

# Some Notes on the Schemes of Temporal Logics in Late Neoplatonism and in the Works of Origen and Gregory of Nyssa

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## Abstract

The article analyzes some key moments in the history of temporal logics in late antiquity (conception of integral time, relationship between temporal and eternal, extended and instant in the systems of Iamblichus, Proclus, Damascius and Simplicius), and genesis of Christian forms of temporal logics, which transform the everlasting homogenous time of κόσμος into history of universal salvation, alterate unextended  $\nu\upsilon\nu$ , moment of psycho-physical time of late Neoplatonists, with  $\kappa\alpha\iota\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$ , eschatologically charged instant of decision and act that can interrupt the continuity of time and to achieve instantaneously the end, τέλος of history.

## Keywords

temporal logic – late Neoplatonists – Origen of Alexandria – Gregory of Nyssa

The theses B and XVIIa of Walter Benjamin's *Handexemplar of On the Concept of History* (1940) contains an actually eschatological idea.<sup>1</sup> Against the model of historical time understood as a progressively directed linear continuum in which each moment is following a preceding one and provides ground for the next, that makes impossible the achievement of the objective of historical

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process other than by progress through the entire chain of the causally linked moments (if this objective is defined otherwise than an “infinite task” at all), Benjamin sets another model of time. It has not continuous but “grainy” structure, each moment of this time can become a point of rupture of the temporal continuity and instantaneous achievement of the end of history. According to Benjamin, each of these moments is “the small gateway in time through which the Messiah might enter”.<sup>2</sup> For Benjamin, secularized version of this messianic time is Marx’s idea of classless society; this secular version of messianic time saves the same structure: “there is not a moment that would not carry with it *its* revolutionary chance”.<sup>3</sup>

Giorgio Agamben, who discovered the *Handexemplar* of *On the Concept of History* in the Bibliothèque Nationale in 1980, has recognized in eschatologically charged moments of Benjamin’s messianic time the category of *καιρός* crucially important for early Christian and Byzantine authors. Later he included Benjamin’s temporal schematism into his own reflections on the issues of eternity, *chronos*, *kairos*, *parousia*, messianic and eschatological time in St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans.<sup>4</sup> However the texts of Benjamin and Agamben, where the present moment of time is interpreted as *καιρός* – that is as an eschatologically charged instant of decision and act that can interrupt the continuity of time, to achieve instantaneously the end, *τέλος* of history, are not unique in the wide perspective of reflection on the structure of time in the twentieth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>5</sup>

In the contemporary philosophical debates we can observe the moments of actualizing the temporal problematics developed by late Antique and early Byzantine authors. It seems to be important to study the genesis of temporal logics more precisely, which determines the problem and categorical framework of the later discussions on the nature of time.

2 W. Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, vol. 4 (1938-1940), eds. M.W. Jennings, M. Bullock, H. Eiland, G. Smith, Cambridge, MA, 2003, pp. 397, 401-402.

3 W. Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, vol. 4, p. 402 (Benjamin’s italic–AK).

4 See: G. Agamben, *The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, Stanford, 2005, pp. 59-78. On Agamben’s reception of Benjamin’s temporal logic see: L. De la Durantaye, *Giorgio Agamben: A Critical Introduction*, Stanford, 2009, pp. 101-120, 148, 368, 413.

5 Suffice to mention here a parable *The Hour of God’s Will* by Nikolai Leskov, or *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* by Fyodor Dostoevsky where a visionarist’s meditations on the primordial sin and universal history alternate with the words: “...and yet how simple it is: in one day, in one hour everything could be arranged *at once!* The chief thing is to love others like yourself, that’s the chief thing, and that’s everything; nothing else is wanted – you will find out *at once* how to arrange it all” (italics are mine–AK; English tr. by Constance Garnett, see: F. Dostoyevsky, *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*, Adelaide, 2014).

## 1 Schemes of Temporal Logic in Late Neoplatonism

First, let us mark in a concise form the main stages of the discussion on the nature of time in the Greek philosophy:

1. “Pre-history”: the problematic and conceptual field for the discussion on the nature of time and on its structure in philosophy of Late Antiquity:
  - Zeno’s aporias.
  - Plato: *Timaeus* 37d-38c: reciprocal definitions of time and eternity; *The Parmenides* 152a-e: the notion of  $\nu\hat{\nu}\nu$  (“now”), an unextended moment of temporal continuity in which the becoming stops and which therefore will be interpreted in later Platonic tradition as a moment of eternity in the temporal sequence.
  - Aristotle: *Physica* (IV,10-14): definition of time as “the number of motion with regard to prior and posterior” (219b1-2); discussion on enigmatic nature of unextended “nows”; a number of  $\acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron\rho\iota\alpha\iota$  on the reality of time.<sup>6</sup>
  - Plotinus: *De tempore et aeternitate* (*Enn.* III. 7): the definitions of time as the life of the cosmic soul<sup>7</sup> and of eternity as the life of  $\text{Νοῦς}$ .<sup>8</sup>

II. Pseudo-Archites (Simpl., *Categ.*, 352.24-353.15):<sup>9</sup>

Time has no substance ( $\acute{\alpha}\nu\upsilon\pi\acute{\omicron}\sigma\tau\alpha\tau\omicron\nu$ ): its “parts” are no-longer-existing past and not-existing-yet future. However it includes some indivisible moment “now” ( $\nu\hat{\nu}\nu$ ), the content of which is permanently changed, but form remains unchanged. This moment is a border-line between future and past. But it is not comprehensible: as soon as we try to reflect on it, it becomes past.

Although the content of the “now” changes with every new moment, the form or structure of the time remains unchangeable.

Simpl. *Categ.* 352.32-353.2: “for every Now ( $\nu\hat{\nu}\nu$ ) is a partless and indivisible limit ( $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\rho\alpha\varsigma$ ) of the former time and the beginning of the future, like the point on a straight line which is broken”.<sup>10</sup>

6 See: R. Sorabji, *Time, Creation, and the Continuum*, London, 1983, pp. 7-16; M.F. Wagner, *The Enigmatic Reality of Time: Aristotle, Plotinus, and Today*, Leiden–Boston, 2008, pp. 149-166.

7 *Enn.* III 7, 11, 42-45, in: Plotinus, *Enneads III. 1-9*, ed. A.H. Armstrong, Cambridge, MA – London, 1967, p. 340.

8 *Enn.* III 7, 3, 16-18, in: Plotinus, *Enneads III. 1-9*, p. 302. Cf.: M. Chase, “Can We Escape Mortality? Some Neoplatonic and Islamic Views on Time and Eternity” in: *Ἐσχάτως-β: Φιλοσοφία ιστορίας в контексте идеи “предела”* [*Ἐσχάτως-β: Philosophy of History in the Context of Idea of “Limit”*], ed. O. Dovgopolova, Odessa, 2012, pp. 18-20.

9 *Simplicii In Aristotelis categorias commentarium*, ed. K. Kalbfleisch (Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca, vol. VIII), Berlin, 1907, pp. 352-353.

10 *The Concept of Time in Late Neoplatonism: Texts with transl., introd. and notes by S. Sambursky and S. Pines*, Jerusalem, 1971, p. 24-25.

III. Model of “three aspects of being” of each hypostasis in late Neoplatonism (beginning from Iamblichus), in its explications on temporal logic:

1. As καθ’ ἑαυτὸν – “by itself”; or ἀμέθεκτος – “non-participated”;
2. μετεχόμενος – “participated” to a lower level of being, but not mixed with this lower level;
3. as reflected by this lower level – κατὰ μέθεξιν (or: a lower level of being as reflecting a higher hypostasis).<sup>11</sup>

IV. Iamblichus’ distinction between two kinds of time:

1. phenomenal (“begotten”) time of sensible world, which has not its own substance (ἀνυπόστατον)<sup>12</sup>, is fluid, continual, infinitely divisible; and
2. “generative” (γενεσιουργός), “transcendent” (ἐξηρηγμένος) or “intelligible” (νοερός) time, which is a number of self-moving movement (ἀριθμὸς τῆς αὐτοκινήτου κινήσεως), a time-like monad (μονὰς χρονικός), “the extension (διάστημα) with regard to the pre-existing order of movement (τὸ κατὰ τὴν προϋπάρχουσαν τῆς κινήσεως τάξιν), in which the earlier and later are arranged beforehand and provide the actions and movements with order. For one cannot infer (συλλογίζεσθαι) the earlier and later of things without the pre-existence of time per se (τοῦ χρόνου καθ’ ἑαυτὸν), to which also the order of actions is referred”.<sup>13</sup>
3. Simplicius: “Iamblichus ... defines the indivisible with regard to the intrinsically stationary forms of logoi and the unreal with regard to the movements proceeding from them which do not conserve the indivisible and immobile essence”.<sup>14</sup>

S. Sambursky’s and S. Pines’s interpretation: Iamblichus draws a scheme of two lines: the first – a straight or a fragment of a giant circumference with points marking the moments of the antecedent and the posterior, symbolizes the static intelligible time, and second – a broken in the point of tangency with the first, that denotes the physical time. By its contact angle the second line permanently slides along the line of the intelligible time from one its moment to another and – simultaneously, – flows itself like a conveyor belt.<sup>15</sup>

v. Proclus’s scheme of the integral time (χρόνον ὅλον):

“Time by its essence and through the activity resting in itself is thus eternal and a monad and a centre, and simultaneously it is continuous and number and circle, in respect of that which is proceeding and participating” (ἔστιν οὖν

11 Ch.: J. Dillon, *Introduction to: Iamblichi Chalcediensi In Platonis dialogos commentariorum fragmenta*, ed., transl. and commented by J. Dillon, Leiden, 1973, p. 33.

12 *Simpl. Categ.*, 353.19, in *Simplicii In Aristotelis categorias commentarium*, p. 353.

13 *Simpl., Categ.*, 352.13-20; English tr. by Sambursky and Pines, *The Concept of Time*, p. 27.

14 *Simpl., Categ.*, 353.19-23; English tr. by Sambursky and Pines, *The Concept of Time*, p. 27.

15 *The Concept of Time in Late Neoplatonism*, pp. 14-15, 26-29.

αἰώνιος μὲν καὶ μονὰς καὶ κέντρον κατ' οὐσίαν ὁ χρόνος καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἐν αὐτῷ μείνασαν ἐνέργειαν, συνεχῆς δὲ ἅμα καὶ ἀριθμὸς καὶ κύκλος κατὰ τὸ προῖόν καὶ τὸ μετεχόμενον).<sup>16</sup>

VI. Damascius: the presence of the whole time in each of its moments:

Moments of the time are “emanative ravel”; each of them contains (συνέπτυκται) the whole time, likewise as circumference and rays are fold in the center of the circle (ἄλλ' ὡσπερ ἐν τῷ κέντρῳ συνέπτυκται ὁ κύκλος καὶ πάσαι αἱ ἀπὸ τοῦ κέντρου, οὕτω καὶ ἐν τῷ ἡνωμένῳ τὸ πᾶν τῆς διακρίσεως πλήθος. ἀνά δ' τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον ἐν τῷ ἐνί, τὸ τε κέντρον αὐτό καὶ τὰ ἐν τῷ κέντρῳ συνεπτυγμένα καὶ πάντα ὁμοίως ἀπλόζεται).<sup>17</sup>

VII. So in the late Neoplatonic scheme of time we have:

1. 'A tangent line' of the fluid, 'begotten' phenomenal time, that touches in the point of 'now' the 'circumference' – the integral or intelligible time (χρόνος νοερός), all the moments of which are everlasting and simultaneous.
2. The sequence of the points on this circumference is not the temporal, but logical and causal: this is “the extension corresponding to the pre-existing order of movement, in which the earlier and later are arranged beforehand and provide the actions and movements with order” (Iamblichus cited by Simplicius in *Categ.*, 352.13-18).
3. The transition from one point of the circumference to another (from one “everlasting event” to another) is not only linear; it is mediated by the relation to the center – the point of eternity, radiating the rays (model μονή – πρόοδος – ἐπιστροφή).

To sum up: the result of intuitive beholding given to the highest part of the Soul unfolds in the intelligible time like a chain of discursive conclusions; and in the time of the sensible world this syllogistic chain becomes the causal chain of phenomenal continuity.

## 2 The Principles of Temporal Logic in Early Christian Authors

We may suppose that in the Christian tradition the reason of emerging the fundamentally new temporal logic was necessity to comprehend the world in context of the event transcending the world itself, that is the event of

16 Procli Diadochi *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, ed. E. Diehl, Leipzig, 1906, vol. III, p. 26.30-27.3. English tr. by S. Sambursky and S. Pines, *The Concept of Time in Late Neoplatonism*, p. 53.

17 Damascii *Successoris dubitationes et solutiones de primis principiis in Platonis Parmenidem*, ed. C.É. Ruelle, vol. 1. Paris, 1889 (repr. Amsterdam, 1966), p. 62, 20-23.

Christ. This event becomes the axis of history (and, hence, strictly requires that history has to have its beginning and τέλος), and makes imperative gradual reflection on history *in the both directions* from this “moment of interruption”, or the axis. Each moment ought to be sequentially explained in its reference to the key event, it has to have a meaning; universal history is interpreted as the history of salvation. The same time this key event is experienced as a rupture of all causal connections, as a miracle. Intuition of the event of Christ as a rupture of temporal continuity, as a stopping time is expressed in the series of early Christian texts, for example in *Protoevangelium Jacobi*, 18.2:

Ἐγὼ δὲ Ἰωσήφ περιεπάτουں, καὶ οὐ περιεπάτουں. Καὶ ἀνέβλεψα εἰς τὸν πόλον τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ εἶδον αὐτὸν ἐστῶτα, καὶ εἰς τὸν ἀέρα καὶ εἶδον αὐτὸν ἔκθαμβον καὶ τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἡρεμοῦντα. Καὶ ἐπέβλεψα ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ εἶδον σκάφην κειμένην καὶ ἐργάτας ἀνακειμένους, καὶ ἦσαν αἱ χεῖρες αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ σκάφῃ. Καὶ οἱ μασώμενοι οὐκ ἐμασῶντο καὶ οἱ αἶροντες οὐκ ἀνέφερον καὶ οἱ προσφέροντες τῷ στόματι αὐτῶν οὐ προσέφερον, ἀλλὰ πάντων ἦν τὰ πρόσωπα ἄνω βλέποντα. Καὶ εἶδον ἐλαυνόμενα πρόβατα, καὶ τὰ πρόβατα ἐστήκει· καὶ ἐπῆρεν ὁ ποιμὴν τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ τοῦ πατάξαι αὐτά, καὶ ἡ χεὶρ αὐτοῦ ἔστη ἄνω. Καὶ ἐπέβλεψα ἐπὶ τὸν χεῖμαρρον τοῦ ποταμοῦ καὶ εἶδον ἐρίφους καὶ τὰ στόματα αὐτῶν ἐπικείμενα τῷ ὕδατι καὶ μὴ πίνοντα. Καὶ πάντα θήξει ὑπὸ τοῦ δρόμου αὐτῶν ἀπηλαύνετο.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, the temporal logic that gave rise to early Byzantine philosophy of history emerges from the intuition of singularity of the human (God-man) person, whose coming is experienced as a rupture of temporal and causal continuity. This temporal logic is based on the paradoxical understanding: eternity, metahistorical *is* here, it can interrupt the natural sequence of events; however, the same time there is a gape, hiatus between this Divine eternity and a

18 É. de Strycker, *La forme la plus ancienne du Protévangile de Jacques. Recherches sur le papyrus Bodmer 5 avec une édition critique du texte grec et une traduction annotée* (SH, 33), Bruxelles, 1961, p. 148, 150. English tr. by A. Walker (*ANF*, vol. 8, 1903, p. 365), with my corrections according to the papyrus Bodmer 5: “And I Joseph was walking, and was not walking. And I looked up to the pole of the heaven, and saw it standing; and I looked up into the air, and saw it astonished, and the birds of the heaven keeping still. And I looked down upon the earth, and saw a trough lying, and work-people reclining; and their hands were in the trough. And those that were eating did not eat, and those that were rising did not carry it up, and those that were conveying anything to their mouths did not convey it; but the faces of all were looking upwards. And I saw the sheep walking, and the sheep stood still; and the shepherd raised his hand to strike them, and his hand remained up. And I looked down upon the current of the river, and I saw the kids and their mouths resting on the water and not drinking. And all things in a moment were driven from their course”.

creature. This is a paradoxical but insurmountable contradiction which became the core of Christology: God is entirely “historical”, and absolutely transcendent.

Early Byzantine temporal logic presupposes the essentially eschatological perspective of philosophy of history: the universal history is the time between the necessary limits, it once began and once will be finished. Once a Neoplatonic author starts to write as a Christian (as John Philoponus after 529)<sup>19</sup>, he eagerly criticises the Aristotelian doctrine of the cosmos perpetuity, arguing the beginning of the world in time and altogether with time.

This Christian intuition of necessary temporal limit may be perceived also in the “individual eschatology”. In the Platonic tradition, starting from *Phaedrus*, it was assumed that a soul after its fall into body has possibility to retrieve its memory and return to the celestial realm. However, this returning is not a final one: as far as a soul remains three-partible, it can fall into sensible world again. This “eschatological relativism” is essential for Plato and all Platonic tradition: perpetual cosmos cannot have in itself any unconditional temporal limits. Christian tradition, for its part, to year 543 breaks totally with any shadow of conception of metempsychosis, and insists on irreversibility of human history.<sup>20</sup> Singularity of Incarnation and Crucifixion makes necessary the postulates about uniqueness and temporal limitation of the world history:<sup>21</sup> even Origen who assumed the multitude of consistently successive worlds-aeons, insisted on their finite number.<sup>22</sup>

19 On the discussion between John Philoponus and an Athenian pagan Neoplatonist Simplicius on the eternity of cosmos, see: M. Chase, “Discussion on the Eternity of the World in Late Antiquity”, *Scholae*, 5.2 (2011), pp. 111-173. It is interesting that even in his polemics against the Aristotelian theory of time and perpetual cosmic moving Philoponus explores the conceptual material extracted from the texts of Aristotle himself. He notes a series of Aristotle's passages, where the Stagirite mentions some examples of instantaneous changes (such as the freezing of water). According to Philoponus, God's creation of the world is precisely such an instantaneous change: it is not a motion on the part of the Creator, but is analogous to the activation of a state (*hexis*), which is timeless and implies no change on the part of the agent.

20 Perhaps, Augustine's sequence *posse non peccare – non posse non peccare – non posse peccare* can be seen as paradigmatic for all further theories of progress. See: Augustinus, *De correptione et gratia*, 12.33-34, in: Augustinus, *Contra sermonem Arrianorum praecedit Sermo Arrianorum, De correptione et gratia*, ed. M.J. Suda and G. Folliet, (CSEL, 92), Wien, 2000, p. 259-260.

21 Cf. Augustine's *De civitate Dei*, 12.14. – See: Aurelii Augustini *De civitate Dei, libri XI-XXII*, ed. B. Dombart, A. Kalb, (CCSL, 48), Turnhout, 1955, p. 368-369.

22 Origen, *De princ.* III, 5, 2: if the created reality would not have the beginning and the end, it been not comprehensible even for its Creator. – See: Origène, *Traité des principes, Tome III (Livres III et IV)*, Introduction, texte critique de la Philocalie et de la version de Rufin, traduction par H. Crouzel et M. Simonetti, (SC 268), Paris, 1980, p. 220, 222.

Given in early Christian texts of the first and the second centuries, this intuition of time directed to its fulfilment and having a possibility of such fulfilment in each of its moments, becomes a subject of theological and philosophical reflection for Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, John Philoponus and Maximus the Confessor.

Already in the New Testament, the experience of time turned out to be associated with the significant equivocality of the word *παρουσία*: this Greek word may mean both presence and arrival. Due to the possibility to comprehend *παρουσία* as real presence of Christ in the life of Church<sup>23</sup> the experience of singularity of God-man personality's event – through Paul's doctrine about the Church as Christ's body,<sup>24</sup> – becomes here paradigmatic and implies the demand to treat another person as Christ himself.<sup>25</sup> Moreover the idea of infinite depth, indetermination of God-man personality turns out to be expanded in some measure to human personality also. This is the source of specifically Christian pathos of freedom that penetrates Christian anthropology from Paul to Kant. But at the same time *παρουσία* is related to future, to the forthcoming coming of Christ: it demands from humans to be constantly prepared that in this moment, here and now the continuity of everyday life will be dissected by the metahistorical event.<sup>26</sup> Both aspects of understanding the *παρουσία* in the early Church in their close connection (causal continuity of time can be dissected by a metahistorical event any time when we deal with another person) constitute the complex of ideas from which the early Byzantine temporal logic arises.

### 3 Origen of Alexandria. Temporal Logic and Philosophy of History in the *De Principiis*

Although the authenticity of the text known as *On the First Principles* (*De principiis*, *Περὶ ἀρχῶν*) is still debated by scholars,<sup>27</sup> this book is the only Origen's

23 Cf. Mt. 18:20.

24 Cf. 1 Cor. 12.

25 Very important text here is Mt. 25:34-46.

26 Cf. Mt. 29:19 (the parable of the fig tree), Lk. 17:24, Mt. 25:1-13 and many others. Together with the texts of New Testament, huge corpus of apocalyptic literature as well as prophetic practice of the early Church ought to be mentioned here. It is important to emphasize that the end of history was interpreted and anticipated in these texts as not the subject of fear, but of hope: ἐλθέτω χάρις καὶ παρελθέτω ὁ κόσμος οὗτος (*Didache* 10,6; *The Apostolic Fathers. 1 Clement, 11 Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, Didache*, ed. B.D. Ehrman (LCL, 24), Cambridge, MA–London, 2003, p. 432).

27 Thus, for instance, Panayiotis Tzamalikos even refuses to take this work into account in

work where his philosophy of history is presented in a coherent form. Without entering the discussion on various interpretations of Origen's philosophy of history and temporal logic<sup>28</sup> let us try to describe the main features of this conception.

The world process begins when God, on the only reason of his goodness,<sup>29</sup> creates from nothing<sup>30</sup> some, but certainly final<sup>31</sup> number of clear rational

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his research of Origen's philosophy of history: P. Tzamalikos, *Origen: Philosophy of History and Eschatology*, Leiden–Boston, 2007, pp. xii-xiii, 9-10.

- 28 See on the issue: Tzamalikos, *Origen: Philosophy of History*; P. Tzamalikos, *Origen: Cosmology and Ontology of Time*, Leiden–Boston, 2006; P. Tzamalikos, "Origen and the Stoic View of Time," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 52 (1991), pp. 535-561; R.P.C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture*, Louisville–London, 2002; M.J. Edwards, *Origen against Plato*, Oxford, 2002; E. Osborn, "Causality in Plato and Origen," in: *Origeniana Quarta: Die Referate des 4. Internationalen Origenes-kongresses (Innsbruck, 2-6 September 1985)*, ed. L. Lies, Innsbruck–Wien, 1987, pp. 362-369; K.J. Torjesen, "Pedagogical Soteriology from Clement to Origen," in: *Origeniana Quarta*, pp. 370-378; J. Bostock, "Origen's Philosophy of Creation," in: *Origeniana Quinta: Historica, Text and Method, Biblica, Philosophica, Theologica, Origenism and Later Developments. Papers of the 5th International Origen Congress (Boston College, 14-18 August 1989)*, ed. R.J. Daly, Leuven, 1992, pp. 253-269; L.R. Hennessey, "A Philosophical Issue in Origen's Eschatology: The Three Senses of Incorporeality," in: *Ibid.*, pp. 373-380; S. Guly, "The Salvation of the Devil and the Kingdom of God in Origen's *Letter to Certain Close Friends in Alexandria*," in: *Origeniana Decima: Origen as Writer. Papers of the 10th International Origen Congress (University School of Philosophy and Education "Ignatianum", Kraków, Poland, 31 August-4 September 2009)*, ed. S. Kaczmarek, H. Pietras, A. Dziadowiec, Leuven–Paris, 2011, pp. 197-220; I.L.E. Ramelli, "Origen's Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Reassessment," in: *Origeniana Decima*, pp. 649-670; U. Volp, "'...for the fashion of this world passeth away': The Apokritikos by Makarios Magnes – An Origenist's Defense of Christian Eschatology?" in: *Origeniana Decima*, pp. 873-890; A.B. Серёгин, *Гипотеза множественности миров в трактате Оригена "О началах"* [A.V. Serëgin, *Hypothesis of Plurality of Worlds in the Treatise De principiis by Origen*], Moscow, 2005.
- 29 Origen, *De princ.* II, 9, 6, 184-185 (Origène, *Traité des principes, Tome I (Livres I et II)*, Introduction, texte critique de la Philocalie et de la version de Rufin, traduction par H. Crouzel et M. Simonetti, (SC 252), Paris, 1978, p. 364).
- 30 Origen, *De princ.* II, 9, 2, 31-36 (Origène, *Traité des principes*, I, p. 354).
- 31 Origen argues this thesis by very important statement (*De princ.* II, 9, 1, 9-20): *Certum est enim quod praedefinito aliquo apud se numero eas fecit; non enim, ut quidam uolunt, finem putandum est non habere creaturas, quia ubi finis non est, nec conpraehensio ulla uel circumscriptio esse potest. Quodsi fuerit, utique nec contineri uel dispensari a deo quae facta sunt poterunt. Naturaliter nempe quidquid infinitum fuerit, et inconpraehensibile erit. Porro autem sicut et scriptura dicit, número et mensura uniuersa condidit deus, et idcirco numerus quidem recte aptabitur rationabilibus creaturis uel mentibus, ut tantae sint, quantae a prouidentia dei et dispensari et regi et contineri possint;* Origène, *Traité des principes*, I, p. 352; English tr. by G.W. Butterworth: "...in the beginning God made as large a number of rational and intelligent beings ... as foresaw would be sufficient... We must not suppose, as some would, that there is no end of created beings, since where there is no end there can

spirits. Origen does not suggest that the act of creation occurs in some moment of time and before it there was time without created beings; on the contrary, time itself comes into being together with the created rational spirits. These clear spirits, or minds are created as absolutely equal and similar to each other;<sup>32</sup> they are able to contemplate God, that is to participate in some way in the inner life of God, “participating” in Logos, Christ.<sup>33</sup> It is very important that at the moment of creation these minds are endowed with free will; hence the image of God which is given to each of them<sup>34</sup> is not a *proprium*, but may be lost.

Since with equal (and the best of the possible) “start positions” any alteration of these positions by created rational beings inevitably becomes the choice of worse, the next act of world drama becomes *the universal cosmogonic fall*.<sup>35</sup> Each of them realizes its choice in a special way: some beings lean towards evil more, somebody less; so the result of the universal fall becomes diversity of rational beings. Organising this variety, God arranges κόσμος or αἰών, connecting some conditions of spirits with some ontological levels, or “services” (i.e., with numerous ranks of celestial, terrestrial and infernal beings).<sup>36</sup> On this stage of the world process matter determines more or less rough corporeality of rational beings, their “subordination to vanity” – from inspired corporeality of angels to rough bodies of humans and demons. It is important to note that matter in Origen’s doctrine is a reason for neither multiplicity nor variety of the beings. The multiplicity is resulted by the act of creation (and remains even in the final apokatastasis), the variety is a result of fall, that is of the free choice. Matter here is only a “medium” of the difference that rational creatures acquire in realisation of their free will. So the free choice of rational creatures each time determines again their position in the hierarchy of κόσμος.<sup>37</sup>

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neither be any comprehension nor limitation... For by its nature whatever is infinite will also be beyond comprehension” (Origen, *On First Principles*, ed. H. de Lubac, Gloucester, MA, 1973, p. 129).

32 Origen, *De princ.* II, 9, 6, 188, in: Origène, *Traité des principes*, I, p. 364.

33 Origen, *De princ.* II, 6, 3, 92-96, in: Origène, *Traité des principes*, I, p. 314.

34 Origen, *De princ.* III, 6, 1, 13-25, in: Origène, *Traité des principes*, III, p. 236.

35 See Origen, *De princ.* III, 5, 4, 89-125, where Origen discusses the semantic of the word καταβολή; “foundation” of the world turns out to be at the same time its “throwing down”; Origène, *Traité des principes*, III, p. 224, 226.

36 Cf. Origen, *De princ.* II, 1, 2-3 (Origène, *Traité des principes*, I, pp. 236-240); II, 9, 6 (Origène, *Traité des principes*, I, pp. 364-366); III, 5, 4 (Origène, *Traité des principes*, III, pp. 224-226).

37 See Origen, *De princ.* II, 9, 2: the existence of created beings is not substantial and, hence, is determined in its one or another mode by direction of their will (Origène, *Traité des*

According to Origen, the sequence of successive worlds, or aeons (numerous, but limited in number)<sup>38</sup> has pedagogical and therapeutical meaning. The goal of all temporal process is to lead each of the created beings to its primordial condition, that is to the unity with God, without denying freedom of its will. Due to its immortality, a soul “throughout diverse and immeasurable ages ... may either descend from the highest good to the lowest evil or to be restored from the lowest evil to the highest good”.<sup>39</sup> Although the result of a life determines the conditions of the next birth (Origen devotes many pages of his works to the interpretation of the doctrine of infernal torments for sinners and to description of “the celestial universities” for righteous persons)<sup>40</sup> it would be mistaken to see here an analogue of karma: Origen describes not an impersonal law of karma, but wise and careful pedagogics and therapy.

That is why it is important to compare Origen's *De principiis* with Plotinus's treatise *Enn. III.4 – On Our Allotted Guardian Spirit*.<sup>41</sup> Plotinus assumes that a soul before its new incarnation selects some tutelary principle, or δαίμων – its fate, an aim of its aspirations, its idea of virtue (this way Plotinus interprets the myth about the choice of a lot by souls in Plato's “dream of Er”)<sup>42</sup> – and follows it all its life. (In Plotinus's text this “choice” is not more than allegory of a soul's natural inclination). Δαίμων corresponds to one or another ontological stage of the intelligible world. It is not necessary kind and good: a foolish soul may select for itself a foolish or evil δαίμων. This way souls perpetually wander across the levels of reality going up and down from one life to another.<sup>43</sup>

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*principes*, I, p. 354, 356).

- 38 Proving his statement about the finite number of the worlds-aeons (and, hence, about the finite character of the world process itself) Origen explores the same argument as in the case of proving a finite number of created beings: if the world process would be infinite it would be incomprehensible even for God (Origen, *De principiis* III, 5, 2, in: Origène, *Traité des principes*, III, pp. 220, 222). It is important to compare this passage from *De principiis* with Origen's definition of the kingdom of God as “the contemplation of the ages which have been and which are to come” (ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ ἢ θεωρία τῶν γεγονότων καὶ γενησομένων αἰώνων ἐστὶ, – Origen, *Commentary on Psalms*, 145.13; *PG* 12, 1673; English tr. by R.P.C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event. A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture*, Louisville–London, 2002, p. 350): as God contemplates all the sequence of worlds-aeons, the temporal process, for Origen, is finite.
- 39 Origen, *De principiis*, III, 1, 23, 1025-1027, in: Origène, *Traité des principes*, III, p. 146; English tr. by Butterworth, p. 209.
- 40 Cf. Origen, *De principiis*, II, 10-11, in: Origène, *Traité des principes*, I, pp. 374-413. Cf. Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, pp. 333-358.
- 41 Plotinus, *Enneads* III. 1-9, ed. A.H. Armstrong, Cambridge, MA–London, 1967, pp. 139-162.
- 42 Plato, *Republic* 617d-620e.
- 43 See Porphyrius, *Vita Plotini*, 10.15-28 and 22.23-30 on the δαίμων of Plotinus himself: Porphyry, *On the Life of Plotinus and the Order of His Books*, Plotinus, *Enneads* I. 1-9, ed. A.H. Armstrong, Cambridge, MA – London, 1966, pp. 32-34, 66.

Origen's description of the ways of souls in their incarnations in successive worlds might seem similar to the perspective describing by Plotinus. Initially all rational creatures are clear spirits, all have equal "start positions", but then they prove to be involved into circles of the world process; all they are not good or evil substantially, but they have free will and can choose many times one life or another, thus changing their "ontological status" – becoming angels, humans or demons. The same time ontological horizon in Origen's system differs from that of Plotinus: the world of Origen has a kind of "mainstream"; this world as a system of aeons is a complex system of educational institutions and the world history is a long educational process directing the whole universe to salvation.

It is important to emphasize that the beginning and the end of the world process described by Origen don't fully correlate with each other. In series of texts Origen says about the forthcoming "end of aeons" (τέλος τῶν αἰώνων) and the universal restoration (*restitutio omnium*, ἀποκατάστασις τοῦ πάντου),<sup>44</sup> which will come when all creatures, including demons and devil himself, voluntarily submit themselves to God, thanks to own efforts and God's mercy having attained the likeness to God. On this final stage of the world process the difference between creatures caused by their fall will disappear; the matter will transform into universal spiritual body of the creature;<sup>45</sup> God will become an absolute object of any feeling and knowledge: "everything which the rational mind, when purified from all the dregs of its vices ... can feel or understand or think will be all God".<sup>46</sup> Indirectly the discourse on the soul of Christ in *De principiis* II, 6, 3-7 points out to impossibility of a new fall: a soul that by the force of love has inclined to goodness will lose its ability to sin<sup>47</sup> (the anticipation of Augustine's *non posse peccare*).

What is essentially Christian in the temporal logic of Origen? It is the intuition of person. Origen postulates the absolute importance of each rational being: the world process cannot be over until everyone, some earlier someone later, will be saved. Origen disposed the impersonal Platonic cosmos by universe of rational beings, that is by universal Church; system of ontological levels is transformed in his doctrine into the system of responsible "ministries". Theology of Origen is entirely personalized: God directly appeals to each subject of the universal history as to one of its "centres".

44 Cf. Origen, *De principiis* II, 3, 5, esp. lines 196-210 (Origène, *Traité des principes*, I, p. 262); *De principiis* III, 5, 2 (Origène, *Traité des principes*, III, pp. 220-222).

45 Origen, *De principiis* III, 6, 8, 237-241 (Origène, *Traité des principes*, III, p. 250, 252).

46 Origen, *De principiis* III, 6, 3, 69-72 (Origène, *Traité des principes*, III, p. 240; English tr. by Butterworth, p. 248).

47 See Origène, *Traité des principes*, I, p. 314-324.

In this perspective, a distinction between “time” (χρόνος) and “kairos” (καιρός) has major significance in Origen’s ontology of time. As Panayiotis Tzamalikos shows in his research,<sup>48</sup> καιροί, as the moments of God’s intervention in history (moments of a prophecy pronounced or fulfilled, events of Incarnation and consummation of the aeon) and human’s action in regard to God, have to be defined as qualitatively different “the most appropriate moments for action”: “history ... is not a senseless complex of episodes, in which actions simply come to pass: each moment is, in a particular way, related to a specific performance. The *time* of a certain action is a constitutive element of its *quality* itself”.<sup>49</sup>

So universal process is transformed by Origen into the multitude of “histories”, directed by the will of God to the fulfilment, so that God does not infringe on the freedom of created beings: the mercy does not force, but direct.

#### 4 Gregory of Nyssa, some features of temporal structures in *On the Making of Man* and *On Virginity*

Similar temporal logic might be seen also in a series of treatises of Byzantine theologian Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>50</sup> Vladimir Cvetković, investigating the temporal problematics in Gregory’s *On Virginity* has discovered in his writing the logical schemes describing four main temporal categories with corresponding “temporal orders”:

48 Tzamalikos, *Origen: Philosophy of History*, pp. 130-140.

49 Tzamalikos, *Origen: Philosophy of History and Eschatology*, p. 138, Tzamalikos’s italics. Cf. W. Benjamine’s secularized interpretation of analogical conception of historical time in his *On the Concept of History*: “In reality, there is not a moment that would not carry with it its revolutionary chance – provided only that it is defined in a specific way, namely as the chance for a completely new resolution of a completely new problem”. See: Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, vol. 4, p. 402.

50 See on the issue: B. Цветковић, *Бог и време: Учење о времену Светог Григорија Нисског* [V. Cvetković (read Tsvétkovich), *God and the Time: The Doctrine of Time in Gregory of Nyssa*], Niš, 2013; P. Plass, “Transcendent Time and Eternity in Gregory of Nyssa,” *VC*, 34.2 (1980), pp. 180-192; I.L.E. Ramelli, D. Konstan, *Terms for Eternity: Aiónios and Aídios in Classical and Christian Texts*, Piscataway, 2013, pp. 172-198; I.L.E. Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena*, Leiden–Boston, 2013, pp. 279-658; V. Cvetković, “St. Gregory’s argument Concerning the lack of διαστήματα in the divine activities from *Ad Ablabium*,” in: *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarism (Proceedings of the nth International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa, Tübingen, 17-20 September 2008)*, eds. V.H. Drecoll and M. Berghaus, Leiden–Boston, 2011, pp. 369-382.

1. χρόνος or cosmological or physical time based on the circle movement of celestial spheres;
2. psychological time based on the movement of our soul, changes of its emotional or intellectual states directed to past (memory), future (hope) and present (possibility of free act, that is a time of *καιρός*; for Gregory the notion of *καιρός*, as the most appropriate moment for doing good is basic for the proper understanding of the doctrine of free will; as a unique moment of free act *καιρός* may be interpreted here as a point of possible rupture of casual continuity of natural time, as a moment of freedom);
3. historical time that is linear movement to the end of time, to divine eternity (*αἰών*) “by permanent determination of human beings to find the repose of their motion in God”;<sup>51</sup> for Gregory, the main characteristic of historical time, is perpetual need in God and search for knowing of God; due to this need, immanent for all creation, the world history acquires the general direction to salvation, *ἐπέκτασις*;<sup>52</sup>
4. Christological time that is time of implemented eschatology, incorporation of Logos “where one’s salvation is not placed anymore at the end of the historical time, but in the historical process itself”.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, each moment of historical time can become, for Gregory, a moment in which the temporal continuity is interrupted by the “event of Christ”.

In *De hominis opificio* Gregory, in the same manner as the unknown author of the Coptic *Gospel of Truth*, interprets the goal of the world process as manifestation in reality of the whole image of God that is the total humanity. Due to Adam’s fall, the death has come into reality, and the *pleroma* of God’s image cannot enter the world at once; it happens gradually by generations. Historical time is arranged by God especially for it:

God, Who governs all things in a certain order and sequence ... therefore also foreknew the time coextensive with the creation of men, so that the extent of time should be adapted for the entrances of the pre-determined souls, and that the flux and motion of time should halt at the moment when humanity is no longer produced by means of it; and that when the generation of men is completed, time should cease together with its completion, and then should take place the restitution of all things, and with the World-Reformation humanity also should be changed from the corruptible and earthly to the impassible and eternal.<sup>54</sup>

51 Цветковић, *Бог и време*, p. 335.

52 Here there is obvious similarity with Origen’s philosophy of time.

53 Цветковић, *Бог и време*, p. 335.

54 Gregory of Nyssa, *De opificio hominis* 22, 5, 28-41, PG 44, 205. English tr. by H.A. Wilson, in *NPNF*, vol. 5, 1917, p. 412.

Therefore, in Gregory's treatise we find the doctrine on the unconditional importance of every human being: each part of the total humanity is a unique aspect of God's image that ought to be revealed in the creation.

Thus in temporal logic that is explicit in the works of early Byzantine authors, historical time appears to have "granular" structure: each moment of this structure can be a point of potential break of temporal continuity, a point in which historical time may prove to be opened to eternity. Each human being is a kind of "centre" of historical time; moreover, as far as Origen includes into the process of universal salvation angels and demons, the number of such "centres" of historical time may surpass the number of humans. Early Byzantine authors insist that God regards each human being as unique and the only (cf. Mt. 18:10: "See that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven"). That is why a "rupture" of temporal continuity means here a principal possibility not to be determined by causal connection of the historical, i.e. the possibility of transcending the historical.

Temporal logic found in the works of early Byzantine authors is based on intuitions different from the intuitions of temporal logic in Neoplatonism. The second is characterised by (1) the idea of lack of the limits of cosmic time and moving (famous *τρόποι* of Aristotle arguing impossibility to comprehend the first and the last moments of time) and (2) homogeneity of moments of time; while in the works of Christian authors of the third and fourth centuries there are temporal schemes characterised by 1) the idea of the limits of cosmic and historical time, and direction of this time to its eschatological end. Comparing this temporal model with Neoplatonic one it can be said that time as it was described by Iamblichus, Proclus and Damascius also is understood as consisting of non-extended moments of "now", *νῦν*, and each of these moments is considered a point in which eternity presents in time. In both types of temporal models time is grainy; Neoplatonic *νῦν* or *καίρῳ* of early Byzantine authors equally may be interpreted as such elements of temporal continuity which are connected with each other not only directly, as moments of casual sequence, but also through the relation of each of them to the non-temporal, to eternity. However, *καίρῳ* differs from *νῦν*: eternity which meets a human in *καίρῳ* is eternity of the divine Person: temporal moment here is "the small gateway in time through which the Messiah might enter".