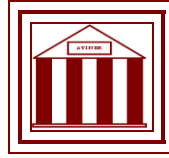


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**The Οὐσία in Origen's *Commentary on John*
About the Theological Interpretation of a
Philosophical Concept**

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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 προηγούμενη 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 ὑποκειμενον. 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 ὑποκειμένῳ, 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 ὑπομενον or προηγούμενη 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 said¹, 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. Stead². Origen actually quotes this term, especially within his exegesis of *John*, in a very technical way³. 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 Caesarea⁴. In the meantime, he devoted to a long exegesis of the Lord's Prayer, generally dated 233-234⁵ (= *Orat.*), in which the exegesis of the verse: «Give us this day our daily bread (τὸν ἄρτον τὸν ἐπιούσιον)»⁶ 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

¹ Wolfson, H.A. 1964. *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*. Harvard University Press, London, 317.

² Stead, Ch. 1990. *Philosophie und Theologie I. Die Zeit der Alten Kirche*. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart/Berlin/Köln, 114. See also: Id. 1977. *Divine Substance*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 94f. Before him see also: Crouzel, H. 1955. *Théologie de l'image de Dieu chez Origène*. Aubier, Paris, 102-106.

³ See particularly: Simonetti, M. 1971. Note sulla teologia trinitaria di Origene. *VetChr* 8, 273-307 (now: Id. 1993. Sulla teologia trinitaria di Origene. In Id. *Studi sulla cristologia del II e III secolo*. Istitutum Patristicum Augustinianum, Roma, 109-143); Id. 2000. Art. Trinità. In Monaci Castagno, A. *Origene. Dizionario*. Città Nuova, Roma, 459-466. A very important essay is: Marksches, Ch. 2007. Was bedeutet οὐσία? Zwei Antworten bei Origenes und Ambrosius und deren Bedeutung für ihre Bibelklärung und Theologie. In Id. *Origenes und sein Erbe. Gesammelte Studien*, W. de Gruyter, Berlin/New York, 173-193.

⁴ In general see: Pazzini, D. 2000. Art. Giovanni. In Monaci Castagno, A. *Origene. Dizionario*, 197-200. About the relationship between theological problems and historical context see: Harl, M. 1958. *Origène et la fonction révélatrice du Verbe incarné*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 121-137, 160-189; Vogt, H.J. 1990. Beobachtungen zum Johannes-Kommentar. *ThQ* 169, 191-208.

⁵ Koetschau, P. 1899. *Origenes. Werke II. Buch V-VIII Gegen Celsus. Die Schrift vom Gebet (GCS 3)*. Akademie Verlag, Leipzig, LXXV-LXXVII. P. Nautin dates it 234-235; see: Nautin, P. 1977. *Origène, sa vie et son oeuvre*. Beauchesne, Paris, 385.

⁶ *Orat.* 27,1: *GCS* 3 363,23-24.

and *Lk* 11:13¹. 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, περιούσιος, which Moses refers to the people in *Ex* 19:6 and is a periphrasis for: «ὁ περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν καταγινόμενος λαὸς»², the people that get around the substance. After this linguistic analysis of the term, which reminds of the Late Antiquity grammarians' method³, Origen declares that the meaning of ἐπιούσιος depends on the meaning of the term οὐσία of which it is composed⁴. Thus, he lists three classes of the meanings of οὐσία: the first is derived from Middle-Platonic language⁵, the second from a Stoic lexicon⁶, finally the third is introduced by himself⁷. 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 exist⁸. 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

¹ *Orat.* 27,7: τί δὲ καὶ τὸ ἐπιούσιον, ἤδη κατανοητέον. πρῶτον δὲ τοῦτο ἰστέον, ὅτι ἡ λέξις ἢ ἐπιούσιον παρ' οὐδενὶ τῶν Ἑλλήνων οὔτε τῶν σοφῶν ἠνόμασται οὔτε ἐν τῇ τῶν ἰδιωτῶν συνηθείᾳ τέτριπται, ἀλλ' ἔοικε πεπλάσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν εὐαγγελιστῶν: *GCS* 3 366,33-367,2.

² *Orat.* 27,7: ἰσομοία τῇ ἐπιούσιον προσηγορία ἐστὶ παρὰ Μωσοεὶ γεγραμμένη, ὑπὸ θεοῦ εἰρημένη· ὑμεῖς δὲ ἔσεσθέ μοι λαὸς περιούσιος (*Ex* 19:6). καὶ δοκεῖ μοι ἑκατέρω λέξις παρὰ τὴν οὐσίαν πεποιῆσθαι, ἢ μὲν τὸν εἰς τὴν οὐσίαν συμβαλλόμενον ἄρτον δηλοῦσα, ἢ δὲ τὸν περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν καταγινόμενον λαὸν καὶ κοινωνοῦντα αὐτῇ σημαίνουσα: *GCS* 3 367,7-12.

³ With respect to Origen's dependence on Late Antiquity's rhetoric, see: Neuschäfer, B. 1987. *Origenes 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 sept. 1993*, Peeters, Leuven, 3-12.

⁴ For the general question see: Pétré, 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 Vaterunsers in der frühchristlichen Literatur, *MBTh* 47, 70-180; Dahle, A. 1918. Origen on 'Our daily bread', *ET* 16, 13-24.

⁵ Origen may have referred to a Middle-Platonic handbook which is generally allocated to Alcinous; see, in particular, Whittaker, J. 1974. Parisinus Graecus 1962 and the writings of Albinus. *Phoenix* 28, 320-354, 450-456.

⁶ The Stoic lexicon which Origen certainly made use of was the *περὶ στωικῆς ὀνομάτων χρήσεως* by Herophilous, 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 Herophilous in Origen, see: Cadiou, R. 1932. Dictionnaires antiques dans l'oeuvre d'Origène. *REG* 45, 271-285.

⁷ See Marksches, Ch. 2007. Was bedeutet οὐσία? 184-185.

⁸ *Orat.* 27,8: ἢ μέντοι κυρίως οὐσία τοῖς μὲν προηγουμένην τὴν τῶν ἀσωμάτων ὑπόστασιν εἶναι φάσκουσι νενόμισται κατὰ τὰ ἀσώματα, τὸ εἶναι βεβαίως ἔχοντα καὶ οὔτε προσθήκην χωροῦντα οὔτε ἀφαίρεσιν πάσχοντα: *GCS* 3 367,14-16.

of every change vii) which does not change; viii) the ἄποιον, i.e. the non-qualitative matter, which has capability of every quality (ποιός)¹. 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 ἄποιον) 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* (= *CJo*)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 *CJo*, 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.

¹ *Orat.* 27,8: οὐσία ἐστὶν ἡ πρώτη τῶν ὄντων ὕλη, καὶ ἐξ ἧς τὰ ὄντα, ἡ τῶν σωμάτων ὕλη, καὶ ἐξ ἧς τὰ σώματα, ἡ τῶν ὀνομαζομένων, καὶ ἐξ ἧς τὰ ὀνομαζόμενα, ἡ τὸ πρῶτον ὑπόστασιν ἄποιον ἢ τὸ προουφιστάμενον τοῖς οὖσιν ἢ τὸ πάσας δεχόμενον τὰς μεταβολὰς τε καὶ ἀλλοιώσεις, αὐτὸ δὲ ἀναλλοίωτον κατὰ τὸν ἴδιον λόγον, ἢ τὸ ὑπομένον πᾶσαν ἀλλοίωσιν καὶ μεταβολήν. κατὰ τοῦτω δὲ ἡ οὐσία ἐστὶν ἄποιος τε καὶ ἀσχημάτιστος κατὰ τὸν ἴδιον λόγον ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ μέγεθος ἀποτεταγμένον ἔχουσα, πάσῃ δὲ ἔγκειται ποιότητι καθάπερ ἔτοιμόν τι χωρίον. ποιότητος δὲ διατακτικῶς λέγουσι τὰς ἐνεργείας καὶ τὰς ποιήσεις κοινῶς, ἐν αἷς εἶναι τὰς κινήσεις καὶ σχέσεις συμβέβηκεν· οὐδὲ τις γὰρ τούτων κατὰ τὸν ἴδιον λόγον μετέχειν φασὶ τὴν οὐσίαν, ἀεὶ δὲ τις αὐτῶν ἀχώριστος εἶναι πάθει τήνδε, οὐδὲν ἦττον καὶ ἐπιδεκτὴν πασῶν τῶν τοῦ ποιούντος ἐνεργειῶν, ὡς ἂν ἐκεῖνο ποιῆ καὶ μεταβάλλῃ· ὁ γὰρ συνὼν αὐτῇ τόνος καὶ δι’ ὅλων κειρωρικῶς πάσης τε ποιότητος καὶ τῶν περὶ αὐτὴν αἴτιος ἂν οικονομῶν· δι’ ὅλων τε μεταβλητὴν καὶ δι’ ὅλων διαιρετὴν λέγουσιν εἶναι, καὶ πᾶσαν οὐσίαν πάσῃ συγγεῖσθαι δύνασθαι, ἠνωμένην 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 Platonic tradition. In Crouzel, H., Lomiento, G. and Rius-Camps, J. *Origeniana. Premier colloque international des études origéniennes*, Istituto di Letteratura Cristiana Antica dell’Università di Bari, Bari, 257-275.

³ The critical edition followed is: Blanc, C. (ed.). 1966-1992. *Origène. Commentaire sur saint 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 *Clo* 1,24,151-152¹. 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 meaning².

ii. The second passage is *Clo* 2,2,16 where Origen criticizes not only the Monarchians, who argue that the Son has not a proper identity, ιδιότης, and differs from the Father only in the name, τῷ ὀνόματι, but also the Adoptionists, who believe that the Son is different from the Father and has a proper identity, ιδιότης, and existence, οὐσία, but does not participate in his divinity, θεότης³. 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 θεός⁴.

iii. The third context where the Alexandrian assigns a Platonic meaning to οὐσία, is *Clo* 2,10,74. Here Origen mentions some who believe that the Holy Spirit has not a proper οὐσία, different from the οὐσίαι of the Father and the Son⁵. Thus, he replies that if the Holy Spirit had not a proper οὐσία, he would

¹ *Clo* 1,24,151-152: οἰόμενοι προφορὰν πατρικὴν οἰοῦναι ἐν συλλαβαῖς κειμένην εἶναι τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο ὑπόστασιν αὐτῶ, εἰ ἀκριβῶς αὐτῶν πυνθανοίμεθα, οὐ διδάσκειν οὐδὲ οὐσίαν αὐτοῦ σαφηνίζουσιν, οὐδέπω φαιμέν τοιάνδε, ἀλλ' ὅπως ποτὲ οὐσίαν. λόγον γὰρ ἀπαγγελλόμενον υἱὸν εἶναι νοῆσαι καὶ τῷ τυχόντι ἐστὶν ἀμήχανον. καὶ λόγον τοιοῦτον καθ' αὐτὸν ζῶντα καὶ ἦτοι οὐ κεχωρισμένον τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο τῷ μὴ ὑφεστάναι οὐδὲ υἱὸν τυγχάνοντα ἢ καὶ κεχωρισμένον καὶ οὐσιωμένον ἀπαγγελλέτωσαν ἡμῖν θεὸν λόγον: *SCh* 120,136-137. About the concept of ὑπόστασις in Origen, see: Hammerstaedt, J. 1991. Der trinitarische Gebrauch des Hypostasisbegriffs bei Origenes. *JAC* 34, 12-20; Drecoll, V.H. 2003. Der Begriff Hypostasis bei Origenes. Bemerkungen zum Johanneskommentar II,10. In Perrone, L. (ed.). *Origeniana octava. Papers of the 8th International Origen Congress, Pisa, 27-31 aug. 2001*, I, Peeters, Leuven, 479-487.

² About Origen's polemic against the Monarchians, see: Del Cogliano, M. 2012. The interpretation of John 10:30 in the third century: antimonarchian polemics and the rise of grammatical reading techniques. *JThI* 6/1, 117-138, particularly 133-137. As M. Del Cogliano suggests, Origen may have known the antimonarchian exegesis of *John* during his stay at Rome, perhaps between the years 214 and 217 (see: Eus., *h.e.* 6,14,10; Nautin, P. 1977. *Origène, sa vie et son oeuvre*, 365, 418). About this, see also: Trigg, J.W. 1983. *Origen: the Bible and philosophy in the third-century Church*, Knox, Atlanta, 76-80.

³ *Clo* 2,2,16: ἦτοι ἀρνούμενους ιδιότητα υἱοῦ ἑτέραν παρὰ τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς ὁμολογοῦντας θεὸν εἶναι τὸν μέχρι ὀνόματος παρ' αὐτοῖς υἱὸν προσαγορευόμενον, ἢ ἀρνούμενους τὴν θεότητα τοῦ υἱοῦ τιθέντας δὲ αὐτοῦ τὴν ιδιότητα καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν κατὰ περιγραφὴν τυγχάνουσαν ἑτέραν τοῦ πατρὸς, ἐντεῦθεν λύεσθαι δύναται: *SCh* 120,216-217. See also: *CCels* 5,39; *SCh* 147,118; *Dial.* 1,32; *SCh* 67,54; *Clo* 6,39,202; *SCh* 157,280.

⁴ See *Clo* 2,2,17: *SCh* 120,218-219.

⁵ *Clo* 2,10,74: δογματίζων μηδὲ οὐσίαν τινὰ ἰδίαν ὑφεστάναι τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἑτέραν παρὰ τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱόν· ἀλλὰ τάχα προστιθέμενος μᾶλλον, ἐὰν ἕτερον νομίξῃ εἶναι τὸν υἱὸν παρὰ τὸν πατέρα, τῷ τὸ αὐτὸ αὐτὸ τυγχάνειν τῷ πατρί, ὁμολουμένως διαιρέσεως δηλουμένης τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος παρὰ τὸν υἱὸν ἐν τῷ <*Mt* 12,32>: *SCh* 120,254-255. The Platonic meaning of οὐσία is used by Origen also in terms of οὐσία τοῦ Χριστοῦ, or οὐσία τοῦ θεοῦ; see:

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 Son¹.

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 (ὁ μὲν τις οἶεται ...): while the Monarchians argue that if the Son is the same light as the Father on the basis of *IJn* 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 is².

v. The fifth text is Origen's exegesis of *Jn* 1:26-27, where he explains that the Son-Logos came to existence, ὑφ'εστηκότος οὐσιοδῶς, from a pristine subject, which is defined τὸ ὑποκείμενον, and is identical to the Wisdom³. 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 ὑποκείμενον; 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 *ICor* 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 ὑποκείμενον and of the ὑπόστασις, and their difference is just nominal, κατά τινας ἐπινοίας. Origen replies that the difference between the Father and the Son is necessary⁴.

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

Clo 6,14,85: *SCh* 157,190-191; *Clo* 6,30,154: *SCh* 157,246-247; *Clo* 13,21,123-124: *SCh* 222,96-97.

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 διαφέρειν τῷ ἀριθμῷ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ πατρὸς, ἀλλ' ἐν οὐ μόνον οὐσία ἀλλὰ καὶ ὑποκειμένῳ τυγχάνοντας ἀμοτέρους, κατά τινας ἐπινοίας διαφορῶν οὐ κατά ὑπόστασιν λέγεσθαι πατέρα καὶ υἱόν· λεκτέον πρὸς αὐτοὺς πρῶτον μὲν τὰ προηγουμένως κατασκευαστικὰ ῥητὰ τοῦ ἕτερον εἶναι τὸν υἱὸν παρὰ τὸν πατέρα, καὶ ὅτι ἀνάγκη τὸν υἱὸν πατρὸς εἶναι υἱόν, καὶ τὸν πατέρα υἱοῦ πατέρα: *SCh* 157,528-531. 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 Origene. 274), it is difficult to accept this interpretation. Particularly about this text see: Orbe, A. 1958. *Hacia la primera teología de la procesión del Verbo*, Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Roma, 436-437; Id. (1991). Orígenes y los monarquianos. *Gregorianum* 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*, Secretariado Trinitario, Salamanca, 189-213.

Platonic lexicon, i.e. the incorporeal existence of the divinity¹, but also as equal to ὑπόστασις; 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 generation².

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 *Clo* 1,19,115, where he says that the Son-Wisdom is the intelligible universe of the τύποι, the ideal entities according to which he gives to the matter the structure, the πλάσις, the essences, the εἶδη, finally the οὐσία too³. 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 creation⁴.

ii. Another Christological use of the term οὐσία occurs in *Clo* 1,28,200. After distinguishing between the predicates which refer to Christ καθ' αὐτὸ 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 ἐπίνοιαι, titles or denominations of his indivisible nature⁵. Here, he certainly criticizes the Gnostics, who introduce a double nature of Christ, pneumatic and psychic⁶.

¹ About the general question see: Schadel, E. 1987. Zum Trinitätskonzept des Origenes. In Lies, L. (ed.). *Origeniana quarta. Die Referate des 4. Internationalen Origeneskongresses (Innsbruck, 2-6 Sept. 1985)*, Tyrolia, Innsbruck/Wien, 203-214. See also: Bruns, Ch. 2013. *Trinität und Kosmos. Zur Gotteslehre des Origenes*. Aschendorff, Münster, particularly 42-44.

² See in particular: Crouzel, H. 1955. *Théologie de l'image de Dieu chez Origène*. 104. See also: Hanson, R.P.C. 1987. Did Origen teach that the Son is *ek tēs ousias* of the Father? In Lies, L. (ed.). *Origeniana quarta*. 201-202. About Origen's refutation of the idea of the animal generation with respect to the generation of the Son-Wisdom see: *Clo* 19,20,157; *SCh* 290,142-145.

³ *Clo* 1,19,115: καὶ λεκτέον ὅτι κτίσας, ἴν' οὕτως εἶπω, ἔμψυχον σοφίαν ὁ θεός, αὐτῇ ἐπέτρεψεν ἀπὸ τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ τύπων τοῖς οὐσίαι καὶ τῇ ὕλη <παρασχεῖν καὶ> τὴν πλάσιν καὶ τὰ εἶδη, ἐγὼ δὲ ἐφίστημι εἰ καὶ τὰς οὐσίας; *SCh* 120,122-123.

⁴ About this point, see: Sfameni Gasparro, G. 1979. Doppia creazione e peccato di Adamo nel 'Peri Archon' di Origene. Fondamenti biblici e presupposti platonici dell'esegesi origeniana. In Bianchi, U. *La 'doppia creazione' dell'uomo negli Alessandrini, nei Cappadoci e nella gnosi*, Edizioni dell'Ateneo, Roma, 43-82; Hengstermann, C. 2011. The Neoplatonism of Origen in the first two books of his 'Commentary on John'. In Kaczmarek, S. and Pietras, H. (eds.). *Origeniana decima. Origen as writer. Papers of the 10th International Origen Congress. University School of Philosophy and Education 'Ignatianum', Kraków, 31 aug.-4 sept. 2009*, Peeters, Leuven, 75-87.

⁵ *Clo* 1,28,200: μηδεὶς δὲ προσκοπτέω διακρινόντων ἡμῶν τὰς ἐν τῷ σωτήρι ἐπινοίας, οἰόμενος καὶ τῇ οὐσίαι ταῦτόν ἡμᾶς ποιεῖν; *SCh* 120,158-159.

⁶ See: Simonetti, M. 1966. Eracleone e Origene. *VetChr* 3, 111-141; Id. 1967. Eracleone e Origene (continuazione e fine). *VetChr* 4, 23-64; Id. 1992. Eracleone, gli psichici e il 'Trattato tripartito'. *RSLR* 28, 31. About the controversy between Origen and the Gnostics see: Lettieri, G. 2005. Il 'nous' mistico. Il superamento origeniano dello gnosticismo nel 'Commento a Giovanni'. In Prinzivalli, E. (ed.), *Il Commento a Giovanni di Origene: il testo e i suoi contesti*, Pazzini, Verucchio, 223ff. See also: Rius-Camps, J. 1968. Comunicabilidad de la naturaleza de Dios según Orígenes. *OCP* 34, 5-37.

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, ἀποαλήθεια, that is the Son-Wisdom, on the one hand, and the individual truths, ἀληθείαι, 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 truths¹.

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, ἀλήθεια (*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 (ἄποιον) subject which can be of every quality (ποιότης). 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 than the intelligible creation's οὐσία³: 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 not⁴.

¹ *Clo* 6,6,38: *SCh* 157,158-159. See also: *Clo* 6,6,40: *SCh* 157,158-159.

² For a general presentation of the point see: Fernández, S. 2011. Verso la teologia trinitaria di Origene. Metafora e linguaggio teologico. In Kaczmarek, S. and Pietras, H. (eds.). *Origeniana decima*, 457-473.

³ *Clo* 13,25,152: *SCh* 222,114-115.

⁴ See: Harl, M. 1966. Recherches sur l'origénisme d'Origène: la satiété (κόπος) de la contemplation comme motif de la chute des âmes, *StPatr* 8, 374-405; Ead. 1987. La préexistence des âmes dans l'oeuvre d'Origène. In Lies, L. (ed.). *Origeniana quarta*, 238-258.

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 ὑλικὸν, i.e. the non-qualitative subject (τὸ ἄποιον), 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 times¹. The Stoic logic of the relationship between the subject, i.e. the ὑποκείμενον or the ὑλικὸν or the ἄποιον, 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' interpretation², 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.

¹ *Clo* 13,61,429-430: *SCh* 222,266-269. About the presence of the Stoic logic in Origen's thought, see: Chadwick, H. (1947). Origen, Celsus, and the Stoa. *JThS* 48, 34-49; Roberts, L. 1970. Origen and Stoic logic. *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 101, 433-444; Rist, J. 1981. The importance of Stoic logic in the 'Contra Celsum'. In Blumenthal, H.J. and Markus, R.A. (eds.). *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought. Essays in honour of A.H. Armstrong*, Variorum, London, 64-78; Heine, R. 1993. Stoic logic as handmaid to Exegesis and Theology in Origen's 'Commentary on the Gospel of John'. *JThS* 44, 90-117; Somos, R. 2013. Is the handmaid Stoic or Middle Platonic? Some comments on Origen's use of logic. *StPatr* 56, 29-40.

² Markschies, Ch. 2007. Was bedeutet οὐσία? 184-187.

Markschies, which is grounded on the divine Son's mediation. Then, every time the term οὐσία occurs in Origen's *Clo*, 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 contexts¹, 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.

¹ About Origenian Trinitarian theology's dependence on Platonic tradition, see: Dillon, J. 1982. Origen's doctrine of the Trinity and some later Neoplatonic theories. In O'Meara, D.J. (ed.) *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, State University Press, New York, 19-23.