The Οὐσία in Origen’s *Commentary on John* About the Theological Interpretation of a Philosophical Concept

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to briefly examine the quotations of the term οὐσία in Origen’s *Commentary on John* (= *Clo*) and, particularly, to point out that he translates this philosophical concept into the theological relationship between God-Father and the Son-Wisdom. In *de orat.* 27,8 – which was written in 233-234, within the redactions of the first and the second parts of the *Clo* – Origen distinguishes two main meanings of the term οὐσία: firstly, according to the Platonic and Aristotelian tradition, it means the individual existence, properly the ὑπόστασις; secondly, according to the Stoics, it means the common and generic substance, properly the ὑπόμενον or προηγομένη οὐσία. In the exegesis of John Origen resorts this conceptual and philosophical difference in order to explain the theological relation among the Father and the Son. The paper will concentrate on two main occurrences of οὐσία in the *Commentary.* The first is *Clo* 2,23,149: while commenting Jn 1:4 and comparing it with 1Jn 1:5, Origen argues with the Monarchians and says that, as the light of 1Jn 1:5 which has no relation with the darkness is different from the light of Jn 1:4 which is in relation with the darkness, in such way God-Father is different from the Son-Wisdom in terms of οὐσία. Here, Origen seems to suggest that the term οὐσία is used in terms of ὑπόστασις, i.e. individual existence, and that there are two οὐσίαι of the Father and the Son. The second main occurrence of the term is *Clo* 10,37,246: Origen criticizes the Monarchians who point out that God-Father and the Son-Wisdom are the same not only in terms of οὐσία, but also in terms of ὑπόστασις and ὑποκείμενον. Actually Origen insists on the fact that the Father and the Son are different in terms of their individual existences, i.e. τῇ ὑποστάσει or ὑποκείμενῳ, but they are the same because of their common substance, i.e. τῇ οὐσίᾳ. Here, Origen seems to use the Stoic meaning of οὐσία as τὸ ὑπομένον or προηγομένη οὐσία. In conclusion, in his *Clo,* Origen uses the two philosophical meanings of οὐσία which he clearly summarizes in *de orat.* 27,8, in order to explain the theological and divine relation among the Father and the Son.

Keywords: Origen, Οὐσία, ὑπόστασις, Commentary, John.
Introduction

As Harry A. Wolfson said, Origen of Alexandria does not simply resort ancient Greek philosophical concepts, but he also changes and suits them to a theological and Christological context. In fact, his use of the term οὐσία, particularly in his *Commentary on John*, shows that Origen does not only deal with theological problems according to the ideas of Greek metaphysics, but he also mixes them as needed by the exegetical background. Most scholars consider Origen’s use of οὐσία confusing and inaccurate, e.g. Ch. Stead. Origen actually quotes this term, especially within his exegesis of John, in a very technical way. The aim of this paper is, firstly, to briefly reconstruct the different meanings of οὐσία which Origen gets from the philosophical tradition and, secondly, to show that he matches these meanings with different theological contexts.

Philosophical Meanings of Οὐσία: The Case of Orat. 27,7-8

The *Commentary on John*, which this paper will be focused on, was written by Origen among 224-225 in Alexandria and 232-235 in Caesarea. In the meantime, he devoted to a long exegesis of the Lord’s Prayer, generally dated 233-234 (= Orat.), in which the exegesis of the verse: «Give us this day our daily bread (τὸν ἄρτον τὸν ἐπιούσιον)» reminds him of the philosophical meanings of the term οὐσία, on the one hand, and suggests him to divide these different meanings into three main classes, on the other hand. At first, Origen advises that the term ἐπιούσιος is mentioned neither by any ancient Greek authors nor any philosophers, but it is invented by the evangelists, i.e. *Mt* 6:11

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6 Orat. 27.1: *GCS 3* 363,23-24.
and Lk 11:13\footnote{1 Ora\!t. 27,7: τι δὲ καὶ τὸ ἐπιούσιον, ἤδη κατανοητέον. πρώτον δὲ τούτο ἵστεν, ὅτι ἡ λέξις ἢ ἐπιούσιον παρ’οὗδεν τῶν Ἑλλήνων οὔτε τῶν σοφῶν ὠνόμασται οὔτε ἐν τῇ τῶν ἱδρυτῶν συνηθείᾳ τέτριπται, ἀλλὰ ἔσεσθέ ὑπὸ τῶν εὐαγγελιστῶν: GCS 3 366,33-367,2.}. Then, he immediately supposes a linguistic explanation of the term, i.e. ἐπιούσιος is nothing else but a periphrasis for: «ὁ εἰς τὴν οὐσίαν συμβαλλόμενος ἄρτος», the bread which becomes the substance, and he compares it with a similar expression, πεποιῆσθαι, which Moses refers to the people in Ex 19:6 and is a periphrasis for: «ὁ περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν καταχωρούμενος λαὸς», the people that get around the substance. After this linguistic analysis of the term, which reminds of the Late Antiquity grammarians’ method\footnote{2 Ora\!t. 27,7: ἵστη τὴν ἐπιούσιον προσηγορία ἐστὶ παρὰ Μοσείῳ γεγραμμένη, ὑπὸ θεοῦ εἱρμηνεύ̄τη ὡμεῖς δὲ ἔσεσθέ μοι λαὸς περιούσιος (Ex 19:6). καὶ δοκεῖ μοι ἐκατέρα λέξις παρὰ τὴν οὐσίαν πεποιηθεῖ̄, ὅ μὲν τὸν εἰς τὴν οὐσίαν συμβαλλόμενον ἄρτον δηλοῦσα, ὅ δὲ τὸν περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν καταχωροῦμενον λαὸν καὶ κοινονοῦντα αὐτὴ σημαίνουσα: GCS 3 367,7-12.}, Origen declares that the meaning of ἐπιούσιος depends on the meaning of the term οὐσία of which it is composed\footnote{3 With respect to Origen’s dependence on Late Antiquity’s rhetoric, see: Neuschäfer, B. 1987. Origines als Philologe. 1, Reinhardt, Basel, 140-155. About his dependence on Middle-Platonic commentaries, see also: Hadot, I. 1987. Les introductions aux commentaires exégétiques chez les auteurs néoplatoniciens et les auteurs chrétiens. In Tardieu, M. (ed.). Les règles de l’interprétation, Cerf, Paris, 99-122; Heine, R.E. 1995. The Introduction to Origen’s Commentary on John compared with the Introductions to the ancient philosophical commentaries to Aristotle. In: Dorival, G. and Le Boulluec, A. (eds.). Origeniana sexta. Actes du Colloquium Origenianum Sextum, Chantilly, 30 août-3 septembre 1993, Peeters, Leuven, 3-12.}. Thus, he lists three classes of the meanings of οὐσία: the first is derived from Middle-Platonic language\footnote{4 For the general question see: Pétre, H. 1951. Les leçons du ‘Panem nostrum cottidianum’. RSR 38, 63-79. For Origen’s interpretation of the Lord’s prayer, see: Gessel, W. 1975. Die Theologie des Gebetes nach ‘De Oratione’ von Origenes, Paderborn, Wien: Von Stritzky, M.B. 1989. Studien zur Überlieferung und Interpretation des Vaterunser in der frühchristlichen Literatur, MBTh 47, 70-180; Dahle, A. 1918. Origen on ‘Our daily bread’, ET 16, 13-24.}, the second from a Stoic lexicon\footnote{5 Origen may have referred to a Middle-Platonic handbook which is generally allocated to Alcinous; see, in particular, Whitaker, J. 1974. Parisinus Graecus 1662 and the writings of Albinus. Phoenix 28, 320-354, 450-456.}, finally the third is introduced by himself\footnote{6 The Stoic lexicon which Origen certainly made use of was the περὶ στοιχείων χρήματος by Herophilus, who is explicitly mentioned by Origen himself twice in the Prologue of his Commentary on the Psalms. See: PG 12,1053a-c. About the presence of Herophilus in Origen, see: Cadiou, R. 1932. Dictionnaires antiques dans l’œuvre d’Origène. REG 45, 271-285.}. According to the first definition of the term, i.e. the Platonic definition, οὐσία means the ὑπόστασις, the existence or subsistence, of the ἀσώματα, incorporeal beings, which perpetually have τὸ εἶναι, they perpetually exist\footnote{7 See Markschies, Ch. 2007. Was bedeutet οὐσία? 184-185.}. On the contrary, according to the second Stoic definition, the κυρίως οὐσία is identified with eight main expressions: i) the matter of the beings which exist, ii) which are corporeal and iii) which are nominated; iv) the pristine substance which has no qualities and v) pre-exists in each material being; vi) the subject
of every change vii) which does not change; viii) the ἀποικον, i.e. the non-
 qualitative matter, which has capability of every quality (ποιότης)ⁱ. The third and 
last definition of οὐσία is suggested to Origen himself by his own exegesis of 
the ‘daily bread’, which is allegory of Christ incarnated: the οὐσία results in the 
participation of the corporeal reality at the incorporeal divinity of the Son², 
because of his kénosis (Phil 2,6-7).

To sum up, in Orat. 27.7-8 in order to explain the term ἐπιούσιος Origen 
lists three main philosophical meanings of the term οὐσία: 1) a Platonic or 
Middle-Platonic definition on the basis of which it means the incorporeal 
existence of an intelligible reality, i.e. the ὑπόστασις of the ἀσώματα; 2) a Stoic 
definition on the basis of which it means the corporeal reality, particularly the 
non-qualitative matter (τὸ ἁπάντων) which can be of every quality (ποιότης); 3) 
an Origenian definition which defines the οὐσία as mediation of corporeal 
creation and incorporeal divinity grounded on the incarnation of Jesus Christ, 
the ‘daily bread’ (Mt 6:11; Lk 11:13). This triple definition of οὐσία is the 
philosophical pattern according to which Origen intends the term in his 
Commentary on John (= Clo)³.

Theological Uses of Οὐσία in the Commentary on John

In Orat. 27.7-8 Origen quotes three main definitions of οὐσία. In his 
interpretation of John he uses these three definitions as needed by the 
exegetical contexts. Although different contexts are usually combined in Clo, 
they may be divided into three main kinds: a. Trinitarian; b. Christo-logical; c. 
antignostic. Origen results to use the three different meanings of οὐσία in 
accordance to these three different exegetical contexts.

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¹ Orat. 27.8: οὐσία ἐστὶν ἡ πρώτῃ τῶν ὄντων ὦλη, καὶ ξὶ ἢς τὰ ὄντα, ἢ τῶν σωμάτων ὦλη, καὶ 
ξὶ ἢς τὰ σώματα, ἢ τῶν ὁνομαζόμενων, καὶ ξὶ ἢς τὰ ὁνομαζόμενα, ἢ τὸ πρῶτον ὑπόστασιν 
ἀποικον ἢ τὸ προσφυστάμενον τοῖς οὐσίν ἢ τὸ πάσας διατακτῶν τοὺς μεταβολὰς ταῖς 
καὶ ἀλλοιώσεις, αὐτὸ δὲ ἀναλλοίωτον κατὰ τὸν ἱδίον λόγον, ἢ τὸ ὑπομένον πάσαν ἀλλοίωσιν καὶ 
μεταβολῆν. κατὰ τοῦτο δὲ ἡ οὐσία ἐστὶν ἄποικος τοῖς καὶ ἀσχημάτιστος κατὰ τὸν ἱδίον λόγον 
ἀλλ’ ὦλῃ. μέγας ἂν ἄποικος ἀποτελαμενὸς ἔχουσι, πάση δὲ ἐγκείσθαι ποιότητι καθάπερ ἑτοιμῶν τι 
χωρίων. ποιότητας δὲ διαπαθητικῶς λέγουσι τὰς ἐνέργειας καὶ τὰς ποιῆσις κοινῆς, ἤ ἄν εἰναι 
τὰς κνίσεις καὶ σχέσεις συμβεβηκέν’ οὐδὲ τίνος τὰς τοῦτον κατὰ τὸν ἱδίον λόγον μετέχειν 
ψαί τὴν οὐσίαν, ἢ ἢ τὶνος αὐτῶν ἀρχώριστον εἶναι πάθει τῆς, οὐδὲν ἤτον καὶ ἐπίδεικτην 
πασῶν τὸν τοῦ ποιοῦντος ἐνεργείαν, ὡς ἢ ἕκεινο ποιή καὶ μεταβάλλῃ ὁ γὰρ σύνον αὐτὴ 
τόνος καὶ δι’ ὄλων κεχωρηκὼς πάσης τῆς ποιήσεως καὶ τῶν περὶ αὐτῆς αἰτίας ἢ ἐκοιμομένων’ 
δι’ ὄλων τὰ μεταβλητήν καὶ δι’ ὄλων διαρκείν γέγονεν εἰναι, καὶ πάσαν οὐσίαν πάσῃ 
συγχεῖσαι δύνασθαι, ἤνομεν μέντοι: GCS 3 368,1-19.
² See Orat. 27.9: GCS 3 368,20-369,22. About this see: Balas, D.L. 1975. The idea of 
participation in the structure of Origen’s thought. Christian transposition of a theme of the 
colloque international des études origéniennes, Istituto di Letteratura Cristiana Antica 
dell’Università di Bari, Bari, 257-275.
Jean, 5 voll., Cerf, Paris (SCh 120, 157, 222, 290, 385).
The Trinitarian Contexts: The Two Οὐσίαι of the Father and the Son

i. The first main context where Origen uses the term οὐσία with respect to the Trinitarian issue is Cl 1,24,151-152. Here, he comments on Ps 44,2 («My heart has uttered a good word») and he criticizes the Monarchians who believe that as the mind is not different from the heart so the Son is not different from the Father, i.e. the Son has neither a proper οὐσία nor a ὑπόστασις. Origen objects that if the Son had not a proper οὐσία, he could not be distinguished from the Father, which is impossible. According to Origen, the divine Son has a proper οὐσία, different from the Father’s οὐσία. Moreover, in this context the term οὐσία clearly refers to the Platonic meaning.

ii. The second passage is Cl 2,2,16 where Origen criticizes not only the Monarchians, who argue that the Son has not a proper identity, ἴδιότης, and differs from the Father only in the name, τὸ ὄνομα, but also the Adoptionists, who believe that the Son is different from the Father and has a proper identity, ἴδιότης, and existence, οὐσία, but does not participate in his divinity, θεότης. Origen’s refutation is the following: God-Father is the αὐτόθεος or ὁ θεός, but the Son-Logos perpetually participates in his divinity, he is simply θεός.

iii. The third context where the Alexandrian assigns a Platonic meaning to οὐσία, is Cl 2,10,74. Here Origen mentions some who believe that the Holy Spirit has not a proper οὐσία, different from the οὐσία of the Father and the Son. Thus, he replies that if the Holy Spirit had not a proper οὐσία, he would...
be the same as the Father, because of what is said by Mt 12:32 («anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven»), which seems to express a difference between the Spirit and the Son.

iv. Another main Trinitarian context of Origen’s use of οὐσία is Clo 2,23,149, where he implicitly refers to Monarchians’ exegesis of Jn 1:4 («μὲν τις οἶσται ...»): while the Monarchians argue that if the Son is the same light as the Father on the basis of 1Jn 1:5, then the Son’s οὐσία is the same as the Father’s οὐσία, Origen says that the light which the Son is differs from the light which the Father is.

v. The fifth text is Origen’s exegesis of Jn 1:26-27, where he explains that the Son-Logos came to existence, ύφεστηκότας οὐσιοδόξα, from a pristine subject, which is defined τὸ ύποκείμενον, and is identical to the Wisdom. Here, a technical distinction comes up: the Son has an οὐσία, i.e. an incorporeal existence different from the Father’s; the common nature of the Father and the Son is generically called ύποκείμενον; the Son is the Wisdom.

vi. The last main context of a Trinitarian use of the term is Clo 10,37,246, in the exegesis of Jo 2,18-19, where Origen criticizes again the Monarchians: in fact, on the basis of 1Cor 15:15 («we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised») and Jn 2:19 («Destroy this temple, and I will arise it again in three days»), they argue that the Father is the same as the Son, not only in terms of the οὐσία, but also of the ύποκείμενον and of the ὑπόστασις, and their difference is just nominal, κατὰ τινας ἑπινοίας Origen replies that the difference between the Father and the Son is necessary.

On the basis of the previous texts it is clear that: firstly, in the Trinitarian contexts of his exegesis of John, Origen intends οὐσία not only in terms of

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1 Crouzel suggests that the Monarchian whom Origen criticizes may be a scholar of Noetus; see: Crouzel, H. 1955. Théologie de l’image de Dieu chez Origène. 102.
2 Clo 2,23,149-150: SCh 120,304-307.
3 See Clo 6,38,188: SCh 157,268-269.
4 See Clo 10,37,246: μὴ διαφέρει τῷ ἀριθμῷ τὸν ὑιόν τοῦ πατρός, ἀλλ’ ἐν οὐ μόνον οὐσίᾳ ἀλλὰ καὶ ύποκείμενῳ τυχόντος ἀμφοτέρους, κατὰ τινας ἑπινοιας διαφόρους οὐ κατὰ ὑπόστασιν λέγεσθαι πατέρα καὶ ὑιόν, ἐν ὑπόστασιν διαφόρους ὑπόστασιν. Some scholars argue that both Clo 10,37,246, which we have in the original Greek text, and a fragment from Origen’s Commentary on Hebrews (PG 14,1308), which we have only in Latin translation, point out that for Origen, the οὐσία means the common subject of the Father and the Son. See, e.g., Wolfson, H.A. 1964. The Philosophy of the Church Fathers. 318. As Simonetti suggests (see: Simonetti, M. 1971. Note sulla teologia trinitaria di Origen. 274), it is difficult to accept this interpretation. Particularly about this text see: Orbe, A. 1958. Hacia la primera teologia de la procesión del Verbo, Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Roma, 436-437; Id. (1991). Orígenes y los monarquianos. Gregoriamun 72, 39-72. See also: Rius-Camps, J. (1973). Orígenes y su reflexión sobre la Trinidad. In Silanes, N. (ed.), La Trinidad en la tradición prenicena: Cristo revelador del Padre y emisor del Espíritu en las primeras generaciones cristianas, Secretariato Trinitario, Salamanca, 189-213.
Platonic lexicon, i.e. the incorporeal existence of the divinity, but also as equal to ύπόστασις; secondly, he never intends the οὐσία as a common subject of the Father and the Son from which the Son comes to existence, because the idea of the so called ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας generation of the divine Son reminds him of the animal generation.

The Christological Contexts: the Mediator Οὐσία

i. As far as the main Christological contexts where Origen uses the term οὐσία are concerned, the first one is CIo 1,19,115, where he says that the Son-Wisdom is the intelligible universe of the τόποι, the ideal entities according to which he gives to the matter the structure, the πλάσις, the essences, the εἴδη, finally the οὐσία too. On the basis of this text, the οὐσία results in the incorporeal property in which each being participates because of the mediator nature of the Son-Wisdom and of the creation.

ii. Another Christological use of the term οὐσία occurs in CIo 1,28,200. After distinguishing between the predicates which refer to Christ καθ’ οὐσία and πρὸς ἡμᾶς, Origen assumes that some believe that different predicates of Christ correspond to different natures of Christ, but he declares that different predicates of Christ are just different ἐπίνοια, titles or denominations of his indivisible nature. Here, he certainly criticizes the Gnostics, who introduce a double nature of Christ, pneumatic and psychic.

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3 CIo 1,19,115: καὶ λεκτέων ὅτι κτίσας, ἐν οὐσίας εἶκο, ἐμψυχον σοφίαν ὁ θεὸς, αὐτῇ ἐπέτρεψεν ἀπὸ τὸν ἐν αὐτῇ τόπον τούς οὐσίαν καὶ τῇ ὅλῃ <παρασχεῖν καὶ> τὴν πλάσιν καὶ τὰ εἴδη, ἐγὼ δὲ ἐφίστημι εἰ καὶ τὰς οὐσίας: SCh 120,122-123.


5 CIo 1,28,200: μὴ δέ προσκοπέω διακρινόντος ἡμῶν τὰς ἐν τῷ σωτηρίῳ ἐπινοιας, οἴμενος καὶ τῇ οὐσίᾳ ταύτην ἡμᾶς ποιεῖν: SCh 120,158-159.

iii. The third main text where Origen assigns a clearly Christological meaning to οὐσία, is Clo 6,6,38: here, he distinguishes between the truth in itself, ἀντικόσμητος, that is the Son-Wisdom, on the one hand, and the individual truths, ἀληθεία, that participate in the truthfulness of the truth in itself. Origen uses the adjective οὐσιώδης in order to define the truth in itself, in which the individual truths participate because of the incarnation of Christ, i.e. the incarnation of the truth in itself in the individual truths\(^1\).

iv. Another very relevant text of Origen’s exegesis of John where οὐσία explicitly refers to the mediator nature of Christ between the creation and the God-Father, is Clo 19,6,37. Here, Origen says that the human intellect can access God’s substance, οὐσία, only through his truth, ἀληθεία (Jn 14:6), or that the human intellect can access God’s nature, φύσις, and power, δύναμις, only through his substance, οὐσία. Thus, at first Origen assigns to οὐσία a Platonic meaning, i.e. it means the incorporeal existence of the God-Father; then, he assigns a Christological meaning to the term, i.e. it means Christ who mediates between the creation and the Father, particularly his nature and power.

These are only the most representative texts of Origen’s Christological use of the term οὐσία in his Clo. If Christ, as the divine Son-Wisdom, is the mediator between God-Father and the creation – and this mediation is grounded on his creation of the sensible world and of his kénosis –, then his οὐσία is nothing else but the mediation between divinity and extra-divinity, exactly as the ‘daily bread’ in Orat. 27,8. Therefore, in Christological contexts Origen seems to use not only a Platonic meaning of οὐσία – it is properly Christ’s divine and incorporeal existence –, but also the same meaning he used in his exegesis of the ‘daily bread’ (Orat. 27,7-8)\(^2\).

The Antignostic Contexts: Οὐσία as Φύσις

i. Particularly in the second part of his Clo – that part which was written in Caesarea, between the years 232 and 235 – Origen frequently assigns an explicit Stoic meaning to the term. As he explains in Orat. 27,7, according to the Stoic lexicon, the οὐσία is the non-qualitative (ἀποικο) subject which can be of every quality (ποιότητας). The first text where this specific meaning of the term occurs, is Clo 13,25,152, where Origen says that the Son’s οὐσία is higher that the intelligible creation’s οὐσία\(^3\): this concept implies that the Son and the creation participate in the same divinity, which is expressed by the term οὐσία, but the Son perpetually participates in the Father, and the intelligible beings do not\(^4\).

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\(^1\) Clo 6,6,38: SCH 157,158-159. See also: Clo 6,6,40: SCH 157,158-159.
\(^3\) Clo 13,25,152: SCH 222,114-115.
ii. The second text where the term οὐσία occurs in a Stoic language is Clo 13,61,429-430. Here, Origen criticizes the Gnostics who deny the immortality of psychic souls. He replies that as the ὑλικόν, i.e. the non-qualitative subject (τὸ ὑποκοιμημένον), can participate in different qualities at different times, even in opposite qualities, i.e. ποιότητες, so the soul itself can participate in different qualities, i.e. the mortality and the immortality, at different times. The Stoic logic of the relationship between the subject, i.e. the ὑποκείμενον or the ὑλικόν or the ὑποκοιμημένον, on the one hand, and the qualities, i.e. the ποιότητες, on the other hand, is the pattern according to which Origen intends the relationship between the soul and its predicates, i.e. mortality and immortality.

iii. Another very significant text where Origen intends οὐσία in terms of the Stoic logic, is Clo 20,23,197ff, particularly in his exegesis of Jn 8:44 («You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires») against Heracleon, who argues that the hylic beings belong to the Demiurge and are damned, and the pneumatic beings belong to God and are saved. According to Origen, there is no difference between the hylic and the pneumatic beings, they participate in the same subject, i.e. the same οὐσία, but some live in accordance to the good and some do not. As in Stoic logic the οὐσία denotes the non-qualitative subject which can be every quality, so in Origen’s exegesis of Jn 8:44 it means the common nature, φύσις, in which all the beings participate, i.e. those that the Gnostics define as ‘hylic’ and ‘pneumatic’ beings.

On the basis of these texts it may be argued that, firstly, Origen uses the Stoic concept of οὐσία in order to criticize the Gnostics, particularly regarding the so called ‘difference of natures’, and that, secondly, all the occurrences of the Stoic interpretations of this term in Clo are in the books which Origen wrote at Caesarea, after the year 232 – it is not impossible that the Origenian polemic against the Gnostics increased when he was no longer in Alexandria, where the Gnostic school of Valentinus was born.

Conclusion

According to Ch. Markschies’ interpretation, Origen does not use the term οὐσία in a confused and inaccurate way, but he rather gives it specific meanings. Particularly in Orat. 27,7-8, he lists three main philosophical meanings of οὐσία, i.e. Platonic, Stoic and a ‘third way’, as defined by Ch.


Markschies, which is grounded on the divine Son’s mediation. Then, every time the term οὐσία occurs in Origen’s *Cio*, it denotes one of these meanings. However, the attribution of one of these meanings to οὐσία results to depend on the exegetical contexts, so the Platonic meaning mainly occurs in Trinitarian contexts\(^1\), the Stoic meaning in antignostic contexts and the third meaning – which Origen himself introduces in his exegesis of the Lord’s Prayer – mainly occurs in Christological contexts.