

Róbert Somos

# LOGIC AND ARGUMENTATION IN ORIGEN



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## Preface

The main topic of this book is what Origen said about logic, dialectic and theory of science in his writings and what characterized his strategy of argumentation. This is not a well-defined segment of reality or norms. Logic, in its broader sense, has no clear contours, because besides the theory of inference, antique logic deals with questions of language and problems of epistemology. Theory of language, rhetoric and etymology are now part of linguistics, and epistemology is an autonomous philosophical discipline rooted in metaphysics. Moreover, logic and argumentation also have substantial practical aspects, which cannot be separated from theoretical issues. For the latter reason, instead of “what”, the focus of my investigation is on the “how”. The symbiosis of theoretical and practical moments results in a serious difficulty for interpreters because before answering the question of “how”, one should give an account of “what”. Since the question of “how” is always more complex than the question of “what”, and, what is more, logic, in its antique sense, has no clear contours, for convenience, in a provisional way, our main topic should be associated with a simple general idea. This leading idea may be rationality in its broadest sense, that is, the rationalistic or intellectualistic character of Origenian thinking contextualized in its practical dimensions. At the beginning of the fourth book of *First Principles*, Origen’s aim is expressed in the following terms: “... we try also to confirm our belief with reason” (λόγῳ τε πειρώμεθα κρατύνειν ἡμῶν τὴν πίστιν).<sup>1</sup> This formula may be the motto of this book. Here, the meaning of *logos* is not identical with the divine Word, but it is not independent of it either. *Logos*, as operation or argument capable of confirming a belief, may be “reason”, “argument” or “ground” depending on the context. This context may be the interpretation of Scriptures, the creation of systematic theology, accomplishing apologetics or fulfilling a special kind of spirituality. Origen did not only play an important role in initiating these extremely different fields, but he also contributed voluminous works to these different projects. His activity encompassed continual Scriptural exegesis – the principal program of his life – based on solid philological foundations and on an explicit theory of interpretation, and was carried out to grasp the spiritual sense of the Scripture.

1 Princ. IV 1,1. Here, I diverged from the English translation of Butterworth. In most cases I reproduced his version of the text, and generally, I follow existing English translations of Origen’s works. For the list of abbreviations, the bibliographic details of the translations followed and the works cited, see the Bibliography.

With his *First Principles*, Origen was the creator of the first systematic theology, and he composed the most intellectual piece of early Greek patristic apology in *Against Celsus*. A common characteristic of these different segments of activity is that they are based on scientific and logical principles and were developed with methodological consciousness.

According to Origen, although the *logos* used by us in our intellectual practice is a human capacity, the final source of this rationality is divine *Logos*, divine Wisdom, turned in the direction of the created beings via creation, along with providence and the fulfilment of this providence, the birth of Jesus Christ, his life and teaching, his death and resurrection. According to the Alexandrian theologian, the organized structure of the world, our inner intellectual nature and the divine revelation crystallized in the divine texts constitute a uniform, organic but complex and perplexing message. Deciphering it calls for continual efforts of human life. In a narrower sense, neither the whole earthly life nor the afterlife of the created souls is sufficient to acquire perfect knowledge of God and divine realities. Our knowledge cannot be perfect, but the love of truth is implanted in us by God: "We have not received this longing from God on the condition that it should not or could not ever be satisfied; for in that case the love of truth would appear to have been implanted in our mind by God the Creator to no purpose, if its gratification is never to be accomplished."<sup>2</sup> The different pieces of knowledge received in several phases of our life amplify and complete the earlier ones, and, according to Origen, in the final state, in the *apokatastasis*, the created soul can achieve the firmest communion with God. In this phase of human life the activity of knowledge is realized by the use of reason, which is rationality in its broad sense. To name this rationality, the antique man employed the word "logic", similarly to the modern parlance which often uses this expression in an extended and metaphoric way. For Origen, rationality as logic refers, on the one hand, to the rationality of the whole reality, and, on the other, to the intellectual arsenal of logical instruments and the application of these dialectical and methodological tools. It is clear that the topic of logical instruments can be attached to the Greek philosophical discipline, but the case of rationality is more complex in its more general sense and without clear contours. The contours of the fields and investigations which would have been called logical ones are clear to neither Origen nor us. Thus, because the object of this discipline cannot be identified with a well-limited field of reality – as opposed to the natural sciences, mathematics, ethics or biblical studies – the method of investigation cannot be the same.

While writing this book, I have often felt that further themes and questions can and should be discussed. Forms, structures and processes of the arguments could have been treated with more elaboration. Technical subtleties of scientific-

2 Princ. II 11,4.

ic-methodological ideas could have been investigated on the basis of more detailed theory. The Origenian strategies of argumentation could have been compared with similar techniques in other theological or philosophical works. The biographical aspect, strongly relating to the personal, practical context, might have been highlighted, because this new approach has produced two of the most important recent contributions to Origenian literature: Peter W. Martens' book, *Origen and Scripture. The contours of the exegetical life*<sup>3</sup> and Lorenzo Perrone's work, *La preghiera secondo Origene. L'impossibilità donata*.<sup>4</sup> Attractive as this direction may be, it did not seem to fit in with the topic of logic in the current condition of the research.<sup>5</sup> In my opinion, the different aspects of these registers would have caused such complexity in discussing Origenian logic – in the present situation – that the possibility of drawing clear inferences would have been very doubtful. This being the first attempt of grasping an obscure and secondary topic, we may need to give a somewhat simplified picture. Thus, these aspects of the two contributions of the recent Origenian scholarship may enrich the investigations of Origenian logic in the future, but only if we keep in mind that the topic of logic is quite different from that of exegetical activity, spirituality and prayer in terms of importance.

- 3 MARTENS, *Origen and Scripture* xi: "Biographic examination" is the term employed by the author. The sense of the word here is not the chronological aspect of the Origenian activity but a kind of inner "history" or rather the permanent aspect of this inner history. As Martens puts it, "the focus is on his [Origen's] account of the spiritual interpreter, the animating centre of the exegetical enterprise ... I intend to disclose the contours of Origen's sweeping vision of scriptural exegesis as a way of life ... Origen contextualized interpreters – himself included – within the Christian drama of salvation." For the chronology of Origen, see the standard work: NAUTIN, *Origène*. Recent work with special emphasis on the separation between the Alexandrian and Caesarean years of Origen: HEINE, *Origen*. The first important contribution to the topic of the inner, personal change in Origen's thought was CROUZEL, *La personnalité d'Origène*. For the autobiographic aspects, see PERRONE, *Origen's 'Confessions'*.
- 4 PERRONE, *Preghiera*. One of the basic suggestions made by the author is that theology and exegesis are inseparable in Origen's writings. The Italian scholar emphasizes that Origenian works belonging to different literary genres address different audiences, and thus the Alexandrian master had to speak to different people in different ways. Due to these circumstances a special polyphony emerges, in which the Origenian texts provide a wide range of registers of thought that cannot be forced into a rigid system. Perrone thus corrects earlier scholarly approaches that aimed to extract a single philosophical, mystical or theological scheme, a fundamental personal *habitus* from Origen.
- 5 I tried to show the biographic aspect of the Origenian activities in connection with philosophy in my Hungarian dissertation: SOMOS, *Origenész és a görög filozófia [Origen and the Greek Philosophy]*. I emphasized the philosophical aspect connecting two biographic topics. The first is the Christian philosophical school of Origen in Alexandria and Caesarea. Secondly, I tried to prove that only one Origen existed, but now, I am more sceptical about the conclusion.

Thus, it should be emphasized that the scope of this book is a limited one. In Origen's thought, logic is not a topic like scriptural interpretation or spirituality. Furthermore, I do not want to call Origen a logician or a philosopher. I do not want to dig up the "essence" of his teaching from his ideas on logic. He was a Christian thinker, who – consciously or spontaneously – used, reused, adapted and reformed Greek philosophical thoughts and methods belonging to logic and created a theory of his own about the relationship between divine *Logos* and human *logos*. An investigation of these aspects of Origen's work may contribute to a better understanding of him.

When working on the final version of this monograph, I was tempted to amplify the material, collected over the last ten years. Yet I resisted. The first version of this book was published in Hungarian: *Logika és érvelés Órigenész műveiben [Logic and argumentation in the works of Origen]* in the monograph series of *Catena* (Budapest, 2011). This series is edited by the Centre of Patristic Studies of the University of Pécs and Kairosz Publisher. In this English version, I have substantially changed the structure of the book, extending the text and the bibliography and adding some entirely new chapters on epistemology and logical paradoxes. I published the first version of some chapters and sub-chapters also in English at different conferences and in their proceedings.<sup>6</sup>

I would like to express my gratitude to the Origenists and colleagues for their help, invitations to conferences and constant inspiration, especially to István M. Bugár, Alfons Füst, György Geréby, György Heidl, Anders-Christian Jacobsen, Gábor Kendeffy, Alain Le Boulluec, Peter Martens, Angela Maria Mazzanti, Lorenzo Perrone, and Emanuela Prinzivalli. The Hungarian Research Fund (OTKA project K 81278) supported my research and the publication.

Pécs, September 2013

Róbert Somos

6 To Chapter Three: Christianity as practical Philosophy in Origen, in: HEIDL/SOMOS, *Origeniana Nona* 327–335, and The divine power in Origen's theory of salvation, in: *Pagani e cristiani alla ricerca della salvezza* 711–724. To Chapter Six: An Aristotelian science-methodological principle in Origen's *Commentary on John*, in: PERRONE, *Origeniana Octava*, vol. 1, 547–552, and Elements of the Theory of Scientific Knowledge in the *Commentary on John*, in: PRINZIVALLI, *Commento al Vangelo di Giovanni* 157–175. To Chapter Nine: Strategy of Argumentation in Origen's *Contra Celsum*, in: *Adamantius* 18 (2012) 200–217. To Chapter Ten: Is the Handmaid Stoic or Middle Platonic?, in: VINZENT, *StPatr* LVI/4, 29–40. Some ideas of the Chapter Two were delivered at the conference *Origeniana Undecima* in Aarhus, 2013.

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## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this work is to elucidate Origen's activity in the field of logic. Due to the immense volume of his works – surviving only in a fragmentary way – and because of the highly respected quality of these writings, the Alexandrian theologian was considered the most distinguished Christian thinker of his time, in the third century A.D., and he has been regarded as the most influential intellectual figure of that time by succeeding generations.

In my opinion, patristic scholars have not turned their attention to the topic of logic and theory and practice of argumentation. Naturally, there exist writings on how Origen employed logical notions and inferences, on what scientific-theoretical methods are present in his writing, and on which traditions the Alexandrine's knowledge of logic and rhetoric can be connected to, but in its larger context the theme has not received closer investigation. It seems to me that there are three reasons for this disregard.

The first is related to our elementary experience of logic. This general impression tells us that the hopelessly dry and formal character of logic has nothing to do with the substantial theological content that constitutes the fundamental questions posed by Origen, this logical formalism being in obvious opposition with the principal message and spirituality of Christianity.

The second reason may be that – in its narrow sense – logic as a discipline is part of philosophy. The numerous investigations dealing with the relationship, in Origen's thinking, between the Jewish-Christian tradition and Greek philosophy mainly focus on the problems that have true and direct relevance of *Weltanschauung*. Greek philosophical or natural theology, ethics and – to a certain extent – natural philosophy are the fundamental disciplines that were interesting to Christians for establishing their position in the antique spiritual and material world. These doctrines deal with sharp segments of realities and values. Natural theology, physics – problems of creation and anthropology – and ethics offer principal questions and answers, directly or indirectly relevant to the problem of how Christians should consider the divine and human world and what they should think about the relationship between Greek culture and their own Christianity. From a historical point of view of patristic scholarship, these are also the primary questions to answer when modern interpreters investigate Origen's relation to the Greek philosophy of his time. From this perspective logic is a secondary topic.

The third reason for the relative absence of interest for a comprehensive elaboration of Origenian logic is the above-mentioned blurred profile of logic in Origen's thinking. Thus, interpreters do not agree on how to define logic in the work of the Alexandrian master. It will be explained later, in chapter one, that logic had a special position in Greek philosophical schools and that it is possible to define *λογική* or *διαλεκτική* in multiple ways in Origen, too. The possible definitions offer a heterogeneous picture, which is the reason that it is difficult to deal with these issues in an economical way.

Naturally, these three reasons for the absence of interest cannot be considered serious arguments *pro* or *contra* as to the relevance of the question of logic in Origen's activity. In actual fact, it is difficult to see that concepts and methods connected to logic have substantial consequences in the field of theology. It is not obvious how a close analysis of a formal discipline can offer a key for judging theological thoughts and argumentations. Although logical ideas have no direct theological relevance, they should not be neglected. The evaluation of the intellectual quality of different Christian authors' thoughts is possible after a sophisticated thinking process, the first step of which may be the analysis of logic.

Naturally, the relatively little attention paid to Origenian logic of itself does not validate an investigation, much less guarantee a successful outcome. Still, I have two arguments to suggest that analysing these questions may be fruitful. First, the study of Origenian logic, argumentation and theory of scientific knowledge contributes to a better understanding of Origen's attitude to Greek philosophy as it generally throws light upon the relationship between Christianity and the philosophical traditions in his works and activities. Second, a close inspection of the structure of the thoughts and arguments may illuminate the intellectual qualities of these Origenian ideas and it may provide some basis for the first steps of future comparisons between the convincing capacities of different Christian theologians' proofs and between Christian and non-Christian author's argumentations.

When forming my approach, I found that a similar effort – in another field – had proved successful. The productiveness of this bottom-up, less essentialist perspective can be found, for example, in Bernhard Neuschäfer's book *Origenes als Philologe* in which the author investigates not so much the allegorical method that has become, for good reason, inseparable from Origen's achievements, as the grounds of scholarly text-interpretation and the questions of the literary form of exegetical works.<sup>7</sup> The starting point of Neuschäfer's approach is that Origen's exegesis was investigated focusing on the allegorical method prior to him. The result of this traditional view was that evaluation of the allegorical interpretation became the measure according to which different studies and scholars interpreted Origen's exegesis. However, interpretation is preceded by the reconstruction of

7 NEUSCHÄFER, *Origenes als Philologe*.

the text, the level of grammatical analysis. Although Origen always emphasizes the superiority of spiritual interpretation in relation to the historical meaning of the Scripture – which is a fundamental fact for all investigations of Origen's exegesis – the basis of interpretation is textual-critical activity. Our theologian makes a great effort to offer a position from which the comparison of the Hebrew original with the different Greek translations of the Scripture may be correct. The most fruitful result of this work was *Hexapla*, but all Origenian interpretations start from this point.

The relationship between philology and allegorical or spiritual interpretation seems to be analogous to that between logic and theology. Several Origenian theological ideas have been examined in connection with philosophical patterns, but despite the generally adopted scholarly opinion that Middle Platonism was the most important philosophical school for him, these studies have often produced opposing views on the nature and importance of the philosophical elements used by Origen.<sup>8</sup> Similarly to the situation registered by Neuschäfer in connection with the alleged Origenian allegorical interpretation, this Middle Platonic component and its degree has become the focal point of the interpretation of Origen's attitude to philosophy. Still, I am convinced that in the field of theology we can find topics that do not coincide with Origen's famous and most specific ideas coloured by Platonism. These include, for example, from an inner Christian perspective, the theology of Trinity showing certain subordinating tendencies or the pre-existence of the soul, or, in the relationship between Greek philosophy and Christianity, the concept of Providence (*πρόνοια*) and the theory of matter. Nevertheless, theology as a science also contains moments that should be regarded as simple and fundamental elements of scholarly practice, and, at the same time, they have no direct consequences on questions of *Weltanschauung*. These moments, acquired mostly in a spontaneous way, belong to logic. Logic is related to form rather than content: it deals often with the "how" rather than the "what".<sup>9</sup> This is why the adaptation of numerous elements of the standard scholarly practice did not present ideological problems in Origen in contradiction to his theory of the pre-existence of the soul, which is strongly loaded by moments of world view. It may be that by adopting this bottom-up approach we can obtain a more precise view of Origen's relationship with philosophical tradition.

8 Some scholars consider Origen as Greek philosopher or Platonist philosopher: KOCH, *Pronoia und Paideusis*; BERCHMAN, *From Philo to Origen*. Another extremity is to name "diametrical opposition" the relation between Origen and Greek philosophy: DANIÉLOU, *Origène* 109; CROUZEL, *Origène et la philosophie* 91–94.

9 The main goal of studying logic is to be able to argue, which is a practical issue. In some cases it is possible to draw correct conclusion without knowledge of the rules of constructing syllogisms, but more articulated argumentation demands theoretical erudition and practical skill.

The blurred profile of logic in the philosophical tradition and Origen's manner of thinking causes several problems for our investigation. It is clear that here we cannot deal successfully with the complex problems of the theory of syllogisms, the theory of dialectical arguments, rhetoric, the theory of knowledge in general, the theory of scientific knowledge, the theory of language, the theory and practice of text-interpretation and some elements of metaphysics. Thus, the common intersection of the Origenian and modern use of the word *logica* may be the main subject of our inquiry. I will deal with thoughts clothed in linguistic forms. A criterion of logical characteristics is that these forms should directly relate to the concept of truth. I will, therefore, disregard numerous aspects of rhetoric,<sup>10</sup> grammar,<sup>11</sup> theory of language,<sup>12</sup> exegesis,<sup>13</sup> metaphysics, philosophical theory of knowledge and questions relating to literary genre<sup>14</sup> so as to concentrate on different types of scientific and dialectical propositions, inferences, arguments, the theory of scientific knowledge and the strategies of argumentation.

10 For Origen's rhetoric and style, see TORJESEN, *Influence of Rhetoric*; TORJESEN, *Herme-  
neutical Procedure*; NEUSCHÄFER, *Origenes als Philologe* 202–246; LE BOULLUEC, *Art.  
Retorica*; HARL, *Origène et la fonction révélatrice*; MONACI CASTAGNO, *Origene predi-  
catore*. Recent studies on an important aspect of Origenian rhetoric, namely, on the propo-  
sopoeia, see VILLANI, *Origenes als Schriftsteller*; VILLANI, *Personae loquentes*.

11 For questions of grammar, see NEUSCHÄFER, *Origenes als Philologe* 202–240. For theo-  
logical implications of the Origenian grammar, see CACCIARI, *Dalla grammatica alla teo-  
logia*. On grammar, style and logic: PAZZINI, *Lingua e teologia*.

12 HARL, *Origène et la sémantique*.

13 For the connection between exegetical theory, practice and philology, see MARTENS,  
*Origen and Scripture* 25–66, and DIVELY LAURO, *Soul and Spirit of Scripture*.

14 On the question of the literary genre of *quaestiones et responsiones* and their relevance to  
the problems of formal aspect of Origenian argumentation, see the studies of PERRONE, *La  
parrhêsia di Mosè*; PERRONE, “*Quaestiones et responsiones*” in Origenes.

## CHAPTER ONE: DEFINITION AND VALUATION OF LOGIC BY ORIGEN

In Chapter One I attempt to answer the question of what place is marked out for logic and dialectics in Origen's works, and of how the nature of this discipline is described by the Alexandrian master. In the texts written by Origen, several positive and negative valuations of dialectics can be found, and on the basis of this information, the coherence of the Origenian view can be assessed. A provisional starting point may be that in the second and third centuries, philosophers and church fathers generally used Stoic terminology or *termini technici*, which seem to be pieces of Stoic vocabulary. This is due to the general trend of the stoicising of earlier philosophical lexica from Hellenistic times. Although it is clear that Origenian metaphysical ideas have much more common elements with contemporaneous Platonism, the stoicising of philosophical lexica can be registered in his scientific terminology, too.<sup>15</sup>

According to this general view, *λογική* is the philosophical discipline that deals with questions of theory of knowledge, theory of scientific methods, theory of language, rhetoric, and problems of scientific and dialectical reasoning, as well as with the theoretical and practical questions of argumentation in different types of debates. With a certain simplification of the issues one can say that *διαλεκτική* is part of the discipline of *λογική*. We can follow Hans von Arnim's division, found in his collection entitled *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, according to which under the entry *logica* one can classify the theory of knowledge (*de cognitione doctrina*), *dialectica* and *rhetorica*. According to this approach, logic deals with the *logos*, that is with language expressions mainly in terms of truth and falsity. Naturally, this division represents a very general view: in the works of different authors and in the Stoic practice, *λογική* and *διαλεκτική* are often interchangeable terms.<sup>16</sup>

15 CADIOU, Dictionnaires antiques.

16 SVF II 35.

## 1. Some predecessors. Philo of Alexandria and Clement of Alexandria

It is a well-known fact that early Christians did not know dialectics: neither the term *λογική* in the sense of *ἐπιστήμη λογική*, nor that of *διαλεκτική* occurs in Scripture. In the context of logic, Saint Paul's *First Letter to the Corinthians* opposes the "enticing words of man's wisdom" and his "speech and preaching ... in demonstration of the Spirit and of power".<sup>17</sup> According to the standard interpretation of this passage of Saint Paul's letter, attractive human teaching and debating technique confronts direct divine power and will be defeated by God's words. Mainly on the basis of this passage of the Pauline text, in the Christian circles of the first centuries the condemnation of philosophy and its parts, logic and rhetoric, was a common practice.

This negative valuation, which definitely exerted an influence in Patristic times, was not an exclusively Christian issue. Philo of Alexandria tells us that logic is hunting for words (*λογοθηρία*), the knowledge of which is useless for obtaining virtue.<sup>18</sup> But Philo – as was his custom – overcomplicates matters and as a result, the door is opened for a more positive valuation of logic. The Jewish philosopher thus interprets Gen 9:20: "And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard", following the old Stoic use, as he compares natural philosophy (*τὸ φυσικόν*) to trees and plants of the garden, whereas moral philosophy (*τὸ ἠθικόν*) to fruits, and logic (*τὸ λογικόν*) to the hedge:

"Accordingly, they tell us that the men of old likened philosophic discussion with its three-fold division to a field, comparing that part which deals with nature to trees and plants; that which deals with morality to fruits and crops, for the sake of which the plants exist; that part which has to do with logic to a fence enclosing it. For even as the wall built round it serves to protect the fruit and the plants that grow in the field, keeping off those who would like mischievously to make their way in with a view to plunder; in the same way the logical part of philosophy is, so to speak, a strong barrier guarding those other two parts, the ethical and the physical. For when it disentangles which one deals with ambiguous expressions capable of two meanings, and exposes the fallacies created by tricks of argument, and using perfectly clear and unmistakable language and adducing proofs which admit of no doubt destroys plausible falsehood, that greatest snare and pest of the soul, it makes the mind like smoothed wax ready to receive the impressions made by the science that explores existence and that which aims at building character, impressions free from flaw and aught that is not genuine."<sup>19</sup>

17 1 Cor 2:4. The third chapter will deal with the Origenian interpretation of this passage.

18 Philo, *omn. prob. lib.* 79 f.

19 Philo, *agric.* 14–16. Translated by COLSON, Philo's works, vol. 3, 115–117.

This interpretation, based partly on Deut 20:20, attributes a positive function to logic. The task of this discipline is to defend, with rational and technical instruments, the other two parts of philosophy: natural and moral doctrines. Logic is inferior to physics and ethics, but it keeps off all destroying activities as a tool used for worthy purposes.

Philo's positive valuation influenced the leading figures of the Alexandrian Christian tradition. As is well known, Clement and Origen regarded Philo as their predecessor, and they adopted many ideas from the Jewish philosopher. Clement was the first thinker who rejected the view shared by the majority of Christian theologians, according to which the principal source of the heretical teachings was Greek philosophy.<sup>20</sup> For Clement, logic was important not only as an instrument for defense, but also as a method, *ἀναγωγή*, with which one may reach the first and simple divine reality. He often used Philo's wording, but in book VI of *Stromata*, he offered a positive picture of philosophy independently from Philo:

“Further, the Gnostic will put to use dialectics, for delivering the distinction of genera into species, and will master the distinction of realities, till he come to what is primary and simple. But the multitude is frightened at Greek philosophy, as children are at bogeys, being afraid lest it lead them astray. Nevertheless, if the faith – for I would not call it knowledge – possessed by them be such as to be vanished by plausible argument, let it be by all means dissolved, and let them confess that they will not retain the truth. For truth is invincible, as they say, but false opinion will be destroyed.”<sup>21</sup>

In this interpretation, dialectics enables us to intimately experience the principles. Above all, it is not only the adaptation of Platonic dialectics that can be attributed to Clement, but Aristotelian science methodology, too. Therefore, in the final analysis, the logical principle emphasizes that all learning and teaching starts from previous knowledge, and that this previous knowledge is identified by Clement with the content of Christian faith, especially with the divine Logos.<sup>22</sup> This is a central theme of his theological achievement, and the investigation of the connection between belief and knowledge enables Clement to elevate Christian teaching into the realm of high culture.

Logic, regarded as a dialectic and anagogical process on the one hand, and as theory of previous knowledge on the other, has, in this way, a direct theological function. Thus, in Clement's interpretation, logic is not only a useful instrument that can be applied, properly or improperly, in various ways for defending something else, but also a central element of Christian theological consideration.

20 For the Clementian distinction between philosophy and logic, on the one hand, and heresy, on the other, see LE BOULLUEC, *La notion d'hérésie*, vol. 2, 276–312.

21 Clement, *strom.* VI 80,4.

22 On these questions, see the seminal work of OSBORN, *Philosophy of Clement*.

## 2. Origen's definition of logic

### 2.1 *Commentary on the Song of Songs*

Origen shares Clement's positive valuation, but he does not state that divine first principles can be accessed by dialectical *ἀναγωγή*.<sup>23</sup> He uses the word *λογική* as a general term related to the discipline as a whole, at least it is almost entirely certain that Rufinus translates the word *λογική* as *logica* consistently. Origen demonstrated no special interest in defining logic. Although he tells us more about logic than does Philo or Clement, he is not concerned with providing an unambiguous formula for its definition. The nature and character of logic do not appear as distinct topics in the writings of the Alexandrian master. The most extensive investigation of the nature of logic can be found in the prologue of the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, a text which has come down to us in the Latin translation by Rufinus:

“The basic disciplines through which one attains knowledge of things are the three which the Greeks called ethics, physics and epoptics; these we may call the moral, natural, and contemplative. There are admittedly some among the Greeks who also count logic as a fourth, which we may call rational. Others have said that the latter is not extrinsic, but is rather interwoven through these three disciplines which we mentioned above and is incorporated into the whole group. For this logic is, as we say, rational, in that it deals with the meaning of the words and propositions, proper and improper significances, the species, the genus and gives information as to the figures of each and every saying. This branch of discipline certainly requires not so much to be separated from the others as to be mingled and interwoven with them. That study is called moral, on the other hand, which inculcates a seemly manner of life and gives a grounding in habits that incline one to virtue. The study called natural is that in which the nature of each single thing is considered; so that nothing in life may be done which is contrary to nature, but everything is assigned to the uses for which the creator brought it into being. The study called contemplative is that by which we go beyond things seen and contemplate somewhat of things divine and heavenly, beholding them with the mind alone, for they are beyond the range of bodily sight.”<sup>24</sup>

It is a well-known thesis that *enoptica* in the manuscript tradition should be emended as *epoptica*, a term used to define the grasp of spiritual realities by pure intellect. When Origen adapts the word used in the parlance of the Greek mysteries, he follows the tradition of Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch and Clement of Alexan-

23 The four Christian levels of knowledge offered by Origen as an answer to Celsus' allusion to the Platonic *ἀναγωγή* in epist. 7, 342 a 1–b 3 is not a well-formed logical or epistemological interpretation: Cels. VI 9.

24 Origen, in Cant. comm. prol. 3,1–3. Translation of Lawson with some modifications. I also used the translation of MARTENS, Origen and Scripture 79.

dria.<sup>25</sup> As far as the systematic order of the philosophical disciplines is concerned, the Alexandrine's division cannot be linked to a single thinker or philosophical school, because the division created in the Platonic Academy by Xenocrates and adopted by Stoic thinkers dealt with the trio of logic, physics and ethics, whereas Aristotle's most used classification identifies theoretical, practical and poetic sciences.

After making the threefold classification, Origen advances his view that this division of philosophy, that is, the general sciences into ethics, physics and *εποπτική*, has been taken over from Solomon by Greek philosophers.<sup>26</sup> *Proverbs* corresponds to moral philosophy, *Ecclesiastes* to natural philosophy and *Song of Songs* to *disciplina inspectiva*. This is the true philosophy, *vera philosophia* or *fundamenta verae philosophiae* according to Origen.<sup>27</sup> Logic is also mentioned as an important subject for Solomon, but the Alexandrine master does not connect it with any book written by him:

“That in laying down these basic principles of true philosophy and establishing the order of the subjects to be learnt and taught, he was neither ignorant of the rational science nor refused to deal with it, he shows plainly right at the beginning of his *Proverbs*, primarily by the fact that he made *Proverbs* the title of his book; for the pro-verb denotes that one thing is openly said, and another is inwardly meant ... In the following he goes on forthwith to discriminate between the meanings of words: he distinguishes knowledge from wisdom, and instruction from knowledge, and represents the understanding of words as something different again, and says that prudence consists in a person's ability to grasp the shades of meaning in words. He differentiates, moreover, between true justice and sound judgment; but he mentions a certain perspicacity as being necessary for those whom he instructs – meaning, I believe, the astuteness of perception by which crooked and fallacious lines of thought may be seen for what they are, and shunned accordingly. And he says, therefore, that subtlety is given by wisdom to the innocent, doubtless lest they should be deceived in the Word of God by sophistic fraud. And in this also seems to me that he has in mind the rational science, whereby the content of words and the meanings of propositions are discerned, and the proper significance of every utterance is reasonably defined.”<sup>28</sup>

When dealing with the third chapter of the prologue of the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, interpreters focus their attention on the threefold division or on the

25 Plato, *symp.* 210 a; *Phaidr.* 250 c; *epist.* 7, 333 e; Plutarch, *Dem.* 26,1; *Alc.* 22,4, *Clement*, *protr.* 10,3; *paed.* I 8,3; *strom.* II 47,4; V 71,2; HARL, *Les trois livres de Salomon*; BRÉSARD/CROUZEL/BORRET, *SC* 375, 128; 376, 755.

26 Origen, in *Cant. comm. prol.* 3,4.

27 In *Cant. comm. prol.* 3,8.

28 In *Cant. comm. prol.* 3,8 f. Translation of Lawson with some modifications.

third discipline of the general sciences.<sup>29</sup> Sometimes logic, the fourth discipline, is mentioned, for instance, when Henri Crouzel emphasizes that here “... la logique est la science du caractère allégorique de l'Écriture qui livre des mystères sous des images”.<sup>30</sup> And the result of the most thorough analysis of this section of the prologue made by Marguerite Harl is that logic possesses this “caractère allégorique” and that it is the theory of language in Origen:

“La ‘logique’ est donc science du langage, celle qui permet de discerner les propriétés des différentes parties du discours ... Origène a rapporté l'opinion de ceux qui pensent que la logique est *mêlée* dans les trois autres parties de la philosophie ... Pour lui, il en limite la présence au livre des Proverbes.”<sup>31</sup>

This view now seems to be the *communis opinio*. In his new, excellent book entitled *Origen and Scripture*, Peter Martens translates the passage of the *Commentary on the Song of Songs* prologue 3,1–3 in such a manner that linguistic discipline absorbs logic: “There are admittedly some among the Greeks who also count linguistics as a fourth, which we can call rational.”<sup>32</sup> Martens argues in favour of this solution in the following way:

“The English translator of this *Commentary* renders the Latin expression unhelpfully, I think, as ‘logic’. It is important to remember that *ἡ λογικὴ τέχνη*, the linguistic discipline, often encompassed in antiquity far more than what is customarily meant by logic today. ‘Linguistic’ is probably a more helpful translation since it catches better the wide spectrum of this ancient scholarly discipline: it certainly included inquiry into the patterns of argument expressed through language (resembling our logic), but it also comprised an assessment of language itself, that is, the sorts of issues philologists addressed.”<sup>33</sup>

It is true that logic is strongly connected to language and to different texts. A rational discipline included in the Jewish-Christian tradition according to the Origenian view, it focuses mainly on divine Scripture, its reconstruction and interpretation. However, Harl's and Martens' explanation has some weaknesses. First, here the presence of logic is not limited to the *Proverbs* because in connec-

29 Ilsetraut Hadot does not mention logic in the Appendice III (Les parties de la philosophie chez Cassiodore et chez Origène) of her book: HADOT, *Arts libéraux et philosophie* 299–301.

30 CROUZEL, *Origène et la philosophie* 24; cf. CROUZEL, *Origène et la “connaissance mystique”* 249 f. Pierre Hadot considers the Origenian mention of logic in the following way: logic is not an independent part of philosophy and this is not his own idea on logic but an allusion to the Aristotelian view: HADOT, *Einteilung der Philosophie* 439 f.

31 HARL, *Les trois livres de Salomon* 252 n. 17.

32 MARTENS, *Origen and Scripture* 79.

33 MARTENS, *Origen and Scripture* 79.

tion with the literary genre of the *Proverbs*, Origen hints at Jn 16:25. Therefore, the New Testament is also relevant for him in this respect. Second, it is also clear that Origen accepts the position that logic overlaps with the other three disciplines. The reason is that it is not only a strange idea of some people; Solomon himself signals the acceptance of it by the title of *Proverbs*. The presence of logic as *conditio sine qua non* among the philosophical disciplines is also clear from the Greek text of the third book of *Commentary on Genesis* extant in the *Philocalia*: "... is it possible to discuss properly the ethical, physical and theological problems without precise knowledge of how to explain their meanings and without elucidating them according to the logical part?"<sup>34</sup>

Third, the finesse which makes it possible to defend ourselves against the sophistic argumentation is obviously not a question of language and cannot be named "linguistic". Similarly, although it is true that the Origenian parlance on logic is embedded in a language and textual context, distinctions (*discretio verborum*) between science, wisdom, discipline, and true righteousness are not exclusive problems of lexicography. Definition and *διαίρεσις* are based on language but they represent dialectical procedures. Furthermore, *verbum* here may be the Latin word for *λόγος*, and I am not convinced that the correct translation of *discretio verborum* is "distinctions des mots" as is rendered in the French text, rather than "distinctions des concepts". In the same way, in the passage *Philocalia* 14,2 *κατὰ τὸν λογικὸν τόπον* means "according to the logical part", rather than "la science du langage", as translated by Marguerite Harl.<sup>35</sup> In Origen's view, according to a passage of *Commentary on Epistle to Romans*, preserved in *Philocalia*, the problem of possibilities belongs to logic.<sup>36</sup> Finally, when Gregory of Thaumaturgus describes the method of Origen's teaching, he speaks about logic not in the meaning of linguistics but in a normal way. The master formed his pupils' rational souls in a "logical way" (*λογικῶς*) that they would be able to judge propositions and arguments (*περὶ τὰς λέξεις καὶ λόγους*).<sup>37</sup>

There is no doubt that the main aspect of logic in the prologue of the *Commentary on the Song of Songs* is the science of language. But it cannot be said that this

34 Philoc. 14,2. The whole passage shows the predominance of theory of language. When in the fragment of *Commentary on Proverbs* 1,6 (PG 13, 24D–25A) Origen speaks of "equipment of reason" (*ἐν λόγῳ παρασκευή*) he does not use the word *λογική* but he understands this "equipment of reason" as tool of logic, by which one can "solve the sophism and refute the fallacious reasoning" (*πῶς τὸ σόφισμα λύεται, καὶ ὁ παραλογισμὸς ἐλέγχεται*).

35 When commenting on this passage, HARL, SC 302, 425 n. 1, also emphasizes: "Celle-ci [la part de la logique] correspondent ici à la science du langage".

36 Philoc. 25,2.

37 Gregory, pan. Orig. 85–89. Henri Crouzel emphasised the divergence between the prologue of *Commentary on the Song of Songs* and Gregory's account, CROUZEL, Origène et la "connaissance mystique" 251: "On ne retrouve pas ici le caractère proprement scripturaire de la logique et la dialectique ..."