly create a multiple and complex universe.”⁹ He requires an intermediary who is “one yet shares in the multiplicity and complexity of the created beings.”¹⁰ This “being intermediate” is none other than the Son, or the Logos, who is “the only begotten” of God, “the wisdom of God,” “without any beginning,” “the truth and life of all things which exist,” and whose existence owes to the will of the Father and nothing else. That is, the Son’s existence is directly linked to the eternal generation of the Father;¹¹ a link which, at times, Origen employs to describe the Son in subordinate terms as

⁴ Origen’s stated purpose focuses on apostolically-delivered doctrine; he contends that the apostles “merely stated the fact that things were so, keeping silence as to the manner or origin of their existence.” See *On First Principles*, Pref 3 (ANF 4:239). They left it up to their theological successors to “investigate or explain the reasons or bases of these doctrines.” Cf. Antonia Tripolitis, *The Doctrine of the Soul in the Thought of Plotinus and Origen* (Roslyn Heights, NY: Libra Publishers, 1978), 89. Origen’s work is to provide his investigation and explanation.

⁵ Origen, *On First Principles*, 1.1.2 (ANF 4:242).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.1.6 (ANF 4:243).

⁷ Tripolitis, 91.

⁸ Ronald E. Heine, “God,” in *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, John Anthony McGuckin, ed. (Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 107.

⁹ Tripolitis, 92.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*; Origen, *On First Principles*, 2.6.1 (ANF 4:281).

¹¹ Origen, *On First Principles*, 1.2.4-6; 2.6.1 (ANF 4:243-244; 281). In some ways, Origen’s thinking is at heart an apologetic. Since the Father is outside time and immutable, he begets the Son by an eternal act, “so that it cannot be said that ‘there was when He was not’.” See J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, rev ed. (San Francisco: Harper, 1978), 128.

a “second God.”¹²

The initial creation of the Father through the Son is the Holy Spirit. Origen asserts that the Holy Spirit is equal “in honour and dignity”¹³ to the Father and Son; he concedes, however, that there are many aspects of the Spirit’s existence not clearly known. According to Origen, the Holy Spirit “is made known through the Son, and operated by God the Father.”¹⁴ That is, he proceeds from the Son and is related to the Son in the same way that the Son relates to and is generated by the Father. Origen’s descending triadic arrangement follows closely the “gods of the Middle Platonists and the principles of Plotinus.”¹⁵

God’s first created act was a world composed of “rational or intellectual creatures” limited to a “definite number, predetermined by Himself.”¹⁶ Origen calls these creatures *logika* (λογικά); they are “pure intelligences or minds”¹⁷ and thus incorporeal. The *logika* were “created by God in the beginning,” meaning that they pre-existed the creation of the material world. They were God’s thoughts, “the eternal forms or ideas in the Mind or Wisdom of God, which is the Logos.”¹⁸

¹² Origen, *Contra Celsus*, 5.39 (ANF 4:561). Origen respectfully explains his title: “And although we may call Him a ‘second’ God, let men know that by the term ‘second God’ we mean nothing else than a virtue capable of including all other virtues, and a reason capable of containing all reason whatsoever which exists in all things, which have arisen naturally, directly, and for the general advantage, and which ‘reason,’ we say, dwelt in the soul of Jesus, and was united to Him in a degree far above all other souls, seeing He alone was enabled completely to receive the highest share in the absolute reason, and the absolute wisdom, and the absolute righteousness.”

¹³ Origen, *On First Principles*, Pref 4 (ANF 4:240).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.3.7 (ANF 4:255).

¹⁵ Tripolitis, 94. Edward Moore cites a Greek fragment from G.W. Butterworth’s 1966 translation of *On the First Principles*, in which Origen explains:

The God and Father, who holds the universe together, is superior to every being that exists, for he imparts to each one from his own existence that which each one is; the Son, being less than the Father, is superior to rational creatures alone (for he is second to the Father); the Holy Spirit is still less, and dwells within the saints alone. So that in this way the power of the Father is greater than that of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and that of the Son is more than that of the Holy Spirit, and in turn the power of the Holy Spirit exceeds that of every other holy being (Fragment 9).

See Edward Moore, “Origen of Alexandria,” *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ISSN 2161-0002, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/>, January 21, 2015.

¹⁶ Origen, *On First Principles*, 2.9.1 (ANF 4:289). This aspect of Origen’s theology “has long been regarded as one of the most disagreeable features of his theology.” See Peter W. Martens, “Origen’s doctrine of pre-existence and the opening chapters of Genesis,” *Zeitschrift Für Antikes Christentum* 16:3 (January 2012): 516.

¹⁷ Tripolitis, 94; Origen, *On First Principles*, 2.9.1 (ANF 4:289). Moore, “Origen of Alexandria.”

¹⁸ *Ibid.*; for Origen, God’s wisdom has an eternal quality; it has always existed. Such being the case, the “outline of all created beings” has also existed in eternity. They were merely waiting for “actualization” by the Wisdom, or Logos, the intermediary known as the Son.

Initially, the *logika* were “equal and alike”¹⁹ and, at least, to begin with, lived in harmony with their Creator.

By virtue of their creation, they did not contain, as it were, an inherent God-like goodness; the good that was in their substance was not natural; rather, it was given them by God. Thus, the *logika* were “necessarily changeable and mutable.”

God’s desire was that the *logika* would exercise their “free and voluntary action” in order that “the good that was in them might become their own.” The *logika*, however, had other notions. Origen explains: “... but slothfulness, and a dislike of labour in preserving what is good, and an aversion to and a neglect of better things, furnished the beginning of a departure from goodness.” After all, “... everything which is a gift, may be taken away, and disappear.”²⁰

The Defection of the Soul

By neglecting the divinely-desired good, the *logika*—rational beings created by God—made poor use of their freedom, becoming “immersed in evil.”²¹ Origen attributed their demise, not to a deliberate action on their parts, but rather to their “inherent changeability, their laziness or weariness which caused them to make the wrong choice, to neglect God and thus to fall into evil.”²²

Having fallen away from God’s love and goodness, the *logika* become alienated from God and, in the process, souls. Origen uses the Greek word *psyche* (ψυχή) for souls, a term he appropriated from the verb ψύχεσθαι, which commonly refers to making cold or cool,²³ as found in Plato and Aristotle. Origen reasons that a fallen *logika* has “cooled from that natural and divine warmth, and therefore has been placed in its present position, and called by its present name.”²⁴

Since the initial fall away from God, the *logika* or rational beings possess some kind of corporeal nature.²⁵ The only rational creature to avoid the fall and persist as incorporeal with God

¹⁹ Origen, *On First Principles*, 2.9.6 (ANF 4:292).

²⁰ Ibid., 2.9.2 (ANF 4:290).

²¹ Tripolitis, 95.

²² Ibid. who explains: “Like Plotinus and other contemporary Platonists, Origen upheld the Socratic-Platonic principle that a rational being would not deliberately and knowingly select evil. ... Freedom is for Origen the ability of the created spirit to change, to develop and grow by advancing toward God or to neglect the good and become abased.” A free and deliberate act of moving away from the creator and into evil does not fit in Origen’s philosophical and theological system.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Origen, *On First Principles*, 2.8.3 (ANF 4:288).

²⁵ Tripolitis, 96.

is the soul of Christ.²⁶ God created bodies for the remainder of the rational beings—*logika*—consequent to their fall away from him; afterward, according to Origen, the fallen rational beings “never have lived nor do live without it [= a body]; for an incorporeal life will rightly be considered a prerogative of the Trinity alone.”²⁷

Still, Origen maintains that bodily substance can be incorporeal: “so pure and refined as to be like the *æther*, and of a celestial purity and clearness.”²⁸ He concedes, however, that such a body will be known only to God and the divine triad. Rather, what a body looks like depends upon “the will and moral development of the individual being.”²⁹ Origen insists:

As we have remarked above, therefore, that material substance of this world, possessing a nature admitting of all possible transformations, is, when dragged down to beings of a lower order, moulded into the crasser and more solid condition of a body, so as to distinguish those visible and varying forms of the world; but when it becomes the servant of more perfect and more blessed beings, it shines in the splendour of celestial bodies, and adorns either the angels of God or the sons of the resurrection with the clothing of a spiritual body, out of all which will be filled up the diverse and varying state of the one world.³⁰

In other words, the more an individual soul progresses toward God, the more glistening it appears to be; the body in which this soul is enclosed, enjoys a “finer”³¹ shape and texture. On the other hand, those souls who resist God undergo a coarse and unattractive bodily form.

God created bodies for His purposes; however, not all bodies are human containers. Bodies are the world or the entire material universe. They became what they are, not because of “any partiality on the part of the Disposer . . . but, “the cause of the diversity and variety among these beings is due to their conduct, which has been marked either with greater earnestness or

²⁶ Moore, “Origen of Alexandria.” Origen explains: “That the nature, indeed, of His soul was the same as that of all others cannot be doubted, otherwise it could not be called a soul were it not truly one. But since the power of choosing good and evil is within the reach of all, this soul which belonged to Christ elected to love righteousness, so that in proportion to the immensity of its love it clung to it unchangeably and inseparably . . .” (Origen, *On First Principles*, 2.6.5 (ANF 4:283).

²⁷ Origen, *On First Principles*, 2.3.2; 2.1.4 (ANF 4:271; 268). Martens remarks that, “. . . in Origen’s narrative, this sort of embodiment in a corporeal world comes after, and not before, the fall.” See Martens, 519.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.6.4 (ANF 4:262). Cf. Tripolitis, 96.

²⁹ Tripolitis, 96.

³⁰ Origen, *On First Principles*, 2.2.2 (ANF 4:270)

³¹ Tripolitis, 96. Origen [*On First Principles*, 2.1.4 (ANF 4:269)] believes that the qualities of “heat, cold, dryness, and humidity” are implanted in matter to “produce the different kinds of bodies.”

indifference, according to the goodness or badness of their nature ... ”³²

Their conduct resulted in a hierarchy in the material universe³³:

1. The *super-celestial* represent those rational beings (*logika*, souls) whose fall or defection was only a short distance from God. They are the ones “placed in happier abodes, and clothed with heavenly and resplendent bodies” existing as angelic beings, the sun, moon, and stars (cf. 1 Cor 15:41).

2. The *earthly* are those rational beings who fell farther away from God and are embodied as human beings. Origen points out the pronounced inequities between human beings politically, socially, economically, and personally, declining to enumerate “all the horrors of human misery.”

3. The *invisible* represent the “lower powers [= *inferna*] to which earthly things have been entrusted for administration.” These are the rational beings who rejected God outright, turning completely against Him. They became demonic or evil spirits.

The Education of the Soul

Thus, for Origen, the material universe was created by God as a “penitential dwelling”³⁴ place for fallen rational beings. The world is a cosmic academy, a training ground “for educating and disciplining the souls, a place through which and from which the souls must rise to apprehend and become once again a part of the world of truth and ultimate reality.”³⁵

Origen believed the world, the material creation, is a place of both punishment and blessing, or more to the point, “a type of punishment that is itself a blessing.”³⁶ He concedes that “in what is called the ‘present world’ life is a calamity, or at least the first and greatest struggle of

³² Origen, *On First Principles*, 1.8.2 (ANF 4:265). González explains that Origen’s understanding of bodies is tri-level. There are “heavenly beings, whose bodies are ethereal; we who have fallen into this world, with our fleshly bodies; and the demons, whose bodies are even coarser than ours.” Justo L. González, *From the Beginnings to the Council of Chalcedon* (vol 1, *A History of Christian Thought*; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), 221.

³³ The information is summarized from, *Ibid.*, 2.9.2-3 (ANF 4:289-90); with additional comments by Tripolitis, 97.

³⁴ Tripolitis, 97, 102.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 97.

³⁶ Stefan Nordgaard, “Body, sin, and society in Origen of Alexandria,” *Studia Theologica* 66:1 (May 2012), 21.

the soul.”³⁷ The soul, enveloped by the body, endures a constant onslaught of punishments, evils, and affliction. Origen refers to the disastrous life of Job—his losses, the dangers he faced, and the inept counsel of his so-called friends. None were accidents; they were part of the divine curriculum:

The result of all the foregoing remarks [re Job] is to show, that all the occurrences in the world which are considered to be of an intermediate kind, whether they be mournful or otherwise are brought about, not indeed by God, and yet not without Him; while He not only does not prevent those wicked and opposing powers that are desirous to bring about these things (from accomplishing their purpose) but even permits them to do so, although only on certain occasions and to certain individuals, as is said with respect to Job himself.³⁸

God attempts to educate and train souls for his purposes. Origen rejects both the Platonic and Gnostic concepts of the human soul. Instead, his thinking converges on Paul’s dualistic distinction between the flesh and the spirit (cf. Rom 8:3-16; Gal 5:16-26). While residing in its earthly schoolhouse, Origen argues that “the will of the soul is something intermediate between the flesh and the spirit”³⁹ In other words, the evil endured in the human struggle on earth is the attempt of the flesh and spirit to “gain control of the soul.”⁴⁰ If the soul obeys the spirit, it relates to the Spirit of God; if however, the soul follows fleshly corruptions, it demonstrates hostility to God.⁴¹

God respects, as it were, human freedom as the soul decides which to follow. It is not that God is incapable of persuading and admonishing souls; but, souls (i.e., persons) must be willing to submit themselves to the divine pedagogy as disclosed in the canon of Scripture and “by means of those persons who, through God’s gracious appointment, are the instructors of His hearers.”⁴² For Origen, God’s training is dialectical in nature; God is, so to speak, the persuader, but he anticipates a response, a submission, a yielding to his persuading. “And therefore, it must not be said that it is because God is incapable of persuading men that they are not persuaded, but because

³⁷ Origen, *Contra Celsus*, 2.42 (ANF 4:448). Indeed, Origen is willing to say, citing the Psalmist (43:20 LXX), that the material world is a “place of affliction.”

³⁸ Origen, *On First Principles*, 3.2.7 (ANF 4:334); emphasis mine.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.8.4; 3.4.2 (ANF 4:289; 338).

⁴⁰ Tripolitis, 108.

⁴¹ Riemer Roukema, “” Souls,” in *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, 202. Origen contends that the soul “elects” which of the two (flesh or spirit) it will obey. “And if it yield itself up to the pleasures of the flesh, it renders men carnal; but when it unites itself with the spirit, it produces men of the Spirit, and who on that account are termed spiritual. And this seems to be the meaning of the apostle in the words, “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.” See *On First Principles*, 3.4.2 (ANF 4:338).

⁴² Origen, *Contra Celsus*, 6.57 (ANF 4:599).

they will not accept the faithful words of God.”⁴³

Accordingly, the struggle continues throughout the lifetime of the human being; the final decision always hanging in doubt. But, if the human decision is in doubt, Origen himself has no doubts about how God will resolve the issue. Most of all, Origen could not fathom a God who would create souls and assign them to bodies, only to watch as the soul dissipates “into the oblivion of evil (non-being) for all eternity.”⁴⁴ It may well be that one lifetime is not sufficient for a particular soul to achieve salvation.

Thus, in death, education and training continue. For Origen, even venerable saints like Peter and Paul required additional training to achieve purification.⁴⁵ The location of this divine “school of the soul” is “in some place situated on the earth, which holy Scripture calls paradise.”⁴⁶ Origen believes that these souls will receive instruction about their past lives on earth as well as certain future events. Faithful learners—the pure in heart and holy of mind—will progress quickly and come “to a place in the air, and reach the kingdom of heaven . . .”⁴⁷ There they will enter the mansions of heaven, a place analogous to Greek globes or spheres, and “in each of which he will first see clearly what is done there, and in the second place, will discover the reason why things are so done: and thus he will in order pass through all gradations, following Him who hath passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, who said, ‘I will that where I am, these may be also’.”⁴⁸ Origen’s thinking is similar to the “popular doctrine of astral or celestial eschatology found in many of the writings of the second-third centuries.”⁴⁹

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Moore, “Origen of Alexandria.”

⁴⁵ Tripolitis, 113, referring to Origen’s commentary on Numbers 25.

⁴⁶ Origen, *On First Principles*, 2.11.6 (ANF 4:299).

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Tripolitis, 113; in particular, Tripolitis refers to the writings of Numenius, the so-called father of Neoplatonism. George Karamanolis notes that Numenius was well-received among Christian scholars of his day, not the least of which was due to his respect for the Jewish tradition, and through his allusions to Plato as being like Moses speaking Attic Greek and to Jesus. See his “Numenius”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/numenius/>. Origen was regularly “in company” with the works of Numenius as well as Plato, Cranius, Apollophanes, Longinus, Moderatus, and Nicomachus (see Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.19). That Origen had an impressive knowledge of Numenius’ work is evident from the various citations by him in *Against Celsus* (1.15; 4.51; 5.57; 5.38), a remarkable fact considering that Origen usually cites from Scripture (see Angelos Kritikos, “Platonism and Principles in Origen,”

However, the souls of the evil are “unable to make the ascent” into “the sphere of the planets, which Scripture calls heaven.” They remain beneath the earth where indeed, they undergo punishment by fire. But, according to Origen, the fire is not material; it is, rather, a mental state, as it were, during which the soul views by God’s educative powers a visual history “of all the foul, and shameful, and unholy deeds which it has done.”⁵⁰ These souls experience the fires of hell as mental states of disorder, dissolution, and dissension. Only God’s healing fire can solidify the disintegration of the soul and return it a lasting restoration. The judgment fire of God is not punitive in nature, but healing like a physician’s balm. It educates and purifies.⁵¹

But, how long will it take for souls who have followed and obeyed the wicked commands of the devil and participated in “persistent and inveterate wickedness”⁵² to be purified? Origen concedes that it may take “many ages ... improved by this stern method of training ... advance] to a better condition”⁵³ This is the genesis of Origen’s doctrine of multiple ages, in which some souls would be re-born in order to undergo the training and education of God all with “a view to ultimate salvation.”⁵⁴ Because souls develop “at different levels and speeds,”⁵⁵ Origen believes that “after this age,” there will be “other ages” and “other ages again to follow” ... [until] the whole universe will come to a perfect termination.”⁵⁶

This aspect of Origen’s teaching has been historically troublesome since it seems to imply some form of transmigration of souls (*metempsychosis*) from one age to a subsequent one due to their incorrigible nature. But to what? An animal? Another human being? Origen rejects those possibilities. In his *Commentary on Matthew* he flatly denounces the “the dogma of transmigration, which is foreign to the church of God, and not handed down by the Apostles, nor

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⁵⁰ Origen, *On First Principles*, 2.10.4 (ANF 4:295); cf. Tripolitis, 113-14.

⁵¹ Tripolitis, 114.

⁵² Origen, *On First Principles*, 1.6.3 (ANF 4:261).

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Moore, “Origen of Alexandria.”

⁵⁵ Tripolitis, 114.

⁵⁶ Origen, *On First Principles*, 2.3.5 (ANF 4:273). Origen argues elsewhere that “there were ages before our own, and that there will be others after it. It is not, however, to be supposed that several worlds existed at once, but that, after the end of this present world, others will take their beginning.” (3.5.4)

anywhere set forth in the Scriptures.”⁵⁷

Rather, Origen maintains some continuity between one’s present body and the body in the age to come. Only those who are ignorant of Christian teaching would dare to say that human “souls pass from the bodies of men into the bodies of dogs, according to their varying degree of wickedness”⁵⁸ To Origen, transmigration was nothing less than paganism; he argued fervently:

... but we, who do not find this at all in the divine Scripture, say that the more rational condition changes into one more irrational, undergoing this affection in consequence of great slothfulness and negligence. But, also, in the same way, a will which was more irrational, because of its neglect of reason, sometimes turns and becomes rational, so that that which at one time was a dog, loving to eat of the crumbs that fell from the table of its masters, comes into the condition of a son.⁵⁹

Unlike those in the Platonic tradition, Origen did not denigrate the physical body. Rather than an evil mass of *soma* imprisoning the soul, Origen viewed the body as “providing each soul with a unique identity.”⁶⁰ The body, however, is in a state of constant flux, but always looking to the time of resurrection when the soul will reshape it “by whatever matter then exists” into a new body.⁶¹

The Restoration of the Soul

The time will come, however, when all souls will be purified and return to their original state of perfection, a time of “the perfection and completion of things.”⁶² The completion is thoroughly directed by the judgment of God and comprehensive in nature, including human souls, angels,

⁵⁷ Origen, *Commentary on Matthew*, 13.1 (ANF 9:474). See also, *Contra Celsus*, 7.32, where Origen affirms: “Our teaching on the subject of the resurrection is not, as Celsus imagines, derived from anything that we have heard on the doctrine of metempsychosis . . .” (ANF 4:623).

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Moore, “Origen of Alexandria.”

⁶¹ Briane E. Daley, “Resurrection,” in *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, 184. Moore, “Origen of Alexandria,” comments: “This is an important point for an understanding of Origen's epistemology, which is based upon the idea that God educates each soul according to its inherent abilities, and that the abilities of each soul will determine the manner of its knowledge. We may say, then, that the uniqueness of the soul's body is an image of its uniqueness of mind. This is the first inkling of the development of the concept of the person and personality in the history of Western thought.”

⁶² Origen, *On First Principles*, 1.6.1 (ANF 4:260). Origen admits that his statements on this topic are not to be taken with dogmatic certainty. Rather, he approaches the topic “in the style of a disputation rather than of strict definition.”

celestial beings, and demons.⁶³ The restoration of all beings, or *apokatastasis*, ranks as one of the most important, if again troublesome, concepts in Origen's philosophy—"the touchstone by which he judges all other theories."⁶⁴ Indeed, it was this teaching upon which Origen's later opponents largely based their charges of heresy. None was considered more heretical than Origen's notion that even the devil himself will evidently turn of his own free will to God.⁶⁵

Origen bases much of his thinking on this matter on biblical texts. As a biblical scholar, he appeals in particular to 1 Cor 15:25-28:

25 For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be abolished is death. 27 For He has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. 28 When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

Origen focused special attention on v 28: "so that God may be all in all." The evil souls who were initially unable to make the ascent to heaven "will arrive in due measure and order at that land and at that training which is contained in it, where they may be prepared for those better institutions to which no addition can be made."⁶⁶ So powerful is the Word of God that it "shall prevail over the entire rational creation, and change every soul into His own perfection; in which state every one, by the mere exercise of his power, will choose what he desires, and obtain what he chooses."⁶⁷ The "entire rational creation" presumably includes the demonic and even devil himself.⁶⁸ Origen explains to Celsus:

For although, in the diseases and wounds of the body, there are some which no medical skill can cure, yet we hold that in the mind there is no evil so strong that it may not be overcome by the Supreme Word and God. For stronger than all the evils in the soul is the Word, and the healing power that dwells in Him; and this healing He applies, according to the will of God, to every man. The consummation of all things is the destruction of evil.⁶⁹

⁶³ Tripolitis, 114; cf. Origen, *On First Principles*, 1.6.1; 2.10.8 (ANF 4:260; 292-3).

⁶⁴ Moore, "Origen of Alexandria."

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Origen, *On First Principles*, 3.6.9 (ANF 4:348).

⁶⁷ Origen, *Contra Celsus*, 8.72 (ANF 4:667).

⁶⁸ Tripolitis, 114. See footnote 5 (ANF 4:346). For an overview of this aspect of Origen's thought, see: Lisa R. Holliday, "Will Satan Be Saved? Reconsidering Origen's Theory of Volition in 'Peri Archon'," *Vigiliae Christianae* 63:1 (Jan 2009): 1-23.

⁶⁹ Origen, *Contra Celsus*, 8.72 (ANF 4:667). The destruction of evil would presumably include the devil and his demons. Origen admits that "although as to the question whether it shall be so destroyed that it can never anywhere arise again, it is beyond our present purpose to say."

Origen's restoration or *apokatastasis*, however, did not align with the church's teaching at that time on the resurrection of the body. The notion popular during Origen's lifetime was that the human person will be resurrected with the same earthly body inhabited on earth. To some extent, Origen agrees. The body does upon death experience a change, but not to its essential substance. The body, created from dust, will upon death return to dust, and will one day experience the resurrection; but, with a distinctive difference. Origen contends that the body will "advance to the glory of a spiritual body."⁷⁰

In other words, at the *apokatastasis*, the soul "will have become pure spirit, [and] the body which will continue to serve the spirit, will be purified and attain a spiritual quality and nature."⁷¹ As a spiritual body, the resurrection body will be more ethereal or "celestial" in nature and thus suitable to its new heavenly environs.⁷² That does not mean that souls lose their distinctive or characteristic form. Rather, it is the soul which provides the body with "substantial continuity, and that imposes on it the unique perceptible 'form' (*eidōs*) by which features remain identifiable despite the changes of age, growth, and illness."⁷³ But, it is not the celestial body that enables persons to persist; rather, persistence is anchored in the soul due to its eternal nature and linkage with God.

PERSISTING ON THE PERSISTENCE

Question A recurring motif throughout Origen's *On First Principles*, is the relationship of the soul to the body. This becomes even more significant as Origen describes the postmortem resurrection of the body. He is particularly attracted to the Pauline notion of the "spiritual body" as referenced in 1 Cor 15. He utilizes this passage as a proof-text for his explanation of the resurrected body and how it relates to physical or earthly bodies. The passage also has eschatological significance for Origen as he explains "how human bodies achieve consummation in God (I Cor. 15.28)."⁷⁴

Persistence conditions relate to the sorts of changes a person (or a thing) can undergo or

⁷⁰ Origen, *On First Principles*, 3.6.5 (ANF 4:346).

⁷¹ Tripolitis, 114.

⁷² Ibid. Origen contends: ". . . but when [the body] becomes the servant of more perfect and more blessed beings, it shines in the splendour of celestial bodies, and adorns either the angels of God or the sons of the resurrection with the clothing of a spiritual body . . ." See Origen, *On First Principles*, 2.2.2 (ANF 4:270).

⁷³ Daley, 184.

⁷⁴ Brandon Morgan, "'We Will All Be Changed': Materiality, Resurrection and Reaping Spiritual Bodies In Origen's *Peri Archon*," *American Theological Inquiry* 7:2 (Aug 2014), 13.

survive without ceasing to exist.⁷⁵ Origen's writings, in particular *On First Principles* and *Contra Celsus*, teem with persistence issues. Specifically, Origen makes a sharp demarcation between physical and resurrected bodies without sacrificing the "unique identity between them"⁷⁶ and that ensures they remain numerically identical.

Substantial Change

Fundamental to Origen's understanding of persistence is his view of the human body. Origen insists that "bodily nature admits of diversity and variety of change, so that it is capable of undergoing all possible transformations"⁷⁷ The material of the human body is in a constant state of flux based on material needs. In other words, the body is in "a continual state of change and transformation, caused by the food which is eaten, absorbed by the body, and turned into tissue."⁷⁸

Origen contends that the bodily or

... corporeal nature admits of a change in substance; whence also God, the arranger of all things, has the service of this matter at His command in the moulding, or fabrication, or re-touching of whatever He wishes, so that corporeal nature may be transmuted, and transformed into any forms or species whatever, according as the deserts of things may demand.⁷⁹

Thus, the body is in service to God and to the soul, a "fixer-upper" so to speak, which God uses in accordance to the "deserts" or merits of the person as the soul makes its journey back to God. Because bodies are subject to change, and particularly a change into resurrected bodies that are substantially different, Origen concludes:

... so also, with respect to the state of the body, we are to hold that this very body which now, on account of its service to the soul, is styled an animal body, will, by means of a certain progress, when the soul, united to God, shall have been made one spirit with Him (the body even then ministering, as it were, to the spirit), attain to a spiritual condition and quality, especially since, as we have often pointed out, bodily nature was so formed by the

⁷⁵ Kevin J. Corcoran, *Rethinking Human Nature: A Christian Materialist Alternative to the Soul* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 70.

⁷⁶ Morgan, 13.

⁷⁷ Origen, *On First Principles*, 2.1.4 (*ANF* 4:269).

⁷⁸ Morgan, 14; see Henry Chadwick, "Origen, Celsus, and the Resurrection of the Body," *Harvard Theological Review* 41:2 (April 1948), 86. Chadwick refers to a fragment of Origen's commentary on Psalm 1, quoted by Methodius of Olympus in his own work, *On the Resurrection*, and preserved in Greek by Epiphanius of Salamis in his *Panarion*. These works appear in a volume translated by Frank Williams (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishing, 2013).

⁷⁹ Origen, *On First Principles*, 3.6.7 (*ANF* 4:347).

Creator, as to pass easily into whatever condition he should wish, or the nature of the case demand.⁸⁰

For Origen, God creates bodies that accord with their specific environment; since “the heavenly environment is radically different from the present earthly environment,” the result is that “souls require an alternative sort of body that can accommodate one’s surroundings.”⁸¹ Against Celsus, Origen argues:

Our teaching on the subject of the resurrection is not, as Celsus imagines, derived from anything that we have heard on the doctrine of metempsychosis; but we know that the soul, which is immaterial and invisible in its nature, exists in no material place, without having a body suited to the nature of that place.⁸²

Substantial Continuity

Since Origen posits a radical difference between the physical and resurrection bodies, how does he go about establishing that particular body’s identity? If, as Paul writes, the physical body “is sown a natural body, [and] it is raised a spiritual body” (1 Cor 15:44), what causes the identity of a person to cross over from one to the other and remain numerically the same?⁸³

Above all, it is the soul, the ultimate principle of persistence. Thus, while the physical body experiences constant transformation “as its components are assimilated and discharged”⁸⁴ during its sojourn on earth, the soul is the anchor that provides the body with substantial continuity. To demonstrate how this happens, Origen employs the philosophical constructs of principle and form:

Principle

Origen makes use of the Stoic conception of σπερματικός λόγος or seminal principle, “a philosophical explanation for the link between the physical and spiritual bodies which Christian doctrine proclaimed.”⁸⁵ The notion also reinforces Origen’s confidence in I Cor 15, where Paul compares the resurrection body to the growth of “bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else” (1 Cor 15:37b). The grain of wheat sown in the ground sprouts and matures by means of its

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.6.6 (ANF 4:347).

⁸¹ Morgan, 15.

⁸² Origen, *Contra Celsus*, 7.32 (ANF 4:623).

⁸³ Corcoran, 130.

⁸⁴ Daley, 184.

⁸⁵ Joseph Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1983), 114.

seminal principle, the power that causes the maturation process.⁸⁶

Form

Origen asserts that the soul impresses, as it were, on the body the distinctive and distinguishable “form” (*eidōs*) by which human features remain perceptible notwithstanding advances in age and physical growth, and the incapacitating effects of disease.⁸⁷ When the resurrection occurs, the soul will produce this distinctive *eidōs* anew with the result that this new body “shines” like celestial bodies, and “adorns... the sons of the resurrection with the clothing of a spiritual body.”⁸⁸

Abounding in confidence, Origen asserts:

We ought not, however, to doubt that the nature of this present body of ours may, by the will of God, who made it what it is, be raised to those qualities of refinement, and purity, and splendour (which characterize the body referred to), according as the condition of things requires, and the deserts of our rational nature shall demand.⁸⁹

In his commentary on Romans 1, Origen argues that “the real Peter and Paul, so to speak, is always the same... even if the nature of the body is in a state of flux, because the form (*eidōs*) characterizing the body is the same...” There is, however, one salient difference: the form (*eidōs*) is now changed “for the better.” And even though the change or transformation is “very great, our present form will be the same in the world to come.”⁹⁰

For Origen, the application of principle and form is far more than philosophical musings. Together, they convey specific theological implications since the *σπερματικός λόγος* is associated with God’s providential care over the mutable nature of the human body. Therefore,

For in the same way also our bodies are to be supposed to fall into the earth like a grain; and (that *germ* being implanted in them which contains the bodily substance) although the bodies die, and become corrupted, and are scattered abroad, yet by the word of God, that very *germ* which is always safe in the substance of the body, raises them from the earth,

⁸⁶ Chadwick, 101; see also Morgan, 15-16. Trigg, 114, explains: “It is the seminal principle which will *persist from the physical to the spiritual body*, producing, of course, a very different body in new conditions of existence” (emphasis mine).

⁸⁷ Daley, 184; Morgan 15.

⁸⁸ Origen, *On First Principles*, 2.2.2 (ANF 4:270).

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.6.4 (ANF 4:346). Daley, 184, adds that, for Origen, the resurrection reveals “the unknown future form of glory lurking within our present material limitations.”

⁹⁰ Epiphanius of Salamis, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis: Against Origen also called Adamantius*, Books II and III, 64.14.5-6.

and restores and repairs them, as the power which is in the grain of wheat, after its corruption and death, repairs and restores the grain into a body having stalk and ear. And so also to those who shall deserve to obtain an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, that *germ* of the body's restoration, which we have before mentioned, by God's command restores out of the earthly and animal body a spiritual one, capable of inhabiting the heavens.⁹¹

Here, the Creator God implants the *σπερματικός λόγος*. Via his sovereign will, God exercises command over the constantly-changing body up to and including the resurrection of the body at resurrection. In the same way, divine providence ensured that "the mortal quality of the body of Jesus" was changed by the will of God into a body "that was ethereal and divine."⁹²

Thus, the body, with its distinctive and characteristic form (*eidos*), undergoing constant change, nevertheless maintains its identity throughout its earthly journey. The ability of the body to endure the changes and mature is a product of the divine *logos* within both the created material world and within the eschatological journey of the soul back to God.⁹³

Origen's explanation of the "end of the world" takes him back to its creation. At the "first creation," humans received the image of God. But, the defection resulted in the soul's being clothed with a body in the material world. By exercising diligence, however, the seminal or life principle is at work producing growth and maturity. The image of God granted humans at the beginning is the guarantee that "the perfect realization of the divine likeness [will be] reached in the end by the fulfilment of the (necessary) works."⁹⁴ In the end, the image of God conforms humans to the likeness of God, "because undoubtedly in the consummation or end God is 'all and in all'."⁹⁵

Are You My Father?

Given the process outlined above, one question remains: *how* is it that a presumably rehabilitated, resurrected, incorporeal body might be numerically identical to the corporeal body of the person who died?⁹⁶ For a practical twist, consider Origen's father, Leonides, martyred for his faith during

⁹¹ Origen, *On First Principles*, 2.10.3 (ANF 4:294). The word translated "germ" (italicized) is the reference to the *σπερματικός λόγος* or life principle.

⁹² Origen, *Contra Celsus*, 3.41 (ANF 4:480); see Morgan, 16.

⁹³ Morgan, 17.

⁹⁴ Origen, *On First Principles*, 3.6.1 (ANF 4:344).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, (ANF 4:345).

⁹⁶ It is difficult to know for certain what Origen believed about post-mortem personal identity. The reason

the persecution of the Roman Emperor Septimus Severus in 202. Estimates place Origen at around seventeen years of age when his father was martyred. How will Origen be able to identify his beloved and martyred father as one of those incorporeal souls rehabilitated from dust? In Origen's thinking, the question of personal identity is resolved by fusing his own exegetical genius with leading philosophical opinions at the time.⁹⁷

The body restricts each soul to a unique identity. However, the soul's performance in God's cosmic schoolhouse ultimately determines its unique identity in light of its unique mind. The physical body is, for Origen, an image of the mind. This may well be one of the first ventures into psychosomatic concepts in Western thinking.⁹⁸ During the Transfiguration of Jesus (Mk 9:2-9), Origen explains that the "forms of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah were not different from what they had been."⁹⁹ In other words, regardless of transfigurations and transformations, the body retains its previous form and, in it, personal identity:¹⁰⁰ "... it will be flesh no longer, but whatever was once characteristic of the flesh will be characteristic of the spiritual body."¹⁰¹

Origen carefully maintains the identity and distinctiveness between the two:

When, therefore, all rational souls shall have been restored to a condition of this kind, then the nature of this body of ours will undergo a change into the glory of a spiritual body ... so also are we to consider, with respect to the nature of the body, that the one which we

is that the major work containing those views, *On First Principles*, has been preserved only in a Latin translation from an Origenist disciple named Rufinus who was determined to defend Origen's seedy reputation in the 5th century Christian church; see Orig. *Princ.*, "Prologue of Rufinus," (*ANF* 4:237). Cf. John Anthony McGlucken, "The Life of Origen," *Westminster Handbook to Origen*, 2-3. Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 6.1.

⁹⁷ See Brian E. Daley, "Eschatology," *Westminster Handbook to Origen*, 95. Origen's detractors often accuse him of taking Platonism to the extreme, especially the Platonic doctrine of the preexistence of souls. See Plato *Phaed.* 76e, in Plato: *Five Dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo*, trans. G. M. A. Grube, rev., John M. Cooper, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 2002), cited hereafter as *Phaed.*; cf. Raymond Martin & John Barresi, *The Rise and Fall of the Soul and Self: An Intellectual History of Personal Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 64.

⁹⁸ Moore, "Origen of Alexandria."

⁹⁹ Orig., *Fr. Ps.*, 142-3.

¹⁰⁰ Martin and Barresi, 62.

¹⁰¹ Orig., *Fr. Ps.*, 143. Compare this recognition with accounts in John 20:14-16 and Luke 24:13-35, where Mary Magdalene and the disciples on the road to Emmaus failed to recognize Jesus. In both accounts, recognition came suddenly through Jesus' words (John 20) and actions (Luke 24). Further, in John 20:20, Jesus finds himself having to prove his identity to his disciples by allowing them to see his post-crucifixion hands and side. Why were they unable to recognize him without empirical evidence? What was it in His glorified state that precluded the disciples from recognizing Him? Yet, there were essential qualities in Jesus, which persisted into the glorified state that does not include identical physical appearance.

now make use of in a state of meanness, and corruption, and weakness, is not a different body from that which we shall possess in incorruption, and in power, and in glory; but that the same body, when it has cast away the infirmities in which it is now entangled, shall be transmuted into a condition of glory, being rendered spiritual, so that what was a vessel of dishonour may, when cleansed, become a vessel unto honour, and an abode of blessedness.¹⁰²

Origen thus recognizes the substantive difference between the physical and the spiritual bodies without forfeiting the singular connection between them that sustains their identities. How? He argues that risen physical bodies function as “coverings” for humanity. If God requires persons to have bodies, then Origen insists that: “we ought *to be invested with no other than our own.*”¹⁰³

The spiritual body will be recognizable through its unique form (*eidōs*) which Origen vaguely explains is “fashioned according to some shape.”¹⁰⁴ Thus, the means of bodily identity, of knowing his father, is Leonides’ form. Form is the consistent, unchanging incorporeal substance that not only assures the identity of the person for the period of its constantly changing bodily existence, but also guarantees the numerical identity between the earthly body and the resurrected body.¹⁰⁵

For all his garrulity, Origen failed to clarify exactly how he envisaged this final bodily form and how he will be able to determine the exact identity of Leonides. It is clear that he regards the entire spatial world, planets included, as being transfigured into a “degree of perfection”¹⁰⁶ resulting in a lasting peace between the justified and God and with each other.¹⁰⁷ Rather than providing a stellar Origenist interpretation, he lets “each one of our readers determine for himself, with care and diligence, whether any one of them can be approved and adopted.”¹⁰⁸ The question remains how will he know Leonides? Indeed, how will any of us know another?

¹⁰² Orig. *Princ.*, 3.6.6 (*ANF* 4:347).

¹⁰³ Ibid., 2.10.1 (*ANF* 4:293).

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 2.10.2 (*ANF* 4:294).

¹⁰⁵ Benjamin P. Blosser, *Become Like the Angels: Origen's Doctrine of the Soul* (Washington DC: Catholic University of American Press, 2012), 252.

¹⁰⁶ Orig. *Princ.*, 2.3.7 (*ANF* 4:275).

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Daley, “Resurrection,” 185.

¹⁰⁸ Orig. *Princ.*, 2.3.7 (*ANF* 4:275).

Body Language

In his groundbreaking monograph, *Naming and Necessity*,¹⁰⁹ Saul Kripke argued in favor of two different sorts of designators—rigid and non-rigid. A designator is simply a term referring to something. *Rigid designators* designate the same person in all possible worlds in which he or she exists; *non-rigid designators* are descriptive, identifying phrases.¹¹⁰ A *possible world* refers to “ways the world might have been.” When Kripke uses the term, he means the totality or entire histories of that possible world and the descriptive conditions associated with it.¹¹¹

For the sake of illustration, consider the United States presidential election of 2000, in which George Bush opposed Al Gore.¹¹² In a hotly contested race, the U.S. Supreme Court eventually ruled Bush the winner. A phrase such as “the President of the United States in September 2001” refers to a uniquely identifying description and is, as such, a *non-rigid designator*. Because, the President of the United States in September 2001, *could* have been Al Gore. At least it is possible to imagine such a scenario.

Naming phrases like “George Bush” or “Al Gore” which directly (rigidly) designate a particular person are examples of *rigid designators*. The words “George Bush,” for example, designate George Bush in every world in which George Bush could exist.¹¹³ So, the sentence “George Bush was the President of the United States in September 2011” expresses a *contingent identity* because although “George Bush” is a rigid designator, the phrase “President of the United States in September 2011” is a non-rigid designator. All that means is that the sentence, “George Bush was the President of the United States in September 2011, can be true in *this* world, yet false

¹⁰⁹ Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1980).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 18; we have all imagined different worlds from time to time, including certain things about ourselves. It clearly takes imagination to conceive of a possible world. For example, we may imagine that we are back in high school hoping to arrange a date with the most popular girl or boy, or becoming a famous musician, or an airline pilot. We might even imagine that we were in Oxford at its inception almost a millennium ago or, at the opposite end of the historical spectrum, that we were on the first lunar excursion. Kripke has reference to these kinds of “worlds.” The fact is any constitutionally qualified candidate might have been President of the United States in September 2001—including Donald Trump or even me. See also Stephen E. Parrish, who explains that using the term “possible worlds” implies that such a world is “broadly logically possible” and that there is “no contradiction” occasioned by it; “Theism, Naturalism, and Worlds: The Puzzle and the Problem,” *Philosophia Christi* 18:2; 433-4.

¹¹² This paper uses the example of Bush and Gore; Kripke makes use of Richard Nixon’s presidency in his explanations.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 48, where Kripke explains that, a designator is considered to be rigid “if in every possible world it designates the same object.”

in *other* worlds. Its truth is *contingent*: the identity it expresses holds true in this world, but not necessarily in other worlds. If, on the other hand, the identity is between two rigid designators, the identity will be *necessary*; it will hold in every world in which these designators refer.¹¹⁴

If two words both designate the same referent in every possible world¹¹⁵ and if, in this world, the two words designate the same referent, then they must designate the same referent in every world; since, as a matter of logical necessity, everything is identical to itself. Thus, if “George Bush” and “the President of the United States in September 2001” are both *rigid designators*, and if we insist that “George Bush” is, in this world, identical to “the President of the United States,” then we must insist that “George Bush” is identical to “the President of the United States” in every possible world. The identity will be *necessary*.¹¹⁶

Kripke explains the idea of a *rigid designator* as follows: imagining some other world and imagining the question, “Could Al Gore have been President of the United States in September 2001?” how is it possible to know that, in the possible world, the same Al Gore is the one who lost the presidential race in 2000? Kripke simply *stipulates*¹¹⁷ that it is the same Al Gore to which we refer in this world. *Every personal name is a rigid designator*.¹¹⁸ Even if 100 persons are named Al Gore, the name of each of those 100 persons is a rigid designator of that very person and not of anyone else with the name.

How might Kripke’s thinking assist Origen? Utilizing a Cartesian reference, he notes:

Let “Descartes” be a name, or rigid designator, of a certain person, and let “B” be a rigid designator of his body. Then if Descartes were indeed identical to B, the supposed identity, being an identity between two rigid designators, would be necessary, and Descartes could not exist without B and B could not exist without Descartes.¹¹⁹

If then, as Kripke argues, rigid designators identify people like Descartes and track them across possible worlds, then it is *possible* that the identity of “Leonides” to his physical body “B” would hold true even when he attains a glorified, spiritual body. It is, a necessary truth; it holds

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 48-49.

¹¹⁵ Origen argues elsewhere that “there were ages before our own, and that there will be others after it. It is not, however, to be supposed that several worlds existed at once, but that, after the end of this present world, others will take their beginning.” See Orig. *Princ.*, 3.5.3 (*ANF* 4:342).

¹¹⁶ Kripke, 48-49.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 49.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 145.

true in every possible world, including the one in which we now live and the eschatological one in which Leonides' soul has returned to its Maker. Using the argument of a rigid designator to identify Origen's father results in the following:

Leonides in the *physical body* = Leonides in the *spiritual body*

Kripke's theory and my appropriation of it here is dependent upon an initial "baptism" (not in the religious sense) by which an

. . . object may be named by ostension, or reference of the name may be fixed by a description. When the name is 'passed from link to link,' the receiver of the name must, I think, intend when he learns it to use it with the same reference as the man from who he heard it.¹²⁰

The use of "ostension" indicates an act of pointing out or to someone. In Kripke's mind, Origen could actually point to Leonides identifying him in his spiritual body as a metaphysical recognition of his father. The identification, however, depends on an essentialist understanding of *what* Leonides is. Does Leonides in the spiritual body have the essential properties and relations of Leonides in the earthly body? When the spiritual transition occurs, will the *eidōs* or form which, for Origen, identified the body, have the essential properties and relations Kripke insists is necessary? Will the scars and brutality of martyrdom disclose Leonides' identity? For Kripke, the answer requires an "empirical investigation" discovered along the "route to the necessary *aposteriori*."¹²¹ But, how can a proposition which is *necessarily true* be knowable only *aposteriori*?

Consider the proposition *L* that if Leonides in his physical body exists, then Leonides exists as a human person. Origen knew this *apriori*. If *L* is true, then to say that *L* is necessary requires that one also knows *apriori* that *L* is true in any possible world that could be instantiated.¹²² Thus, since the actual world w_1 was instantiated with Leonides existing as a human person, then any epistemically possible world w_2 would contain essential properties and relations of Leonides if

¹²⁰ Ibid., 96. Kripke, 94-5, explains that local custom occasions the referential rigid designator. Others within the referent's community—to include the referent him/herself and the history of how a particular name or rigid designator came to be applied to the referent—determine the veracity of the designator. He admits (94) to sympathy with Bishop Joseph Butler's now-famous ontological maxim, "Everything is what it is, and not another thing." See Joseph Butler, *Five Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel*, ed. Stephen L. Darwall (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1983), 20.

¹²¹ Scott Soames, "The Philosophical Significance of the Kripkean Necessary *Aposteriori*," *Philosophical Issues* 16:1 (Sept 2006): 291.

¹²² Ibid., Soames explains: "Thus, when one finds, empirically, that *p* is true, one learns *aposteriori* that epistemically possible world-states in which *p* is false are metaphysically impossible."

instantiated. To fuse this approach with a theological proposition would suggest that Leonides in the present real world w_1 will be or at least obtain to the essential properties and relations of Leonides in a spiritual world w_2 when eschatologically instantiated.

There is, undeniably, no reason or empirical evidence to affirm or deny the possibility of one kind of Leonides linked to or the same as another kind of Leonides. As Kripke argued, some propositions are *necessarily true* but knowable only *aposteriori*.¹²³

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¹²³ *Ibid.*, 35, 140; Kripke's thinking is notoriously complex and piercingly intense. If the information presented above seems confusing, it is because Kripke's work contributed significantly to the decline of the theory that philosophy is fundamentally the *logical analysis* of language. This brief paper is clearly not the place for a cogent appraisal of Kripke's work. For a helpful introduction to Kripke's thinking, see G. W. Fitch, *Saul Kripke* (New York: Routledge, 2014); a solid analysis of Kripke's essays is available in Alan Berger, ed. *Saul Kripke* (Cambridge: University Press, 2011).

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