ON THE METAPHYSICS OF GOD AND CREATURES IN THE EASTERN PRO-NICENES

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Arius of Alexandria is known for his contention, condemned at the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D., that if the Son of God is begotten by God, then there was a time when the Son was not (*ēn pote ote ouk ēn*).[1] Opponents of Arius object to this line of reasoning, charging that if the Son came into being, then the Son is a creature; he is mutable; he is corruptible; his goodness is non-essential; and he cannot give life to humanity. These charges consistently appear in the writings of Arius' contemporaries, the councils to follow, and the Church fathers in the centuries after the dispute.[2] Such consequences of Arianism likely seem less than obvious to the modern reader. However, beneath these charges is a set of metaphysical assumptions that underwrites the pro-Nicene rationale. In what follows, I will flesh out the metaphysical foundation of Eastern anti-Arian polemics and what this foundation tells us about how the Eastern fathers understand the basic metaphysical differences between God and creatures.

[1] Socrates Scholasticus, *Historia Ecclesiastica,* 1.5 (PG 67.42a-b). All patristic citations reference the standard divisions of the work, followed by the volume and column number(s) in *Patrologiae cursus completes,* ed.

[2] E.g., Alexander of Alexandria, *Epistula ad Alexandrum Constantinopolitanum*, 11-3 (PG 18:552b-2c); Athanasius of Alexandria, *De Incarnatione Domini nostri Jesu Christi contra Apollinarium*, 1.3 (PG 26:1097a); *Epistula ad Serapionem* (PG 26:592b); *Epistula ad Afros Episcopos*, 5 (PG 26:1037b); *Oratio de Incarnatione Verbi,* 3 (PG 25:99d-102d); *De Decretis Nicaenae synodi,* 20.2 (PG 25:452a); *Orationes tres 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-8a, 112c, 220a, 481d); *Epistula Encyclica*, 7 (PG 18:573b); *Symbolum Synodi Nicaenae anno 325* (PG 20:1540c); Basil of Caesarea, *Epistulae*, 8.2 (PG 32:249); Gregory Nazianzen, *Orationes*, 2.14, 2.17, 2.28, 29.7, 34.13, 45.4-7 (PG 35: 423a-4b; 36:81c-4a, 253a-4b, 627b-32b); Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium*, 1, 2, 8, 9 (PG 45:368a, 459, 793c, 812d).

The structure of this paper is as follows. In section one, I offer a brief overview of the Eastern pro-Nicene commitment to moderate realism and hylomorphic substance metaphysics. In section two, I show how these commitments play out in the Arian dispute. In section three, I systematically work through the pro-Nicene rationale, fleshing out how the metaphysical necessities of mutability, corruptibility, temporality, finitude, and complexity of nature follow in reference to creatures from the metaphysical commitments discussed in sections one and two. Finally, in section four, I show why the negation of these metaphysical necessities follows in reference to God, thus yielding the requisite metaphysical necessities of deity, according to the Eastern pro-Nicenes.

I

To understand the Eastern pro-Nicene position contra Arius, we must first grasp two aspects of Eastern patristic thought: (1) their commitment to moderate realism, and (2) their understanding of matter as pure potency. Although both are likely review for many readers, having a firm grasp of these two aspects of their thought is crucial to all that follows.

The discussion of realism centers on universals, or singular terms predicated of multiple particulars and identified by a general noun. For example, the car is red; the ball is red; and the shirt is red. Although redness is a singular concept, red is here predicated of three distinct subjects. The question of realism is whether this or any other general noun has any reality outside of the generic category in the mind. In other words, is redness a real thing that the mind rightly identifies as somehow in multiple subjects? Or is redness a chimera created by the mind as it groups many things that appear to be similar, even though they are wholly unconnected

outside of the mind?[3] To quote the *locus classicus* from Porphyry, the issues is "(i) Whether genera or species exist in themselves or reside in mere concepts alone, (ii) whether, if [the genera or species] exist, they are corporeal or incorporeal, (iii) whether [the genera or species] exist apart or in sense objects and in dependence on them."[4]

According to extreme realists, the general nouns we use refer to the Ideas or Forms that eternally exist independent from every particular of which they are predicated, such as in Plato's account. The common portrait of Plato's extreme realism is that universals comprise a second world of perfect archetypes independent of our own. This world of the Forms is composed of the perfect referents for all such general nouns—the perfect circle, the perfect square, the perfect line, etc. When the soul encounters a material object in our world, it compares the object with its catalogue of archetypes (which it knows innately) and identifies the object with the archetype it most closely approximates. The predication applied is thus an association of object with archetype by general comparison: *John* (copy) is *human* (archetype).[5]

Although the Eastern fathers believe archetypal Ideas reside in the mind of God,[6] when it comes to substance metaphysics, they tend towards the account of Aristotle. In the Aristotelian

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[3] General studies on universals/particulars and (extreme)realism/nominalism include Frederick C. Copleston, "The Problem of Universals," in *History of Philosophy*, 9 vols. (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1950), 136-55, vol. 2; Gyula Klima, "The Medieval Problem of Universals," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford, CA: 2001 & 2013); Jorge J. E. Gracia, *Individuality: An Essay on the Foundations of Metaphysics* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), esp. 60-142; Meyrick H. Carré, *Realists and Nominalists* (London: Oxford University Press, 1946); Paul Gould, "The Problem of Universals, Realism, and God," *Metaphysica* 13 (2012): 183-94.

[4] Porphyry, *Isagoge* (CAG 4.1: p. 1), trans. Edward W. Warren (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1975), 27-8.

[5] Plato's theory of the Forms is most famously espoused in *The Republic*, 506d-21b. See also James I. Conway, "The Meaning of Moderate Realism," *New Scholasticism* 36 (1962): 141-79; Larry Lee Blackman, "Why Every Realist Should be a Platonist," *Auslegung* 7 (1980): 144-62.

[6] E.g., Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron* 1.5 (PG 29.13a-16a). For a synopsis of the Eastern patristic reception of Plato, especially amongst the Cappadocians, see David Bradshaw, "Plato in the Cappadocian Fathers," *Plato in the Third Sophistic,* ed. Ryan Fowler (DeGruyter, 2014): 193-210.

moderate realist account, universals never exist independently from the particulars of which they are predicated; they are only actual within particulars.[7] We might think of the moderate realist position as analogous to the relationship between a computer and a computer program. The computer programmer (representative of God) has in his mind the abstract idea of a game. We will call this game *Adventure to Mars* (or *AM*). This game is nowhere actual outside the programmer's mind; it is a mere abstraction. The programmer then programs *AM* (substantial form) into three different computers (matter), and *AM* then becomes actual (or immanent) in these three computers. On the level of raw programming data (the essential properties of *AM*), the game is identical on each computer. But the three instances of *AM* are not identical all things considered. For these essential properties are now in three distinct machines, combined with various accidents: Each computer occupies a different location; each game performs different functions; the respective screens yield color variations, and so on. This is akin to how the Eastern fathers understand the matter-form relationship in creatures. Peter, James, and John are three distinct subjects (*hypostases*) that share a common form, nature, or essence (*ousia*), namely, *human.* On the level of essential properties of the species they are identical. Yet, Peter, James, and John are not identical all things considered. Not only are they distinct subjects, but their common form, *human,* is combined with distinct material accidents in the respective subjects: Peter, James, and John differ in location, size, color, etc.[8]

[7] Aristotle, *De Anima*, 412a1-4a28; *Metaphysica*, 1013a26-8; 1017b14-6; 1017b21-3; 1028b33-9a33; *Physica* 192b8-3b21; 194b26-9. See also Darrel D. Colson, "Aristotle's Doctrine of 'Universalia in Rebus'," *Apeiron* 17 (1983): 113-24; Theodore Scaltsas, *Substances and Universals in Aristotle's Metaphysics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), esp. 28-35.

[8] For a brief history of the Eastern patristic affirmation of hylomorphic metaphysics, see my "Are Created Spirits Composed of Matter and Form? A Defense of Pneumatic Hylomorphism," *Philosophia Christi* 14, no.1 (2012): 81-90.

This brings us to how the Eastern fathers use the term "matter" (*hylē*). When speaking of matter, these writers do not mean an object that has mass and includes atoms and other particles, what is known philosophically as "secondary matter." Instead, they more often than not mean what Aristotle calls prime matter (*hē prōte hylē*).[9] Matter in this sense is nothing more than a substratum of pure potentiality that receives various properties.

Considering the phenomenon of change may help clarify the concept. Let us say that Bob's skin is white, but following a long day at the beach, his skin turns red. Bob then retreats indoors for the next week, and his skin again turns white. Such changes in Bob indicate that he has the potential to be red and to cease to be red. But where is this potential located? Presumably redness itself did not come to exist for the first time when Bob became red, since there are many things other than Bob that are red. Nor did the definition of red fluctuate as Bob became more or less red. Therefore, despite the changes in Bob's redness, the generic universal, red, is not what suffers change. Rather, Bob came to participate in the unchanging universal and then ceased to participate in it. Might the locus of change, then, be Bob himself? If we presume, as the Eastern fathers do, that every changing object also has an identity that endures throughout changes, then the subject (or *hypostasis*) is not the locus of change but of enduring identity.[10] That is, Bob remains Bob both before becoming red and after ceasing to be red. The subject suffers change, but the subject per se is not what changes. So, if neither Bob (the enduring subject) nor redness (the property received or lost) is the locus of change, then there must be some third component of

[9] Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, 1042b9-1042b11; *Physica*, 190 a31-190b15; See also the articles by Ernan Mc Mullin, Harry A. Nielsen, Joseph Owens, Milton Fisk, and Norbert Luyten in *The Concept of Matter*, ed. Ernan McMullin (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963); H. M. Robinson, "Prime Matter in Aristotle," *Phronesis* 19, no. 2 (1974): 168-88.

[10] Anna Zhrykova, "Hypostasis – The Principle of Individual Existence in John of Damascus," *The Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 61, no. 1-2 (2009): 103-110, 125.

Bob that is the locus of Bob's potential to receive or lose various properties. This potential is what is meant by the term *prime matter*.

Prime matter is a substratum of pure potentiality. In other words, it has no innate properties of its own, but is a blank slate that may receive and again lose any number of properties. We might think of it as analogous to a shapeless bit of fabric that can receive shape from objects it might drape around. The shapes belong to the objects that supply them, not to the fabric per se. In the same way, prime matter may receive redness and again lose it; it may receive density and again lose it; it may receive shape and again lose it. But the property received belongs to the form that communicates it to matter, not to matter per se. In short, prime matter is the potential in which forms or properties take up residence. Therefore, when we speak of Bob's potential for change, we are speaking neither of the possibility that Bob might cease to be Bob (change in *hypostasis*) nor the possibility that red might cease to be red (change in the universal), but of the potential (prime matter) in Bob to receive properties currently lacking and lose properties currently had.

This moderate realist account is the basis for Eastern patristic hylomorphic metaphysics. Any given object consists of (1) the principle of existence or identity of the subject that endures throughout every change; (2) the substratum (i.e., prime matter) that receives whatever properties are actual within the subject; and (3) the properties, or forms, manifest in the substratum at any given moment. In short, every object is hylomorphic because the subject, (1), is composed of both matter (*hylē)* and form (*morphē)*, as per (2) and (3).

Note that I have said the Eastern fathers identify any given object as hylomorphic. Although the Eastern fathers speak of "immaterial" (*aulos*) creatures, such as angels,[11] their

[11] John of Damascus, *Expositio Fidei*, 2.3 (PG 94:868b).

writings reveal that they believe every creature, including the soul and angels, has matter, or is hylomorphic. To quote John of Damascus, "in comparison with God, who alone is incorporeal, everything proves to be gross [*pachu*] and material [*hylikon*]."[12] When the Eastern fathers distinguish "material objects" from "immaterial objects," such as when distinguishing the body from the soul, this is a statement of relative materiality: In comparison with the body, which has density, color, and mass, the soul is immaterial. The former is what they call "gross matter" (*pachu hylikon*), while the latter is comparatively immaterial (*aulos*). However, even "immaterial" creatures are not truly immaterial in the sense that they have no prime matter. All creatures, so they argue, have prime matter by metaphysical necessity.[13] I will refer to this position as "Hylomorphic Creationism" (or HC). In the next section, we will look at the Arian dispute in order to unearth the Eastern patristic rationale for HC, for it is this dispute that ushers HC to center stage.

II

Amid the Arian dispute, Athanasius insists that mutability is one of the central differences between God and creatures: God is immutable, while all creatures are mutable.[14] Gross matter, such as flesh, perpetually changes in size, color, density, etc., and rational

[12] Damascene, *Expositio Fidei*, 2.3 (PG 94:868b). See also Athanasius, *Vita et Conversatioe S. Antonii,* 31 (PG 26:889-92); Basil of Caesarea, *Epistolae*, 8.2 (PG 32:249); Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium,* 1; 8; 9 (PG 45:368a; 793c; 812d); Evagrius Ponticus, *Scholion 2 to Ps. 134.6; Scholion* 275 *to Prov.* 24.22; Macarius the Great, *Homiliae*, 4.9 (PG 34:479-80; Symeon the New Theologian, *Ethical Discourse* 1.5.2.

[13] See my "Are Created Spirits Composed of Matter and Form?," 81-90.

[14] Athanasius, *De incarnation Domini nostri Jesu Christi contra Apollinarium,* 1.3 (PG 26:1097a); *Epistula ad Serapionem* (PG 26:592b); *Oratio de Incarnatione Verbi*, 3 (PG 25:99d-102d); *Orationes tres adversus Arianos*, 1.18 (PG 26:49b).

creatures, including angels, are subject to moral mutations based on the motion of will.[15] The implication for Arius' Christology is that if the Son of God is created, then he is mutable, just like every other creature. Far from having a nature similar to that of the immutable God, then, the Son, being mutable, would be of a very different nature.[16]

In this dispute, it becomes apparent that Athanasius is not suggesting that all creatures happen to be mutable, even though God could make immutable creatures. Rather, Athanasius thinks it is metaphysically necessary that every creature qua creature is mutable. The rationale he offers is this: To be created is to come into being; to come into being is to move from nonbeing into being; and the movement from nonbeing into being is a mutation. Every creature is thus mutable because its existence begins with a mutation.[17]

In this rationale, Athanasius sides with the Aristotelian view that ontology is not binary but consists of a spectrum of becoming, stretching from pure potentiality to pure actuality.[18] The view contrasts with the Eleatic strong disjunctive *either existence or non-existence*. Working in this disjunctive, change requires an absurdity, namely, if a thing comes into being, then it (a noun indicating something, not nothing) moves (an act of things, not non-things) from being (a term denoting existence) nothing (a term denoting non-existence and non-things) to being something. In short, becoming requires that we speak of things that were not as though they were, which is

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[15] Athanasius, *Oratio de Incarnatione Verbi*, 3-4 (PG 25:99d-104c); *Oratio contra gentes*, 1.35 (PG 25:69a-72a).

[16] Athanasius, *De decretis Nicaenae synodi*, 20.2 (PG 25:452a); *Epistula ad Afros episcopos*, 5 (PG 26:1037b); *Orationes tres 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-8a, 112c, 220a, 481d).

[17] Athanasius, *De incarnation Domini nostri Jesu Christi contra Apollinarium*, 1.3 (PG 26:1097a); *Epistula ad Serapionem* (PG 26:592b); *Epistula ad Afros episcopos*, 5 (PG 26:1037b); *Oratio de Incarnatione Verbi,* 3 (PG 25:99d-102d); *De decretis Nicaenae synodi,* 20.2 (PG 25:452a); *Orationes tres 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-8a, 112c, 220a, 481d).

[18] Aristotle, *Metaphysica* 1019a15-1019b15, 1048a25-1048b9, 1048b35-1049b2.

precisely why the Eleatics were baffled by the phenomenon of change.[19] Yet, Aristotle breaks the strong disjunctive by identifying becoming with the potential of matter to receive a property and the varying degrees of reception that occur in the movement from nonbeing into being.[20]Athanasius' sympathies for this metaphysic is reflected in the fact that, while he speaks of man being created out of nothing (*ouch ontes*), he also refers to man's natural state of nonbeing (*mē einai*) from which he first moved into being and to which he may retreat in corruption.[21] In other words, Athanasius distinguishes *creatio ex nihilo,* to borrow the Latin phrase, from becoming. The former asserts that God created all things, including prime matter, without use of previously existent materials. The latter affirms that all creatures receive once-foreign properties when being created, and this reception involves mutation as properties move from nonbeing into being in the creature. The movement from creation as becoming to HC is simple enough, given Aristotelian substance metaphysics. Because every creature receives properties at its creation, every creature must bear the substratum of potential (i.e., prime matter) that makes possible the reception of properties. In short, every creature must be hylomorphic.

The connection between HC and Athanasius' objection to Arius is evident. If there was a time when the Son was not and he then came into being, then the Son's existence began with a movement from nonbeing into being. This movement requires (a) that the Son is hylomorphic, bearing the substratum that makes possible his reception of properties, and (b) that he is mutable, since his existence began with a mutation. Athanasius' affirmation of (b) is pervasive throughout his polemics. As for (a), we see this confirmed in the fact that Arius feels compelled to state in

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[19] Parmenides, "Fragments (DK28b2, DK28b6, DK28b8 [Diels/Kranz])," in *The First Philosophers: The PreSocratics and the Sophists*, trans. Robert Waterfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 58-61; Aristotle, Metaphysica 986b10-987a2, 1046b29-1047b3.

[20] Cf. Aristotle, *Physica* 189a30-192b5.

[21] Athanasius, *Oratio de Incarnatione Verbi*, 4 (PG 25:104c).

his defense that he does not believe the Son derives subsistence from matter, indicating a clear understanding of Athanasius' rationale, as per HC.[22]

Athanasius' objection to Arius was not unique. It echoed in other opponents of Arianism in his day, such as Alexander of Alexandria; it is reflected in the 325 Nicene Creed, which anathematizes all talk of mutability (*treptos / alloiōtos*) in reference to the Son of God;[23] and it persists among the fathers in the semi-Arian disputes to follow, reflected specifically, though not exclusively, in the writings of the Cappadocians.[24] HC and the metaphysics on which HC is based were therefore central to the pro-Nicene profession.

The strength of the rationale for HC rests on both its simplicity and its relatively uncontroversial claim that creatures are that which come into being. Once this claim is granted, the moderate realist has few choices but to grant that all creatures bear a substratum of potential that receives those properties that come to be.[25] Perhaps, though, one could argue that there is a

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[22] Arius, *Epistula ad Eusebium Nicomediensem* (PG 42:212b).

[23] Alexander of Alexandria, *Epistula ad Alexandrum Constantinopolitanum*, 11-3 (PG 18:552b-2c); *Epistula encyclica*, 7 (PG 18:573b); *Symbolum synodi Nicaenae anno 325* (PG 20:1540c).

[24] Basil of Caesarea, *Epistula*, 8.2 (PG 32:249); Gregory of Nazianzen, *Orationes*, 2.14; 2.17; 2.28; 29.7; 34.13; 45.4-7 (PG 35: 423a-424b; 36:81c-84a, 253a-254b, 627b-32b); Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium,* 1, 2, 8, 9 (PG 45:368a, 459, 793c, 812d).

[25] Contemporary metaphysicians have developed views of substance, such as bundle theory or relational ontologies, which could be and sometime are used to account for change without appeal to a substratum of potentiality. While all explicit relational ontologies (see Peter van Inwagen, "Relational vs. Constituent Ontologies," *Philosophical Perspectives,* 25, *Metaphysics* (2011): 390-405) utilize universals, bundle theorists typically appeal to tropes (or particularized properties). For a programmatic paper developing a trope bundle theory, see Peter Simons, "Particulars in Particular Clothing," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 54:3 (Sep., 1994): 553-75. For a critique of Simons, see Robert K. Garcia, "Tropes and Dependency Profiles," *American Philosophical Quarterly* (forthcoming). John Hawthorne has a series of papers defending bundle theory with universals (1995, 1998, 2002), but, in his most recent paper with Theodore Sider on the subject, he seems to abandon this model. John Hawthorne / Theodore Sider, "Locations," *Philosophical Topics* 30 (2002): p. 28. The centrality of tropes to these alternatives is relevant for the purposes of this paper because the Eastern fathers explicitly reject the view that universals are in anyway divided, particularized, or individuated within hypostases. See, e.g., Gregory of Nyssa, *Quod non Sint tres Dii ad Ablabium* (PG 45:115a-124c); Basil of Caesarea, *Epistulae,* 38 and 236 (PG 32:325a-340c, 875b-886a); and Gregory Nazianzen, *Orationes,* 29, 13 (PG 36:89d-92b); John of Damascus, *De haeresibus,* 83 (PG 94:741a-754d). See also Jacobs, "Are Created Spirits Composed of Matter and Form?," pp. 99-100; Christophe Erismann, "The Trinity, Universals, and Particular Substances: Philoponus and Roscelin," *Tradito* 63 (2008): pp. 278-305. Hence, even if realist versions of such alternatives work, they would not be live options for the Eastern fathers.

slight of hand in the seemingly uncontroversial claim that creatures are that which come into being. The superficial reading of the claim is that creatures are beings that were not and now are. When we recognize, however, that Athanasius (et al.) has in mind something much more metaphysical—namely, creation involves the immanentizing of form in matter—the claim is not as prime facie as it appears on first blush. Might one, for example, affirm that all creatures are beings that were not but now are while rejecting the claim that "coming into being" requires mutative generation? If so, the rationale may be evaded by suggesting that God can create out of nothing a fully formed and immutable creature, one that bursts into existence in full, unchanging perfection. This is, in fact, precisely what Arius sought to argue in reference to the Son of God in later stages of the dispute.[26]

Three things are evident about the pro-Nicene position on the idea that God can create an immutable creature. (1) The pro-Nicenes evidently thought that Arius was attributing to God a metaphysical impossibility when suggesting that he can make an immutable creature.[27] (2) The pro-Nicenes considered an immutable creature to be impossible because they took *creation* to entail *becoming*. In other words, the term *immutable creature* is a contradictory coupling of *immutable* and *mutable*.[28] (3) The pro-Nicenes' realist commitments led them to conclude that such contradictions fall beyond the bounds of omnipotence, much like later medieval realists.[29] Unfortunately, point (2) is taken to be so self-evident by the Eastern fathers they rarely explain

[26] Arius, *Epistola ad Alexandrum papum* (PG 26.708c-709a)

[27] Athanasius, *Epistola ad Afros Episcopos*, 7; Hilary of Poitiers, *De Trinitate*, 6.12; Maximus, *Ambigua*, 15.6-12.

[28] E.P. Meijering, "En Pote Hote Ouk En Ho Hyios: A Discussion on Time and Eternity," *Vigiliae Christianae* 28 (1974): 161-168; Tim Pawl, "Divine Immutability," IEP §1b. For a contemporary exponent of the view that there is no contradiction between the terms created and eternal, see, Ilia Delio, "Is Creation Eternal?," *Theological Studies* 66 (2005): 279-303.

[29] E.g., Maximus, *Ambigua*, 10.32.83, 10.40,95, 26.1-2. Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Ia q.25 a.4.

why Arius' proposal of an immutable, nonhylomorphic creature is impossible, aside from the reiteration of (2). But I think the point can be made clear on their behalf by simply thinking through Arius' alternative.

Let us entertain Arius' claim that God can create a fully formed, immutable entity. Rather than the creature undergoing a generative process by which it comes to have various properties, progressively moving from potential to actual, the entity bursts onto the scene in complete perfection at its first moment of existence. Yet, keep in mind that the creature is immutable. So, it is insufficient that the creature merely comes to be without mutation; it must be of such a kind that it cannot mutate after its creation. In other words, it must have all properties it will ever have and be incapable of losing the properties it bears—which, by extension, requires that it must not bear prime matter, the substratum of potential for change. The implication would be that all of its properties are essential to it, since it has no properties that are subject to change. Now, this raises a question of whether properties such as position, location, and situation are accidental. If so, then the creature could not be temporal, lest its relation to time change, or spatial, lest its relation to other objects change. The former point is especially problematic, since the being had a definite origin point, which requires a temporal relation, namely, before and after its origin. But let us say, for argument's sake, that difficulties related to change in space and time can be evaded by arguing that such changes are "external" (or changes in "passive potential") that would not constitute a mutation.[30] A second difficulty is this. I am unsure how to avoid the conclusion that this "immutable creature" is modally necessary. For, if the creature has always had its attributes and cannot be deprived of any of its properties, then it bears these attributes necessarily. I do not see how one can say that a being has no potential for deprivation of its attributes without

[30] Cf. John Duns Scotus, *Lectura* I.39.5.65, 75, and 84, in his *Opera Omnia,* 26 vols. (Paris, 1891-1895) in which Scotus makes this case with regard to God's observation of temporal changes in creation.

concluding that it cannot be destroyed. Moreover, once we have said that it necessarily bears its attributes and cannot be deprived of them, I am unsure how to conceptually deprive the creature of these attributes at an earlier time, namely, prior to its being created. Therefore, I do not know how to avoid the conclusion that such a creature must be eternal, immutable, incorruptible, and modally necessary. In short, I do not know how to conclude that this creature is not a creature.

Although the above thought experiment is not found amongst the Eastern fathers, I do believe it is true to their rationale.[31] As moderate realists, they maintain there is always a distinction between the universals had by particulars and the particulars themselves. Singular properties that are shared by multiple particulars are thus not identical with any of the particulars having them.[32] So, either the particular is eternal and has its properties by some modal necessity, or it came to be and to have these properties at some point (becoming), thereby bearing them contingently. If the latter is so, then the particular is mutable and must bear the substratum of potential that allows for the contingent reception (and potential loss) of properties.[33] It is irrelevant how quickly this reception took to occur—in a flash of the eye or over a nine-month gestation. The being received its properties at some point, so we are right back to the necessity that every being that comes into being is mutable and hylomorphic.[34]

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[31] Cf. John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa,* 1.3 (PG 94:793b-797a); Maximus, *Ambigua*, 15.6-12.

[32] See my "Are Created Spirits Composed of Matter and Form?," 99-100; Erismann, "The Trinity, Universals, and Particular Substances": 278-305; and Zhrykova, "Hypostasis – The Principle of Individual Existence in John of Damascus": 103-110, 125.

[33] Athanasius, *Oratio de Incarnatione Verbi*, 4 (PG 25:104c); Basil of Caesarea, *Epistula*, 8.2 (PG 32:249); Gregory of Nazianzen, *Orationes*, 2.14; 2.17; 2.28; 29.7; 34.13; 45.4-7 (PG 35: 423a-424b; 36:81c-84a, 253a-254b, 627b-32b); Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium*, 1, 2, 8, 9 (PG 45:368a, 459, 793c, 812d).

[34] For additional considerations in defense of HC, see my "Are Created Spirits Matter and Form?," 90-107.

These, however, are not the only metaphysical necessities that the Eastern fathers understand to obtain in reference to creatures. In the next section, we will explore the additional metaphysical necessities that follow from HC.

III

We have seen to this point that the Eastern fathers understand all creatures to be, by metaphysical necessity, mutable and hylomorphic. Materiality and mutability are therefore trademarks of creatureliness. Yet, the Eastern fathers understand several other metaphysical necessities to follow from HC, namely, corruptibility, temporality, finitude, and complexity of nature.

Corruptibility is the metaphysical flipside of becoming. Simply put, corruption is the retrograde movement of a property. Rather than the given property moving into being (potential to actual), it moves out of being (actual back to potential).[35] On the Eastern patristic account, corruptibility is just as metaphysically necessary to creatures as mutability. Recall that prime matter has no properties of its own. Thus, no property that takes up residence in matter is essential to it. This is not to say that hylomorphic creatures do not have essential properties.—Every species has essential properties.—But it is to say that whatever properties are essential to a species (e.g., bipedal, rational, etc.) are not essential to the matter that bears that species. All properties are foreign properties to prime matter. Or to put it another way, while it is necessary that a given species bear certain properties, it is not necessary that matter bear that species. For this reason, matter always retains its potential to release the properties it receives.

[35] Aristotle, *De Generatione et Corruptione*, 319b2-320a4. Cf. Aristotle, *Categoriae*, 15a15-15b15.

The implication is that every hylomorphic being is corruptible. For if generate beings are necessarily material and mutable, then they are also necessarily corruptible: The very substratum that supplies the potential for becoming also retains its potential to lose these same properties. This is precisely why the Eastern fathers suggest that anything that comes from nonbeing can return to nonbeing.[36] The receptacle of potential that was filled with properties can be emptied just as easily. And because HC is a global claim—every creature is hylomorphic—the implication is that every creature is corruptible.

To be sure, this is not to say that every creature is corrupted at some point. The elect angels, for example, apparently came into being and moved from glory to glory, and will presumably continue this movement on into eternity.[37] Identifying creatures as corruptible is not, therefore, an insistence that all creatures necessarily turn retrograde at some point, but merely a statement that creaturely composition necessitates the possibility of such a movement.

We see this point quite clearly in the Eastern patristic concerns about soteriology amid the Arian dispute. The concern emerges in two places. First, it appears in the charge against Arianism that the Son of God, if he is what Arius suggests, must be corruptible and morally turnable—that is, can turn from the good, just as the Devil did. For the mutability of Arius' Son of God necessitates the possibility of such corruption.[38]

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[36] Athanasius, *Oratio de Incarnatione Verbi*, 1.4; Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio Catechetica Magna*, 6.

[37] Dionysius, *Coelesti Hierarchia*, 2.3, 13.4, 15.3, 15.9; Damascene, *Expositio Fidei*, 2.3. See also Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Presence and Thought: Essay on the Religious Philosophy of Gregory of Nyssa*, trans. Mark Sebanc (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1995), 34-5.

[38] Athanasius, *Orationes tres adversus Arianos*, 1.5, 1.9, 1.22, 1.28, 1.35-6, 1.48, 2.34, 4.12 (PG 26:21c, 29b, 57c, 72a, 84a-88a, 112c, 220a, 481d); *De decretis Nicaenae synodi,* 20.2 (PG 25:452a); *Epistula ad Afros episcopos*, 5 (PG 26:1037b); Alexander of Alexandria, *Epistula ad Alexandrum Constantinopolitanum,* 11-3 (PG 18:552b-c); *Epistula encyclica,* 7 (PG 18:573b); Basil of Caesarea, *Epistula,* 8.2 (PG 32:249); Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus de sancta et consubstantiali Trinitate*, 13 (PG 75:205d-34a); *Symbolum synodi Nicaenae anno* 325 (PG 20:1540c).

Second, we see the metaphysics of corruptibility in the charge that if the Son of God is mutable and not of the same nature as God the Father, then he cannot remedy our own corruptibility. The roots of this second charge are less obvious than the first. However, what we find is that the Eastern fathers insist that the only way in which a creature that is necessarily corruptible, or turnable (*treptos*), can be delivered from the threat of corruption is to partake of the only nature that is unturnable (*atreptos*). Here we run into Eastern patristic doctrine of deification, or *theosis*. I will not say much on this doctrine, since soteriology is not my concern here. Suffice it to say for our purposes that the Eastern fathers understand salvation to involve the transformation of the individual as he partakes of a foreign nature, namely, the nature of God. By imbibing the incorruptible divine nature—or, more precisely, the life-giving divine *energeiai*—the individual is transformed, akin to the ways Christ's own flesh is transfigured by union with the divine nature. In this way, the corruptible is made incorruptible.[39] This soteriological concern, which came to the fore in the Arian dispute and continued to appear in later disputes with Apollinarus, for example, shows that the Eastern fathers understand HC to entail that corruptibility is a metaphysical necessity binding all creatures, and which Christian soteriology must address if it is to promise to human persons the hope of incorruptibility in the resurrection from the dead.[40]

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[39] Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos,* 1.43; 1.51 (PG 26:99c-102b; 26:117b-20a); Alexander of Alexandria, *Epistula ad Alexandrum Constantinopolitanum,* 13 (PG 18:552c); Gregory of Nyssa, *Adversus Apollinarem* (PG 45:1124-269, esp. 1128a). See also Maximus the Confessor's comments on the Monothelite heresy in the 7th century: Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguorum liber* (PG 91:1057c).

[40] Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos,* 1.43 (PG 26.99c-102b); Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sancto* 9.23 (PG 32:109a-110c); Basil of Caesarea, *Epistolae* 236 (PG 32:875b-886a); Gregory of Nyssa, *Adversus Apollinarem* (PG 45.1124-1269, esp. 1128a); Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentarium in Evangelium Joannis*, 13:31-2 (PG 74:151a-6a); Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguorum liber* (PG 91.1057c); Maximus the Confessor, *Ad Thalassium*, 42 (*Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca* 7:285-9); John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa*, 3.17, 3.28, 4.27 (PG 94: 1067b-72b, 1219a-28a). See also Nathan A. Jacobs, "Created Corruptible, Raised Incorruptible: The Significance of Hylomorphic Creationism to the Free Will Defense," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology*, eds. Joshua Farris / Charles Taliaferro (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2015). Cf. St. Paul, 1 Corinthians 15:37-50.

It should be said that corruptibility has both ontological and moral dimensions—dimensions that are best distinguished, though I have, to this point, conflated them. The ontological dimension is common to all creatures, sentient or not. Plants come into being and can again retreat from being; dogs come into being and can again retreat from being; humans come into being and can again retreat from being. Corruption in this sense is ontological deterioration. Objects that are composed of various parts can decompose. Even angels, which may not have organic parts, are at least subject to decomposition by removing their nonorganic properties, such as reason and will, from the substratum of potential in which they are manifest. In other words, because angels are matter-form composites, whatever forms reside in matter in an angel can be removed from matter, thus ending the creature's being and returning it to nonbeing.

Regarding moral corruption, this type of corruption is unique to sentient beings. For in such entities we encounter the unique faculties of reason and will, and with them the moral properties of virtue and vice—the former being moral becoming and the latter moral corruption. The Eastern fathers insist that moral properties are just that: Ontological properties that are acquired by rational spirits in either positive movements of will (virtue) or negative movements of will (vice). For this reason, they understand these moral properties to be equally subject to generation and corruption. Perhaps the best way into the point is the Eastern patristic insistence that moral properties are accidental in creatures.[41]

The accidental nature of moral properties in creatures can be shown to be prime facie by considering any two examples of virtue and vice in a single species, such as the respective

[41] E.g., Tatian, *Oratio adversus Graecos,* 4; 12 (PG 6:811-14; 829-34); Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses,* 4.37.2-6 (PG 7:1100-03); Thphl.Ant.*Autol.*1.4 (PG 6.1029A); Origen, *De principiis,* 1.5, esp. 1.5.5 (PG 11:157-65, esp. 163-65); Justin, *Apologia Secunda,* 5 (PG 6:452-3); Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata,* 2.3; 7.3; 7.7 (PG 8:941-42; 9:415-28; 9:449-72); Basil of Caesarea, *Epistolae* 8.2 (PG 32:249).

examples of Christ and Adam.[42] Adam was created with the potential for virtue or for its neglect. Therefore, his human nature neither entailed nor excluded moral goodness. In like manner, whatever Christian claims about the Incarnation may be controversial, the idea that Christ could be both human and good is not one of them. Such examples show that *human* is compatible with moral goodness (as per Jesus) but does not entail it (as per Adam, et al.). Goodness cannot, then, be counted amongst the essential properties of human nature, but must be accidental. In addition, the fact that Adam could have persisted in goodness and been confirmed in righteousness or move away from the good, as he in fact did, indicates that such accidents are potencies that are subject to movement from nonbeing into being and vice versa. For the former movement would have brought a moral perfection from nonbeing into being, while the latter movement was in fact a retreat from goodness and thus a retrograde movement. These moral movements, therefore, are rightly identified as matters of becoming and corruption. And the very same case can be reiterated in reference to the respective examples of the elect and fallen angels.[43]

As already indicated, the proximate cause of moral change, according to the Eastern fathers, is the motion of will. Basil of Caesarea is quite clear on this point:

> God does not love what is constrained but what is accomplished out of virtue. And virtue comes into being out of free choice and not out of constraint. But free choice depends on what is up to us. And what is up to us is self-determined. Accordingly, the one who finds fault with the Creator for not fashioning us by nature sinless is no different from one who prefers the nonrational nature to the rational, and what lacks motion and impulse to what has free choice and activity.[44]

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[42] Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 3.18.1, 3.21.10; *Ostensio Apostolicae Praedicationis*, 31-33; Origen, *De Oratione*, 4; Tertullian, *Adversus Judaeos*, 2, 13.

[43] Athenagoras, *Legatio pro Christianis*, 24; Barnabas, *Epistola Catholica*, 18-20; Tatian, *Oratio adversus Graecos*, 7.

[44] Basil of Caesarea, *Hom. quod Deus non est auctor malorum,* 7 (PG 30:345b). See also Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sancto,* 18.46 (PG 32:151b-4a).

The reason the will must serve as the proximate cause of virtue is quite simply that without the faculties of reason and will, moral properties do not obtain. The Eastern fathers take as given the point that moral culpability requires both knowledge of what one ought or ought not to do (reason) and the power of contrary choice to either do or not do it (will)—that is, libertarian freedom.[45] The point is rather intuitive among human persons, evident in the fact that pleas of moral innocence tend to claim either ignorance—*I didn't know!*—or inability—*I couldn't help it!* Assuming the faculties of reason and will are present and capable—in both knowledge and ability—of moving toward the good, then the necessary conditions for either virtue or vice are present. Which property then obtains depends on whether the creature moves toward the good, ushering virtue into being, or away from the good, bringing moral corruption upon himself.

Such metaphysical commitments again make themselves known in the Arian dispute. As noted above, amongst the charges against Arius is that the Arian Son of God must be corruptible. This charge is stated both generically, indicating general ontological corruptibility, and morally—the Son could become morally evil, just as the Devil did. Moreover, the charge appears that, even if Arius' Son of God does not turn from the good, his virtue is accidental to him.[46] The point is in keeping with the above account: His moral properties, being subject to becoming, are subject to corruption as well, and because he bears the capacity for either moral movement, his species must be compatible with either virtue or vice, making these moral properties accidents determined by the movements of will.

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[45] Origen, *De orat.,* 6 (PG 11:433c-439b); *De princ.* 3.1 (PG 11:249a-303a); Gregory of Nyssa, *De virginitate,* 12 (PG 46:369b-376d); John Chrysostom, "Homily II," in *Homilae XXIV in Epistolam ad Ephesios* (PG 62:17-22; John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa,* 2.24-27 (PG 94:951b-962b). See also David Bradshaw, "Divine Freedom: The Greek Fathers and the Modern Debate," in *Philosophical Theology and the Christian Tradition: Russian and Western Perspectives*, ed. David Bradshaw (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2012), 77-92.

[46] See n. 40 above.

Temporality also emerges as a metaphysical necessity that the Eastern fathers understand to follow from HC. The point emerges quite simply. Creatures are, of necessity, bound by sequences of mutation. For, having come into being, they are subject to the *before* and *after* of their creation. Moreover, the movement from nonbeing into being is not an extrinsic sequence, but an intrinsic sequence of successive mutations that entail time. Therefore, if creatures are that which move from nonbeing into being, then creatures are also temporal by necessity.[47]

Finitude is yet another necessity that follows from HC, and is closely aligned in Eastern patristic thought with temporality. The Eastern fathers assert repeatedly that creatures are circumscribed (*perigraptos*), while God is uncircumscribed (*aperigraptos*).[48] This point is often made in reference to the previous point about time: Creatures, being that which comes into being, are circumscribed by the before and after of their becoming. In other words, unlike a line that extends infinitely in both directions, creatures, having a definite origin point, are necessarily limited—at least temporally.[49]

The case for spatial finitude emerges in reference to both number and material locality. Regarding the latter, the Eastern fathers presume that corporeality is inherently located in space[50]—some going so far as to state that God is a creator of bodies.[51] Granting that materiality

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[47] Aristotle, *Physica*, 217b30-224a17; Damascene, *Dialectica*, 68; Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa,* 1.3 (PG 94:793b-797a); Maximus, *Ambigua*, 10.38.91-92.

[48] On creaturely circumscription, see Basil of Caesarea, *Epistolae* 8.2 (PG 32:249); Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium,* 1; 8; 9 (PG 45:368a; 793c; 812d); John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa,* 2.3; 1.13 (PG 94:868b; 852c-853b). On divine uncircumscrpition, see Leontius of Byzantium, *contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos* 1 (PG 86.1284c); Leontius of Hierosolymitanus, *adversus Nestorianos* 1.1 (PG 86.1408d); Clement of Alexandria, *fragmenta* 39 (PG 9:769c); Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 6.15 (PG 9:344b); Athanasius, *fragmenta in Job* (PG 27:1345a); Athanasius, *de sententia Dionysii 20* (PG 25:509a); Theodoret, *De sancta et vivifica Trinitate* 28 (PG 75:1188c); Eusebius of Caesarea, *commentarius in Is.* 9.6 (PG 24:152d); Gregory of Nyssa, *Epistula* 101 (PG 37:177b); Gregory of Nyssa, *adversus Apollinarem* 18 (PG 45:1160a); Maximus the Confessor, *Opuscula theological et polemica* (PG 91:57c); John of Damascus, *Homiliae* 4.29 (PG 96:632a).

[49] Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa,* 1.3 (PG 94:793b-797a).

[50] Maximus, *Ambigua*, 17.11.

entails spatiality, it follows quite naturally from HC that all creatures are spatial entities of one kind or another. Again, it must be kept in mind that material does not necessarily include density, mass, color, etc.; material here indicates prime matter. Gross matter is not requisite for location. All that is required is limited properties of some kind. Hence, every creature comes to be in a specific place—here and not there. Even if angels, for example, are not composed of gross matter and are pure intellect, they are presumably still located in space, having intellectual perceptions that are neither omniscient nor omnipresent and are thus finite. Even celestial entities, then, are subject to changes in locale, following from changes in intellective perception.[52]

Regarding the argument from number, we find the assertion among the Eastern fathers that number, in the proper sense, is a phenomenon involving the material instantiation of a certain type of thing. Thus, we number fern trees when this nature is manifest in matter. Counting is the enumeration of circumscribed, separate material instances of a common nature: This circumscribed body is an instance of fern tree (one); this circumscribed body is also an instance of fern tree (two), etc. Pure abstractions are not subject to such multiplication, since the abstract nature is a singular concept identifying the essential properties of the species. Concrete instantiation is required. As Evagrius Pontus puts it, "every number indicates those things which have received a material [*enulon*] and circumscribed nature."[53] The fact that number adheres across the full spectrum of instantiated creatures thus indicates, to the minds of the Eastern fathers, that material limitation, or circumscription, is common to all created beings.

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[51] *Epistolae* 8.2 (PG 32:249). This letter is wrongly ascribed to Basil of Caesarea in PG. See W. Bousset, *Apophthegmata* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1923), 335-36; and R. Melcher, "*Der achte Brief des Basilius, ein Werk des Evagrius Pontikus,*" in *Münserische Beiträge zur Theologie,* no.1 (1923).

[52] Maximus, *Ambigua*, 10.38.91-92. Cf. Job 1:6-7; and Daniel 10:12-14. For an analytic defense that of spirit creatures being spatially located see my "Are Created Spirits Composed of Matter and Form?": 93-98.

[53] Evagrius Pontus, *Epistolae* 8.2 (PG 32:249). See also Origen, *De principiis,* 1.5.3 (PG 11:158-60).

There is also a subtle indication of a third point in defense of spatial finitude in Evagrius' above statement about number. While number and materiality were certainly taken to indicate spatial limitation, Evagrius' reference to circumscribed nature (*perigraptos physis*) could be a reference to the distinction between created natures (*physes / ousiai)* and the divine nature that is above all created natures (*hyperousios*).[54] For our purposes, suffice it to say that the Eastern fathers, as realists, understand all forms to constitute an abstract definition of a certain type of thing. In Aristotelian logic, this would be the identification of the given genus with the addition of the specific difference of the species that distinguishes it from every other species in that genus. Hence, man is a rational (specific difference) animal (genus).[55] In such definitions, limitations are ascribed to the given species—hence the designation *definition,* from the Latin *definire* (to limit). In other words, by ascribing a definition, one has drawn a line around the given type of thing (i.e., circumscribed it), indicating what definite properties it has, and such designations also exclude other properties (e.g., bipedal, not quadrupedal). In short, such definitions indicate the thing defined is circumscribed (*perigraptos*) or finite.

Complexity of nature is the last of the metaphysical necessities we will discuss that follows from HC. What is meant by a complex nature is quite simply that the nature of the thing is not a single form (simple), but is combined with several forms (complex).[56] There are two aspects of creatures in which this can be seen. The first is that creatures invariably bear accidental properties. The necessity of this fact follows from other necessities already noted,

[54] Pseudo-Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus* 1.1; 1.4 (PG 3.588b; 3.592a); Psuedo-Dionysius, *Epistula* 4 (PG 3.1072b); Anastasius Sinaita, *Hodegus* sive *viae dux.* 2 (PG 89.53b); Synesius of Cyrene, *Hymni* 1.62 (PG 66.1589); Modestus Hierosolymitanus, *In dormitionem BMV* 8 (PG 86.3297b); Maximus the Confessor, *Opuscula theological et polemica* (PG 91.128c); Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* (PG 91.1049a; 91.1409d); Gregory of Agregentius, *explanatio supra Eccl.* 4.5 (PG 98.936d); John of Damascus, *Homiliae* 8.1 (PG 96.700b); John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa,* 1.4 (PG 94:797b-801c); Arethas of Caesarea (Cappadocia), *Commentarius in Apoc.*1.8 (PG 106.512c).

[55] Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics,* 2.13.

[56] Damascene, *De Natura Composita contra Acephalos*, 7; Maximus, *Ambigua*, 7.40-43.

such as temporality and spatial circumscription, both of which follow from the fact that creatures come to be. Being located in time, the creature has an accidental temporal locale: It came to be at T_1, but it could have come to be at T_2 and still been the same species of thing, and it will continue to be that species of thing at T_3. In like manner, being spatially located, the creature is subject to accidents of location: It came to be here, but it could have come to be there and still been the same species of thing, and it will continue to be the same species of thing when moving from here to there. This is not to mention accidents of color or density in gross matter and changing moral (and other intellectual or volitional) accidents in sentient beings.[57] Therefore, following from creaturely finitude—both temporal and spatial—the necessity of accidental properties emerges.

The fact that such accidents constitute transient participations in forms that are not essential to the nature of the creature indicates that the creature is complex, bearing several forms at any given moment. As Evarius points out, not even angels are simple in nature because they bear moral accidents: "Similarly we say one angel in number, but not one by nature nor yet simple, for we conceive of the hypostasis of the angel as essence with sanctification [*meth hagiasmou*]."[58] Or as Basil of Caesarea puts it:

> But there is no sanctification without the Spirit. The power of the heavens are not holy by nature; were it so there would in this respect be no difference between them and the Holy Spirit. It is in proportion to their relative excellence that they have their need of holiness from the Spirit. The branding-iron is conceived together with the fire; and yet the material and the fire are distinct. Thus too in the case of the heavenly powers; their substance is, peradventure, an aerial spirit, or immaterial fire,…. But their sanctification, being external to their substance, superinduces their perfection through the communion of the Spirit. They keep their rank by their abiding in the good and true, and while they

[57] For additional defense of changing intellectual accidents in spirit creatures, see my "Are Created Spirits Composed of Matter and Form?": 93-98.

[58] Evagrius Pontus, *Epistolae* 8.2 (PG 32:249).

> retain their freedom of will, never fall away from their patient attendance on Him who is truly good.[59]

Hence, even the most ethereal creatures, which are void of complex organic parts (gross matter), bear a complex nature; for they bear at least additional moral properties that are accidental to their nature.

Yet, it is not clear that creatures are complex only because they are subject to changing accidents. The very structure of the Great Chain of Being in which creatures appear seems to necessity complexity of essence.[60] The basic concept of the Chain of Being is that created species display increasing and compounding perfections. Thus, rocks bear basic properties, such as existence, color, and density; plants bear many of the same properties but also bear properties of life and growth; animals bear these same properties, but also have the capacity for self movement; rational animals bear the same perfections as irrational beast, but have the unique faculties of reason and free choice; and on the Chain goes into the celestial realm. The ascending hierarchy of perfections is the very thing that gives rise to the logic of genera and species, touched on above. Within this chain, we can discern generic categories that encompass several species of thing, such as *animal.* Within this genus, there are properties, such as life, that are common to every species in the genus. Yet, we also find certain properties that are shared by some species and not by others. Several species of animal are winged, but not all are; several are biped, but not all are. As we look more carefully, we find unique properties (i.e., the specific difference) that distinguish one species from all the others in the genus. Man, for example, is a rational (specific difference) animal (genus).

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[59] Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 16.38 (PG 32:135a-40b).

[60] Damascene, *Dialectica*, 47; Maximus, *Ambigua*, 10.37.

The fact that a species is within a larger genus is itself an indication that it bears at least one property that is not identical with the species itself and which it shares with another species. The species is thus necessarily complex, or has properties that are essential to it but not identical with it. Were a species simple (call this species *p*), neither admitting accidents nor having properties that are non-identical with the species itself, *p* could not share any property with any other species (say species *q*). For this reason, species *p* and *q* could never share a genus. Species *p* would be wholly unique and entirely insulated from every other species of thing. Thus, a creature would either be *p* by nature, or the creature would be of a different species that has no overlapping properties—accidental or essential—with *p.* Yet, such simplicity is never found in creatures—evident in the fact they all belong to the genus *creature*.

This is why we find the Eastern fathers distinguishing *nature* in a generic sense from *species* proper. An eye, for example, has a nature (*physis*). There are properties that are essential to an eye. Yet, an eye is never an independent species. Rather, this nature is always contained in a larger, complex nature (*eidos* / *ousia*), such as the nature of man or dog or cat. Hence, we find that the Eastern fathers often refer to the human body as having a nature distinct from the nature of the human soul, even though they recognize that *human* is one nature (*eidos / ousia*) that holds both the fleshly and spiritual natures together.[61] Complex natures are thus species of thing that hold together numerous lower natures (e.g., biped, ten-toed, two-armed, ten-fingured, rational, etc.) that the species can share with other complex natures within its genus. Such is the basis for the genera-species phenomenon throughout creation in which every creature, as creature, participates.

[61] Gregory of Nazianzen, *Orationes,* 7.21-24; John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa,* 2.12; *Dialectica,* 44 (PG 94:616a-617a).

What we see, then, is the Eastern patristic rationale for how the above set of metaphysical necessities follow from HC in reference to creatures universally. There is a flipside to this coin, however. As we will see in the next section, the Eastern fathers, much like Aristotle, understand the contingency of creatures to point to the existence of something very unlike creatures. And as these differences are fleshed out, a different set of metaphysical necessities emerge in reference to God.

IV

In this final section, we will consider the metaphysical necessities that apply to God, which stand in contradiction to those of creatures. These necessities become evident as we look at the mutability and subsequent contingency of creatures, and what entities subject to becoming require for their existence. Much like Book XII of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, the Eastern fathers understand mutability to point beyond itself to a being that is immutable, and immutability carries a string of additional entailments about the nature of such a being.[62] In the space remaining, we will look at Aristotle's demonstration of the divine necessities in his cosmological argument, after which we will consider the Eastern patristic affirmation of the same.

Aristotle's cosmological argument begins with the problem of motion and ends at the conclusion that there must be an unmoved source of cosmic motion. To understand his argument, we must distinguish two types of causal relations. I will here borrow the medieval scholastic terminology for the distinction: *per se* causes versus *per accidens* causes.[63] The latter are causal interactions in which the relationship between cause and effect is not ongoing. For example, I

[62] Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, 1069a18-1072a18; cf. *Physica*, 254b8-260a19 for a similar analysis.

[63] E.g., Francisco Suarez, *Disputationes Metaphysicae*, 17.2.2.

swing a bat (cause) and hit a ball, setting it in motion (effect). After the momentary interaction between bat and ball, the motion of the ball is no longer dependent on the bat. I could immediately throw the bat into an incinerator and this would have no bearing on the motion of the ball. Per se causal relations, by contrast, display ongoing dependence of the effect on its cause. For example, if I place my cup of coffee into a cup holder in my car, the cause of the cup's suspension is the holder. Were I to destroy the cup holder (cause), the cup's suspension (effect) would cease. Such ongoing dependence is what distinguishes per se causal relations from per accidens relations.

Another way to think of the difference is to draw two intersecting lines, one that runs horizontal and the other vertical. The horizontal line illustrates a temporal sequence of per accidens causal relations. For example, I roll a ball; it bumps another ball, setting it in motion. The second ball bumps into a third ball, setting it in motion. The third bumps into a fourth, and so on. The vertical line, by contrast, illustrates per se causal relations that are stacked one upon another at the moment in question. As in the above example in which I place my cup in a cup holder, the cup is dependent upon the holder; the holder is dependent upon the dashboard; the dashboard is dependent upon the car frame to which it is fixed, and so on. If any of the causes in this chain ceases to be, the effect and causes stacked upon it cease as well. Thus, there is a vertical chain of cause-effect dependence.

These two types of causal relations are the bases for two different versions of the cosmological argument.[64] The first version of the argument is the more common amongst Christian apologists today and is often attributed to Kalaam.[65] This is the argument from per

[64] Bruce Reichenbach, "Cosmological Argument," in *Stanford Encyclopedia* (Stanford, CA: 2012); William L. Craig, *The Cosmological Argument from Plato to Leibniz* (London: The Macmillan Press LTD, 1979).

[65] E.g., William L. Craig, *The Kalām Cosmological Argument* (London: The Macmillan Press LTD, 1979).

accidens causes. The argument recognizes that our universe is comprised of a string of per accidens relationships: My parents caused me to exist; my grandparents caused my parents to exist, and so on. So the argument goes, there cannot exist an infinite regress of causes. Hence, there must be a beginning to this chain, and since something cannot come from nothing, there must be a being that exists eternally and sets this chain in motion. Clearly this is not Aristotle's cosmological argument, since he maintains that the cosmos is eternal.[66]

Aristotle's cosmological argument builds not on per accidens causes but on per se causes. His argument begins with the phenomenon of motion: If *r* is in motion, from whence does *r* derive this motion? If it derives motion from *s,* is *s* also in motion? If so, from whnce does *s* derive its motion? Must we go from *s* to *u* and from *u* to *v* and so on ad infinitum? If so, we have an infinite regress and no explanation for motion.[67] Therefore, we must arrive at a first cause that supplies motion without being set in motion by anything. While this might sound like Kalaam's argument, it is not. To see the difference we must understand two foundational points. The first is already before us, namely, the per se / per accidens distinction. The Kalaam argument builds on sequences of per accidens relations—hence the tracing of a temporal sequence and the need for a beginning to the cosmos. Aristotle's investigation concerns per se causal relations, or any given stack of cause-effect relations at any given moment. The second point necessary to grasping Aristotle's argument is this. When Aristotle speaks of motion, he does not have in mind (primarily) an object changing location, moving from point *A* to point *B*. Rather, Aristotle has in mind becoming, or mutative movements from nonbeing into being. For example, the muscles

[66] James Lehrberger, "Dialectic and Demonstration in Aristotle's Argument for an Eternal Cosmos," *Il Cannocchiaele: Rivista di Studi Filosofici* 1-2 (1996): 67-81.

[67] Aristotle, *Analytica Posteriora*, 72b1-72b4; *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1094a18-1082a22; *Physica*, 202b30-208a4, 254b7-255a18, 256a4-257a33, 258b10-260a19; Patterson Brown, "Infinite Causal Regression," *Philosophical Review* 75 (1966): 510-525.

that compose my bicep have the potential to flex, but at the present moment this potential is dormant. Were I to flex my bicep, this potential would move into actuality. Such motion from potential to actual is the type of motion that Aristotle examines in his argument.

Keeping these points in mind, the argument begins by considering the four logically possible relationships to motion:

(1) A thing does not receive motion and does not give motion.

(2) A thing receives motion but does not give motion.

(3) A thing receives motion and gives motion.

(4) A thing does not receive motion but gives motion.

Option (1) is irrelevant to the problem of motion, since such an object (e.g., an unmoved rock) plays no part in the motion of things—at least not in whatever per se chain of causes we may be considering while this object is at rest. This leaves only three relevant relationships to motion. Option (2) identifies *the moved,* or something that receives motion from something else but does not give motion to anything else. If I pick up a stick and carry it with me, the stick receives motion from me, but does not give motion to anything else.[68] Option (3) identifies an *instrument,* or an object that both receives motion and gives motion to something else. Were I to take the stick in my hand and use it to push along a ball, the stick would now be an instrument, receiving motion from me and giving motion to the ball. Option (4) is what Aristotle calls a *movent.* A movent gives motion to other things but does not receive motion from anything. (Whether one

[68] We could quibble with this example, since the stick would move molecules in the air around it, making it an example of (3), not (2). And even an "unmoved" rock (my example of (1)) sits atop our planet, which is in motion, making the rock at least an example of (2). Such quibbles are of little concern to the argument. At best they cast suspicion on whether (1) and (2) identify possible state of affairs. The quibble is no threat to the argument, however. For the argument hangs on (2) and (3), in the weak disjunctive, requiring the existence of (4). If it can be demonstrated that (1) and (2) are not possible states of affairs and everything in creation falls under (3), then the argument still stands: (3) requires the existence of (4), and nothing in creation matches the state of affairs described by (4); hence there must be something that is not part of creation that matches (4), and this all men call God.

can supply an example of a movent from creation is a matter we will return to as we work through the argument.)

With these four relationships to motion before us, let us consider a chain of per se causal relations that involve becoming. The skin of my hand has the potential to be curved. At T_1 this potential is merely that, potential. But at T_2 this potential becomes actual: I curve my hand. We now have motion from potential to actual, and an investigation of this single movement reveals a very long and complex stack of per se causal relations. The motion of my skin fits option (2) above: My skin is moved but does not move anything else. This motion points beyond itself, since my skin is moved (passive voice), thus raising the question, What moved my skin? Presuming a typical state of affairs, this initial motion is caused by the muscles, tendons, and bones in my hand working together to form a curvature. The muscles in my hand contract, moving muscular potential into actuality, and this motion pulls upon tendons that in turn bring into actuality the potential for the bones in my hand to form a curve. The motion of my bones is that of an instrument, option (3). For they move my skin and are moved by my muscle. Likewise, the motion of my tendons is also that of an instrument, moving my bones (and by extension, my skin), while being moved by my muscles. So, does this chain of instruments end with my muscles? Certainly not. My muscles move other things—my tendons, bones, and skin—but they, too, are moved. For my nervous system prompts muscle contraction by the motion of neurons. Hence, my muscles, being moved and moving other things, are also instruments. What, then, of the motion of my neurons? These certainly move things, but they too are moved: When neurons fire, their potential to fire moves into actuality, raising the question, What prompted this motion?

As we explore this chain of *per se* causal relations, what emerges is two interconnected issues. The first is that mere potential cannot cause anything, since it is not yet a thing; only

actual things can serve as causes. Hence, every time we find another thing in the stack of per se causes that is itself a movement from potential to actual—be it a muscle contraction or neural firing—we must look beyond this mutation for an actual something that serves as its cause.

The second, closely related issue is that the chain cannot continue on ad infinitum, lest we have turtles all the way down. I here, of course, refer to the story in which an inquiry is made as to what the world sits atop and the reply comes that it sits atop a turtle, and when pressed on what the turtle stands atop, this leads to an infinite regress of turtles standing upon turtles—an evidently absurd reply. Another way of considering the same point is this. Were we to look at a string of train cars and ask why the first car is moving, only to be pointed to the second car pushing it, this reply would be of little help if that car was also being pushed. And were the solution to the problem of train motion that the chain of pushed cars is infinitely long, this would be no answer at all. An answer requires that we arrive at something that has motion in itself and is supplying motion to the cars in the chain. In like manner, Aristotle insists that the chain of per se causes cannot go on infinitely—skin to bone to tendon to muscle to neuron ad infinitum. It must have a terminus. And to constitute a terminus, the chain must end at a movent, or something that supplies potential-to-actual motion without itself moving from potential to actual.

When we bring these points together, we can see what Aristotle means by a movent: A being that does not suffer potential-to-actual mutations and yet is an actual something that sits beneath any given stack of mutations as the first cause of these mutations. Such is Aristotle's Unmoved Mover, or God.[69] To be sure, by "Unmoved" Aristotle does mean inactive. For the Unmoved Mover causes the movement of mutative things that stand upon it; he is supremely active. Instead, "Unmoved" means immutable. So, perhaps it would be more apt to refer to

[69] David Bradshaw, "A New Look at the Prime Mover," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 39, no. 1 (2001): 1-22; Gary E. Kessler, "Aristotle's 'Theology'," *Sophia* 17 (1978): 1-9.

Aristotle's Immutable Mover. To such a Mover, Aristotle concludes the motion (or mutation) of our world unwaveringly points.

Now, might such a conclusion be a logical leap? Granting that stacks of instruments must stand atop a movent, why must the movent be God? Perhaps there exists the subatomic movent particle, AΩ, which has yet to be discovered, and AΩ is wholly immune to mutation.[70] While the proposal may sound initially plausible, we here run headlong into the metaphysics of becoming, discussed above, and the necessities that cling to the finite. AΩ would need to be eternal, lest it come into being and collide with the rationale for HC and thus the mutability of AΩ. Yet, even granting the eternality of AΩ, its finitude raises serious problems for its immutability. Let us put to one side for the moment that the Eastern fathers would argue that bounded spatial location is a property of body, which entails materiality, which in turn entails mutability, since matter is a substratum of potential. Suffice it to consider instead the simpler difficulty that if AΩ is finite, then it is subject to changes in location, position, situation, and relations to other finite entities. Such changes—or even the possibility of such changes—indicate mutability. In short, AΩ has the potential to be something or somewhere it presently is not, and thus AΩ cannot be a candidate for the Immutable Mover.

In this light, we can see why Aristotle understands immutability to point beyond itself to numerous other entailments. As in the above thought experiment about AΩ, the Immutable Mover cannot come into being; hence this Mover is necessarily eternal. Moreover, being immutable, the Mover is also immune to negative mutations (i.e., corruption). Hence, the eternality of this Mover points to the necessity of his existence: He does not come into being, and

[70] This is much like certain material components postulated by the Pre-Socratics: Anaximene of Miletus, DK 13a5, 13a6, 13a10; Empedocles of Acragas, DK 31a33, 31b8, 31b12, 31b109; Democritus of Abdera/Leucippus of Miletus, DK 67a6, 67a7.

he cannot cease to be but necessarily is. In like manner, this Mover must be perfectly whatever he is. For being immune to every change, he is unchangeably so: Whatever he was in eternity he now is and ever will be. Such perfection indicates that he bears no accidental properties in which he might come to participate or cease to participate, and this, in turn, points to his atemporality, since he is not subject to sequences of change or accidental locations in time. Harkening back to the metaphysics of becoming, we also find that the immutability of this Mover indicates that he does not, and indeed cannot, bear the substratum of potential that allows for mutations, namely, prime matter. Hence, the Immutable Mover is necessarily immaterial in the true sense. Because immutability is incompatible with the finitude of bodies, as argued in reference to AΩ, both the Mover's immateriality and immutability point to the necessity that this Mover is neither finite nor a body. As such, the Mover cannot have any property or quality that is native to bodies, such as mass, quantity, magnitude, and the like. To the contrary, the Mover must be omnipresent, or uncircumscribed, being entirely unbounded in location and existing everywhere that mutative things are, since he is the mover of all things that come into being. Such infinitude also points to the Mover's omnipotence. For the Mover must have power sufficient to not only move all things that are in motion at any given moment (i.e., the cosmos), but also power sufficient to move all things from eternity and to eternity. In other words, the power of the Mover must be both spatially and temporally infinite. In sum, from the immutability of the divine movent, Aristotle arrives at the necessity of nearly every classical divine attribute.[71]

We find these very same conclusions in the Eastern fathers with similar rationale. As we saw, amid the Arian dispute divine immutability was central to pro-Nicene orthodoxy. Further,

[71] Rem B. Edwards, "The Pagan Dogma of the Absolute Unchangeableness of God," *Religious Studies* 14 (1978): 305-313. NB: Edwards is correct in his interpretation of immutability and its corollaries, but I reject his inveighing against the Patristic usage. Cf. also Giannis Stamatellos, *Plotinus and the Presocratics: A Philosophical Study of Presocratic Influence in Plotinus' Enneads* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), 60.

we saw that immutability was understood to require eternality over against becoming.[72] We also saw that the pro-Nicenes understood becoming and corruption to be flipsides of the same coin: To grant the former to the Son of God is to grant the latter, and to reject the former is to reject the latter. Hence, in defending divine immutability, these fathers understood themselves to be defending divine incorruptibility as well, per the soteriological side of anti-Arian polemics.[73] Further, we saw, per HC, that the Eastern fathers understand all that comes into being to be material, while God alone is truly immaterial.[74] Following from this, we saw the Eastern patristic insistence that God is not circumscribed (*aperigraptos*), since circumscription is a property of bounded material bodies.[75] And this insistence evidently entails, for these fathers, both divine

[72] Athanasius, *De Incarnatione Domini nostri Jesu Christi contra Apollinarium*, 1.3 (PG 26:1097a); *Epistula ad Serapionem* (PG 26:592b); *Epistula ad Afros Episcopos*, 5 (PG 26:1037b); *Oratio de Incarnatione Verbi,* 3 (PG 25:99d-102d); *De Decretis Nicaenae Synodi,* 20.2 (PG 25:452a); *Orationes tres 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-8a, 112c, 220a, 481d); Alexander of Alexandria, *Epistula ad Alexandrum Constantinopolitanum*, 11-3 (PG 18:552b-2c); *Epistula encyclica*, 7 (PG 18:573b); *Symbolum synodi Nicaenae anno 325* (PG 20:1540c); Basil of Caesarea, *Epistula*, 8.2 (PG 32:249); Gregory of Nazianzen, *Orationes*, 2.14; 2.17; 2.28; 29.7; 34.13; 45.4-7 (PG 35: 423a-424b; 36:81c-84a, 253a-254b, 627b-32b); Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium,* 1, 2, 8, 9 (PG 45:368a, 459, 793c, 812d).

[73] Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos,* 1.43; 1.51 (PG 26:99c-102b; 26:117b-20a); Alexander of Alexandria, *Epistula ad Alexandrum Constantinopolitanum,* 13 (PG 18:552c); Gregory of Nyssa, *Adversus Apollinarem* (PG 45:1124-269, esp. 1128a). See also Maximus the Confessor's comments on the Monothelite heresy in the 7th century: Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguorum liber* (PG 91:1057c).

[74] Tatian, *Oratio adversus Graecos,* 4 (PG 6:8-11b-814b); Athenagoras, *Legatio pro Christianis,* 24 (PG 6:945a-948b); Irenaeus, *Ostensio Apostolicae Praedicationis*, 85-6 [18]; Tertullian, *De carne Christi,* 6 (PL 2:762c-766a); Lactantius, *Divinae institutions* 2.10 (PL 6:927d-929d); Jerome, *Epistolae* 124 (PL 22:1059-72); Origen, *De principiis,* 2.2.2 (PG 11:187); Evagrius Ponticus, *Scholion 2 to Ps. 134.6; Scholion* 275 *to Prov.* 24.22; Athanasius, *Vita et conversation S. Antonii,* 31 (PG 26:889-92); Basil of Caesarea, *Epistolae* 8.2 (PG 32:249); Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium,* 1; 8; 9 (PG 45:368a; 793c; 812d); Macarius the Great, *Homilia spirituals* 4.9 (PG 34:479-480); John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa*, 2.3 (PG 94:868b); and St. Symeon the New Theologian, *Ethical Discourse* 1.5.2.

[75] On creaturely circumscription, see Basil of Caesarea, *Epistolae* 8.2 (PG 32:249); Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium,* 1; 8; 9 (PG 45:368a; 793c; 812d); John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa,* 2.3; 1.13 (PG 94:868b; 852c-853b). On divine uncircumscrpition, see Leontius of Byzantium, *contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos* 1 (PG 86.1284c); Leontius of Hierosolymitanus, *adversus Nestorianos* 1.1 (PG 86.1408d); Clement of Alexandria, *fragmenta* 39 (PG 9:769c); Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 6.15 (PG 9:344b); Athanasius, *fragmenta in Job* (PG 27:1345a); Athanasius, *de sententia Dionysii 20* (PG 25:509a); Theodoret, *De sancta et vivifica Trinitate* 28 (PG 75:1188c); Eusebius of Caesarea, *commentarius in Is.* 9.6 (PG 24:152d); Gregory of Nyssa, *Epistula* 101 (PG 37:177b); Gregory of Nyssa, *adversus Apollinarem* 18 (PG 45:1160a); Maximus the Confessor, *Opuscula theological et polemica* (PG 91:57c); John of Damascus, *Homiliae* 4.29 (PG 96:632a).

atemporality[76]—since they argue the circumscription of creatures from their origination in time[77]—and divine omnipresence—since they link accidents of location with bodily finitude.[78] All such claims also point the Eastern fathers to the conclusion that God, being immune to every change, is an eternally complete or perfect (*teleia*) being, having no shifting accidents or acquired perfections.[79]

Like Aristotle, the Eastern fathers not only attribute such necessities to God but take them to be indicated by the mutability of creation.[80] Yet, unlike Aristotle, we find that the Eastern fathers do not end with these conclusions, but trace the juxtaposition of God and creatures to additional divine necessities. For example, divine incorruptibility points the Eastern fathers toward the simplicity of the divine nature. Ontologically, divine incorruptibility indicates that God, unlike beings with complex natures, is not composed of parts that would allow for ontological decomposition or destruction.[81] Morally, the impossibility of change for better or worse indicates that divine goodness cannot be an accidental property added to the divine nature and subject to acquisition or loss; God must be essentially good, having goodness by nature and

[76] Whether the Eastern patristic affirmation of divine atemporality fits better A theory or B theory of time, or perhaps something that is neither, is difficult to say. What can be said with certainty is that to whatever extent time is linked with sequences of mutation, God is immune to it. Whether this indicates that time is a thing that a being is either within or without is more difficult to say. One could read the claim that creatures are circumscribed by time as indication that time is a thing that contains some entities but not God. However, I am inclined to understand the Eastern fathers as taking time to be not a thing in which objects are located but to be synonymous with sequential mutations. Hence God is not "outside of time," but rather is not subject to time, i.e., is immutable. The difference between the temporal and the atemporal, then, is the difference between being within the chain of mutations and being the movent underneath these changes. See, e.g., Theodoret, *Demonstrationes per Syllogismos quod Immutabilis sit Deus Verbum* (PG 83.317c-336b), which makes no mention of time as a thing to be in or out of, but only discusses divine atemporality in reference to God's lack of mutation.

[77] This letter is wrongly ascribed to Basil of Caesarea in PG: *Epistolae* 8.2 (PG 32:249).

[78] Maximus, *Ambigua*, 17.11.

[79] John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa,* 1.1-7 (PG 94:789a-808b).

[80] E.g., John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa,* 1.3 (PG 94:793b-797a).

[81] Basil, *Epistulae*, 234.2 (PG 32:869b-70c).

not by moral striving.[82] Likewise, omniscience follows from divine immutability, since the divine mind cannot bear the potential for increase in knowledge or its diminishment, since this would constitute a mutation. God must know all things that are knowable, past, present, and future, and in such a manner that no change in knowledge is possible.[83]

Now, to be sure, the Eastern fathers do not embrace every conclusion Aristotle divines about the Immutable Mover. Aristotle, for example, collapses the operations (*energeiai*) of the divine nature with the divine essence (*ousia*), suggesting that the Immutable Mover's nature is operative power (*hē ousia energeia*). The Eastern fathers, by contrast, insist on distinguishing the divine nature (*ousia*) from divine operations (*energeiai*) in such a way that not only preserves the simplicity of the former amid the complexity of the latter but upholds the freedom of providence[84]—something often lost in Aristotelian and NeoPlatonic systems of thought. Further, Aristotle appears to deny that God is aware of the mutations he causes in our world, thinking only on himself and his own thoughts, while the Eastern fathers, as noted, argue that God has perfect knowledge of the past, present, and future of our world—hence divine omniscience. Such differences are significant and by no means peripheral to patristic thought.[85] Nonetheless, the point remains: Creatures are bound by a set of metaphysical necessities due to their composition, and these necessities, in both Aristotle and in the Eastern fathers, point beyond creatures to the

[82] See nn. 40 and 41 above. See also Basil of Caesarea, *Epistula,* 234 (PG 32:869b-70c).

[83] Damascene, *Expositio Fidei*, 2.28-29; Maximus, *Ambigua*, 10.42.102; Nemesius of Emesa, *De Natura Hominis*, 42-43.

[84] On the simplicity of the divine nature and the complexity of the divine energies, see Basil of Caesarea, *Epistula,* 234 (PG 32:869b-70c). On divine freedom, see Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses,* 2.1.1, 2.5.4 (PG 7a:709c-10a, 723c-4a); John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa,* 1.14 (PG 94:860a-2a); David Bradshaw, "Divine Freedom in the Greek Patristic Tradition," *Quaestiones Disputatae* 2 (2011), 56-69.

[85] For a complete study of the Eastern patristic reception and varied rejections of Aristotelian philosophical theology, see David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

immutable God, and as the entailments of immutability are fleshed out, what becomes clear are the contrary metaphysical necessities that apply to God alone.

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What we have seen in this chapter is the metaphysical foundations that sit beneath the Eastern patristic understanding of the basic differences between God and creatures. Creatures, being that which come to be, are subject to mutation, and from this follows the necessities of materiality, corruptibility, moral accidents, finitude, temporality, spatiality, and complexity of nature. Moreover, we have seen how these necessities indicate contingency that points beyond creatures to God. In this pointing, contingency indicates the contrary divine necessities of immutability, eternality, immateriality, omnipresence, omnipotence, incorruptibility, essential goodness, atemporality, and perfection in being that are requisite of divinity. Such are the basic differences between God and creatures in Eastern patristic thought, basics that played a crucial role in defining pro-Nicene orthodoxy and continued to inform pro-Nicene thought in the centuries to follow.

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