The begotten-not-made distinction in the eastern pro-Nicenes

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Abstract: The Nicene–Constantinopolitan profession that the Son of God is begotten, not made, presents the tension that the Son is caused by God but not created. This claim was a point of controversy in the semi-Arian and Eunomian/Anomean disputes of the fourth century. The latter argued that unoriginateness is central to divinity. Hence, the Son, being originate, cannot be of the same nature as the Father. Some philosophers of religion today echo this same conclusion. In this article, I show, contrary to both ancient and modern critics of the begotten-not-made distinction, that the Eastern fathers offer clear differences between begetting and creating, which clarify why the distinction is cogent and necessary within their metaphysics.

The Nicene–Constantinopolitan profession that the Son of God is begotten, not made, offers the uneasy tension that the Son is caused by God but not created by God. This claim was a central point of controversy with both the 'semi-Arians' (to use Epiphanius' label)[1] and the Eunomians/Anomeans in the fourth century. The latter in particular argued that *being unoriginate* is a central trait of divinity. Or to employ Latin terminology, they maintained that *aseitas* (self-existence) is an essential property of the divine essence. Building on this point, the Eunomians argued the following:

1. All that which is begotten is caused.
2. The Son is begotten [of the Father].
3. Therefore, the Son is caused. (1 & 2)
4. All that which exists *a se* [in itself] is not caused.
5. Therefore, the Son is not that which exists *a se*. (3 & 4)
6. All that which bears the divine essence is that which exists *a se*.
7. Therefore, the Son is not that which bears the divine essence. (5 & 6)

For this reason, the Eunomians rejected the pro-Nicene claim that the Son is *homoousios* with the Father, arguing instead that the Son is of a nature different from and inferior to that of his unoriginate Father.[2]

Some philosophers of religion today continue to see the begotten-not-made distinction as problematic. Brian Leftow, for example, argues that it is hard to see how a Trinitarianism that 'entails divine "begetting" can avoid the claim that God creates the Son *ex nihilo*'.[3] Leftow sees only two differences between begetting and creating, namely, eternality and the moral perfection of The Begotten. Yet, Leftow considers this to be 'an unacceptably low standard of divinity'.[4] To illustrate why, he offers a thought experiment in which God creates a group of angels from eternity who are morally perfect by nature. According to Leftow, all that the pro-Nicenes say of the Son can be said of this angelic horde: they are causally dependent on God; they exist from all eternity; they are morally perfect; and they are even immaterial. Yet, Leftow anticipates that no-one would grant divine status to these angels.[5] But this raises the question: if these angels do not meet the standards of divinity, why does the Nicene Son of God?

In what follows, I look at how the Eastern fathers understand the differences between the begetting of the Son of God and the making of creatures. I will show, contrary to both ancient and modern critics of the distinction, that the Eastern fathers identify numerous points of difference between begetting and creating, differences that show the distinction to be not only cogent but necessary within their metaphysics. What follows is neither an historical survey of the development of the distinction between Eternal Generation (hereafter EG) and creation nor an exposition of one particular Church father on the topic.[6] Instead, I offer something in the spirit of the 'neo-patristic synthesis' of Georges Florovsky and Vladimir Lossky,[7] to wit, a systematizing of various claims by the Eastern Church fathers on the begotten-not-made distinction with a view to defending the distinction against its opponents in the philosophy of religion, both ancient and contemporary.[8] As such, not every claim identified and defended below appears in every Eastern father. Yet, at the same time, I see no claim offered herein that stands in conflict with any Eastern father on the topic, and, more importantly, the claims I expound all rely on an underlying rationale that, in my assessment, is common across the pro-Nicene writers of the East.[9] Hence, even where an individual claim may be unique to a single writer, its rationale is not. The synthesis I offer, therefore, is one I take to be faithful to a real *consensus patrum* of the Eastern patristic writers on the EG–creation distinction.

My exposition consists of four sections. I dedicate the first three to the metaphysical differences between EG and creation. In the first section, I look at how the Eastern fathers understand the metaphysics of becoming, the role matter plays in this understanding, and how becoming and matter supply the metaphysical baseline for the distinction between God and creatures generally and EG and creation specifically. As we will see, this metaphysical baseline determines the

Eastern apophatic claims about EG. In the second section, I look at the kataphatic claims about EG, focusing on the twin elements of eternality and begetting. We will see how these elements connect with the metaphysics of the first section and why they must be so paired. In the third section, I look at the modal distinction between EG and creation. We will see that, while no distinction between God and creatures is required in pagan philosophy, Christianity, as articulated by the Eastern fathers, moved decidedly away from pagan modalities, adding a further distinction between EG and creation. In the fourth section, I return to the Eunomian and Eunomian-style cases noted above. With the metaphysics of the first three sections in hand, I identify the flaws in the arguments of both the Eunomians and contemporary philosophers of like mind. In the end, I demonstrate that there are many robust and defensible differences between EG and creation in Eastern patristic thought and show why these distinctions are indispensable within Eastern pro-Nicene metaphysics.[10]

Becoming and the apophatic traits of EG

We begin by looking at the basic metaphysical divide between God and creatures articulated by the Eastern pro-Nicenes, which informs the apophatic distinctions between EG and creation.[11] As argued in a series of recent articles, the general consensus of the Eastern Church fathers is that all creatures, including 'immaterial' entities, are in some sense corporeal. Not all have density or mass but all have basic materiality.[12] This commitment reveals how the Eastern pro-Nicenes understand the metaphysical divide between God and creatures generally.[13]

We see hints of this cosmic materiality in early Christian discussions of the corporeality of angels,[14] the corporeality of the soul,[15] and the general assertion that to be created is to be corporeal.[16] Yet, the point is most clearly seen in the Arian dispute. As is well known, Arius suggested that because the Son is begotten, there was a time when the Son was not (*ēn pote ote ouk ēn*), namely, the time prior to the Father's act of begetting.[17] Athanasius argued in reply that if the Son came into being, then the Son is mutable, just like every other creature.[18]

Athanasius's anti-Arian polemics make clear that he is not suggesting that all creatures happen to be mutable, even though God could make immutable creatures. Rather, Athanasius thinks it is a metaphysical necessity that every creature qua creature is mutable. His rationale is this. To be created is to come into being; to come into being is to move from non-being into being; and the movement from non-being into being is a mutation. Every creature is therefore mutable because its existence begins with mutation.[19]

Beneath this argument is the Eastern patristic commitment to moderate realist substance metaphysics. Realism, of course, concerns whether general nouns have any reality outside the abstraction in the mind. For example, we say this object is red and that object is red. Is the common property, red, a single something shared

by both objects? Or is redness an invention of the mind as it groups things that appear similar, even though they are disconnected outside the mind?[20] Realism takes the position that the common property is indeed real outside the mind and shared by the various objects that participate in it. In terms of the specific type of realism we find in the Eastern fathers, though we find some commonalities between their views and Plato,[21] they tend towards the account of Aristotle when discussing created substances. In Aristotelian moderate realism, forms never exist independently from the subjects of which they are predicated. Form is only concretely real when manifest in matter.[22] 'Matter' (*hylē*), in this context, does not mean atoms or particles, but what Aristotle calls prime matter (*hē prōte hylē*).[23] Matter in this sense is a substratum of pure potentiality, or non-being (*mē on*). It is non-being, not because it is no-thing whatsoever, but because it has no innate properties of its own and, as such, is a blank slate of ontic potential. We might think of prime matter as analogous to a shapeless bit of fabric that receives shape when draped around a solid object. The shape received comes to the fabric from the object it drapes; though the fabric takes on this shape, the shape does not belong to the fabric per se. In the same way, prime matter may receive redness (from the form red) and again lose it; it may receive sphericality (from the form sphere) and again lose it, and so on. In short, prime matter is the receptacle of potential in which forms take up residence and become concretely real.

This moderate realist metaphysic underwrites Athanasius's anti-Arian polemics. In the moderate realist account, every mutation is either positive (becoming) or negative (corruption).[24] The former consists of the movement from non-being into being, while the latter is the retrograde movement from being back to non-being.[25] Athanasius's use of this metaphysic is reflected in the fact that, while he speaks of man being created out of nothing (*ouch on*), he also refers to man's natural state of non-being (*mē einai*) from which he first moved into being and to which he may retreat in corruption.[26] In other words, in Athanasius we find two teachings on creation that should not be confused. The first is that God created all things, including matter, out of nothing – a teaching contrary to the pagan doctrine that God fashions or crafts the world from pre-existent material, and reflected in Athanasius's stronger terminology of things being created from unqualified nothingness (*ouk on*). Yet, alongside this is a second teaching, reflected in Athanasius's use of the standard Aristotelian distinction between concrete being (*to on*) and material potential (*mē on*), or relative non-being.[27] To wit, all creatures, when created, receive once-foreign properties, and this reception entails a movement of those properties from non-being into being – that is, it entails the reception of form (being) in a substratum of potential (matter). And it is this second teaching that is central to Athanasius's anti-Arian polemics.

Athanasius's argument against Arius, in short, is that if the Son of God was not and then came to be, he is mutable. The case hinges not on the first point about creation out of nothing but on the second: If the Son is a creature that moved from non-being to being, then the Son's existence began with form entering the

receptacle of matter, moving material potential into actuality. Any entity that comes to be in such a manner must, therefore, be both hylomorphic – a composite of matter (*hylē*) and form (*morphē*) – and mutable, since becoming is a mutation.[28] This reading of Athanasius is confirmed in the fact that Arius feels compelled to state in his defence that he does not believe the Son derives subsistence from matter, indicating that Arius recognizes Athanasius's moderate realist rationale.[29]

Athanasius's objection to Arius was not unique. This objection, with its underlying rationale about the metaphysical entailments of becoming, finds echoes in other opponents of Arius in his day, such as Alexander of Alexandria; it is reflected in the 325 Nicene Creed, specifically in its anathemas about mutability (*treptos*/*alloiōtos*);[30] and it persists among the fathers in the semi-Arian and Eunomian/Anomean disputes to follow – specifically, though not exclusively, in the writings of the Cappadocians.[31] In this light, it is fair to say that the view that every creature qua creature is both mutable and hylomorphic – a composite of matter (non-being) and form (being) – is part of the pro-Nicene profession of faith in the third and fourth centuries. And rather than this view becoming less pronounced with time, later Eastern fathers are even more explicit that, though they speak of 'immaterial' (*aulos*) creatures, such as angels, this is a statement of relative immateriality; for even these have prime matter, given their movement from non-being into being. As John of Damascus puts it, 'in comparison with God, who alone is incorporeal, everything proves to be gross [*pachu*] and material [*hylikon*]'.[32] The relevance of this metaphysic in the current context is that it identifies the most basic difference between things divine and things created: the latter is corporeal, having moved from non-being into being, while the former is not. I will refer to this commitment to creaturely corporeality as 'Hylomorphic Creationism' (or HC).

Once we recognize the Eastern patristic commitment to HC, we have the foundation for grasping a variety of metaphysical differences between God and creatures. Six metaphysical necessities, common to all creatures, emerge from HC. Virtually all six are noted in the anti-Arian polemics as entailments of creaturely becoming, and these continue to appear in later writers. As we will see, the rationale for why each is an entailment of HC is discernible.[33]

1. *Every creature is mutable*. As explained above, in Eastern patristic realism, mutation is either positive (becoming) or negative (corruption). The former consists of the movement from non-being into being, the latter of being back to non-being. As argued against the Arians, becoming is what occurs in every act of creation as a creature receives once-foreign properties. Hence, every creature is mutable because every creature begins its existence with a mutation, namely, the movement from non-being into being.

2. *Every creature is a matter–form composite*. This is a natural extension of the previous point. Because the Eastern fathers understand becoming to be the entrance of form into matter that moves material potential into being, any

mutable entity must bear both form (i.e. its concrete properties) and matter (i.e. the substratum of potential that receives these properties). Therefore, creatures, as things which come into being, must be matter–form composites, or hylomorphic entities.

3. *Every creature is corruptible*. Corruption is the retrograde movement in which form retreats from matter. Rather than a property moving into being (non-being into being), corruption is the opposite motion (being back to non-being).[34] On the Eastern patristic account, corruptibility is just as native to creatures as mutability. Recall that prime matter has no properties of its own; it is pure potential. Therefore, no property that takes up residence in matter is essential to it. This is not to say that creatures do not have essential properties – every species does. But it is to say that whatever properties are essential to a creature are not essential to the material receptacle that bears them. All properties are foreign properties to prime matter. For this reason, matter may always release the properties it receives.[35] The implication is that every hylomorphic entity is corruptible. For if creatures are necessarily hylomorphic, then the very material that supplies a creature with the potential to receive properties also retains its potential to lose these properties. Or, as some fathers put it, anything that comes from non-being can return to non-being.[36]

4. *Every creature is temporal*. The Eastern fathers link time with successive sequences of change. Because creatures are that which come into being, their temporality is evident in two ways. First, they are subject to the *before* and *after* of their making.[37] Second, becoming is itself a sequence of successive change, namely, the change from potential to actual. How many steps the change involves is irrelevant; the fact that it is a successive sequence entails temporality.[38]

5. *Every creature is finite*. The Eastern fathers assert repeatedly that creatures are finite or circumscribed (*perigraptos*) but God is uncircumscribed (*aperigraptos*).[39] The supplied rationale is fourfold, but only three considerations are of importance here.[40] First, they argue the point from temporality. Creatures are circumscribed by the before of their becoming.[41] Second, they argue the point from corporeality: the Eastern fathers understand matter to be inherently located in space.[42] Given HC, then, every creature must be spatially finite. Third, the fact that creatures bear form also indicates they are finite, since every form constitutes an abstract definition. In Aristotelian logic, this definition is the genus plus the specific difference of the species (e.g. man is a rational [specific difference] animal [genus]).[43] In such definitions, limitations are ascribed. For a definition draws a line around the given type of thing (i.e. circumscribes it), identifying what properties it has and what properties it has not (e.g. bipedal, not tripedal, quadrupedal, etc.).[44]

6. *Every creature bears a complex nature*. What is meant by *complex nature* is that the essence is not a single form (simple) but is a combination of several forms (complex).[45] Several reasons sit behind this claim, but for our purposes, the argument from accidents will suffice.[46] Every creature invariably has accidental

properties. This follows naturally from the necessities of creaturely finitude, temporality, and spatiality. Being located in time, the creature has an accidental temporal location: it came to be at T_1 but could have come to be at T_2, and it will remain the same type of thing when it arrives at T_3. In like manner, being spatially located, the creature has accidents of location: it came to be here, not there, and will remain the same type of thing when moving from here to there. The necessity of accidents entails that the creature is complex, bearing several formal properties at any given moment.[47]

Now, the Eastern fathers negate every one of these metaphysical necessities in reference to God. Just as mutability and corporeality are fundamental traits of all creatures, so immutability and incorporeality are fundamental traits of divinity. And just as becoming entails a host of other metaphysical necessities common to all creatures, so immutability entails its own metaphysical necessities common to all things divine.[48] There is therefore symmetry to how the Eastern pro-Nicenes contrast God and creatures.

Like Aristotle, the Eastern fathers understand mutability to point beyond itself to an immutable ground of being, and because all creatures are bound by mutability (as per HC), this ground must be that which is outside of creation, namely, God. Thus, divinity is characterized first and foremost by immutability.[49] The immutability of things divine is rigorously argued in the Arian dispute and is unquestionably part of the pro-Nicene position, and the entailments of the position are numerous. First, rejection of divine becoming requires that things divine are also eternal, lest there be a time when they were not and then came into being.[50] Second, as we saw above, becoming and corruption are flipsides of the same coin: the former is a positive mutation, while the latter is a negative mutation. Hence, in defending divine immutability, the Eastern fathers also understand themselves to be defending divine incorruptibility.[51] Third, because divine immutability is per se immutability – the divine *cannot* change – such immutability entails immateriality. For prime matter is the substratum that makes all mutation, positive or negative, possible; and thus, God, being immune to mutation, must be truly immaterial in the sense that the divine does not have the material potential for change.[52] Fourth, in rejecting divine mutation, the Eastern fathers also accept divine atemporality, since they link time with successive sequences of change or mutation.[53] Fifth, the Eastern fathers are clear that, in negating materiality and temporality, it follows that God is not circumscribed (*aperigraptos*), since circumscription is a property of material bodies bounded by space and time.[54] And the insistence that God is uncircumscribed entails, sixth, divine omnipresence – since they link accidents of location with bodily finitude.[55] All such claims also point to the conclusion that, seventh, God is eternally complete or perfect (*teleios*), having no shifting accidents, acquired perfections, or changing contrary properties.[56] Finally, divine immutability and incorruptibility entail, eighth, that God is essentially good, not having but being Good by nature, lest the divine be subject to moral accidents.[57] In sum, divine immutability entails that God is

eternal, incorruptible, immaterial, atemporal, infinite (or uncircumscribed), omni-present, and perfect (or fully what he is).

Bringing the metaphysics of God and creatures to bear on the EG–creation distinction, it becomes clear that the distinction is not a vague negation. Instead, the distinction places one set of metaphysical necessities in contrast with a second set. The two sets look as follows. The term *creation* entails:

(a)   God places form in matter, producing a hylomorphic entity.

(b)   The hylomorphic entity exists by becoming because, by placing form in matter, God moves non-being into being.

(c)   The resulting entity is mutable because it begins its existence with the mutation of non-being into being.

(d)   The entity, bearing its properties contingently via their entrance into matter, is of such a kind that it may again lose its properties, or undergo corruption.

(e)   The creaturely reception of properties involves before and after, thus producing a temporal entity.

(f)   The entity produced, being circumscribed by time and space and bearing form, is finite in nature.

(g)   The entity, bearing accidents of time and location, bears a complex nature.

EG negates every one of these points because that which is begotten of God is divine – a point presumed in this section but argued in the next to be an entailment of the term *begotten.* Thus, the metaphysical entailments of divinity must obtain in reference to The Begotten of God. The Eastern fathers are thus able speak clearly, albeit apophatically, about how EG differs from creation. EG entails:

(a′)   EG is *not* the placement of form in matter, so EG is *not* the production of a hylomorphic entity that derives existence from matter.

(b′)   EG does *not* involve becoming, or the movement from non-being into being.

(c′)   EG is *not* the production of a mutable entity, as it does not involve becoming.

(d′)   EG does *not* give the divine nature in a way that is subject to loss, or corruption.

(e′)   EG is *not* temporal, involving neither before nor after.

(f′)   EG is *not* the production of a finite entity, involving neither the giving of a circumscribed nature nor the production of a circumscribed entity.

(g′)   EG is *not* bound by space or time and thus involves no temporal or spatial accidents.

The distinction is concisely summarized by Gregory of Nazianzus's exhortation: 'cast away your notions of flow and divisions and sections, and your conceptions of immaterial as if it were material birth, and then you may perhaps worthily conceive of the Divine Generation'.[58] On an apophatic level, then, we can speak in specific terms about what EG is not. The apophatic claims are specific because the respective claims about creation and divinity are equally specific. Thus, having established strict metaphysical dividing lines between God and creatures, as well as the rationale for the difference, the Eastern fathers have an equally clear rationale for the apophatic dividing line between creating and EG. In the next section, we will look beyond the apophatic specifics of EG to what can be said positively about the doctrine.

The eternally begotten Son of God

We saw above the specifics of what EG is *not* and the metaphysical rationale for these apophatic claims. But can anything positive be said about EG? The Eastern fathers do offer positive assertions about EG, but before we look at these claims, we must discuss how they understand concept-forming about things divine.

Amid the Eunomian dispute, we find heated disagreement over what can be known of God. The Eunomians sought to expound the essential properties of the divine essence in defence of their brand of Arianism. In response, the Cappadocian fathers insist that no such exposition is possible, since God's essence is 'above intelligence' (*hyper dianoian*).[59] To see what this means, we must grasp (i) their distinction between *noēsis* and *epinoia* and (ii) their insistence that God is *hyperousios* and thus never an object of *noēsis*.

Beginning with (i), *noēsis* constitutes the direct apprehension of a form. Here we must contrast the realism of these ancient writers with the nominalism of the modern empiricists. In modern empiricism, such as John Locke's, the object outside the mind is one thing and the mental replica of the object is a second thing.[60] Ancient realists, by contrast, see the properties of an object and the mental abstraction of these properties as isomorphic: the property, or form, in the object and the property apprehended by the mind are the same property. As per realism, a single form can reside in multiple objects. The singularity of the form *red*, for example, includes not only red in objects *p* and *q* but also red abstracted in the mind in the act of perception: the red in the object and the red in the mind when perceiving the object is the same property. Such direct apprehension of form constitutes empirical knowledge, or *noēsis*.

The difficulty is that objects consist of more than just form. There is, for example, the enduring subject that sits beneath these forms (*hypostasis*), as well as the substratum of matter in which forms come to be.[61] When thinking on such things, the mind finds itself at a loss; it gropes for something in its catalogue

of forms but comes up empty. Hence, it must rely on comparisons for understanding. For example, prime matter, being a substratum of pure potential, is *like* a shapeless bit of fabric that receives shape from objects around which it is draped. But it is *unlike* fabric insofar as fabric has definite properties, while prime matter has no properties of its own. Such concept-forming is what the Eastern fathers call *epinoia*.[62]

The Eastern patristic insistence that God is above intelligence is an assertion that God is never an object of *noesis*, nor can he be. This assertion brings us to the second point noted, namely that God is *hyperousios*.[63] To explain, we will track with Platonism for a moment.[64] In Platonic realism, the forms provide intelligibility to things by grounding both unity (genera and species) and delineation (specific difference). Form thus supplies intelligibility by circumscribing an entity.[65] But, as Aristotle would press, what common principle unifies the forms?[66] Plato and later Platonists locate the answer in The Good. For form not only tells us *what* a thing is but its quality: good/bad, healthy/unhealthy, well-formed/malformed are qualitative assessments based on likeness or unlikeness to a form. Plato thus sees The Good as the source of being and, not surprisingly, treats The Good interchangeably with God.[67] All of this, however, raises the question: is The Good, and thus God, merely one of the forms that The Good is meant to explain? An affirmative reply yields an infinite regress: the forms are unified by a common form (viz. The Good), but The Good, being a form, must also share a common property (say, form *p*) with the other forms; but this common form (form *p*), itself being a form, must also share a common property (form *q*) with the rest of the forms, and so on *ad infinitum*. Therefore, in later Platonic accounts, the answer is *No*, God transcends form. This is the basis for the Neoplatonic insistence that God is beyond being (*epekeina tēs ousias*) and that The Good is not an intelligible attribute of God (i.e. a form) but something grasped indirectly by the many and various articulations of goodness in creation.[68]

We find similar accounts amongst the Eastern fathers, who affirm both the existence of archetypal Ideas in the mind of God and God's transcendence of those Ideas.[69] Moreover, though the Eastern fathers identify The Good with God, they resist the notion that God is, or has, a form.[70] As per the metaphysical commitments of the previous section, their insistence on divine immutability entails a rejection of finitude – which requires various accidents of location, position, time, etc. – and the rejection of finitude entails a rejection of a circumscribed nature (*perigraptos physis*) from amongst the forms.[71] Whatever the divine nature is, it must be above form. Hence, God is *hyperousios*.

When considering divine transcendence, we can see why the Eastern fathers insist that God is beyond intelligence. *Noēsis*, as an apprehension of form, can never grasp that which has no form. This is true of prime matter, of *hypostases*, and of the divine essence. The divine essence, being *hyperousios*, has no defined or delineated content on which our rational faculties might lay hold,

such as colour, shape, or numerated appendages. For the Eastern fathers, this means that God cannot be an object of *noēsis*, since the divine nature is not of such a kind that mind can abstract and circumscribe by direct perception. All God-talk, therefore, falls to the concept-forming process of *epinoia*. Such God-talk is thus either positive (*kataphatic*) or negative (*apophatic*) comparison with that which the mind can grasp.

To be sure, this is not to say God-talk is neither true nor false, according to the Eastern fathers. Analogical language is just as subject to truth and falsehood, accuracy and inaccuracy as univocal language. For example, in the Trinitarian disputes, it is analogical to say that the three persons of the Trinity are *like* masks or faces (*prosōpa*) that a single subject wears, as per Sabellianism. This is an analogical claim, but what it says is false. The pro-Nicene formulation is also analogical, namely, the Trinity is three subjects (*hypostases*) who share a common nature (*ousia*). The analogical status of the claim is evident in the fact that, if taken univocally, it would indicate that the divine nature is a form (or *ousia*), which the Eastern fathers deny in their *hyperousios* (above- or super-form) doctrine. So, as with all comparative theology, there is something true and something false in the claim. The true kataphatic assertion is that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three distinct subjects, never confused or conflated, and these three are the same type of thing, namely, God. They are not facades or masks; they are not parts of a whole; they are discrete subjects of a common type. To this extent, the kataphatic comparison is true. Yet, equally necessary are the apophatic comparisons, such as these subjects are *not* materially divided, *not* distinguished by material accidents, *not* of a nature from amongst the forms, etc.[72] In other words, the distinctions between God and creatures, discussed in the previous section, must be remembered amid the positive assertion.

We identified above the apophatic assertions of the Eastern pro-Nicenes concerning EG. Yet, there are important kataphatic assertions as well. The first the Eastern fathers derive from the biblical testimonies about Jesus Christ, namely, the Son is God's *only begotten*. The title 'son of God' may be ascribed analogically to a nation (Matt 2:15) or to a creature, as indicative of adoption (Rom 8:14) or even causal origin (Luke 2:38). Yet, in the case of Jesus Christ, *only begotten* is added to the term, indicating that Jesus is the only son who is son by begetting. Despite questions by biblical scholars today about the meaning of *monogenēs* (translated 'only begotten'),[73] its indication of paternal generation that is singular or unique was undisputed amongst the Eastern pro-Nicenes.[74] *Begetting* is thus taken by the fathers to indicate a very specific mode of efficient causality. (Here, of course, I am utilizing Aristotle's distinction between formal causality (what it is), material causality (of what it is made), efficient causality (how it came to be), and final causality (for what end it is).[75]) In the creaturely context, begetting involves one subject causing another subject to exist by the first communicating his nature to the second. Hence, a human father begets a son by communicating his humanity to a second subject in the procreative process. And so it is with the

Son of God, according to the Eastern fathers. God the Father causes the Son to exist by communicating in a paternal manner the divine nature to this second subject. This cannot be said of any subject other than the Son. Hence, he is *monogenēs*.

The term *begotten* was indeed read analogically by the Eastern fathers. So we find insistence that this begetting does not involve material emission, mutative gestation, before or after, and the like.[76] In other words, anything we might associate with creaturely procreation that violates (a′)–(g′) should be dispelled from the concept. Yet, the Eastern pro-Nicenes insist that amid these apophatic qualifications we not lose the kataphatic assertions that (i) the Son derives his existence by means of the Father communicating the divine nature to him in a paternal manner, and (ii) the Son of God is unique in this regard. Hence, the Son of God is not an adopted or metaphorical son; he is the Only Begotten Son of God, or the only subject to derive existence by paternal communication of the divine nature. From this point naturally follows the pro-Nicene insistence that the Son is *homoousia* with God the Father. For begetting is the communication of a common nature from father to son. To quote Basil of Caesarea,

> For after saying that the Son was light of light, and begotten of the substance of the Father, but was not made, they went on to add the *homoousion*, thereby showing that whatever proportion of light any one would attribute in the case of the Father will also obtain in that of the Son. For very light in relation to very light, according to the actual sense of light, will have no variation. Since then the Father is light without beginning, and the Son begotten light, but each of Them light and light; they rightly said 'of one substance', in order to set forth the equal dignity of the nature. Things, that have a relation of brotherhood, are not, as some persons have supposed, of one substance; but when both the cause and that which derives its natural existence from the cause are of the same nature, then they are called 'of one substance'.[77]

Now, what it looks like for one subject to beget another without material emission, separation, mutation, and the like the Eastern pro-Nicenes admit they have no clear idea. But this should come as no surprise, since both The Begetter and The Begotten are *hyperousios* and, as such, are beyond the grasp of *noēsis*. Of metaphysical necessity, the process is 'above intelligence'. All these Eastern writers can do, therefore, is assert the basics of the comparison that hold, namely, God the Father causes the Son to exist by communicating his divine nature in a paternal manner. Beyond this, the pro-Nicenes can only reassert the apophatic qualifications (a′)–(g′). As Basil continues,

> And when we are taught that the Son is of the substance of the Father, begotten and not made, let us not fall into the material sense of the relations. For the substance was not separated from the Father and bestowed on the Son; neither did the substance engender by fluxion, nor yet by shooting forth as plants their fruits. The mode of the divine begetting is ineffable and inconceivable by human thought. It is indeed characteristic of poor and carnal intelligence to compare the things that are eternal with the perishing things of time, and to imagine, that as corporeal things beget, so does God in like manner; . . .[78]

Note, however, there is nothing unusual in this conceptual limitation. For such is the case in all theological language. Because God is not one of the forms, our

mental concepts of the divine are only ever comparative. In the case of EG, the truth of the positive comparison is from Christ's own assertions about himself: he is God's Only Begotten Son (e.g. John 3:16) – along with similar assertions in wisdom literature, psalms, and prophets (e.g. Prov. 8:23, Ps. 109:3 LXX, Wis. 7:22). As for negative comparisons, these merely reiterate the metaphysical differences between God and creatures generally.

Having said this, it should be noted that the apophatic claims (a′)–(g′) yield a second kataphatic assertion about EG, namely, that this begetting is *eternal*. There are two supporting rationales for the point. The first derives from negations (e′) and (g′), which negate before and after as well as temporal accidents. Both points require a mode of causation that is non-sequential, having neither beginning nor end nor punctuated location in time. Hence, the begetting of the Son of God is an *eternal* generation. The crucial point to understand here, however, is that the *eternal* in EG is not an assertion that the Son was begotten in the first moment of time or prior to all other things. Either would constitute a temporal location. To quote Basil again, 'For the conjunction of the Son with the Father is without time and without interval'.[79] *Eternal*, in EG, indicates that this mode of causation – divine begetting – is coterminous with the Only Begotten Son and the Father, who begets him.

To understand the claim, it may help to borrow the mediaeval scholastic distinction between *per se* and *per accidens* causes.[80] Imagine two intersecting lines, one that runs horizontal and the other vertical. The horizontal line illustrates a temporal sequence of *per accidens* causes. For example, I roll a ball; it then bumps another ball, setting it in motion; the second ball then bumps a third ball, and so on. The vertical line, by contrast, illustrates *per se* causes, or causes stacked one upon another at any given moment. For example, I place my cup into a cup holder in my car; the cause of the cup's suspension (effect) is the holder; the cause of the holder's suspension (effect) is the dashboard (cause); the cause of the dashboard's suspension (effect) is the car frame (cause) to which it is fixed, and so on. If any of the causes in this chain ceases to be, every effect and cause stacked upon it ceases as well. Thus, there is a vertical chain of dependence. Such ongoing dependence is what distinguishes *per se* causes from *per accidens* causes. In the created realm, begetting is typically *per accidens*. A father begets a son at a point in time, and if the begetter then dies, the begotten continues to exist. Yet, this type of causation is possible only because creatures are subject to the types of metaphysical necessities noted in (a)–(g), such as becoming, temporal accidents, successive change, and the like. Divine causation, by contrast, cannot begin, have temporal location, or be subject to successive change, per (e′) and (g′). Hence, what is meant by EG is a *per se* causal relationship between the Father and the Son. The generation of the Son by the Father is not something that happened at some point in the past; it is eternal in the sense that it is perpetual or coterminous with the

Begotten One and the Father, who begets. It is a *per se* causal relationship between the Father and the Son that was, is, and forever will be.

We see this point illustrated by the Eastern fathers via the analogical relationship between the sun and its rays. We conceive of the sun along with the rays it emits without interval.[81] The analogy is a defence of eternal causation of a *per se* kind. That is, in the analogy, the cause (the sun) and the effect (its rays) are coterminous with one another. Such is (analogically) the nature of EG, according to the Eastern fathers.

The second rationale for the eternality of the Son's begetting derives from (b′) and (c′) as well as divine immutability generally, of which (b′) and (c′) are a recapitulation. This rationale for EG relates specifically to how the Eastern fathers understand the respective identities of the divine *hypostases,* Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. While the Eastern pro-Nicenes deny that things divine have changing material accidents, they do not deny divine accidents full stop. Defining *accident* broadly as any property external to the essence of the subject, the Eastern fathers do ascribe one accident to the Father, one to the Son, and one to the Holy Spirit, respectively, namely, the personal property, or idiosyncrasy, of being the Father, of being the Son, and of being the Holy Spirit. These are not accidents in the sense of a property or form that is subject to acquisition or loss. Rather, *being the Father, being the Son,* and *being the Holy Spirit* constitute the respective (unchanging) idiosyncrasy (*idiōtēs*) that distinguishes each divine person from the others. The respective idiosyncrasy is accidental in the sense that it belongs to the respective subject, not the common essence. Hence each *hypostasis* has one accident, namely, the idiosyncrasy (accident) of being that particular subject.[82]

Now, the uniqueness of these divine idiosyncrasies is that each is rooted in the particular *hypostasis*'s relation to another *hypostasis*. The idiosyncrasy of being the Father is grounded in his begetting of the Son. The Son's idiosyncrasy of being the Son is grounded in the Father's paternal generation. As for the Holy Spirit, the causal language of procession or outbreathing is derived from the linguistic connection between breath and spirit. Hence, the Holy Spirit's idiosyncrasy of being the Spirit of God is grounded in his procession, or spiration, from God the Father. To quote Gregory of Nyssa,

> But if the First Father has no cause transcending His own state, and the subsistence of the Son is invariably implied in the title of Father, why do they try to scare us, as if we were children, with these professional twistings of premises, endeavouring to persuade or rather to decoy us into the belief that, if the property of not having been generated is acknowledged in the title of Father, we must sever from the Father any relation with the Son . . . [N]ot only does the 'Father' mean the same as Ungenerate and that this last property establishes the Father as being of none, but also that the word 'Father' introduces with itself the notion of the Only begotten, as a relative bound to it.[83]

The Eastern pro-Nicenes are well aware that if these idiosyncrasies are subject to change or were not and now are, then the subject whose identity is grounded by the particular idiosyncrasy would also be subject to change or becoming.[84] Hence,

the very same rationale that requires the rejection of Arianism – namely the rejection of becoming in reference to the Son of God – also requires that the Father never begin to beget the Son or to outbreath the Holy Spirit. As Gregory of Nyssa states in response to the Eunomians, 'his school must place a definite interval of time between the only begotten and the Father. What I say, then, is this: that this view of theirs will bring us to the conclusion that the Father is not from everlasting, but from a definite point in time'.[85]

In short, the apophatic rejection of becoming and mutation yields a kataphatic assertion about the eternality of divine causation in the Holy Trinity. To again quote Gregory of Nyssa,

> [L]et it suffice on the ground of causation only to conceive of the Father as before the Son; and let not the Father's life be thought of as a separate and peculiar one before the generation of the Son, lest we should have to admit the idea inevitably associated with this of an interval before the appearance of the Son which measures the life of Him Who begot Him, and then the necessary consequence of this, that a beginning of the Father's life also must be supposed by virtue of which their fancied interval may be stayed in its upward advance so as to set a limit and a beginning to this previous life of the Father as well: let it suffice for us, when we confess the 'coming from Him', to admit also, bold as it may seem the 'living along with Him'; for we are led by the written oracles to such a belief. For we have been taught by Wisdom to contemplate the brightness of the everlasting light in, and together with, the very everlastingness of that primal light, joining in one idea the brightness and its cause, and admitting no priority.[86]

In sum, we find in the Eastern pro-Nicenes not only apophatic assertions about EG but kataphatic assertions as well. In the title *only begotten,* we arrive at a specific mode of efficient causality – namely, the cause of the Son is the Father communicating the divine nature in a paternal manner – and discover that the Son is singularly unique in this regard. We also find the rationale for what must be removed from the analogy of begetting, as per the metaphysics of the previous section. Yet, in the combining of these positive and negative claims, we discover why EG must be eternal and what precisely this eternality means, namely, a *per se* causal relationship between Father and Son. In the next section, we will look at one final set of claims concerning EG, which go to the modal status of this divine causation.

Eternal Generation, creation, and modality

The last of the distinctions we will consider between EG and creation consists of the respective modalities of the two causations, namely, EG is modally necessary while creation is modally contingent. The point may sound unextraordinary – of course things divine are modally necessary while things created are modally contingent. However, the point was not obvious in the ancient world. While both Plato and Aristotle ascribe will (*boulēsis*) to God, it is not clear that such will involves contrary choice. In Neoplatonism, The One emanates the world involuntarily.[87] And because all that issues from The One emanates

without contrary choice, it seems that the hypothetical necessity is unavoidable: if God exists, then so does the world that issues from God. Here, the distribution axiom comes into play, according to which if modal necessity is assigned to a hypothetical, then the modal necessity distributes to both the antecedent and the consequent: $\Box(p\rightarrow q)\rightarrow(\Box p\rightarrow\Box q)$.[88] In the hypothetical conjoining of The One and the world, the modal necessity ascribed to the cause (The One) is distributed to the effect (the world).[89] A similar issue emerges in Aristotle's account. Aristotle's Movent (or immutable mover) does not choose to make the world; in fact, a common reading of Aristotle is that God does not even think on the world he produces. Moreover, Aristotle does not distinguish the nature (*ousia*) of the Movent from his operations (*energeiai*), as the Eastern fathers do in their defence of divine freedom. Instead, for Aristotle, God's nature is operative power (*hē ousia energeia*).[90] In other words, it seems that the Movent does not choose to bring mutable things (creatures) into being; rather, it is the nature of the Movent to perpetually cause mutable entities to come into being. Hence, according to Aristotle, the world is eternal and coterminous with the Movent that moves it.[91] The very same modal claim noted in reference to Neoplatonism could thus be argued for Aristotle as well.

The Eastern Church fathers make a decisive break with this pagan philosophical trajectory, insisting on the contingency of creation in contrast with the modal necessity of things divine. Numerous arguments appear in the Eastern fathers in defence of the point. Yet, all the arguments boil down to a defence of divine contrary choice. Some make an argument from perfections, namely, God cannot give free choice if this is a power that he lacks.[92] This case parallels very closely the Eastern patristic insistence that the image of God consists of both reason and free choice, or self-determination (*to autexousion*), and thus the Archetype (God) must have freedom as imaged in man.[93] Others make the argument that divine freedom is prime facie, given that God clearly has capacities that he does not at every moment exercise, such as the capacity to destroy the world, and must therefore operate by contrary choice.[94] Still others make an argument from evil, or better theodicy, namely, if God, the first cause, operates without free choice, then all things are fated; if all things are fated, then God is the cause of evil; God, being Good, cannot be the cause of evil; therefore, all things are not fated and God operates by free choice.[95] Regardless of whether one concedes these arguments, the point remains: the Eastern fathers are committed to divine freedom and with this to the contingency of creation.[96]

Now, the contingency of creatures is straightforwardly established by divine freedom. Granting, as the Eastern fathers do, that God has libertarian capacities of choice, then the creation of the world and other aspects of providence are of such a kind that they could be otherwise, since creation is a free articulation of the divine will.[97] The more difficult point to establish is the modal necessity of EG. Two challenges present themselves. The first challenge is this. Some wrongly take the Eastern fathers to suggest that EG is involuntary.[98] Yet, the

Eastern fathers are clear that EG is a product of the will of the Father, not an involuntary emanation.[99] This insistence raises the question of whether the very same argument for the contingency of creation can be applied to EG. Assuming this challenge can be overcome, the second difficulty is this. If EG can be shown to be modally necessary, does it follow that the Father necessarily generates *this* Son? If the eternal generation of *a* Son is necessary but the Father could generate a different Son, then 'our' Son's existence is still modally contingent, even though EG is modally necessary.

To the first problem, as noted above, the Eastern fathers deny that EG is an involuntary emanation by the Father. Yet, at the same time, they refuse the Arian notion that the Son is contingently generated, such that the Son might not have been.[100] The *via media* they defend is what we might call a 'natural' or 'fitting' volition. Athanasius draws a comparison with operations of divine goodness: 'For it is the same as saying, "The Father might not have been good". And as the Father is always good by nature, so He is always generative by nature'.[101] Clearly, Athanasius does not intend 'by nature' to refer to the divine essence common to the *hypostases*, since generating the Son is the idiosyncrasy that distinguishes Father from Son and Holy Spirit.[102] *Nature* here refers to the idiosyncratic nature (*idiōtēs*) of God the Father. The point that the Father is generative by nature is crucial. For, as Athanasius points out, 'to counsel and choose implies an inclination two ways' (*to bouleuesthai kai prophairesthai eis hekatera tēn rhopēn echei*), which is precisely why, though God is free in how he articulates his goodness, there is no inclination to be *not* good and thus no counsel or choosing involved in whether to do good.[103] So it is with EG. Because the very identity of the Father is rooted in him being generative, there is no counsel involved in whether to generate a Son who is the exact likeness of his glory. To beget is the idiosyncratic nature of the Father – something that cannot be said of the Father as creator of all things visible and invisible, for example.

The strong claim that *to beget* is the nature of the Father conjoins the Father's immutability and modality with EG. Because the Father's personhood is rooted in EG, his immutability requires that EG is equally immutable, lest the Father be subject to contrarieties. In other words, though the Eastern fathers introduce contrary choice and contingency into God's acts of creation and providence, their notion of fitting volition in reference to EG moves closer to the talk of divine will in Plato and Aristotle, noted above.[104] The Father's act of EG admits no contrary choice; hence, it is modally necessary, and this necessity distributes to EG, as per the distribution axiom: the Father and EG are conjoined, so the modal necessity of the Father distributes evenly to EG.

This brings us to the second challenge, however. The connection between the personhood of the Father and EG only requires that the Father is generative. Nothing in the argument so far seems to require that the Father generates *this* Son of God. Might the Father have eternally generated Son_1, Son_2, or Son_3 and still been the Father? If so, *which* Son to beget would still be subject to counsel

and choice, and thus the existence of 'our' Son of God would be contingent. To this point, two responses may be offered. The first simply reverses the argument. Just as the personhood of the Father is rooted in his being Father to the Son, so the singularly unique property of 'our' Son of God is that he is the Only Begotten of the Father; the relationship is symmetrical. If the Father begets a Son, then the Son he begets will be the Son he has in fact begotten. For the identity of the Son is his being begotten of the Father before all worlds. Or, to use Leibniz's indiscernibility of identicals, there is no way to distinguish The Only Begotten Son from a second Only Begotten Son when *being The Only Begotten Son* is the sum total of the personal properties of the subject.

Perhaps one could reply, however, that the Father could have begotten multiple Sons, and in this case, none of the Sons begotten would be The Only Begotten Son of God. To this rebuttal, two points arise, one focused on the nature of begetting and the other on the nature of the Father. First, given the nature of what begetting is, this mode of efficient cause requires continuity in formal cause between the begetter and the begotten. In the case of God, the divine nature communicated by the begetter is immutable. Hence, the suggestion that God might pick amongst various Sons (Sons that are contingent, since they may or may not exist, depending on divine choice) creates an impossible hypothetical: to wit, the Father might beget (i.e. communicate his immutable nature to) a contingent (i.e. mutable) subject. On this basis alone, the Eastern fathers could reject the hypothetical as incoherent. But a second rebuttal also emerges. Whatever the reason God begets only one Son, to ascribe counsel and choice to this begetting not only makes the existence of the Son contingent and thus mutable, it also makes the Father contingent and mutable, as discussed in the previous point. Another way of putting this is that the Eastern fathers understand the begetting of the Son to be what we might call an internal (as opposed to external) relation – that is, a relation that is essential to the identity of the subject.[105] Granting the point, were the Father to generate a set of Sons in place of The Only Begotten, the Father's own identity would also be different. A simple *modus tollens* suffices to rebut the conclusion: the Eastern fathers reject the mutability of the Father and thus reject the antecedent in the hypothetical that he might beget a Son other than The Only Begotten. In other words, because *our* Father is conjoined with *our* Son by hypothetical necessity (*our* Father → *our* Son), when modal necessity is ascribed to *our* Father, modal necessity distributes to *our* Son as well ($\Box$ *this* Father → $\Box$ *this* Son); and because granting the possibility of more Sons would make *our* Son modally contingent and thus require modal contingency of *our* Father, the Eastern fathers can reject the proposal on the basis of the modal necessity of the Father. While the Eastern fathers may refrain from speculating why it is impossible that the Father beget more than one Son – or, perhaps more accurately, why there is no contrary inclination in the Father that would require counsel – they can, at the very least, reject this possibility on the grounds that it would result in

ascribing mutability to the immutable Father. The reciprocal immutability of Father and Son, then, makes secure the modal necessity of EG in all its specifics.

Ambiguity and errors in Eunomian and Eunomian-style arguments

With the metaphysical distinctions between EG and creation before us, we return to the Eunomian and Eunomian-style arguments identified in the introduction. Beginning with the contemporary case of Leftow, we noted that Leftow sees only two differences between begetting and creating, namely, eternality and the moral perfection of The Begotten. Yet, Leftow considers this to be 'an unacceptably low standard of divinity',[106] illustrating the point via a thought experiment in which God creates from eternity a group of morally perfect angels who meet these same standards: they are causally dependent on God; they exist from eternity; they are morally perfect; and they are immaterial.[107] While Leftow's case may have initial plausibility, in the light of the foregoing, it proves to be a very superficial understanding of the EG–creation distinction. Leftow evidently has little grasp of the underlying metaphysics of the Eastern fathers. Thus, the EG doctrine, in Leftow's hands, becomes painfully thin once detached from its metaphysical commitments and has little to protect it when run through the analytic machinery of contemporary philosophy of religion. Yet, as we have seen, the pro-Nicene profession of EG generally and of the EG–creation distinction specifically is not metaphysically neutral but metaphysically committed, and robustly so. When we recognize this fact, there emerges a long list of distinctions between EG and creation, contra Leftow's claim, as well as an underlying metaphysical rationale that informs these distinctions.

The first and most important distinction between The Begotten and Leftow's angels is also the most obvious, though it must be said: Leftow's angels bear the nature *angel*, while The Begotten bears the nature *God*. As we saw in the second section, the very assertion that the Son is *begotten* entails that God the Father gives his own nature to the Son in a paternal manner. This cannot be said of angels – regardless of their moral qualities or when God makes them. God causes angels to exist by endowing them with a nature foreign to his own, a nature that is not divine. From this first and most important distinction, all subsequent distinctions flow.

Because Leftow's angels bear the nature *angel*, rather than the nature *God*, they are creatures that are subject to the metaphysical necessities that bind all creatures, identified in the first section. The specifics of their creation, therefore, contrasts with EG at seven points already identified in the contrast between (a)–(g) and (a′)–(g′). To avoid redundancy, I will not here reiterate these distinctions. However, it is worth noting that the metaphysical differences between God and creatures indicate that the Eastern pro-Nicenes would reject Leftow's hypothetical angels as metaphysically impossible. For amongst the metaphysical necessities the Eastern fathers ascribe to creatures is that they are temporal (as opposed to

eternal), corruptible (as opposed to incorruptible, or essentially good), and at some level material (as opposed to truly immaterial, as God alone is). Hence, Leftow's thought experiment posits a set of hypothetical creatures the very concept of which the Eastern fathers would reject as metaphysical nonsense. The point is demonstrated by the fact that Arius himself, at later stages of the Arian dispute, sought to modify his own position by arguing that, though the Son is created, he is created immutable.[108] This manoeuvre was of no help to Arius, however, since the pro-Nicenes took Arius to be asserting a metaphysical impossibility. To wit, because *creation* entails *becoming*, the suggestion of an *immutable creature* is the suggestion of a contradiction, namely, a *mutable* entity that is *not-mutable*.[109] Like later mediaeval realists, the pro-Nicene realist commitments led the pro-Nicenes to reject such contradictions as nonsensical fictions that are beyond the bounds of omnipotence.[110] Hence, just as they rejected Arius's proposal of an immutable creature, so they would reject as metaphysical fiction Leftow's proposal of a horde of immutable, immaterial, and incorruptible angels.

Of course, the contrast between (a)–(g) and (a′)–(g′) is not the only metaphysical difference that can be noted. As we saw in the second section, EG, when combined with (e′) and (g′), points to an eternal mode of causation that, not only reflects (a′)–(g′), but entails an eternal *per se* causal relationship between the begetting Father and the begotten Son, something that cannot be said of the relationship between God and any creature. Moreover, as we saw in the third section, there is a clear modal distinction between the only begotten Son and creatures, namely, that the former is modally necessary, while the latter are modally contingent. In sum, Leftow's claim that there is little to nothing to distinguish EG from creation unravels under scrutiny.

What of the Eunomian case against EG, however? As noted at the opening of this article, the Eunomians argue that *being unoriginate* is essential to divinity and place *being caused*, or *being originate*, in contradistinction to *being unoriginate*. Hence, by affirming causality (viz. EG) in reference to the Son, the pro-Nicenes must deny the divinity of the Son. The case breaks down as follows:

1. All that which is begotten is caused.
2. The Son is begotten.
3. Therefore, the Son is caused. (1 & 2)
4. All that which is caused is not unoriginate.
5. Therefore, the Son is not unoriginate. (3 & 4)
6. All that which is God is unoriginate.
7. Therefore, the Son is not God. (5 & 6)[111]

The pro-Nicenes identify two ambiguous terms in this line of argument. The first ambiguous term is *unoriginate*.[112] This term can be read as meaning *deriving existence from no cause whatever* or it can be read as *not created*. If read in the latter

sense, the pro-Nicenes affirm 6, *All that which is God is that which is not created.* So it is in their own position. Neither the Father nor the Son is created, per the metaphysics of the first section above. Yet, if read in the former sense, as *deriving existence from no cause whatever*, then the pro-Nicenes reject the point, since the Son is caused by the Father. To quote, Gregory of Nyssa,

> [W]hen the question [of whether the Son is unoriginate] is about 'origin' in its other meanings (since any creature or time or order has an origin), then we attribute the being superior to origin to the Son as well, and we believe that that whereby all things were made is beyond the origin of creation, and the idea of time, and the sequence of order. So, He, Who on the ground of His subsistence is not without an origin, possessed in every other view an undoubted *unoriginateness*; and while the Father is unoriginate and ungenerate, the Son is unoriginate in the way we have said, though not ungenerate.[113]

The second ambiguous term in the argument is *God.* In both biblical and Eastern patristic literature, this term may refer to either the subject, God the Father, or to the divine nature.[114] If *God* is taken in the former sense, the argument is both valid and sound, according to the pro-Nicenes. But the case is also irrelevant to Arianism. Taken in this way, the argument shows only that the Son is not the Father. The pro-Nicenes agree: 'for Sabellius has no ground for confusion of the individuality of each Person, when the Only begotten has so distinctly marked Himself off from the Father in his words, "I and my Father"; . . .'.[115]

The argument works as a defence of Arianism if and only if the term *God* is read as a reference to the divine nature (i.e. *that which is God* means *that which is divine*). If *God* is read this way, the argument is a valid proof of Arianism, but the pro-Nicenes then reject 6 and thus dismiss the case as unsound. The pro-Nicene rejection of 6 is based on their moderate realist commitments, according to which the locus of existence that gives concrete reality to any nature is the subject in which that nature subsists, and the divine nature is no exception. This gets to the heart of the distinction between the pro-Nicenes and the Eunomians (as well as Arians generally). The Eunomian case places the principle of existence in *nature* rather than *subject*. In other words, the Eunomian instinct is that existence is accidental to created natures but essential to the divine nature. Hence, any subject having the divine nature has existence by virtue of being divine. The Eastern fathers, being moderate realists, reject the point. Existence is *never* a property, accidental or essential, of natures. Existence is only ever located in subjects that give concrete reality to natures – hence their use of *hypostasis*, or *that which exists underneath a nature*.[116] In short, subjects *exist*; natures *subsist* (in subjects). For this reason, the specifics of *how* a subject has existence (efficient cause) are idiosyncratic in each subject. Bob is son of Bill, but Joe is son of John; or this oak tree grew from an acorn that fell to the ground, while that one from an acorn that was planted; or this one is begotten, while that one is spirated. Thus, the *how* (efficient cause) is external to the nature that determines *what* the subject is (formal cause). To quote Gregory of Nyssa,

> In our view, the 'native dignity' of God consists in godhead itself, wisdom, power, goodness, judgement, justice, strength, mercy, truth, creativeness, domination, invisibility, everlastingness, and every other quality named in the inspired writings to magnify his glory; and we affirm that every one of them is properly and inalienably found in the Son, recognizing differences only in respect of unoriginateness . . . When, for instance, this word [unoriginate] has meaning of 'deriving existence from no cause whatever', then we confess that it is peculiar to the Father . . .[117]

None of this is to say there are no modal difference between divine subjects and created subjects. As shown in the third section, the Eastern fathers maintain that divine subjects are modally necessary, while created subjects are modally contingent; as shown in the second section, causation of a divine subject must be eternal and *per se*; and, as shown in the first section, divine causation is incompatible with metaphysical traits of creatures. Yet, as the Eastern fathers also show, all of the above points are compatible with causation, so long as that causation is not creation in the sense of (a)–(g).

Now, perhaps the objector is still inclined to think that if a subject is divine, then that subject should not have an efficient cause. To this, two points are crucial. The first is a reiteration of the previous one: the Eastern fathers insist that a category error is at work, namely, the confusing of efficient and formal causality. Formal cause determines *what* a thing is; efficient cause determines *how* it is. As the Eastern fathers point out, there is no contradiction in affirming continuity of formal cause amid various efficient causes. To quote Gregory of Nyssa again:

> The first man, and the man born from him, received their being in a different way; the latter by copulation, the former from the molding of Christ Himself; and yet, though they are thus believed to be two, they are inseparable in the definition of their being . . . [I]t is because the one and the other was a man that the two have the same definition of being; each was mortal, reasoning, capable of intuition and of science. If, then, the idea of humanity in Adam and Abel does not vary with the difference of their origin, neither the order nor the manner of their coming into existence making any difference in their nature, which is the same in both, . . . what necessity is there that against the divine nature we should admit this strange thought?[118]

The Eastern pro-Nicenes insist that what makes a subject divine is that it has the divine nature (formal cause). It is a 'strange thought' that something external to this nature, namely, the idiosyncratic efficient cause of the subject, should determine *what* the subject is. The one exception, of course, is the efficient cause known as *begetting*, since this involves the communication of nature from one subject to another and thus entails continuity of nature between begetter and begotten. To quote Gregory once again, 'Having heard of the Father and Son from the Truth, we are taught in those two subjects the oneness of their nature; their natural relation to each other expressed by those names indicates that nature . . .'.[119] The only reason to conclude that the divine nature is incompatible with a subject that has an efficient cause full stop is if efficient causality itself were somehow incompatible with the attributes of the nature communicated. But having shown that divine attributes are compatible with eternal, per se causality, the Eastern fathers have no reason to accept the claim. And because these same writers accept the

testimony of Christ that he is begotten but of the same nature of the Father – a claim that more easily fits their moderate realist metaphysics of formal and efficient causality – they have positive reason to reject the counter claim as a simple category error.

The second, equally important consideration is this. If the objector's instinct is that things divine must derive existence from no cause whatever, this instinct is not only incompatible with EG but with the subject–nature (*hypostasis–ousia*) distinction of Nicene Trinitarianism generally. For locating the principle of existence in the divine nature itself, rather than the respective subjects having it, does not suffice to show that things divine derive existence from no cause whatever. To the contrary, were we to affirm the existence of three divine subjects but deny that any of the subjects causes the others, all three subjects would still have an efficient cause, namely, the divine nature itself. Rather than satisfying the instinct to remove efficient causality from things divine, this alternative expands the problem for the objector. For rather than two of three divine subjects having an efficient cause, this 'solution' suggests that all three subjects have a common efficient cause, namely, the divine nature they share. Therefore, the only way to avoid the problem of efficient causality (if it is rightly labelled a problem) is not to reject EG but to reject the subject–nature distinction of the Nicene faith. Yet, without a defence of the legitimacy of this metaphysical instinct, the Eastern fathers have no reason to embrace this instinct contrary to the faith of Nicea.

<div align="center">***</div>

We have seen that the distinctions between EG and creation are anything but vague in Eastern patristic thought. Having supplied a very specific understanding of the metaphysics of becoming and why divinity is incompatible with it, the Eastern fathers are able to supply a very precise set of apophatic claims regarding EG. And building on the biblical language of begetting, they add to these negative claims a clear set of positive assertions about EG, concerning begetting and eternality. Combined with these positive and negative assertions, we found an added layer of modal distinction between created subjects and divine subjects, which stands out as unique in the ancient world. And by bringing these metaphysics to bear on Eunomian and Eunomian-style arguments, we were able to identify precisely what the Eastern fathers see as the ambiguities and errors in the case against EG. In the end, the Eastern fathers prove to have a very clear and defensible understanding of EG that is not so easily dismissed on grounds of vagueness or indefensibility, as some have suggested. The differences they identify between the begetting of the Son and the making of creatures are not only robust and defensible but prove indispensable within Eastern pro-Nicene metaphysics.

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Notes

1. Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion,* 73 (PG 42:426b-d). All patristic citations refer to the volume and column number(s) in Migne (1844–1855) and Migne (1857–1888). PL indicates *Patrologia Latina*; PG indicates *Patrologia Graeca*.

2. See e.g. Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium*, I.6 (PG 45:259c–269a); Aetius (1968), §§2–3.

3. Leftow (2004), 242.

4. *Ibid.*, 210.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Two recent examples of such historical surveys include, from an Eastern perspective, Behr (2001/4) and, from a Western perspective, Ayres (2004). For an Eastern critique of Ayres's account that, in my assessment, rightly charges Ayres with distorting the Eastern fathers by reading them through an Augustinian lens, see Behr (2007). Examples of more focused readings of specific Eastern fathers abound in the literature today. Examples include Hübner (1972); contra Hübner, Drecoll (1996); Cross (2002); Louth (2002); Hildebrand (2007); Zhyrkova (2009); DelCogliano (2010).

7. The 'neo-patristic synthesis' of Florovsky and Lossky is well known and pervasive throughout their writings. See e.g. Florovsky (1972), passim; Lossky (1976), passim.

8. As such, I will not concern myself with critical editions or disputes over authorial attribution (such as Hübner (1972) versus Drecoll (1996)), as such issues have a negligible impact on the method and aims of this article. Hence, the Migne editions suffice.

9. Although the term 'pro-Nicene' is typically used by scholars in a more narrow sense to distinguish those around the time of Nicaea who explicitly affirm Nicaea from those who explicitly oppose or denied Nicaea's orthodoxy, throughout this article I will use the term in a broader sense. Because the Eastern Church fathers in the centuries after Nicaea see their own writings and subsequent ecumenical councils as a continued exposition and defence of the Orthodox faith laid bare and defended at Nicaea, I think it is appropriate to use the term 'pro-Nicene' as a broader identifier for Eastern Church fathers who carry the mantle of Nicaea all the way through Nicaea II.

10. The differences between EG and creation identified in this article can be applied to the Eternal Procession of the Holy Spirit as well. Therefore, while this article only explicitly defends the cogency of EG, it is also an implicit defence of Eternal Procession.

11. The articulation of this and various complementary aspects of Eastern pro-Nicene metaphysic can be seen in Bradshaw (2004), passim, esp. chs. 7–10; *Idem* (2006), 93–120; Erismann (2011), 269–287; Fennema (2013), 1–21; Jacobs (2012), 79–108; *Idem* (2015), 261–276; *Idem* (2016), 3–42.

12. Jacobs (2012), §§1 and 3; *Idem* (2015), 262–9; *Idem* (2016), §§2–3.

13. *Ibid.*, passim.

14. Justin Martyr, *Apologia secunda*, 5 (PG 6:452–453); Tatian, *Adversus Graecos*, 4; 12 (PG 6:811–814; 829–834); Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolycum*, 1.4 (PG 6.1029a); Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses*, 4.37.2–6 (PG 7:1100–1103); Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, 2.3; 7.3; 7.7 (PG 8:941–942; 9:415–428; 9:449–472).

15. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses*, 2.34.1 (PG 7:834–835); Tertullian, *De anima*, 5, 7 (PL 2:652–653, 656–657); *De carne Christi*, 1 (PL 2:773–774); *De resurrectione Carnis*, 17 (PL 2:816–818).

16. Justin Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo*, 5–6 (PG 6:485c–491a); Tatian, *Adversus Graecos*, 4; 12 (PG 6:811–814; 829–834); Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses*, 2.34.1 (PG 7:834–835); Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, 1.11 (PG 8:749c); Tertullian, *De anima*, 5, 7 (PL 2:652–653, 656–657); Origen of Alexandria, *De principiis*, 2.2.2 (PG 11:187); Dionysius of Alexandria, *Contra Sabellium* in Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praeparatio evangelica*, 7.19 (PG 21.564b).

17. Socrates Scholasticus, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 1.5 (PG 67.42a–b).

18. Athanasius of Alexandria, *Adversus Arianos*, 1.18 (PG 26:49b); *Contra Gentes*, 1.35 (PG 25:69a–72a); *De Incarnatione contra Apollinarium*, 1.3 (PG 26:1097a); *De incarnatione Verbi*, 3 (PG 25:99d–104c); *Epistula ad Serapionem* (PG 26:592b).

19. See n. 16. Also, Athanasius of Alexandria, *Adversus Arianos*, 1.5, 1.9, 1.22, 1.28, 1.35–36, 1.48, 2.34, 4.12 (PG 26:21c, 29b, 57c, 72a, 84a–88a, 112c, 220a, 481d); *Epistula ad Afros episcopos*, 5 (PG 26:1037b); *De decretis Nicaenae synodi*, 20.2 (PG 25:452a).

20. General studies on realism include Carré (1946); Copleston (1950), II, 136–155; Gracia (1988), esp. 60–142; Gould (2012), 183–194. The *locus classicus* on universals is Porphyry (1975), 27–8.

21. See Bradshaw (2014), 193–210.

22. Aristotle, *De anima*, 412a1–4a28; *Metaphysica*, 1013a26–28; 1017b14–16; 1017b21–23; 1028b33–9a33; *Physica* 192b8–193b21; 194b26–29; Colson (1983), 113–124; Scaltsas (1994), esp. 28–35.

23. Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, 1042b9–11; *Physica*, 190a31–190b15. See also Robinson (1974), 168–188.

24. Of course, Aristotle acknowledges that there are other species of change, such as change in location. See e.g. Aristotle, *De generatione et corruptione*, 319b33–320a1.

25. *Idem*, *Physica*, 189a30–192b5.

26. Athanasius of Alexandria, *Oratio de incarnatione Verbi*, 4 (PG 25:104c).

27. See e.g. Aristotle, *De generatione et corruptione*, passim, esp. 317a34–320b17.

28. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, 10.20a.45, 31a.68, 49.116 (PG 91:1141b–d, 1161c–d, 1201b–d); John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa*, 2.12 (PG 94:917d–929b); *Dialectica*, 38, 68 (PG 94:605a–606b, 671b–676b); Cavarnos (1989), 40–42.

29. Arius of Alexandria, *Epistula ad Eusebium Nicomediensem* (PG 42:212b).

30. *Idem, Epistula ad Alexandrum Constantinopolitanum* (PG 18:552b-2c); *Epistula encyclica*, 7 (PG 18:573b); *Symbolum synodi Nicaenae anno 325* (PG 20:1540c).

31. Basil of Caesarea, *Epistulae*, 8.2 (PG 32:249); Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes*, 2.14, 2.17, 2.28, 29.7, 34.13, 45.4–7 (PG 35:423a–424b, 425b–428a, 437a–438b; 36:81c–84a, 253a–254b, 627b–632b); Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* (PG 45:368a, 459, 793c, 812b). Basil of Caesarea's *Epistula* 8 is likely that of Evagrius Ponticus. See Bousset (1923), 335–336 and Melcher (1923). Subsequent citations of this epistle will thus cite it as Evagrius'.

32. John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa*, 2.3 (PG 94:868b). See also Athanasius of Alexandria, *Vita et conversatione S. Antonii*, 31 (PG 26:889–892); Macarius the Great, *Homiliae*, 4.9 (PG 34:479–480); Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* (PG 45:368a; 793c; 812b); Evagrius Ponticus (1883), III, *Scholion 2 to Ps. 134.6*; *Idem* (1987), *Scholion 275 to Prov. 24.22*; *Idem, Epistulae*, 8.2 (PG 32:249); Symeon the New Theologian (1966), CXXII, 1.5.2.

33. Because our concern here is the EG–creation distinction, the overview of these six entailments is somewhat cursory. For a thorough treatment of these points, see Jacobs (2016), passim.

34. Aristotle, *De generatione et corruptione*, 319b2–320a4; *Categoriae*, 15a15–15b15.

35. Athanasius of Alexandria, *Oratio de Incarnatione Verbi*, 4 (PG 25.104c); Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio Catechetica Magna*, 6 (PG 45.25b-30d); Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua,* 8.1, 8.4, 10.1.6, 10.33.84 (PG 91:1103d, 1105a–b, 1171d–2b).

36. Athanasius of Alexandria, *De incarnatione Verbi*, 1.4 (PG 25:103a–104c); Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica magna*, 6 (PG 45:25b-30d); Maximus the Confessor, *Capita theologica*, 1.12 (PG 90:1087a-1088b).

37. *Idem, Capita theologica*, 1.48, 1.50 (PG 90:1099c–1102a, 1101a–1102b).

38. *Idem, Ambigua*, 10.38.91–92 (PG 91:1180a–1181a); John of Damascus, *Dialectica*, 68 (PG 94: 671b–676b); *De fide orthodoxa,* 1.3 (PG 94:793b–797a). Cf. Aristotle, *Physica*, 217b30–24a17.

39. Clement of Alexandria, *Fragmenta*, 39 (PG 9:769c); *Stromateis*, 6.15 (PG 9:344b); Eusebius of Caesarea, *Commentarius in Isaiam* 9.6 (PG 24:152d); Athanasius of Alexandria, *Fragmenta in Job* (PG 27:1345a); *De sententia Dionysii*, 20 (PG 25:509a); Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* (PG 45:368a; 793c; 812b); *Epistulae*, 101 (PG 37:177b); *Adversus Apollinarem*, 18 (PG 45:1160a); Evagrius Ponticus, *Epistulae*, 8.2 (PG 32:249); Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus de sancta et vivifica Trinitate*, 28 (PG 75:1188c); Leontius of Byzantium, *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos* 1 (PG 86.1284c); *Adversus Nestorianos* 1.1 (PG 86:1408d); Maximus the Confessor, *Opuscula theologica et polemica* (PG 91:57c); John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa*, 1.13, 2.3 (PG 94:852c-3b, 868b); *Homiliae*, 4.29 (PG 96:632a).

40. All four arguments appear in Jacobs (2016), 20–22.

41. E.g. Evagrius Ponticus, *Epistolae*, 8.2 (PG 32:249); John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa*, 1.3 (PG 94.793b-7a).

42. E.g. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, 17.11 (PG 91:1229d–1232b).

43. Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora*, 96a20–97b40.

44. E.g. Gregory of Nyssa, *De vita Moysis*, 1.2–1.11 (PG 44:300b–301c).

45. John of Damascus, *De natura composita contra Acephalos*, 7; Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, 7.40–43.

46. Additional arguments for the complex nature of creatures appear in Jacobs (2016), 22–25.

47. E.g. Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 16.38 (PG 32:135a–140b); Evagrius Ponticus, *Epistolae*, 8.2 (PG 32:249).

48. For a thorough treatment of the metaphysical entailments of immutability in the Eastern fathers, see Jacobs (2016), §4.

49. Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, 1069a18–1072a18; *Physica*, 254b8–260a19. Cf. Athanasius of Alexandria, *Adversus Arianos*, 1.18 (PG 26:49b); *Epistula ad Serapionem* (PG 26:592b); *De incarnatione Domini contra Apollinarium,* 1.3 (PG 26:1097a); *De incarnatione Verbi*, 3 (PG 25:99d–102d). See also, Jacobs (2016), §4.

50. E.g. Alexander of Alexandria, *Epistula ad Alexandrum Constantinopolitanum*, 11–3 (PG 18:552b–552c); *Epistula encyclica*, 7 (PG 18:573b); *Symbolum synodi Nicaenae anno 325* (PG 20:1540c); Athanasius of Alexandria, *Adversus Arianos,* 1.5, 1.9, 1.18, 1.22, 1.28, 1.35–36, 1.48, 2.34, 4.12 (PG 26:21c, 29b, 49b, 57c,

72a, 84a–88a, 112c, 220a, 481d); *Epistula ad Afros episcopos*, 5 (PG 26:1037b); *Epistula ad Serapionem* (PG 26:592b); *De incarnatione contra Apollinarium*, 1.3 (PG 26:1097a); *De incarnatione Verbi*, 3 (PG 25:99d–102d); *De decretis Nicaenae synodi,* 20.2 (PG 25:452a); Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes*, 2.14, 2.17, 2.28, 29.7, 34.13, 45.4–7 (PG 35:423a–4424b, 425b–428a, 437a–438b; 36:81c–84a, 253a–254b, 627b–632b); Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* (PG 45:368a, 459, 793c, 812c); Evagrius Ponticus, *Epistulae*, 8.2 (PG 32:249).

51. E.g. Alexander of Alexandria, *Epistula ad Alexandrum constantinopolitanum*, 13 (PG 18:552c); *Contra Arianos*, 1.43; 1.51 (PG 26:99c–102b; 26:117b–120a); Gregory of Nyssa, *Adversus Apollinarem* (PG 45:1124–1269, esp. 1128a); Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, 5.23 (PG 91:1057c).

52. E.g. Athenagoras of Athens, *Legatio pro Christianis*, 24 (PG 6:945a-8b); Irenaeus of Lyons, *Ostensio apostolicae praedicationis*, 85–6 [18]; Tertullian, *De carne Christi,* 6 (PL 2:762c–766a); Tatian, *Adversus Graecos,* 4 (PG 6:811b–814b); Origen of Alexandria, *De principiis*, 2.2.2 (PG 11:187); Athanasius of Alexandria, *Vita et conversatione S. Antonii*, 31 (PG 26:889–892); Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones*, 2.10 (PL 6:927d–929d); Macarius the Great, *Homiliae*, 4.9 (PG 34:479–480); Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* (PG 45:368a; 793c; 812d); Evagrius Ponticus, *Epistolae*, 8.2 (PG 32:249); *Idem* (1883), III, *Scholion 2 to Ps. 134.6*; *Idem* (1987), *Scholion 275 to Prov.* 24.22; Jerome, *Epistolae*, 124 (PL 22:1059–1072); John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa*, 2.3 (PG 94:868b); Symeon the New Theologian (1966), CXXII, 1.5.2. For a defence of divine immutability from a pro-Nicene perspective, see, Jacobs (2016), 25–34.

53. E.g. Evagrius Ponticus, *Epistolae*, 8.2 (PG 32:249); Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, 10.38.91–92 (PG 91:1180a–1181a); John of Damascus, *Dialectica*, 68 (PG 94: 671b–676b); *De fide orthodoxa*, 1.3 (PG 94:793b–797a).

54. E.g. Clement of Alexandria, *Fragmenta*, 39 (PG 9:769c); *Stromateis*, 6.15 (PG 9:344b); Eusebius of Caesarea, *Commentarius in Is.* 9.6 (PG 24:152d); Athanasius of Alexandria, *Fragmenta in Job* (PG 27:1345a); *De sententia Dionysii*, 20 (PG 25:509a); Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* (PG 45:368a; 793c; 812d); *Epistulae*, 101 (PG 37:177b); *Adversus Apollinarem*, 18 (PG 45:1160a); Evagrius Ponticus, *Epistolae*, 8.2 (PG 32:249); Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus de sancta et vivifica Trinitate*, 28 (PG 75:1188c); Leontius of Byzantium, *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos* 1 (PG 86.1284c); *Adversus Nestorianos* 1.1 (PG 86:1408d); Maximus the Confessor, *Opuscula theologica et polemica* (PG 91:57c); John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa,* 1.13, 2.3 (PG 94:852c–853b, 868b); *Homiliae*, 4.29 (PG 96:632a).

55. E.g. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, 17.11 (PG 91:1229d–1232b).

56. E.g. Gregory of Nyssa, *De vita Moysis*, 1.2–1.11 (PG 44:300b–301c); John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa*, 1.1–7 (PG 94:789a–808b).

57. E.g. Justin Martyr, *Apologia secunda*, 5 (PG 6:452–453); Tatian, *adversus Graecos*, 4, 12 (PG 6:811–814; 829–834); Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolycum*, 1.4 (PG 6.1029A); Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses*, 4.37.2–6 (PG 7:1100–1103); Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, 2.3, 7.3, 7.7 (PG 8:941–942; 9:415–428; 9:449–472); Origen of Alexandria, *De principiis*, 1.5, esp. 1.5.5 (PG 11:157–165, esp. 163–5); Basil of Caesarea, *Epistulae*, 233.2, 235.3 (PG 32:865c–868b; 873b–876a); Gregory of Nyssa, *De vita Moysis*, 1.2–1.11 (PG 44:300b-1c); Evagrius Ponticus, *Epistolae*, 8.2 (PG 32:249). See also Bradshaw (2014), 193–210.

58. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes*, 3.7 (PG 35:524a–b).

59. Basil of Caesarea, *Epistulae*, 234.2 (PG 32:869b–870c); Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes*, 28.29, 28.31 (PG 36:67b–70a, 69d–74a); Gregory of Nyssa, *De vita Moysis*, 2.158–168 (PG 44:376–377). Cf. Dionysius the Areopagite, *De mystica theologia*, 1.1 (PG 3:997–998); Maximus the Confessor, *Capita theologica*, 1.1, 1.8–9 (PG 90:1083a–1084a, 1085c–1086d); John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa*, 1.4 (PG 94:797b–801c).

60. Locke (1959), 2.8.8–15.

61. On the Eastern patristic view of subjects, see Zhyrkova (2010); *Idem* (2009).

62. See Basil of Caesarea, *Adversus Eunomium*, 1.6 (PG 29:521a–524c); Bradshaw (2006), 114–115; Stead (1988).

63. Synesius of Cyrene, *Hymni* 1.62 (PG 66:1589); Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, 1.1, 1.4 (PG 3:588b, 592a); *Epistula*, 4 (PG 3:1072b); Gregory of Agregentius, *Explanatio supra Ecclesiasten*, 4.5 (PG 98.936d); Modestus of Jerusalem, *In dormitionem BMV*, 8 (PG 86:3297b); Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, 5.5, 71.3 (PG 91:1049a, 1409d); *Capita theologica*, 1.4, 1.6, 2.1 (PG 90:1083c-6a, 1085a-6b, 1123d–1126c); *Opuscula theologica et polemica* (PG 91.128c); Anastasius Sinaita, *Hodegus sive viae dux*, 2 (PG 89:53b); John of Damascus, *Homiliae* 8.1 (PG 96:700b); *De fide orthodoxa*, 1.4, 1.8 (PG 94:797b–801c, 807b–834b); Arethas of Caesarea, *Commentarius in apocalypsin*, 1.8 (PG 106:512c).

64. For a lengthier synopsis of the Platonic notion of beyond being, see, Salas (2005), 212–216.

65. Plato, *Philebus,* 17a–e.

66. Aristotle, *Metaphysica,* 987a29–988a17; 990a34–993a27.

67. Plato, *The Republic* 477a; 508c; 509b; *Phaedo* 97b–99d.

68. Plotinus, *Enneads,* 5.3.14; 5.18; 6.9.3; cf. Plato, *Parmenides,* 137c ff.

69. For a synopsis of the Eastern patristic reception of Plato, see Bradshaw (2014).

70. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis,* 5.12 (PG 9:121b); Gregory of Nyssa, *In Ecclesiasten,* 7 (PG 44:711a–734a); *In Cantica Canticorum,* 5 (PG 44:857b–884d); Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus,* 2.9, 4.3 (PG 3:647a–648b, 697a–698a); John of Damascus, *Institutio elementaris ad dogmata,* 1 (PG 95:99b–102a).

71. On 'circumscribed natures', see Origen of Alexandria, *De Principiis,* 1.5.3 (PG 11:158–160); Gregory of Nyssa, *De vita Moysis,* 1.2–1.11 (PG 44:300b–301c); Evagrius Ponticus, *Epistola,* 8.2 (PG 32:249).

72. On this basic profession, see Wolfson (1956), 337f.; Kelly (1978), 263–269; Cross (2002); Louth (2002), 96–97, 113–114; Alston (2004), 179–186; Erismann (2008), 278–284; Jacobs (2008), passim.

73. For a survey of contemporary biblical studies on the accuracy of this reading, see Gathercole (2006), 'Introduction'.

74. E.g. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses,* 4.5.4 (PG 7.986a); Athanasius of Alexandria, *Ecthesis,* 3 (PG 25.204c–205b); *Epistolae de Ariana haeresi deque Arii deposition,* 3 (PG 18.552b–d); *De decretis Nicaenae synodi,* 7 (PG 25.436b–437a); Basil of Caesarea, *Epistolae,* 38 (PG 32.325a–340c); Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes,* 31.11 (PG 36.144d–145b); Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium,* 4.3 (PG 45.636–637); *Oratio catechetica magna* (PG 45.9b); John Chrysostom, *Fragmenta in Job 2:8* (PG 64.552c); John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa,* 1.8 (PG 94: 807b–834b).

75. Aristotle, *Physica,* 194a17–195b30; *Metaphysica* 1013a24–1014a26.

76. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes,* 3.7 (PG 35:524a–b).

77. Basil of Caesarea, *Epistulae,* 53.2 (PG 32.393b–c).

78. *Ibid.* (PG 32.393c–396a).

79. *Ibid.* (PG 32.393b–c).

80. E.g. Suarez (1859), vol XXV, 17.2.2.

81. E.g. Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium,* 2.9 (PG 45.508d–509b); John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa,* 1.8 (PG 94.816a–817a; 832a–833a).

82. E.g. Basil of Caesarea, *Epistulae,* 236.6 (PG 32.884a–c); Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium,* 1.34 (PG 45:403d–404d); John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa,* 1.8, 3.5 (PG 94.808b–833a; 1000b–1001b); *Dialectica,* 5, 30 (PG 94.540b–545b; 589b–596a).

83. Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium,* 1.38 (PG 94.421d–424a).

84. See also Jacobs (2008), 348–351.

85. Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium,* 1.25 (PG 94.360a).

86. *Ibid.* (PG 94.361b–d).

87. Plotinus, *Enneads,* 4.8.6; 5.12.45–48; and 6.8.

88. '□' means *necessarily* and '→' means *if–then.*

89. See Lovejoy (1936), Lecture II.

90. Aristotle, *Metaphysica,* 1071b20.

91. Aristotle, *Physica,* 251a8–20.

92. Basil of Caesarea, *Adversus Eunomium* (PG 29.697c–700a).

93. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis,* 7.7 (PG 9.458c–460a); Irenaeus of Lyons, *Contra haereses,* 4.4.3, 37.4, 38.4; Gregory of Nyssa, *De virginitate,* 12 (PG 46.369b–376c); *De hominis opificio,* 16 (PG 44.178d–188a); *Oratio catechetica magna,* 5 (PG 45.20d–25a).

94. John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa,* 1.14 (PG 94.860a–862a).

95. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Contra haereses,* 2.1.1; 2.5.4 (PG 7a:709c–710a; 723c–724a).

96. For more on this topic, see Bradshaw (2012).

97. See, E.g. Athanasius of Alexandria, *Orationes tres adversus Arianos,* 2.31 (PG 26.212b); Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron,* I.7 (PG 29.17a–20c); Gregory of Nyssa, *De anima et resurrectione* (PG 46.124b).

98. E.g. LaCugna (1991), ch. 2.

99. E.g. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes,* 29.2 (PG 36.76a–c); Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* (PG 45.469d–472d).

100. Athanasius of Alexandria, *Orationes tres adversus Arianos,* 3.66 (PG 26.461c–464c).

101. *Ibid.*

102. *Ibid.*, 3.35–41 (PG 26.397b–412a).
103. *Ibid.*, 3.62 (PG 26.453c). See also Florovsky (1962).
104. We might ask, in what sense is a 'fitting volition' distinct from an emanation? For if both are modally necessary, what differentiates the one from the other? The answer, it would seem, is located not in a modal distinction but in the *ousia–hypostasis* distinction of the pro-Nicenes. Neoplatonic emanationism is not an act of will by a divine subject; it is an emanation by the super-Form, The One. The Eastern patristic insistence that the Son is begotten of *the Father* locates the act of begetting not in the divine nature but in a divine subject and an act of will by that subject.
105. On internal–external relations, see Edwards (1967), VII, 125–133. See also Jacobs (2008), 348–351.
106. Leftow (2004), 210.
107. *Ibid.*
108. Arius of Alexandria, *Apistola ad Alexandrum papum* (PG 26.708c–709a).
109. Athanasius of Alexandria, *Epistola ad Afros episcopos*, 7 (PG 26.1039c–1042d); Meijering (1974).
110. Jacobs (2016), 8–13. See also the later account of Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, 10.32.83; 10.40.95; 26.1–2 (PG 91.1169b–d; 1184b–d; 1265c–1268c).
111. A careful reader will notice a change in terminology from the introduction to this later rendition of the argument. The differences centre on the choice to use the Latin terminology (*aseitas*) in the introduction in place of the Eunomian terminology of *unoriginate*. Because we are here doing more careful analysis of the Eunomian argument, I have chosen to return to the Eunomian terminology.
112. The Eastern pro-Nicenes distinguish between 'unoriginated' (*to agenēton*) and 'unbegotten' (*to agennēton*) – the difference being a single letter. The Son is 'unoriginated', not 'unbegotten', while the Father is both 'unoriginated' and 'unbegotten'. In other words, neither the Son nor the Father has a temporal point of origin, even though, unlike the Father, the Son does have an existential source of origin. See John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa*, 1.8 (PG 94:807b–834b).
113. Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium*, 1.33 (PG 45:395b–396c).
114. Origen of Alexandria, *Commentaria in Evangelium Joannis*, 2.1–3, 19.1 (PG 14:103c–116a, 523c–538a); Gregory of Nyssa, *Epistula ad Petrum*, 35.4d–f; John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa*, 1.5, 3.4, 3.11 (PG 94:799c–804b, 997a–1000a, 1021c–1028b); Behr (2007), 146–149; *Idem* (2008), 161–163.
115. Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium*, 1.34 (PG 45:403d–404d).
116. John of Damascus, *Dialectica*, 42, 44–45 (PG 94:611a–614a, 615a–618a); Liddell, et al. (1996), 'Hypostasis'.
117. Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium*, 1.33 (PG 45:393d–396b). Note that the term 'Godhead' (*theotēs*) is often misread as a reference to the Holy Trinity, due to Latin influence. The Eastern pro-Nicenes consistently use this term as a reference to the divine nature (*ousia*).
118. *Ibid.*, 1.34 (PG 45:403b–404c).
119. *Ibid.*