


Article

Origen and Plato on the Superiority and Perfection of the Soul

Zhimeng Lin 

Institute of Foreign Philosophy, School of Philosophy and Academy of Mayifu, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou 310058, China; lingyuzm@163.com

Abstract: Origen's theology is fundamentally rooted in the question of whether he upheld the pre-existence of the soul or focused more on the soul's superiority over the body and its perfection. While inheriting many ideas from Plato, Origen adapted them in accordance with Christian doctrine. Both Origen and Plato emphasized that the soul governs the body and is superior to it in both status and importance. The image of God resides in human soul, not the body, guiding individuals toward the perfection of the soul and the attainment of the whole virtues. Origen's tripartite distinction of spirit, soul, and body is intrinsically connected to Plato's tripartite theory of the soul, with the intermediary of the incarnate soul corresponding to the ambiguous role of *thumos* (spiritedness) in Plato's dialogue. This suggests that humans are capable of both good and evil, a potential grounded in free will rather than the sin of the body. Nevertheless, Origen assigned the body a more important role, asserting that the Incarnation not only depended on the body but also facilitated the practice of virtue, positioning the body as central to his theory of resurrection. Origen also adopted Plato's epistemology, teleology of knowledge, and theory of participation. He emphasized that the perfection of the soul requires liberation from the dominance of the senses, using Plato's dialectical method and drawing inspiration from the Holy Spirit to achieve comprehensive knowledge and spiritual maturity. Origen should not be viewed as merely a Platonist or an anti-Platonist. Both he and Plato shared concerns about the correct way of life and perfect knowledge, and both sought to bridge the gap between the majority and the minority, avoiding both elitism and populism.

Keywords: Origen; Platonism; soul; pre-existence; superiority



Academic Editor: Xiaojun Ding

Received: 4 November 2024

Revised: 3 January 2025

Accepted: 14 January 2025

Published: 17 January 2025

Citation: Lin, Zhimeng. 2025. Origen and Plato on the Superiority and Perfection of the Soul. *Religions* 16: 92. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16010092>

Copyright: © 2025 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Origen, as a representative figure of early Patristic philosophy, not only devoted himself to compiling scriptures and commenting on the classical works but also used Platonism to systematically articulate the basic doctrines of Christianity and refute heresies. However, Origen's own thoughts were highly controversial, and he was strongly opposed by the Church and even accused of heresy. Origen's relationship with Plato is particularly nuanced; while often regarded as a Christian Platonist, many scholars argue that he fundamentally challenged Plato's ideas. Deeply versed in the Ancient Greek philosophical tradition and writing in Greek, Origen had a profound knowledge of Plato's works. For instance, in *Contra Celsum*, Origen references Plato's *Timaeus*, *Republic*, *Laws*, *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, and *Crito*, showcasing a remarkable understanding of Plato's philosophy that often surpasses that of his critic, Celsus. It is not advisable to completely separate the connection between Origen and Plato or directly equate their thoughts. Undoubtedly, for the relationship between the soul and the body, knowledge and virtue, the literal interpretation and allegorical meaning of the scriptures, and the question of one god versus many, Origen's understanding was

deeply influenced by Plato; yet, he frequently modified or even inverted these ideas to align them with Christian teachings.

Origen lived in 2nd-century Alexandria under Roman rule, a city characterized by the coexistence of diverse religions, beliefs, and forms of worship. From a young age, he was deeply influenced by both Greek philosophy and Christianity, receiving his education under Clement of Alexandria, a prominent Platonist (Eusebius 1998; Trigg 1983, p. 10). Origen sought to address the many doubts and challenges faced by early Christianity, targeting heretical teachings such as Marcionism and Gnosticism, while also actively responding to the criticisms of Christianity leveled by pagans and Jews. Origen's thoughts on theodicy, the soul, free will, and allegorical exegesis were all profoundly influenced by Plato. He employed Platonic philosophy to interpret the Bible, elevating it to the realms of cosmology and metaphysics. By integrating reason and faith, he strengthened the intellectual foundation of Western civilization. In doing so, Christianity was liberated from obscurantism and superstition, and its doctrines were provided with a more robust theoretical framework.

However, Origen's adoption of Platonism was not without controversy. I. Ramelli highlights the dual reception of Origen: while Christians criticized him as a Platonist philosopher, "pagan" Platonists condemned him as a Christian. Nonetheless, Origen held Plato in the highest regard, believing that Plato had taught truths consistent with those in the Bible, thereby considering himself a genuine Platonist (Ramelli 2011, p. 354, 2017, pp. 2–4; Martens 2012; Hanson 2002). However, Mark J. Edwards argues that Origen fundamentally opposed Plato, as he rejected the Platonic ideas of forms as mere fictions, denied that God is finite, viewed the body as intended for the cultivation of virtue rather than as a punishment, and rejected the transmigration of souls between bodies. Therefore, Origen is often regarded as not a true Platonist but as someone who merely employed Platonic philosophy as a tool for interpreting Scripture.

This paper aims to elucidate the close connections and key differences between Origen's and Plato's understanding of the soul through a comparative analysis of their primary works. It seeks to demonstrate that Origen was neither a pure Platonist nor an outright anti-Platonist. Rather, Origen drew upon the constructive resources of Platonic philosophy, integrating them into his theological teachings to form a distinctive and fascinating intellectual style. Existing scholarship, however, lacks a thorough and nuanced understanding of Platonic thought in this context. For instance, discussions of Origen's views on the soul often rely solely on Plato's *Timaeus* while neglecting relevant arguments in the *Laws X*. Similarly, studies of Origen's epistemology fail to engage with Plato's ideas of knowing one's own ignorance, temperance, and the dialectic of unity and diversity of virtue.

I will first examine Origen's and Plato's views on the soul and body, exploring how Plato's emphasis on the soul's superiority and his tripartite theory influenced Origen's thought, particularly why Origen prioritized the soul's superiority over the body rather than its pre-existence and how the intermediary of the soul corresponds to the ambiguous role of *thumos* in Plato's philosophy. Furthermore, my discussion will address how Origen's understanding of the Holy Spirit as *nous* (mind) intersects with Plato's concept of the World Soul. Unlike Plato, Origen assigned greater significance to the body, emphasizing its role as the foundation of the doctrine of resurrection. Nevertheless, both Origen and Plato regarded the perfection of the soul and the attainment of virtue as central to human life. Moreover, Origen's distinctions between three types of knowledge, three kinds of wisdom, and three layers of biblical meaning correspond to his tripartite division of spirit, soul, and body. His epistemology, teleology of knowledge, and theory of participation are deeply connected to Platonic thought, though he prioritized divine grace over philosophical reason. By contrast, Plato emphasized the natural differences in human capacities and soul types,

positing that the majority and the few lovers of wisdom live fundamentally distinct ways of life, to prevent philosophical truths from undermining customs, politics, and religious beliefs. Through this analysis, this paper will demonstrate that Origen placed greater importance on the soul's superiority over the body and sought to differentiate between various types of knowledge and souls in his theological framework.

2. The Pre-Existence or Superiority of the Soul

Scholars have long debated whether Origen adhered to the doctrine of the pre-existence of souls. The Bible explicitly states that the soul and the body are united, yet Origen appears to have suggested that the soul existed prior to the body and that human soul is the result of a "fall" from a previous state. Origen proposed examining certain doctrines concerning the nature and origin of the soul, as well as how it enters and exits the body, asking questions such as "if it is possible or not that soul enters a second time in a body, and in the same circle and the same order or not, and if it enters the same body or another" (Origen 1989, p. 192). However, Origen never explicitly formulated the doctrine of the pre-existence of souls.

Peter Martens, comparing pre-existence in Origen and Plato's *Phaedrus*, pointed out that Origen's views on the pre-existence of souls, even if they approach the concept, served to explain natural human differences and to counter Gnosticism. He writes, "Pre-existence was the centerpiece of a protological narrative that buttressed the church's view of the goodness and justice of the one God. . .it simultaneously established orthodoxy and critiqued heresy" (Martens 2015, p. 612; cf. Martens 2013, pp. 516–49). Benjamin Blosser, discussing one interpretation of Origen's stance on pre-existence, noted that Origen's concept of the "fall" signifies a transition from a spiritual existence to a fleshly one, which reflects a decline in virtue. This, Blosser argued, occurs on a moral rather than a cosmic level and does not imply a transfer from one "world" to another. Blosser himself concluded, "it seems best to conclude that Origen found in pre-existence a doctrine that was of more apologetic than theoretical value, in that it provided a means of warding off Gnostic claims of moral determinism and cosmic dualism" (Blosser 2012, p. 158; Lewis 2006, pp. 267–300).

When exploring Origen's view of pre-existence, scholars frequently compare it to Plato's *Phaedrus*, *Phaedo*, and *Timaeus*, but rarely consider Plato's *Laws X*, which discusses the superiority of the soul over the body and the existence of the gods. Furthermore, little attention is given to the distinction Plato makes in *Timaeus* between the World Soul and the soul of individual humans. This oversight fails to address the fact that Plato was less concerned with the pre-existence of the soul itself and more with the superiority of the soul over the body: the World Soul precedes the universe, and the soul of an individual precedes the body. From this perspective, Origen's discourse on the relationship between the soul and the body does not merely emphasize the pre-existence of the soul; rather, it highlights the superiority of the soul and humanity's natural purpose to pursue the perfection of the soul.

In refuting the false claim that Jesus' mother was abandoned by her fiancé for adultery, Origen remarked that God, who sends souls into human bodies, would not compel Jesus to undergo a birth more shameful than any other. Moreover, he cited Pythagoras, Plato, and Empedocles, stating that "there are certain secret principles by which each soul that enters a body does so in accordance with its merits and former character" (Origen 1980, p. 32). For souls destined to accomplish great deeds, they ought to enter pure bodies to achieve the whole virtues. While such statements may imply the soul's pre-existence relative to the body, they also carry an apologetic undertone, aimed at defending the doctrine that Jesus was born of a pure virgin, rather than, as Celsus claimed, the offspring of adultery.

In *On First Principles*, Origen first pointed out that all living beings have a soul ($\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$), which is an entity with imagination and desire (Origen 2017–2018, p. 223).¹ Origen then added that the soul can be defined as an entity “capable of rational perception and movement” (*rationabiliter sensibilis et mobilis*); this definition applies equally to angels (2.8.2). Similarly, Plato defined the soul as self-motion.² Plato’s philosophy of the soul is rich and multifaceted, encompassing doctrines of the soul’s immortality, tripartite division, superiority over the body, and distinction between cosmic soul and human soul, all of which influenced Origen. Origen’s description of the soul implicitly reflects Plato’s theory of the tripartite division: the soul comprises reason, spiritedness (*thumos*), and desire (*Republic* 440b).

Origen said that man is composed of soul ($\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$), body ($\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$), and spirit ($\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu$). This suggests that within a person, there are two aspects of souls: the spirit, which is more divine and heavenly, and the soul, which is more inferior. Alternatively, the human being is naturally attached to the mortal body, and the body gains its vitality from the soul but is hostile to the spirit, thus having a tendency to do evil. Origen also explicitly mentioned Greek philosophers’ doctrine of the soul: although the essence of human soul is the same, it includes rational and irrational elements, and the irrational part can be further divided into desire and *thumos* (*On First Principles* 3.4.1). He further elaborated that the heavenly spirit is inherently good, while the earthly soul is inferior, as it is intertwined with the body and cannot survive without it. Such a type of soul can be described as corporeal, and the “fight between the lust of the flesh and the spirit of God” (Galatians 5:17) refers to the inferior soul, i.e., the soul of the body. This is a kind of “material” soul, with earthly desires and bodily appetites, which does not submit to the law of God (*On First Principles* 3.4.2). The heavenly spirit is a divine gift to the human being, with the creative participation of the Holy Spirit, while the earthly soul is focused on pursuing physical satisfaction, which can reduce a human to the level of a wild beast (Kries 2002, p. 75).

Origen uniquely distinguished between two different souls in human beings and compared the mind ($\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$) with the Holy Spirit. In his view, those dominated by their animal nature cannot obtain spiritual things. This is because they are unable to understand the better nature, i.e., the divine nature. The understanding of spiritual things depends on the mind and not the soul (*On First Principles* 2.8.2). As Paul said, “I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also” (1 Corinthians 14:15). Prayer and singing to God by human beings is through the mind and spirit. Origen was more disparaging of the soul, believing that the majority of the places in the *Bible* that mentioned the soul were condemnatory, with almost no praise, such as, “Strong passion destroys those who have it” (*Deuteronomy* 6:4) and “the soul that sinneth, it shall die” (*Ezekiel* 18:4). Origen even said that the Greek word $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ (soul) implies a gradual cooling from a warmer and more sacred state, that is, a cooling of enthusiasm for righteousness, without sharing the sacred fire, but without completely losing the ability to restore the original state of enthusiasm. When the mind falls from its original state and majesty, it becomes a soul, but this fallen state can still be restored to its original state. After the mind degenerates into a soul, it retains different degrees of vitality. Therefore, some people are naturally rational, while others are foolish, even stupid. Origen defined the soul as the “intermediary between a weak body and a quick mind” (*On First Principles* 2.8.3–4).

Building on this, Origen’s exposition of the spirit, soul, body, mind, and Holy Spirit shows a close connection to Plato. In the cosmological picture presented in Plato’s *Timaeus*, the Creator first constructed cosmic soul and then created the cosmic body (Johansen 2008, pp. 138–42; Sallis 1999, pp. 66–69). Consequently, the universe as a living entity possesses both soul and intelligence. The cosmic whole requires intelligence ($\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$) to achieve the

best harmony and beauty. The Creator embedded intelligence within the cosmic soul, enabling it to dominate the cosmic body. In Plato's account, cosmic soul is endowed with various good qualities: intelligence, reason, wisdom, harmony, and so on (Broadie 2011, pp. 88–94). The Creator, using the remaining materials from the fusion of cosmic soul in the original crater (κρατῆρα), formed human soul, which are not as pure as cosmic soul. Each soul corresponds to a celestial body in the heavens and originally understands the nature and predestined laws of the universe. However, after the soul enters the human body, various feelings, desires, *thumos*, and fears are generated. If these souls live well in this world, return to the astral body in the heavens, and live a blessed life, if they live in an inappropriate way, they continue to deteriorate and even become like wild beasts (*Timaeus* 41d–42c). It is noteworthy that the Creator constructed cosmic soul, cosmic body, human soul, and the Olympian gods such as Cronus and Zeus. However, the mortal body of human beings was created by the gods (*Timaeus* 42d). The soul did not have intelligence when it first entered the human body, and it needs correct education to make people complete. Before talking about the creation of the world, Plato implied that the ultimate point of the narrative of the creation of man and the nature of the universe is to provide “the best education” for man (*Timaeus* 27a). Therefore, Plato's theory of creation has a strong teleological aspect.

It becomes apparent that the heavenly spirit and the Holy Spirit in Origen are similar to Plato's cosmic soul, both of which possess the highest quality. Origen's view of the soul as a kind of transformation of the mind is similar to Plato's conception of the soul as the metamorphosis of cosmic soul. According to Origen, human soul struggles between good and evil, spirit and flesh. Plato also claimed that each human soul is pulled by different forces, struggling between good and evil. Both believed that human soul would fall, but both were intrinsically linked to a higher spirit or cosmic soul, which offered the possibility of turning toward a virtuous life. Similarly, Plato also placed great value on the role of intelligence or mind. The cosmic soul and the entire universe have intelligence.

Plato also redefined the concepts of “first things” and “nature” from the perspective of the soul. According to natural philosophers, fire, water, earth, and air are the earliest elements of all things. These “first things” are referred to as “nature”, while the soul, derived from these four elements, is considered a later development. These elements, entirely devoid of soul, not only produce the soul but also give rise to the earth, the sun, the moon, and the stars (*Laws* 889b1–5, 891c1–4, 892c2–3). Plato, however, questioned this view: if the first things are not the elements but the soul, then the soul is more appropriately regarded as “nature”. Through his argument for the superiority of the soul over the body, Plato presented an alternative understanding of nature. Plato categorized all forms of motion into two types: non-self-motion and self-motion. Self-motion not only moves itself but also moves other things, thus occupying the highest position among all types of motion. In terms of time, power, generation, and existence, self-motion holds superiority. Among all motions, self-motion is the strongest, most active, and earliest.³ The soul, being alive and animated, has the ability to move itself. Thus, Plato defined the soul as “motion capable of moving itself”, or self-motion (*Laws* 896a1–2). This implies that, as self-motion, the soul is the strongest, most active, and earliest, and it is the cause of all transformations and movements. The self-motion of the soul precedes the non-self-motion of the body; therefore, the soul takes precedence over the body. As the first thing, the soul naturally governs the body. In the hierarchy of nature, the soul is higher than the body, the World Soul is higher than the universe (cf. *Timaeus* 34c), and human soul is higher than the human body. A soul endowed with intellect and the whole virtues oversees the entire cosmos, driving the celestial bodies and all things, and its nature inherently contains regularity, consistency, order, and proportion. The soul, capable of moving the sun and bringing light

to all, should rightly be considered divine. Ultimately, Plato regarded souls possessing the whole virtues as gods—in the eyes of ordinary people, these gods could be seen as human souls possessing superhuman powers.

In the *Laws*, Plato also mentioned that intelligence is “the god in the eyes of the gods”. If the soul employs intelligence as an ally, it will guide all things towards “what is correct and happy”. If it lacks intelligence, however, the opposite result will ensue (*Laws* 897b). Plato’s ultimate goal was to return from the World Soul to human soul, encouraging individuals to focus on perfecting their own souls, pursuing the whole virtues, and treating this as the natural purpose of humanity. The cosmic soul can drive all things in heaven and earth. If all celestial bodies move in a manner consistent with the principles of intelligence or mind, then it must be the best soul that takes care of the entire universe; if the movements of the celestial bodies are disorderly, then they are in charge of the evil souls (*Laws* 897c-d). However, the celestial bodies frequently move in order, and Plato’s introduction of the evil soul mainly points to the responsibility of humans for their own evil (Lin 2013, p. 25).

Plato further noted that part of the good heavenly soul is “implanted in us from heaven”. For Origen, this resonates with the view that God directly implants souls into the womb, as in the cases of Jacob, Jeremiah, and John the Baptist (*On First Principles* 3:2). This seems to suggest that the divine soul is pre-existent. However, Origen simultaneously emphasized that the heavenly soul is a “rational soul” endowed with reason or intellect. In contrast, the bodily soul, which comes into existence and perishes with the body, cannot exist apart from the body and is thus a “corporeal soul”. This hierarchy of souls highlights that individuals should follow the rational soul rather than be constrained by the bodily soul. The perfection of the soul and virtue takes precedence over the satisfaction of bodily desires. Regardless of whether the soul or the body comes first in terms of temporal generation, the superiority of the soul is humanity’s ultimate goal. It is not the pre-existence of the soul but rather its superiority over the body that Origen was most concerned with.

3. The Intermediary of the Incarnate Soul

The difference between the spirit and the soul is that the spirit is incorruptible and is a divine element bestowed by God, while the soul is an inherent part of this world, closely related to the body, and can be evil and corrupt (Tzamalikos 2007, p. 55). Origen regarded the soul as the intermediary entity, which can either possess virtue or become evil.⁴ However, the lost soul can also be saved, and after salvation, it will have a new name and new circumstances. When the body’s lust and the Holy Spirit struggle, it prevents one from doing what one would like to do (*Galatians* 5:17). Origen believed that this type of unwillingness refers neither to the things of the spirit nor to those of the body. He argued that the will of the soul, positioned between the spirit and the body, serves as a mediator; if governed by the body, it obeys its desires, but if united with the spirit, it submits to the Holy Spirit. The will of the soul is neither attached to the body nor to the spirit. Origen acknowledged that in the struggle between the body and the spirit, the spirit does not always prevail. For most people (*plumiris*), it is the body that takes a dominant role (*On First Principles* 3.4.2).

If most people are ruled by the desires of the body, how can they attain salvation? In Origen’s view, it is better for the soul to obey the spirit when the spirit overcomes the body, but it is not a good choice to fight the spirit with the body:

It may nevertheless appear more advantageous for the soul to be mastered by the flesh than to abide in the sphere of its own will. This is because, as long as it remains in the sphere of its will, this is the time when it is said to be neither hot nor cold, but continuing in a sort of lukewarm condition, it will find conversion a slow and somewhat difficult process; but if it adheres to the flesh, then, at some point, it will be satiated and filled with

those very evils that it suffers from the vices of the flesh, and wearied, as it were, by the heavy burdens of luxury and lust, it may more easily and rapidly be converted from the squalor of material things to a desire for heavenly things and to spiritual grace (*On First Principles* 3.4.3).

Origen greatly disparaged the intermediary of the soul's will, believing that it is better for human beings to be in a polarized state of either good or evil than to be in a state between the two. He even stated that if the soul has not yet become divine through attachment to the spirit, it is preferable to submit to the body's evil than to be influenced by one's own will and fall into an "irrational animal state" (*On First Principles* 3.4.3). This is because the soul's indecision leads to chaos, hesitation, and self-contradiction.

Origen's division of human beings into spirit, soul, and flesh is intrinsically related to Plato's tripartite division of human soul into reason, spiritedness (*thumos*), and desire. The spirit corresponds to the rational part, while the flesh is related to desire and the intermediary soul corresponds to the ambiguous spiritedness. In Plato's tripartite theory of the soul, *thumos* also occupies the middle position, and its nature is highly ambiguous, lacking the clarity to consistently distinguish between good and evil. *Thumos* may be persuaded and guided by reason, combining with it to do good, or it may join with a desire to become evil (*Republic* 440b, 442d). *Thumos* is closely associated with anger, often manifested as a zeal for justice or moral indignation. It makes the guardians harsh towards their enemies and friendly towards their allies, and it is closely linked to courage.

Thumos involves the desire to overcome difficulties and achieve victory, as well as the love for one's possessions, and a sense of awe and piety. At the same time, when the desire for good things is obstructed, *thumos* encourages self-reflection and inspires individuals to strive to improve themselves to a better state (Pangle 1976, p. 1063). However, *thumos* can also transform a justified moral indignation into an unjustified one (Strauss 1989, pp. 165–69). Inferior spiritedness leads to murder and various crimes, while noble spiritedness leads to devotion to justice, political community, or philosophy. The struggle between the spirit and the body in Origen is akin to the struggle between reason and desire in Plato. Either side can prevail. The will of the soul is not dependent on the spirit or body, and spiritedness is also independent of reason and desire. The indecision of the soul mirrors the ambiguity of spiritedness; an inferior soul, like inferior spiritedness, may lead to various crimes, whereas a noble soul turns to the Holy Spirit, as noble spiritedness submits to reason. Origen stated that most people are governed by the body, and Plato also insisted that most people are dominated by desire.

Although Origen drew on many ideas from Plato, some scholars argue that Origen was essentially anti-Plato. M. Edwards states that Origen did not accept the three theories of soul reincarnation: the first is that the soul transfers from a human body to an animal one, or vice versa; the second is that the soul transfers from one person's body to another; and the third is that the soul of God, demons, or angels transforms into human soul, or vice versa (Edwards 2002, pp. 97–101). In the *Republic* (620a) and *Timaeus* (91d–92b), Plato also described that the soul can fall from a human being to an animal. However, Origen did not agree with this view, because it severely undermines the image of God. If the soul undergoes such a transfer, it would mean that the soul has been punished by God and has no chance to be freed again, because animals are not capable of receiving grace. Origen also rejected Plato's assertion that the soul may transfer from one person to another after death. Although Origen differed from Plato on certain specific points, his overall accounts of the spirit, soul, and mind largely inherited Plato's ideas. However, there are differences in their approaches to the salvation of human soul. Origen appealed to faith in God and His grace, while Plato was oriented toward the philosophy and education centered on the love of wisdom.

According to Origen, the body is inferior to the soul. God created humankind in His image, and the part that reflects the image of God is not found in the body—the inferior and corruptible component of the composite human being—but in the inward man, namely the virtuous soul. As Origen states, “Then also the body of the man who has assumed the characteristics of God, in that part which is made in the image of God, is a temple, since he possesses a soul of this character and has God in his soul because of that which is in His image” (*Contra Celsum* 6.63). Origen opposed excessive indulgence in bodily desires and emphasized the importance of managing one’s body by governing the irrational elements within it under the control of the divine Logos. A person bearing the image of God should not be enslaved by the flesh but instead should serve their Creator with full devotion (*Commentary on Romans* 6.14.2). For Origen, the flesh is an “occasion of sin”, even though it is not sinful in itself. However, evil arises from the voluntary actions freely undertaken by the mind. Therefore, the source of evil lies in the freedom of the mind, not in the body (Blosser 2012, pp. 49–50).

Origen did not completely denigrate the body; rather, he regarded it as the foundation of his doctrine of resurrection. He refuted the view of Celsius that “the soul is the work of God, while the nature of the body is not . . . bodies are all composed of the same materials and are equally subject to decay”. Origen affirmed that the body is also the work of God. However, according to Plato, the body is created by the gods rather than the Creator. More importantly, Origen upheld the Christian belief that dead bodies can be resurrected and that their properties undergo transformation. For Origen, the body, as basic material, can be transformed through God’s grace to acquire a better and unique essence (*Contra Celsum* 4:57). Plato argued that the soul is immortal, but he believed that the body is mortal. Origen inherited Paul’s distinction between two types of bodies: “It is planted in death; it comes again in life . . . It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body” (*Corinthians* 15:42–44). Origen insisted that when the unshaped and invisible soul is in a physical space, it needs a body that corresponds to it, and people should have characteristics that correspond to the essence of the material space (*Contra Celsum* 7:32–33). Therefore, Origen thought that no living creature can be detached from its body and still be in a cognitive state (Tzamalikos 2007, p. 61). More importantly, Origen emphasized the importance of practice: human virtue consists of the imitation of the Son of God. In this sense, the actions of the body are even more critical than the soul’s intentions. In the pursuit of eternal life, both body and soul are equally important.

In interpreting the text, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days” (*John* 2:19), Origen pointed out that Jesus compared his body to the temple, and the Church was also compared to Jesus’ body. Just as the temple was rebuilt in three days, Jesus’ body was resurrected after three days. The body of Jesus Christ was crucified and resurrected, and all the saints were crucified with Christ, symbolizing that their living bodies no longer belonged to themselves. The resurrection of Christ presents a true and more perfect body, and with this resurrection, Christ will create more perfect people. For Origen, the resurrection of the body is a profound manifestation of God’s power. In addition, the doctrine of the Incarnation is crucial in Origen. The Logos of God manifests itself through the body of His only Son, Jesus; Origen argued that without the Word taking on human form, mankind would be unable to recognize the most noble “Logos” and “truth”, nor benefit from it (*True Spirituality* 10:26). According to Origen, for humanity to be freed from corruption, an incarnate divine power is essential to restore order on earth; thus, the Holy Father sent His only Son to accomplish this salvation (*True Spirituality* 2:83). After the Incarnation, Christ took on human mortality and experienced death for everyone, willingly dying for sinners. Yet, the resurrection of Christ demonstrates that he is both fully human and transcends humanity, serving as the mediator between God and mankind.

Although Plato did not mention the resurrection of the body, Origen's understanding of truth and Logos resonates with that of Plato. Plato's cave metaphor shows that man is permanently in the world of images, or in the politically constructed world of opinions and customs, where different notions conflict with each other. According to Plato, when individuals leave this world of images and ascend to the sun to seek truth, they cannot directly gaze at the sun (truth) but must first view its reflection in water to avoid being blinded by its brilliance (*Republic*, 514a-516b). Plato recognizes that human beings are essentially between animals and the gods, and although wisdom or truth is the highest ideal, it is not what man most urgently needs. For this reason, Plato argued for the reconciliation of truth and opinion, the philosophical life of pursuing wisdom, and the practical life of obeying laws. This reconciliation prevents philosophical truth from undermining the conventional beliefs of ordinary people, which could pose a threat to philosophers. In a similar vein, Origen emphasized that ordinary people cannot directly perceive the supreme God; instead, they must experience God's ways through Christ. By the death and resurrection of Christ, they come to understand the way of God, which, according to Origen, embodies truth, wisdom, and justice.

4. Knowledge and the Perfection of the Soul

Origen valued spiritual wisdom, emphasizing that the soul should strive for perfect knowledge and not remain at the level of sensory knowledge. He was deeply familiar with a famous Platonic dictum: virtue is knowledge. In Plato's view, justice, moderation, courage, and other virtues are all defective if they do not encompass wisdom. Although virtues seem diverse and distinct, they are ultimately unified in philosophical knowledge or wisdom. Virtues are both many and one, because different types of people, such as ordinary masses, politicians, and philosophers, possess varying forms of virtue, and we cannot forcefully flatten these differences in virtues. However, for the few who love wisdom, philosophers must guide them in rising from the many to the one, i.e., the highest knowledge or wisdom (Lin 2012, p. 32; Pangle 2014, pp. 154–157). Origen also clearly acknowledged the unity of knowledge and virtue, where knowledge is equated with the good. Sin prevents the light of the Logos from penetrating human beings, leading to the separation of reason from the body. Origen believed that the body itself lacks intellectual ability, as intellectual activities do not require physical space, sensible size, or shape (*On First Principles* 1.1.6). However, the organs of the body connect intelligence with sensation, and the soul combined with the body is embodied in sensory knowledge. Intelligence or mind has been corrupted into a soul due to sin, and, therefore, the soul does not yet possess the power of virtue—knowledge—and requires purification to obtain such power (Davies 1898, pp. 739–740).

Origen distinguished three kinds of knowledge: knowledge of sense, knowledge of the soul and its fate, and perfect knowledge, or knowledge of existence, intellectual knowledge, and perfect knowledge. Similarly, he identified three kinds of wisdom: the wisdom of the body, of the soul, and of the spirit, or the wisdom of this world, of the rulers in this world, and of God (*On First Principles* 3.3.1). Knowledge of sense concerns external and sensory objects, which are therefore inherently imperfect. One must transcend this knowledge to acquire virtue. Examples of sensory knowledge include the literal and historical meaning of the Bible. Paul once said,

“Since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse”. (*Romans* 1:19–20)

Human senses can see or hear the incarnate Jesus Christ and the creation of God, thereby enabling a gradual ascent from the sensible to the intelligible. God can be known by man, but man may not honor God. They may believe they are wise, but they are actually deluded and ignorant. Because human senses are influenced by sin and under the bondage of various desires, they cannot comprehend God's knowledge.

Human beings possess reason, while ordinary animals lack it, and they cannot engage in cognitive activities (*Contra Celsum* 4:83). Origen indicated that the result of intellectual activities is moral judgment, which enables the distinction between good and evil. Rational animals not only have imagination but also have the ability to judge various sensory images and diverse opinions, accepting or rejecting them (Davies 1898, p. 741). It is through intellectual judgment that human beings move toward a good life. Human reason inherently possesses the ability to distinguish between good and evil, allowing individuals to choose what they approve of and reject what they despise. However, humans have free will and can choose to do good or evil. Although humans have reason, some things inevitably befall them due to external forces. Rational judgment and external stimuli will determine whether a person's instinctive activities incline toward good or evil (*On First Principles* 3.1.3). Since humans possess free will, Origen stated that an individual's character is ultimately self-determined. Plato also pointed out that when a person dies and chooses a new mode of existence, the responsibility for living a virtuous life lies with the individual, not with God. Although individuals can distinguish between good and evil and make choices about what they love and hate, Plato also made it clear that individuals may be drawn to what they perceive as evil and unjust and may even disdain what they consider noble and good, leading to disharmony between reason and desire, thus distorting their perceptions of pleasure and pain. This disharmony of the soul is the greatest ignorance (*Laws*, 689a-b). Conversely, knowledge also signifies harmony or moderation. The initial education in virtue involves training individuals to develop a proper sense of pleasure and pain, to love the good and to hate the evil, in order to align reason with emotion.

Because humans have free will, Origen stated that it is entirely up to the individual to determine what kind of person he wants to be. Plato also noted that it is one's own responsibility, not God's (*Republic*, 617e), to choose a new pattern of one's destiny after death and whether to lead a virtuous life (Rosen 2005, pp. 384–385). Although humans can distinguish between good and evil, and make choices about what they love and hate, Plato also said that it is possible for individuals to be drawn to what they regard as evil and unjust, and to dislike what they regard as noble and good, leading to disharmony between reason and desire and distorting their perception of pleasure and pain. This disharmony in the soul is the greatest ignorance (*Laws*, 689a-b). Conversely, knowledge also means harmony or moderation (Strauss 1975, p. 46; Benardete 2000, pp. 109–10). The initial virtue education of a person involves training him to develop an appropriate sense of pleasure and pain, to love the good and hate the evil, and to achieve consistency between intelligence and emotion.

Due to the mind's natural desire to understand being, it turns its attention to the soul and its destiny, making it possible to ascend from perceptual knowledge to deeper knowledge. Origen believed that the mind must be purified through Plato's dialectic and, under the trials of piety and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, systematically read and study the Bible. The soul, pure and perfect at the moment of creation, fell from grace due to its desire for knowledge of good and evil. Since then, the soul has been bound to the body. While the body may occasionally reveal the origins of this fall, it is through Jesus Christ that the true source is disclosed (Davies 1898, pp. 739–40). The knowledge of the soul and its destiny is unveiled through the Word embodied in Christ. However, the knowledge of the soul remains incomplete, falling short of divine perfection. Origen pointed out the dual

nature of knowledge: saints see the diversity of things and people on earth, but they do not grasp their causes. Should they yearn to delve into such knowledge, they will fully understand after death. For the saints, after departing from this world, will dwell in God's Paradise—a place of their instruction, the soul's school. There, they will fully understand the nature of all things and acquire the knowledge of future events, interpreting earthly matters in a dual sense. For some, possessing pure souls and minds, a wealth of perceptual experience will lead them to the Kingdom of Heaven and grant perfect knowledge (Smith 1992, pp. 45–47). The classification of knowledge aligns with the stages of existence, where the highest form of knowledge guides and prepares individuals for perfection through "pious exercises". Origen's theory is transcendental; one must transcend the phenomena of perception and subjective consciousness to recognize being as its own end, thereby achieving true understanding (Davies 1898, pp. 745–48). This transcendental process includes three stages: First, the soul becomes pure by freeing itself from the domination of the senses; second, it is guided by virtuous behavior and moral purity towards virtue and from virtue towards moral knowledge; third, it ascends from moral knowledge to perfect knowledge granted by divine grace and spiritual maturity (Smith 1992, p. 174).

Origen defined three types of knowledge and three kinds of wisdom, clearly demonstrating Plato's influence. When explaining the three types of wisdom, he pointed out that poetry, grammar, rhythm, geometry, and medicine constitute worldly wisdom. While this wisdom helps us understand various aspects of the physical world, it is incapable of grasping profound or sacred truths, such as how to govern a society or cultivate a good and happy life. Origen regarded mystical philosophy, astrology, astronomy, and divination as the wisdom of worldly rulers (*On First Principles* 3.3.2). In the *Republic*, Plato used the "line metaphor" to illustrate the four stages of knowledge, progressing from lower to higher: imagination, belief, thought, and reason. These correspond to four levels of reality: images, physical objects, mathematical disciplines, and forms. Plato believed imagination was the soul's lowest state, where its focus is fixed on images of physical things, like poetry and crafts. When the soul ascends from imagination to belief, it begins to perceive the physical world itself and form opinions. The third stage, thought, involves studying mathematical disciplines: arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and harmony. At the highest level, reason is used to understand the world of forms and to explore the interconnections between different forms through dialectical reasoning (*Republic* 509d-511e). These different stages of knowledge also imply varying levels of understanding among ordinary people, mathematicians, dialecticians, and philosophers (Crombie 2013, pp. 73–78; Rowett 2018, pp. 154–156). Like Plato, Origen emphasized the need to transcend the physical world and move toward the intelligible world in pursuit of a virtuous life.

Origen also embraced Plato's theory of participation. Plato proposed that sensible things participate in forms, which impart their specific characteristics or essences. For example, something is beautiful because it participates in the form of beauty (Scott and Welton 2008, p. 106). Origen extended this idea: the subject of knowledge participates in forms or Logos. When a person partakes in Christ's wisdom, knowledge, and holiness, and ascends to a higher level of perfection, they glorify the Creator. Through participation in the Holy Spirit, individuals become greater and holier, receiving the gifts of wisdom and knowledge, which cleanse them of ignorance (*On First Principles* 1.3.8). Origen believed that the souls partaking in the light of reason share the same essence:

"If the heavenly spirits, by partaking in wisdom and holiness, share in the light of reason, which is divine, then human soul, by sharing in this same light and wisdom, must also possess the same nature and essence as the heavenly spirits. Since the heavenly spirits are immortal and eternal, it follows that the essence of the human should must also be eternal and imperishable. Furthermore, since

the nature of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is both eternal and immortal, and the light of reason possessed by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is shared by all creation, it is reasonable to conclude that all who partake in the essence of that eternal nature will continue to exist forever, being both immortal and eternal". (*On First Principles*, Volume 4, Appendix, 36)

The human soul shares the light of reason and divinity, thereby becoming eternal and immortal. However, due to the varying passions and capacities of human soul, there are differences in how they partake in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In other words, acquiring perfect knowledge and virtue also depends on individual effort. A key distinction in Origen's theory of participation, compared to Plato's, is that Origen emphasizes that this participation is granted through God's grace. God sent His only Son to the world, and Christ, as the embodiment of the Word, wisdom, and all virtues, became the source of all knowledge after His Incarnation and dwelt among humankind. Through Christ, people are united with God and will eventually attain happiness. When one restores a complete love for God, one can recognize this as a gift of God's grace (*Contra Celsum* 3:81, *True Spirituality* 1:107). Man needs divine grace to know God, a grace that originates from God's actions and spiritual enlightenment. Unaided by their own abilities, man is incapable of knowing God. It is only through God's mercy and love for humanity that divine grace is granted, enabling those who are predestined to receive knowledge of God. Origen made it clear that, although some philosophers claim to understand the profound theories of God or the gods, they are often arrogant and disdainful toward others, engaging in idol worship. Such philosophers, in their presumption, are even less temperate than the most foolish and simple Christians, and their supposed wisdom is, in fact, a source of shame. (*Contra Celsum* 7:44).

Origen, like Plato, believed that knowledge has a purpose which is goodness, and goodness is synonymous with God. Goodness exists in the unity of the Logos, and God is the source of all intellectual nature or reason (*On First Principles* 1.1.6). Human perceptual knowledge also strives consciously to seek the highest understanding from God, the divine path. For Origen, the purpose of knowledge is to bring human reason into alignment with its object, gradually uniting the subject and object. In doing so, the means and the end are fused, leading to the perfection of the soul. (Davies 1898, p. 743). Plato also regarded "the good" as the highest principle, with the natural aim of human life being to virtuously pursue the perfection of the soul and the wholeness of virtue. However, even the philosophers who seek the highest knowledge do not claim to possess complete understanding—Socratic knowledge is, in essence, the acknowledgment of one's own ignorance. Socrates was keenly aware that truth and the universe as a whole are as elusive and mysterious as they are difficult to grasp (Lin 2018, pp. 29–31). It is precisely this awareness of ignorance, particularly regarding the most important matters, that makes the pursuit of such knowledge the most urgent task. The claim that virtue is knowledge should not be understood as a definitive or affirmative definition. Instead, it serves to refute the sophists' teaching on the teachability of virtue and to reveal the limitations of conventional or customary notions of virtue.

The key difference between Origen and Plato lies in Origen's belief that knowledge is already present in the Bible, which records the revelations of God and the teachings of Jesus Christ. For Origen, the sacred path has already revealed this knowledge, making it accessible to everyone. The Bible has shown humanity the path to virtue: to live virtuously is to imitate the Son of God and follow a life of virtue based on divine commandments. Since God can be "approached" and discovered through action and practice, practice comes before theory and serves as the way to ascend to contemplation (Tzamalikos 2007, pp. 169–170). In Origen's view, virtue is the manifestation of divine Logos in the human

heart, modeled after Jesus Christ. In Christ, one finds “righteousness, temperance, courage, wisdom, piety, and other examples of virtue” (*Contra Celsum* 8:17). Whoever cultivates these virtues according to the divine Logos forms an image of God within their heart. Origen placed greater emphasis on the practice of justice as a path to the perfection of the soul, while Plato appeared more focused on contemplating the highest truth through dialectical reasoning. Origen did not view the relationship between practice and knowledge as merely a moral issue, but rather as a deep ontological connection. To know God, one must first act justly. Although Origen valued the contemplation of the divine Logos, he also stressed the importance of physical action.

In fact, Plato was not indifferent to action—he insisted that philosophers, after beholding the sun (the form), must descend back into the cave, return to the city, and educate those with intellectual aspirations, or guide real-world legislators in crafting the best laws. Similarly, Origen highlights God’s grace and His love for the world, calling upon most people to imitate the divine example of Christ in order to attain the fullness of virtue. Plato, by contrast, highlights the paradoxes of virtue by distinguishing between the many and the one. On the one hand, he encourages the few who love wisdom to discover the inherent challenges of virtue and politics and to pursue rational virtues in order to build an ideal government and legal system. On the other hand, he leaves the majority to adhere to moral virtues. Though the paths of Origen and Plato may seem different, both ultimately converge in their shared aim of guiding the soul toward perfection.

5. Conclusions

Origen was well versed in Plato’s doctrine of the soul’s pre-existence. However, as the soul is both invisible and of profound importance, any argument about its temporal precedence over the body may be inherently limited. Rather than focusing on this temporal aspect, both Origen and Plato emphasized that the soul governs the body and surpasses it in both status and significance. The image of God resides within human soul, guiding individuals to strive for the excellence and perfection of the soul and to live a virtuous life. Plato defined the gods as souls possessing the whole virtues, capable of moving and governing the cosmos like the mind. Origen also believed that God was of an immaterial intellectual nature. Based on Plato’s theory of the soul, Origen further distinguishes between the soul and the spirit, emphasizing the intermediary of the soul and the transcendence of the spirit. This intermediary suggests that humans can either succumb to bodily desires and fall or follow the heavenly spirit toward perfection. While the body can be a source of evil, it is not the root of evil itself, as humans possess the free will to choose between good and evil. Departing from Plato’s perspective, Origen assigned greater importance to the body, viewing it not only as the medium for the incarnation of the Logos but also as a means to take action and practice virtue.

Origen emphasized that the soul should not remain confined to perceptual knowledge but must ascend toward perfect knowledge, an ascent made possible by divine grace rather than human intellectual effort alone. The perfection of the soul requires liberation from the dominance of the senses, utilizing Plato’s dialectical method and guided by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to attain comprehensive knowledge and spiritual maturity. Both Origen and Plato upheld the teleological view of knowledge and the theory of participation, ultimately pointing to the perfection of the soul and the whole virtues. Moreover, Origen was neither a pure Platonist nor an anti-Platonist. Instead, he integrated the beneficial aspects of Platonic philosophy into his theology and sought to bridge the divide between the social elite and the common people. In Origen’s thought, philosophy and theology are seamlessly intertwined, suggesting an inherent connection between Athens and Jerusalem. The similarities and differences between Origen’s and Plato’s ideas highlight the distinct

aims and tensions between philosophy and theology, as well as their varied interpretations of shared themes such as the correct way of a virtuous life, the good, and perfect knowledge.

Funding: This article was funded by the Major Program of the National Social Science Fund of China, “Research on Mediterranean Civilization and the Origins of Ancient Greek Philosophy” (23&ZD239).

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

- ¹ Origen’s reference to *Genesis* suggests that all living creatures have souls, and that Christ, during His incarnation in the flesh, also possessed a soul (*On First Principles*, 2.8.1; *Gennesis* 1:21; 1:24; 2:7).
- ² Cf. Plato, *Laws* 894d, 896a, translated with notes and an interpretive essay by T. Pangle, *The Laws of Plato* (New York: Basic Books, 1980); *Phaedrus* 245c–e.
- ³ Plato not only refuted the Eleatic school’s doctrine of universal immobility but also rejected the Heraclitean school’s doctrine of universal flux. Cf. *Theaetetus* 154b1–155b2, 180d3–e4; *Sophist* 248e6–249b6, 226b5–228e5; *Timaeus* 34a2–b9, 43c1–7, 61d5–62c3; *Statesman* 308d1–311c8; *Phaedrus* 266b3–c1.
- ⁴ Referencing the work of Origen, translated by Ronald E. Heine, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Books 1–10* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1989), p. 193. Also refer to *On First Principles* 1.8.3, 2.6.5, 2.8.4.

References

- Benardete, Seth. 2000. *Plato’s Laws: The Discovery of Being*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Blosser, Benjamin. 2012. *Become Like the Angels: Origen’s Doctrine of the Soul*. Washington: The Catholic University of America Press.
- Broadie, Sarah. 2011. *Nature and Divinity in Plato’s Timaeus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crombie, Ian M. 2013. *An Examination of Plato’s Doctrines: Plato on Knowledge and Reality*. London: Routledge.
- Davies, Henry. 1898. Origen’s Theory of Knowledge. *The American Journal of Theology* 2: 737–62. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Edwards, Mark. 2002. *Origen Against Plato*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Eusebius. 1998. *Ecclesiastical History VI, 1*. Translated by C. F. Cruse. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.
- Hanson, Richard Patrick Crosland. 2002. *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen’s Interpretation of Scripture*. London: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Johansen, Thomas. 2008. *Plato’s Natural Philosophy: A Study of the Timaeus-Critias*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kries, Douglas. 2002. Origen, Plato, and Conscience (Synderesis) in Jerome’s Ezekiel Commentary. *Traditio* 57: 67–83. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Lewis, Rhodri. 2006. Of ‘Origenian Platonism’: Joseph Glanvill on the Pre-existence of Souls. *Huntington Library Quarterly* 69: 267–300. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Lin, Zhimeng. 2012. Sophist’s Courage: A Commentary on Plato’s *Protagoras* 349d–351b. *Journal of Lanzhou University* 40: 27–32. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Lin, Zhimeng. 2013. The Ontology and Theology of the Soul in Plato’s *Laws*”. *Philosophy and Culture* 474: 19–36.
- Lin, Zhimeng. 2018. Nietzsche’s Socratic Problem. *Philosophy and Culture* 525: 23–40.
- Martens, Peter. 2012. *Origen and Scripture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Martens, Peter. 2013. Origen’s Doctrine of Pre-Existence and the Opening Chapters of Genesis. *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 16: 516–49. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Martens, Peter. 2015. Embodiment, Heresy, and the Hellenization of Christianity: The Descent of the Soul in Plato and Origen. *Harvard Theological Review* 108: 612. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Origen. 1980. *Contra Celsum*. Translated with an introduction and notes by Henry Chadwick. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Origen. 1989. *Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Books 1–10*. Translated by Ronald E. Heine. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press.
- Origen. 2017–2018. *On First Principles*. Latin-English Bilingual Edition. Edited and Translated by John Behr. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pangle, Thomas L. 1976. The Political Psychology of Religion in Plato’s *Laws*. *The American Political Science Review* 70: 1059–77. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

- Pangle, Thomas L. 2014. *Virtue is Knowledge: The Moral Foundations of Socratic Political Philosophy*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Ramelli, Ilaria. 2011. The Philosophical Stance of Allegory in Stoicism and its Reception in Platonism, Pagan and Christian: Origen in Dialogue with the Stoics and Plato. *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 18: 335–51. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Ramelli, Ilaria. 2017. Origen and the Platonic Tradition. *Religions* 8: 21. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Rosen, Stanley. 2005. *Plato's Republic: A Study*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Rowett, Catherine. 2018. *Knowledge and Truth in Plato*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sallis, John. 1999. *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's Timaeus*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Scott, Gary, and William Welton. 2008. *Erotic Wisdom: Philosophy and Intermediacy in Plato's Symposium*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Smith, John. 1992. *The Ancient Wisdom of Origen*. London and Toronto: Associated University Presses.
- Strauss, Leo. 1975. *The Argument and the Action of Plato's Laws*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Strauss, Leo. 1989. The Problem of Socrates: Five Lectures. In *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism: An Introduction to the Thought of Leo Strauss*. Edited by Thomas L. Pangle. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Trigg, Joseph W. 1983. *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church*. Atlanta: John Knox Press.
- Tzamalikos, Panagiōtēs. 2007. *Origen: Philosophy of History and Eschatology*. Leiden: Brill.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.