

Medically Modified Eyes

A Baptismal Cataract Surgery in Clement of Alexandria

ABSTRACT In *Paedagogus* 1.6.28, Clement describes baptism through the metaphor of a cataract surgery that enables the percipient to see God. In antiquity, cataract surgery was neither a common nor a safe procedure, which raises the question: why does Clement use such an unlikely metaphor for baptism? In this article, I demonstrate that this medical metaphor of cataract surgery enabled Clement to blur the line between the physical and the spiritual. The visual component of the metaphor allowed Clement to draw from Epicurean sensory perception and epistemology, which understood objects to emit tiny films that entered the eye of *the body*, with repeated contact leading to concept formation, in order to describe how the eye of *the soul* could see God once it has been transformed through baptism. For Clement, it is only through baptism that the cataract can be removed, thereby providing the baptized Christian with deified eyes to see God. In addition to having her cataract removed, according to Clement, the nature of the baptized Christian's vision changes from intromission to extramission, from receiving films to emitting a visual ray back to the divine. I further argue that the medical component of the metaphor allows Clement to describe the baptized Christian as fundamentally different from the rest of humanity and as part of an elite group that has undergone this uncommon and dangerous cataract surgery. Through these two aspects of his metaphor, Clement describes and defines Christians in terms of their medically modified eyes that enable them to see and to know God. **KEYWORDS** Clement of Alexandria, Ancient Medicine, Vision, Epistemology, Baptism, Metaphor

INTRODUCTION

In her influential book, *Making Christians*, Denise Buell challenges traditional scholarship on Clement of Alexandria by exploring the rhetoric of kinship and procreation metaphors as they relate to Christian identity.¹ While she examines the gendered rhetoric of these metaphors, Buell downplays their medical

1. Denise Kimber Buell, *Making Christians: Clement of Alexandria and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

background: “Clement’s primary metaphor for the procreative act cannot be traced directly to either Hippocratic or Aristotelian texts. Neither of these sources offers a precedent for describing the very act of procreation as analogous with the sowing of seed into a field/soil.”² More recently, however, scholars have begun to note the significance of Clement’s medical references in his text:³ a move that parallels the shift occurring in scholarship on medical reasoning in late ancient Christianity more broadly.⁴

Matthew Chalmers, for example, has grounded his exploration of medical terminology in Clement’s writings in the revivification of the work of Herophilus and Eristratus in the second century C.E.⁵ More directly, Jacqueline Lagrée has proposed a “medical model” that underlies Clement’s writings.⁶ In particular, Lagrée writes that the benefit of the medical model “lies in articulating harmoniously both the individual’s different faculties—body and soul—and developing the powers that are specific to him as man.”⁷ The medical model, in other words,

2. Buell, *Making Christians*, 131.

3. See, for example A. Breitenbach, *Wer christlich lebt, lebt gesund. Medizinische und physiologische Argumentation im Paidagogos des Klemens von Alexandrien*, vol. 45, *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, 2002; H. F. J. Horstmannshoff, “Who Is the True Eunuch? Medical and Religious Ideas about Eunuchs and Castration in the Works of Clement of Alexandria,” in *From Athens to Jerusalem: Medicine in Hellenized Jewish Lore and in Early Christian Literature*, ed. Samuel S. Kottek, et al. (Rotterdam: Erasmus, 2000), 101–18; Jacqueline Lagrée, “Wisdom, Health, Salvation: The Medical Model in the Works of Clement of Alexandria,” in *From Athens to Jerusalem*, 2000, 227–40; John David Penniman, *Raised on Christian Milk: Food and the Formation of the Soul in Early Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017); Matthew Chalmers, “Seeking as Suckling: The Milk of the Father in Clement of Alexandria’s Paedagogus 1.6,” *Studia Patristica* LXII (2014): 59–74; Dawn Lavalley, “Divine Breastfeeding: Milk, Blood, and Pneuma in Clement of Alexandria’s Paedagogus,” *Journal of Late Antiquity* 8, no. 2 (Fall 2015): 322–36.

4. See, for example, Wendy Mayer, “The Persistence in Late Antiquity of Medico-Philosophical Psychic Therapy,” *Journal of Late Antiquity* 8, no. 2 (Fall 2015): 337–51; Wendy Mayer, “Medicine in Transition: Christian Adaptation in the Later Fourth-Century East,” in *Shifting Genres in Late Antiquity* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 11–26; Andrew Crislip, *Thorns in the Flesh: Illness and Sanctity in Late Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Kristi Upson-Saia and Heidi Marx-Wolf, eds., “Religion, Medicine, Disability, and Health in Late Antiquity [Special Issue],” *Journal of Late Antiquity* 8, no. 2 (2015); Jared Secord, Heidi Marx-Wolf, and Christoph Marksches, eds., “Health, Medicine, and Christianity in Late Antiquity: Papers Presented at the Seventeenth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 2015,” *Studia Patristica* LXXXI (2017).

5. Chalmers, “Seeking as Suckling.” Chalmers relies upon the work of von Staden for this revivification. Heinrich von Staden, *Herophilus: The Art of Medicine in Early Alexandria: Edition, Translation and Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

6. Lagrée links Clement’s medical model to Plato’s medical model as it relates to the aphorism “live well.” Lagrée, “Wisdom, Health, Salvation,” 227.

7. Lagrée, “Wisdom, Health, Salvation,” 227.

provides the perfect metaphor to blur the line between the corporeal and the spiritual. Further, Lagrée argues, the medical model offers a counterpoint to sophistic rhetoric: “Rhetoric claims to determine the values of social life and provide the means to excel in the community’s life, while medicine seeks to treat the individual as a whole and, therefore, proposes a model of wisdom that is in competition with philosophical wisdom.”⁸ It is this medical model, with its emphasis on bringing together the body and the soul, to which Clement turns in his *Paedagogus*. Clement explains that the Word is both the Healer and the Educator:

Therefore, the Word is our Educator who heals the unnatural passions of our soul with His counsel. The art of healing, strictly speaking, is the relief of the ills of the body, an art learned by man’s wisdom. Yet, the only true divine Healer of human sickness, the holy Comforter of the soul when it is ill, is the Word of the Father. . . In the words of Democritus, “The healer, by his art, cures the body of its diseases, but it is wisdom that rids the spirit of its ills.” The good Educator of little ones, however, Wisdom Himself, the Word of the Father, who created man, concerns Himself with the whole creature, and as the Physician of the whole man heals both body and soul.⁹

This emphasis on the *whole creature* and healing *both body and soul* is significant. Clement is using the medical model as a metaphor for salvation, but he is also using the conceptual field of the body to describe an identical process that happens to the soul. Throughout *Paedagogus*, Clement explains that each person is ill and in need of a doctor (1.9.83), is blind (1.9.83), and cannot learn until she has been cured (1.1.3). The Word is that doctor who heals and counsels (1.1.1), cures passions (1.1.1), and offers the nourishing medicine of His counsel (1.1.3, 1.2.6). In *Protrepticus* 1.8.2, Clement writes, “The Logos is like a good doctor who covers some sick bodies with plaster, scrapes or bathes others, opens

8. Lagrée, “Wisdom, Health, Salvation,” 227–228. Lagrée’s distinction is in Plato, rather than in Clement, for whom she identifies a “rhetorico-medical model.”

9. Clement of Alexandria, *Christ the Educator*, trans. Simon P. Wood, Fathers of the Church Patristic Series (Baltimore: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 7–8. *paed.* 1.2.6. “Ἐστιν οὖν ὁ παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν λόγος διὰ παρανήσεων θεραπευτικὸς τῶν παρὰ φύσιν τῆς ψυχῆς παθῶν. Κυρίως μὲν γὰρ ἢ τῶν τοῦ σώματος νοσημάτων βοήθεια ἰατρικὴ καλεῖται, τέχνη ἀνθρωπίνῃ σοφίᾳ διδασκλή. Λόγος δὲ ὁ πατρικὸς μόνος ἐστὶν ἀνθρωπίνων ἰατρῶν ἀρρωστημάτων παιώνιος καὶ ἐπαθδὸς ἅγιος νοσοῦσης ψυχῆς. . . . «Ἰατρικὴ μὲν γὰρ» κατὰ Δημόκριτον «σώματος νόσους ἀκέεται, σοφίῃ δὲ ψυχῆν παθῶν ἀφαιρεῖται»· ὁ δὲ ἀγαθὸς παιδαγωγός, ἢ σοφία, ὁ λόγος τοῦ πατρὸς, ὁ δημιουργήσας τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ἔλου κήδεαι τοῦ πλάσματος, καὶ σῶμα καὶ ψυχὴν ἀκέεται αὐτοῦ ὁ πανακὴς τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος ἰατρός. Clément d’Alexandrie, *Le pédagogue*, ed. Henri-Irénée Marrou, trans. Marguerite Harl, vol. 1, Sources Chrétiennes 70 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1960), 118.

them by iron, burns them, sometimes amputates with the saw when it is still possible to cure the subject, at least in part, and in one of his members.”¹⁰ In *Paedagogus* 1.8.62, Clement explains that the Word is the surgeon who must cut out the disease of the passions from the soul.

It is this last metaphor, that of the divine surgeon, that I will examine more fully in what follows. More specifically, I will explore Clement’s metaphor of the divine ophthalmologist who must perform the cataract surgery of baptism that enables the percipient to see and to know God.¹¹ By engaging a medical metaphor for baptism, Clement blurs the line between the physical and the spiritual, drawing from the source-domain of the physical *eye of the body* to describe the target domain of the spiritual *eye of the soul*.¹² This metaphor was not merely a way of describing an otherwise ineffable process, but it also offered Clement a rich source for his rhetoric of defining and producing difference in a material way.¹³ With its close link to epistemology and to the transformation of the beholder, this medical metaphor allows Clement to describe the baptized Christian as fundamentally different, and as part of an elite group that can see and know God.

10. Clement of Alexandria, *Clement of Alexandria: The Exhortation to the Greeks. The Rich Man’s Salvation. To the Newly Baptized*, trans. G. W. Butterworth, Loeb Classical Library 92 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1919), 21. *prot.* 1.8.2. Greek text is from Clément d’Alexandrie, *Le protreptique*, trans. Claude Mondésert, Sources Chrétiennes 32 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1949), 62.

11. For another example of the link between baptism and blindness, see Acts 9:1–19 in which Saul first recovered his sight and then was baptized. There are also numerous stories in which Jesus heals the blind, though they lack a reference to baptism. See, for example, Mark 8:22–26, Luke 18:35–43, John 9:1–12.

12. For more on conceptual metaphor theory, see George Lakoff, “The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor,” in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Andrew Ortony, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 202–51; George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

13. For more on engaging rhetoric as a tool for identity formation, see Judith Perkins, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Buell, *Making Christians*; Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Éric Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200–450 CE* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012); Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); On identity formation through Clement’s discourse on hegemony and biopolitics, see Michael J. Thate, “Identity Construction as Resistance: Figuring Hegemony, Biopolitics, and Martyrdom as an Approach to Clement of Alexandria,” *Studia Patristica* LXVI (2013): 69–85; For his discourse on martyrdom, see Pamela Mullins Reaves, “Multiple Martyrdoms and Christian Identity in Clement of Alexandria’s *Stromateis*,” *Studia Patristica* LXVI (2013): 61–68; For identity rhetoric through clothing, see Harry O Maier, “Dressing for Church: Tailoring the Christian Self through Clement of Alexandria’s Clothing Ideals,” in *Religious Dimensions of the Self in the Second Century CE* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 66–89.

In my first section, I focus on the visual component of Clement’s metaphor of baptism as a cataract surgery. In this section, I offer background on the connection between vision and epistemology, showing that Clement links knowledge of God to vision or blindness of the *eye of the soul*, drawing from an Epicurean theory of visual perception and epistemology. I also demonstrate that prior to the cataract surgery of baptism, according to Clement, a person was in a state of darkness, ignorance, or blindness, though she received the divine effluence or seed of salvation that was available to all. In the second section, I return to the theme of cataract surgery, exploring the history of cataract surgery to show that this medical metaphor enables Clement to describe Christians as part of a small group that has been transformed by the divine ophthalmologist. In the third section, I explore the nature of the medical modification that occurs through the surgery. Because the natural state of the *eye of the soul* was blinded by a cataract, such a person was likely to focus instead on the *eye of the body*, falling into the trap of Narcissus. It is only through the transformation of cataract surgery that one’s *eye of the soul* becomes open to the divine light, changing the very nature of one’s vision from intromission to extramission. This is not a return to a former state, but a shift to a radically different and deified state, enabling Clement to describe and define Christian difference and identity in terms of the medically modified eyes: only the baptized Christian has the transformed vision capable of seeing and knowing the divine.

VISION AND EPISTEMOLOGY: TO SEE GOD IS TO KNOW GOD

In *Paedagogus* 1.6.29, Clement writes, “Ignorance is darkness, for it makes us fall into sin and lose the ability to see the truth clearly. But knowledge is light, for it dispels the darkness of ignorance and endows us with keenness of vision.”¹⁴ The Greek here is significant. Darkness causes one to become *ἀμβλυωποῦντες*, dim-sighted, concerning truth, while light makes one *διορατικὸν*, clear-sighted. Even worse, Clement explains, are “the worldly wise who, believing themselves wise, have blinded their own eyes.”¹⁵ The natural state of a person, according to Clement, is one of darkness, ignorance, and dim-sightedness or even blindness. This state requires knowledge and light to bestow clear-sightedness.

14. Clement of Alexandria, *Christ the Educator*, 29 amended. *paed.*1.6.29. ἡ ἄγνοια δὲ τὸ σκότος, καθ’ ἣν περιπίπτομεν τοῖς ἁμαρτήμασιν, ἀμβλυωποῦντες περὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν. Φωτισμὸς ἄρα ἡ γνώσις ἐστίν, ὃ ἐξαφανίζων τὴν ἄγνοιαν καὶ τὸ διορατικὸν ἐντιθεῖς. SC 1:164.

15. Clement of Alexandria, 31. *paed.* 1.6.32. νηπίους ἡμᾶς ὁ παιδαγωγὸς καὶ διδάσκαλος ἀποκαλῶν τοὺς τῶν ἐν κόσμῳ σοφῶν ἐπιτηδειοτέρους εἰς σωτηρίαν, οἱ σοφοὺς σφᾶς ἡγούμενοι τετύφωνται. SC 1:168.

Light and dark have been metaphors for knowledge and ignorance at least as far back as the pre-Socratic philosopher Parmenides in the fifth century B.C.E.¹⁶ For Clement, darkness is not merely the lack of sensory input, but the lack of cognitive action: ignorance is darkness. Light, on the other hand, provides illumination of the mind, allowing cognition to take place. Linked to mental activity, light represents knowledge. Modern English continues the trend of rhetorically pairing the concepts *seeing* and *knowing*, and this is most evident through colloquialisms such as the common “I see what you mean.” These linguistic pairings of *sight* and *knowledge* permeate our language to the extent that they have become inert metaphors, mere remnants of a scientific belief long since gone.¹⁷ In the world of Late Antiquity, however, visual metaphors were living, tied closely to a material understanding of the world and the correspondingly tactile nature of sight.¹⁸ At its most basic level, ancient theories of visual perception fall into two broad categories: intromission and extramission.¹⁹ The theory of intromission held that every object emits tiny films, εἰδῶλα, ἀπόρροια, or *simulacra*, that fly through the air and impress upon a person’s eyes or sometimes

16. H. Diels and W. Kranz, eds., *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6th ed. (Berlin: Weidman, 1952), 28 A46 (I, 226, 10ff), B4 (I, 232, 7), B7 (I, 235, 1). See also 2 Cor. 4:6: “For it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (NRSV). Jane Heath examines the metaphorical relationship between sight and insight in the Gospels in Jane Heath, “Sight and Christianity: Early Christian Attitudes to Seeing,” in *Sight and the Ancient Senses* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 220–36.

17. Alive/Living metaphors tend to surprise the reader by their unexpected pairing. Dead/Inert metaphors have become so pervasive that they have lost the ability to surprise. For more, see Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: The Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny (London: Routledge, 2008), 111. For a helpful description of inert Christian metaphors, see Janet Martin Soskice, *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3.

18. For more on the material understanding of the ancient world, and what she terms “The Material Turn,” see Patricia Cox Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 3ff.; David Fredrick, *The Roman Gaze: Vision, Power, and the Body* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); and Jennifer Glancy, *Corporeal Knowledge: Early Christian Bodies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). For more on tactility and sight in early Christianity, see Shadi Bartsch, *The Mirror of the Self: Sexuality, Self-Knowledge, and the Gaze in the Early Roman Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 58–67. For a similar exploration of the tactile nature of sight in the New Testament, see J. M. F. Heath, *Paul’s Visual Piety: The Metamorphosis of the Beholder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

19. For an excellent summary of the theories, see David C. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

also into their minds.²⁰ The theory of extramission, sometimes called the visual ray theory, held that some sort of visual ray extended from the eye to the object, touching the object and transmitting the image back to the eye.²¹ Both views shared the assumption that sight, and the knowledge gleaned therefrom, occurs through tactile means, though each theory has different consequences on the reliability of such knowledge and its effect on the viewer.

This tactile process and its link to epistemology is crucial background to understand the visual component of Clement's metaphor of baptism. Continuing in *Paedagogus* 1.6.29, Clement writes, "The quickest way to loose those bonds [of ignorance] is to make use of man's faith, and God's grace, for sins are forgiven through the one divine remedy, baptism in the Word."²² This divine remedy (παιωνίῳ φαρμάκῳ) of baptism is the medicine that can take a person from the state of dim-sighted ignorance to that of clear-sighted knowledge.

Not only does Clement describe the *outcome* of baptism in visual terms, but he also engages a direct visual and medical metaphor to describe the *process* of baptism. The key passage is *Paedagogus* 1.6.28 in which Clement begins by describing the state of the sinful person before baptism:

It is just like men who shake off sleep and then are wide-awake interiorly; or, better, like those suffering from *some blinding eye-disease* (τὸ ὑπόχρυμα τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν) who meanwhile receive no light from the outside and have none themselves, but must first *remove the impediment from their eyes* before they can have clear vision.²³

20. If εἶδωλα or *simulacra* entered only the eyes, a person maintained some degree of control, with ability to turn away or close the eyes. If the εἶδωλα or *simulacra* could also enter a person's mind (to cause imagination or dreams through *dianoetic* εἶδωλα), then that person had relatively little control. These *dianoetic* εἶδωλα were described by Epicurus as a stream of εἶδωλα entering both the eyes and the mind according to size: κατὰ τὸ ἐναρμόττον μέγεθος εἰς τὴν ὄψιν ἢ τὴν διάνοιαν (translation my own). *Ep. Hdt.* §49. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, trans. R. D. Hicks, vol. 2, Loeb Classical Library 185 (Harvard University Press, 1925), 578. For more on the theory of intromission, see Philip Thibodeau, "Ancient Optics: Theories and Problems of Vision," in *A Companion to Science, Technology, and Medicine in Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. Georgia L. Irby, vol. 1 (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 133–34.

21. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler*, 11–17. The visual ray is sometimes described as fire, light, or *pneuma*. For more on the theory of extramission and a summary of its critics, see Thibodeau, "Ancient Optics: Theories and Problems of Vision," 131–32.

22. Clement of Alexandria, *Christ the Educator*, 29–30. *paed.* 1.6.29. Τὰ δὲ δεσμὰ ταῦτα, ἢ τάχος, ἀνίεται πίσει μὲν ἀνθρωπίνῃ, θεϊκῇ δὲ τῇ χάριτι, ἀφιεμένων τῶν πλημιμημάτων ἐνὶ παιωνίῳ φαρμάκῳ, λογικῶ βαπτίσματι. SC 1:166.

23. Clement of Alexandria, 27; emphasis my own. *paed.* 1.6.28. Ὡσπερ οὖν οἱ τὸν ὕπνον ἀποσεισάμενοι εὐθέως ἐνδοθεν ἐρηγόρασιν, μᾶλλον δὲ καθάπερ οἱ τὸ ὑπόχρυμα τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν κατάγειν πειρώμενοι οὐ τὸ φῶς αὐτοῖς ἐξωθεν χορηγοῦσιν, ὁ οὐκ ἔχουσιν, τὸ δὲ ἐμπόδιον ταῖς ὄψεσι καταβιβάζοντες ἐλευθέραν ἀπολείπουσιν τὴν κόρην. SC 1:160–162.

This impediment, Clement explains, prevents the person from receiving external light, and the person has no light within. This passage offers our first hint at Clement's theory of visual perception.

Clement also describes this lack of an internal light in *Paedagogus* 3.11.70 as well, where he addresses Matthew 6:22, which reads: "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light" (NRSV).²⁴ This Matthean verse is often used to describe a theory of extramission in which the eye contains a kind of fire that extends from the eye as a ray, enabling the person to see.²⁵ Clement, however, reinterprets this verse through the lens of intromission. In describing the eye in Matthew 6:22, Clement writes, "what is inside is illuminated and made visible by the light that shines through it."²⁶ In other words, the eye is like a doorway that allows the interior to be illumined by the exterior shining light. Though, as we saw in Clement's metaphor for baptism, the pre-baptized state is one of darkness, ignorance, and dim-sightedness. Thus, the doorway is closed to that external light, "like those suffering from some blinding eye-disease who. . . must first remove the impediment from their eyes before they can have clear vision."²⁷

The phrase *eye of the soul* is common in Clement, though he varies his terminology with ὄψις ψυχῆς,²⁸ τοῦ ὁρατικοῦ τῆς ψυχῆς,²⁹ and τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ὄμμα.³⁰

24. Adolf Jülicher has described this verse as the most difficult to interpret in the entire gospel tradition. Adolf Jülicher, *Die Gleichnreden Jesu*, 3rd ed., vol. II (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [P. Siebeck], 1910), 98. For a more complete survey of the scholarship, see Erik Sjöberg, "Das Licht in Dir. Zur Deutung von Matth. 6,22 f Par," *Studia Theologica - Nordic Journal of Theology* 5, no. 2 (January 1, 1951): 89–105; Hans Dieter-Betz, "Matt. 6:22–23 and Ancient Greek Theories of Vision," in *Synoptische Studien* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [P. Siebeck], 1992), 140–54.

25. Dieter-Betz argues that the logion suggests that if one's *lumen internum* shines, then the eye is indeed the lamp of the body and qualifies the eye as ἀπλούς. If, however, the internal light is darkness, the logion will provoke the concern about how to make the darkness into light again, though it does not answer the question, leaving the hearer "alone and restless, and this open-ended situation seems to be the paraenetical goal of the passage." Dieter-Betz, "Matt. 6:22–23 and Ancient Greek Theories of Vision," 154.

26. Clement of Alexandria, *Christ the Educator*, 253. *paed.* 3.11.70. δι' οὗ καταφαίνεται τὰ ἔνδον φωτὶ τῷ φαινομένῳ καταναζόμενα. Clément D'Alexandrie, *Le Pédagogue*, ed. Henri-Irénéee Marrou, trans. Claude Mondésert, vol. 3, Sources Chrétiennes 158 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1970), 140.

27. Clement of Alexandria, *Christ the Educator*, 27. *paed.* 1.6.28. Ὡσπερ οὖν οἱ τὸν ὕπνιον ἀποσεισάμενοι εὐθὺς ἐνδοθεν ἐγρηγόρασαν, μᾶλλον δὲ καθάπερ οἱ τὸ ὑπόχυμα τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν κατάγειν πειρώμενοι οὐ τὸ φῶς αὐτοῖς ἐξωθεν χορηγοῦσιν, ὁ οὐκ ἔχουσιν, τὸ δὲ ἐμπόδιον ταῖς ὄψεσι καταβιβάζοντες ἐλευθέραν ἀπολείπουσι τὴν κόρην. SC 1:162.

28. *Paed.* 1.9.77. SC 1.248.

29. *Str.* 1.28.178. Clément D'Alexandrie, *Les Stromates*, trans. Claude Mondésert, vol. 1, Sources Chrétiennes 30 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1951), 274.

30. *Paed.* 2.1.1 SC 2:110, *paed.* 2.9.81 SC 2:160, *str.* 1.1.10 SC 1:50, *prot.* 6.68.4 SC 1:132, *prot.* 11.113.2 uses a very similar version: τὰ φωσφόρα τῆς ψυχῆς ὄμματα SC 1:181.

Although the latter, τὸ ὄμμα τῆς ψυχῆς, is common in Plato,³¹ Plato's theory of extramission is not the source from which Clement draws his theory of visual perception.³² Both phrases also appear regularly in Philo,³³ though Clement also departs from Philo regarding his theory of visual perception.³⁴ Philo portrays a middle-Platonic theory of visual perception;³⁵ however, as demonstrated through Clement's interpretation of Matthew 6:22 and in his baptismal metaphor, Clement describes a theory that is most consistent with intromission, popularized by Epicurus.³⁶ Indeed, much has been written on

31. See R. 519a and 533d in Plato, *Platonis Respublica*, trans. S. R. Slings, Oxford Classical Texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 265, 285. See also *Sph.* 254a in Plato, *Platonis Opera*, trans. J. Burnet, 3rd ed., vol. 1, Oxford Classical Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 447. He also uses the phrase *eye of the mind*. See *Smp.* 219a. Plato, *Platonis Opera*, trans. J. Burnet, 2nd ed., vol. 2, Oxford Classical Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922), 215.

32. For more on Plato's theory of extramission, see Fritz-Gregor Herrmann, "Dynamics of Vision in Plato's Thought," *Helios* 40, no. 1/2 (2013): 281–307; Willem van Hoorn, *As Images Unwind: Ancient and Modern Theories of Visual Perception* (Amsterdam: University Press Amsterdam, 1973); David E. Hahn, "Early Hellenistic Theories of Vision and the Perception of Color," in *Studies in Perception: Interrelations in the History of Philosophy and Science*, ed. Peter K. Machamer and Robert G. Turnbull (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1978), 60–95; Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler*.

33. They are too numerous to list, but I offer a sampling: τὸ ὁρατικὸν τῆς ψυχῆς occurs in *Legum allegoriarum libri i-iii* 2.68.1, *De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini* 59.6, *De ebrietate* 111.14, *De fuga et invention* 139.4. τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ὄμμα occurs in *De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini* 36.6, 69.2, 78.7, *Quod deterius potiori insidiari solet* 22.5, *De posteritate Caini* 8.4, 118.4, *Quod deus sit immutabilis* 181.3, *De platatione* 22.4, *De ebrietate* 44.3, *De sobrietate* 3.6, *De migratione Abrahami* 49.1, 165.4, 191.8, *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit* 89.5, *De congressu eruditionis gratia* 135.4, *De mutatione nominum* 3.4, 203.3, *De somniis* 1.117.6, 1.164.4, et al. ἡ ὄψις ψυχῶν occurs in *De gigantibus* 9.1, *Quod deus sit immutabilis* 46.1.

34. For Clement's engagement with Philo's writings, see Anniewies Van den Hoek, *Clement of Alexandria and His Use of Philo in the Stromateis: An Early Christian Reshaping of a Jewish Model* (Leiden: Brill, 1988).

35. For Philo's connection to Middle Platonism, see John M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977); Willy Theiler, "Philo von Alexandria und der hellenisierte Timaeus," in *Studies Merlan*, 1971, 25–35; Gretchen Reydams-Schils, "Stoicized Readings of Plato's *Timaeus* in Philo of Alexandria," *The Studia Philonica Annual: Studies in Hellenistic Judaism* 7 (1995): 85–102; David Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato*, Philos. Antiqua; XLIV (Leiden: Brill, 1986). For Philo's theory of visual perception, see Dieter-Betz, "Matt. 6:22–23 and Ancient Greek Theories of Vision"; Scott D. Mackie, "Seeing God in Philo of Alexandria: Means, Methods, and Mysticism," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 43, no. 2 (2012): 147–179; Scott D Mackie, "The Passion of Eve and the Ecstasy of Hannah: Sense Perception, Passion, Mysticism, and Misogyny in Philo of Alexandria," *De ebrietate* 143–52," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 133, no. 1 (2014): 141–163; Sharon Lea Mattila, "Wisdom, Sense Perception, Nature and Philo's Gender Gradient," *Harvard Theological Review* 89, no. 02 (April 1996): 103–129.

36. Ferguson notes: "Epicureanism was somewhat disreputable, and therefore the extent of Epicurean influence has been underestimated. In fact, the second century C.E. was the great period of Epicureanism. Clement grew up in a world of Epicurean missionary endeavor."

Clement's reliance on Epicureanism for his theory of epistemology, in general,³⁷ and Epicurus's theory of conception formation, in particular.³⁸

As noted above, the theory of intromission posits that every object emits tiny films (εἰδῶλα, ἀπόρροια, or *simulacra*) that enter a person's eyes or sometimes also their minds.³⁹ In *Herodotus* 49, Epicurus describes a stream of εἰδῶλα that enters either the eyes or the mind, according to their size.⁴⁰ Larger εἰδῶλα of visible bodies enter the *eye of the body*, but smaller *dianoetic* εἰδῶλα of invisible bodies enter the *eye of the mind*. This *eye of the mind*, for Epicurus, is a sensory organ that functions in parallel to the *eye of the body*.⁴¹ For example, in Fragment U353, Sextus Empiricus explains that Epicurus thinks that εἰδῶλα of the gods come to a person while she sleeps and allow that person to form an idea of divine.⁴² These smaller, invisible *dianoetic* εἰδῶλα are physical and enter the *eye of the mind* in the same way that larger εἰδῶλα enter the *eye of the body*.

Based on his use of Epicurean sensory perception, it follows that Clement's *eye of the soul* functions as a sensory organ much like Epicurus' *eye of the mind* that receives *dianoetic* εἰδῶλα. In *Paedagogus* 1.63.37, Clement writes of knowledge and vision of God, quoting 1 Corinthians 2:9.⁴³ Clement, however, changes the phrase καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἀνέβη to ἐπὶ νοῦν ἀνθρώπου [οὐκ] ἀνέβη.⁴⁴ In other words, he has changed the location: knowledge of God, according to Clement, directly enters one's *mind* rather than one's *heart*.

John Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria*, Twayne's World Authors Series, 289 Greece (New York: Twayne Pub, 1974), 36.

37. Howard Jones, *Epicurean Tradition*, Reprint edition (New York: Routledge, 1992), 111; Raoul Mortley, "Mirror and I Cor 13:12 in the Epistemology of Clement of Alexandria," *Vigiliae Christianae* 30, no. 2 (June 1, 1976): 109–20. John M. Rist, *Epicurus: An Introduction* (CUP Archive, 1972), 28–33.

38. See especially Mortley, "Mirror and I Cor 13." And Salvatore R. C. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

39. If εἰδῶλα or *simulacra* entered only the eyes, a person maintained some degree of control, with ability to turn away or close the eyes. If the εἰδῶλα or *simulacra* could also enter a person's mind (to cause imagination or dreams through *dianoetic* εἰδῶλα), then that person had relatively little control.

40. These *dianoetic* εἰδῶλα were described by Epicurus as a stream of εἰδῶλα entering both the eyes and the mind according to size: κατὰ τὸ ἐναρμόττον μέγεθος εἰς τὴν ὄψιν ἢ τὴν διάνοιαν (translation my own). *Ep. Hdt.* §49. LCL 1:578.

41. Rist, *Epicurus*, 33.

42. Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Physicists*, I.25. Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Physicists*, trans. Robert Gregg Bury, Loeb Classical Library 311 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), 14–15.

43. 1 Cor. 2:9: "But, as it is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him' (NRSV). This verse quotes Isaiah 64:4: καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἀνέβη.

44. Emphasis my own. On debates regarding which organ housed the soul/spirit, see Jessica Wright's essay in this special issue.

This distinction may seem subtle, but it lends further credence to the idea that Clement is describing an Epicurean process for knowledge of God.

An Epicurean process for knowledge of God helps to explain Clement's writing in the *Stromateis*: "Hence, the apostle says, 'Now we see as through a mirror, but then face to face' by those sole, pure, and incorporeal contacts of the intellect (τῆς διανοίας ἐπιβολάς)."⁴⁵ Raoul Mortley points out that this phrase, τῆς διανοίας ἐπιβολάς, is a technical term of Epicurean epistemology found in Diogenes Laertius to describe a criterion of certainty.⁴⁶ Thus, Clement describes knowledge of God in Epicurean terms in which the *eye of the soul* tangibly encounters the divine.⁴⁷

However, this enlightenment happens only after the "cataract surgery" of baptism. Prior to baptism, Clement describes the *eye of the soul* as one of darkness, ignorance, and dim-sightedness or even blindness. Indeed, it seems that, before baptism, a person can hardly use the *eye of the soul* at all, though there is some glimmer of hope. Writing about bringing truth down from the holy mountain of God, Clement writes, "Let truth, sending forth her rays of light into the farthest distance, shine everywhere upon those who are wallowing in darkness."⁴⁸ As God shines the light onto all who are wallowing in darkness, some divine effluence enters those who are baptized or not. In fact, when writing of the partial truth that can be found in philosophers such as Plato, Clement describes a hint of that light: "Well done, Plato, you have hit the truth. But do not give up. Join me in the search for the good. For there is a certain *divine effluence instilled into all men* without exception, but especially into those who spend their lives in thought."⁴⁹

This *divine effluence* (ἀπόρροια θεϊκή) is precisely the same term Empedocles, fifth-century B.C.E. philosopher, offers for his *effluence*: ἀπόρροια. Some label

45. *Str.* 5.11.7.4.1. Translation my own. ἐντεῦθεν ὁ ἀπόστολος «βλέπομεν νῦν ὡς δι' ἐσόπτρου» φησί, «τότε δὲ πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον», κατὰ μόνας ἐκείνας τὰς ἀκραιφνεῖς καὶ ἀσωμάτους τῆς διανοίας ἐπιβολάς. Greek from L. Früchtel, O. Stählin, and U. Treu, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, vols. 2, 3rd edn. and 3, 2nd edn. (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller 52[15], 17. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2:1960; 3:1970): 375.

46. Mortley, "Mirror and I Cor 13," 119.

47. For an examination of vision and the resurrected Christ, see Heath, "Sight and Christianity: Early Christian Attitudes to Seeing."

48. Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Greeks*, 7; emphasis my own. *prot.* 1.2.3: "Ἡ δὲ ὡς ἔτι μάλιστα τηλαυγὲς ἀποστιλβουσα φῶς καταυγαζέτω πάντη τοὺς ἐν σκότει κλινομένους καὶ τῆς πλάνης τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀπαλλάττει, τὴν ὑπερτάτην ὀρέγουσα δεξιάν, τὴν σύνεσιν, εἰς σωτηρίαν" SC 1:54.

49. Clement of Alexandria, 155; emphasis my own. *prot.* 6.68.2–3. Εὖ γε, ὦ Πλάτων, ἐπαφάσαι τῆς ἀληθείας· ἀλλὰ μὴ ἀποκάμῃς· ξὺν μοι λαβοῦ τῆς ζητήσεως τάγαθού περὶ πάντων γὰρ ἀπαξαιπλῶς ἀνθρώποις, μάλιστα δὲ τοῖς περὶ λόγους ἐνδιατριβουσιν ἐνέστακταί τις ἀπόρροια θεϊκή. SC 1:133.

Empedocles a quasi-atomist, though he did not separate the world simply into atoms and void, as did the traditional atomists like Leucippus.⁵⁰ Instead, Empedocles explained that every body in the world was made up of the four elements of fire, water, earth, and air, as well as the two powers of strife (the principle of separation) and love (the principle of union).⁵¹ From Alcmaeon, Empedocles appropriated the idea that the body is made up pores (πόροι) that serve as channels that transmit sensation to the brain.⁵² Every object emits *effluences* that enter into pores for sense-perception.⁵³

In other words, just as Epicurus posited that the gods emitted divine *diagnoetic* εἰδῶλα that enter a person's mind and grant her an idea of the gods, so also Clement suggests that God emits *divine effluence* (ἀπόρροια), and these incorporeal contacts of the intellect (τῆς διανοίας ἐπιβολάς) grant each person a bit of the truth, though full knowledge is only available once the cataract has been removed from the *eye of the soul*. In this way, when Clement describes the world as filled with the *seed of salvation* (τὴν γῆν σωτηρίου σπέρματος),⁵⁴ he is referring to a physical process by which divine particles enter into the *eye of the soul*. This metaphor is so prevalent in Clement that Salvatore Lilla has traced Clement's use of the picture of the shower by which "God inspired the philosophers by dropping particles of the Logos into their minds."⁵⁵

Although each person has received a bit of the *divine effluence* in his or her *eye of the soul*, Clement cautions against those who attend too much to the *eye of the body*. Clement describes those who trusted their sight and then began to worship the sun and moon.⁵⁶ Others, Clement warns, can become beguiled by art, as he recounts the tale of a man so in love with a statue that he had intercourse with the marble.⁵⁷ In each of these cases, Clement describes a misuse of

50. See Aristotle, *GC*, A 8, 325 b, 5; *Cael.* I 6, 305 a, I.

51. A. A. Long, "Thinking and Sense-Perception in Empedocles: Mysticism or Materialism?" *The Classical Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (November 1, 1966): 160.

52. Clara Elizabeth Millerd, *On the Interpretation of Empedocles*, *Ancient Philosophy* 19 (New York: Garland Pub, 1980), 77.

53. Diels thinks Empedocles borrowed the doctrine of pores and effluences from Leucippus because it requires a doctrine of empty space, which Empedocles denied. (Diels, *Emp.* u. Gorg. also Leucippus u. Dem.) Plato generally associated the doctrine to Empedocles (see *Men.* 76C).

54. *Prot.* 10.110.1. SC 1.178.

55. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria*, 17–18. Lilla offers the following examples: *prot.* 68.2 (I. 52. 2–4), 74.7 (I. 57.8–9), *str.* i. 27. i (ii.24.8ff), *str.* i. 27.2–3, vol. ii. 24. 16–23, *str.* i. 37.2, vol. ii. 24. 17–19; cf. *paed.* I.41.3, vol. i. 115. 7–8. He also suggests that Clement likely read Justin Martyr and is adopting his doctrine of *logos spermatikos*, though Clement never mentions him directly. Lilla, 27.

56. *Prot.* 2.26.1–3. SC 1:80–81.

57. *Prot.* 4.57.3. SC 1:121.

the *eye of the body* that may result in the same fate as that of Narcissus: “It did the handsome Narcissus no good to gaze on his own image, as the Greek myth tells us.”⁵⁸ On the contrary, those who focus instead on the *eye of the soul* may contemplate the divine.⁵⁹

Clement encourages his readers instead to direct their gazes towards the divine light.⁶⁰ Clement writes, “but in our view the image of God is not an object of sense made from matter perceived by the senses, but a mental object. God, that is, the only true God, is perceived not by the senses but by the mind.”⁶¹ Clement here distinguishes between *αἰσθητός* (a sensory perceptible object) and *νοητός* (a mental object). God is not perceived by the *eye of the body* but is instead perceived by the *eye of the mind*. However, one cannot make full use of the *eye of the mind* on her own, but she must rely on the divine surgeon to perform the medical modification described by the baptismal metaphor. In *Paedagogus* 1.6.28, Clement reminds his readers that in the pre-baptized state, the *eye of the soul* is covered by an impediment that prevents one from seeing or making contact with the divine. Thus, we return to the medical metaphor of the divine surgery to remove this impediment.

DIVINE OPHTHALMOLOGY AND CATARACT SURGERY

The concept of an impediment in the eye first brings to mind the injunction in Matthew 7:5 and Luke 6:42 to remove the plank from one’s own eye before removing the speck from the eye of one’s brother. Although it is possible that Clement had these verses in mind, his linguistic choices are significant, leading me to believe that he was influenced by medical sources as well. Rather than using *δόκος*, as in Matthew and Luke’s description of the impediment, Clement uses the phrase *τὸ ὑπόχυμα τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν*, a medical phrase used by Galen to refer to a cataract of the eye.⁶² In doing so, Clement draws from the source domain of eye-diseases to describe the target domain of what happens to one’s soul

58. Clement of Alexandria, *Christ the Educator*, 208. *paed.* 3.2.11. οὐδὲ γὰρ, ὡς ὁ μῦθος Ἑλλήνων ἔχει, Ναρκίσσῳ προσχώρησεν τῷ καλῷ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ εἰκόνος γενέσθαι θεατήν. SC 1:32.

59. For an interesting parallel in Plotinus, see Plotinus *En.* I.6.8.15–16, I.6.8.26–28. Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. A. H. Armstrong, Loeb Classical Library 440 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 257–59.

60. *Prot.* 10.92.5. SC 1:161.

61. Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Greeks*, 117. *prot.* 4.51.6: Ἐστίν γὰρ ὡς ἀληθῶς τὸ ἄγαλμα ὕλη νεκρὰ τεχνίτου χειρὶ μεμορφωμένη· ἡμῖν δὲ οὐχ ὕλης αἰσθητῆς αἰσθητόν, νοητόν δὲ τὸ ἄγαλμα ἔστιν. Νοητόν, οὐκ αἰσθητόν ἐστί [τὸ ἄγαλμα] ὁ θεός, ὁ μόνος ὄντως θεός. SC 1:113.

62. Galen, *De methodus medendi* 14.19. Galen, *Method of Medicine*, trans. Ian Johnston and G. H. R. Horsley, vol. 3, Loeb Classical Library 518 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 534.

in baptism. In this section, I will explore the source domain behind the metaphor to better understand Clement's meaning.

Although the term *cataract* (*cataracta*, *καταρράκτης*) was not recorded until 1070 C.E.,⁶³ the disease and its attempted cures had been well documented long before.⁶⁴ Celsus describes the formation of cataracts: "a humour forms. . . as it gradually hardens is an obstacle to the visual power within."⁶⁵ Pedanius Dioscorides lists 26 potential remedies for cataracts in *De materia medica*, ranging from eighteen different herbal remedies to a mixture of fried mussels and honey.⁶⁶ By far, the most commonly described solution for cataracts is usually termed *couching* from the French word *coucher*, which means "to lie down."⁶⁷ In *couching*, one uses a needle to move the cataract out of the way of vision, allowing gravity to pull the cataract down in the eye as if it were lying (*coucher*). Galen describes this method, explaining that the full removal of cataracts was impossible, however one might change their position,⁶⁸ preventing the cataract from blocking a person's vision.⁶⁹

63. This is recorded in Constantinus as a translation from the Arabic. See footnote b in Celsus, *De medicina*, trans. W. G. Spencer, vol. 2, Loeb Classical Library 304 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938), 222.

64. H.T. Swan argues that the Book of Tobit records an ancient description of a cataract and a type of surgery for its removal. H. T. Swan, "An Ancient Record of 'Couching' for Cataract," *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 88, no. 4 (1995): 208–11; For more on couching as cataract surgery, see A. Renouvin, P. Fournié, and V. Soler, "Les évolutions dans le traitement de la cataracte," *NPG Neurologie - Psychiatrie - Gériatrie* 16, no. 92 (April 1, 2016): 64–72; C. T. Leffler, et al., "The Early History of Glaucoma: The Glaucomous Eye (800 BC to 1050 AD)," *Clinical Ophthalmology* 2015 (2015): 207–215; Claudia Florida Costea, et al., "A Brief Account of the Long History of Cataract Surgery," *Romanian Journal of Functional & Clinical, Macro- & Microscopical Anatomy & of Anthropology / Revista română de anatomie funcțională și clinică, macro- și microscopică și de antropologie* 15, no. 1 (January 2016): 46–52; Harry H. Mark, "Aqueous Humor Dynamics in Historical Perspective," *Survey of Ophthalmology* 55, no. 1 (2010): 89–100. For other treatments of cataracts in antiquity, see Hasan Basri Çakmak and Arif Hüdaî Köken, "Medical Therapies for Cataracts in Dioscorides' *De materia medica*," *Eä - Journal of Medical Humanities & Social Studies of Science and Technology* 8, no. 1 (June 2016): 119–31. For a description of a hollow needle found in Montbellel (France) and Viladamat (Spain) dating between the first and third centuries C.E., suggesting the possibility of cataract extraction in antiquity, see Rafael J. Pérez-Cambrodí et al., "Hollow Needle Cataract Aspiration in Antiquity," *Acta Ophthalmologica* 93, no. 8 (December 2015): 782–84.

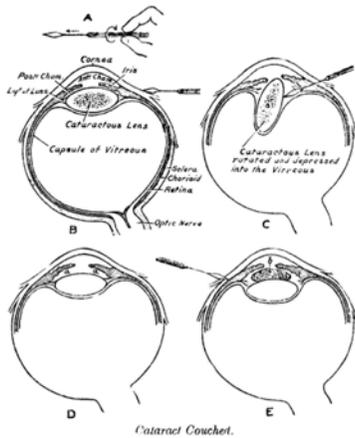
65. Celsus, *De medicina* VII.7.14. Celsus, *De medicina*, trans. W. G. Spencer, vol. 3, Loeb Classical Library 336 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938), 351.

66. Çakmak and Köken, "Medical Therapies for Cataracts in Dioscorides' *De materia medica*."

67. Costea, "A Brief Account," 48, et al.

68. Galen, *Ars medica* 35.6. Galen, *On the Constitution of the Art of Medicine. The Art of Medicine. A Method of Medicine to Glaucon*, trans. Ian Johnston, Loeb Classical Library 523 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 299.

69. Galen, *De methodo medendi* 14.13. Galen, *Method of Medicine*, 3:486–87.



- A. Paracentesis Needle, pointed, spear-ended, fixed in a cylindrical handle, which was pressed onwards whilst rotated by the thumb and finger.
- B. Eyeball. Lens cataractous. Needle entered midway between the outer angle of the eyelid and the outer margin of the iris—until the point of the needle appeared in the pupil over the front of the Cataract.
- C. Cataractous lens in the course of being “Couched.”
- D. Diagram of the supposed “Locus Vacuus,” the posterior chamber *a* filled with aqueous humour like the anterior chamber.
- E. Infusion, Suffusion of opaque, diseased humour into the “Locus Vacuus”; *b*, supposed to be the Cataract which was depressed or broken up.

Steps for ancient cataract surgery: couching. Image from CELSUS, VOL. III, translated by W. G. Spencer, Loeb Classical Library Volume 336, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, First published 1938. Loeb Classical Library® is a registered trademark of the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

Aelian points to the behavior of goats as the source of humans’ knowledge for this surgery: “When the Goat perceives that its sight has become clouded it goes to a bramble and applies its eye to a thorn. The thorn pricks it and the fluid is discharged, but the pupil remains unharmed and the Goat regains its sight without any need of man’s skill and manipulation.”⁷⁰ Whatever the method’s original source, Celsus offers the best description of this surgery required for “long established” cataracts in *De medicina*.⁷¹ After some preoperative care, the patient is seated facing the light while restrained by an assistant.⁷² Celsus writes,

Thereupon a needle is to be taken pointed enough to penetrate, yet not too fine; and this is to be inserted straight through. . . a spot intermediate between the pupil of the eye and the angle adjacent to the temple, away from the middle of the cataract. . . When the spot is reached, the needle is to be sloped against the suffusion itself and should gently rotate there and little by little guide it below the region of the pupil; when the cataract has passed below the pupil it is pressed upon more firmly in order that it may

70. Aelian, *On Animals* 7.14. Aelian, *On Animals*, trans. A. F. Scholfield, vol. 2, Loeb Classical Library 448 (London: Harvard University Press, 1959), 120–21.

71. Celsus, *De medicina* VI.6.35. These “long-established” cataracts are presumably harder and easier to move or break apart. LCL 2:223.

72. Celsus, *De medicina* VII.7.14. LCL 3:351.

settle below. If it sticks there the cure is accomplished; if it returns to some extent, it is to be cut up with the same needle and separated into several pieces, which can be the more easily stowed away singly, and form smaller obstacles to vision.⁷³

As is likely no surprise, such a delicate surgery performed in antiquity was not always successful nor without its dangers.⁷⁴ This is why Celsus recommends waiting for a “long established” cataract, though he cautions that “old age is not favorable for treatment,” and that “vision can be destroyed permanently by a slight movement.”⁷⁵

Indeed, *couching* was neither a common nor safe procedure. Lisa Trentin writes, “This was perhaps the most delicate and dangerous of eye operations in antiquity, since it involved penetration of the interior of the eye.”⁷⁶ Trentin goes on to catalogue the medical and non-medical sources that report accidental eye loss from a botched eye surgery.⁷⁷ Thus, although visual impairment was common in ancient Greek⁷⁸ and Roman⁷⁹ society, the number of people who satisfy Celsus’ requirements for cataract surgery—not too old, but with a long-established cataract—and who also would be willing to risk blindness was a relatively small number.

Despite the risks associated with it, cataract surgery is precisely the metaphor Clement engages to describe baptism: “like those suffering from some blinding eye-disease who. . . must first remove the impediment from their eyes before they can have clear vision.”⁸⁰ Clement accomplishes several things with the rhetoric of this metaphor. First, the visual rhetoric allows Clement to link the baptism ritual to knowledge of God. Only those who have had the impediment removed from their eyes may see and know God. Second, the medical rhetoric enables Clement

73. Celsus, *De medicina* VII.7.14. LCL 3:351.

74. In fact, *couching* posed such risks that it was replaced by *suction* or *extraction* methods as early as the ninth century C.E. Costea, “A Brief Account,” 48, et al.

75. Celsus, *De medicina* VII.7.14. LCL 3:351.

76. Lisa Trentin, “Exploring Visual Impairment in Ancient Rome,” in *Disabilities in Roman Antiquity: Disparate Bodies, “A capite ad calcem”*, ed. Christian Laes, C. F. Goodey, and M. Lynn Rose (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 96.

77. Trentin, “Exploring Visual Impairment,” 96–97.

78. See, for example, Martha L. Rose, *The Staff of Oedipus: Transforming Disability in Ancient Greece*, Corporealities (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003).

79. See, for example, Trentin, “Exploring Visual Impairment in Ancient Rome.”

80. Clement of Alexandria, *Christ the Educator*, 27. *paed.* 1.6.28. Ὡσπερ οὖν οἱ τὸν ὕπνον ἀποσεισάμενοι εὐθέως ἐνδοθεν ἐγρηγόρασιν, μᾶλλον δὲ καθάπερ οἱ τὸ ὑπόχρυμα τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν καταγενεὶ πειρώμενοι οὐ τὸ φῶς αὐτοῖς ἐξωθεν χορηγοῦσιν, ὁ οὐκ ἔχουσιν, τὸ δὲ ἐμπόδιον ταῖς ὕψει καταβιβάζοντες ἐλευθέραν ἀπολείπουσι τὴν κόρην. SC 1:160–162.

to blur the spiritual and the physical, bringing together the whole creature: body and soul. The baptism of the eyes is a dual baptism that links the *eye of the body* to the *eye of the soul*. In *Excerpta ex Theodoto* Clement writes,

Thus the heavenly fire is dual in its nature, belonging partly to the mind, partly to the senses. By analogy, therefore, baptism is also dual in its nature, the sensible part works through water which extinguishes the sensible fire, but the intellectual through Spirit, a defense against the intellectual fire.⁸¹

By using a medical metaphor, Clement can describe the physical act of baptism as a corresponding spiritual surgery for the *eye of the soul*. Lastly, by utilizing a metaphor of an uncommon and potentially dangerous surgery, Clement is describing a process that not many people undertake: only those who are young enough, whose cataract is long-established, and who are willing to risk blindness.⁸² This enables Clement to describe the baptized Christian as part of an elite group linked through baptism to perfection and to *gnosis*.⁸³ By utilizing a metaphor of an uncommon and dangerous surgery, Clement is rhetorically constructing Christian identity in terms of difference: Christians have been fundamentally and materially transformed through the cataract surgery of baptism.

A MEDICAL METAMORPHOSIS

Once a person has had the cataract removed from the *eye of the soul*, she is no longer the same. Indeed, Clement writes, “This is one grace of enlightenment,

81. *Exc. Thdot.* 4.81. This is the English text of the Greek-English version of the *Excerpta Ex Theodoto* prepared by Robert Pierce Casey, *The Excerpta ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria* (Studies and Documents 1; London: Christophers, 1934), 40–91.

82. Celsus, *De medicina* VII.7.14. LCL 3:351.

83. John Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 153. For more on Clement and the spiritual elite, see John J. Herrmann, Jr. and Annewies van den Hoek, “Clement of Alexandria, Acrobats, and the Elite,” in *Pottery, Pavements, and Paradise* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 175–201; Robert G. T. Edwards, “Clement of Alexandria’s Gnostic Exposition of the Decalogue,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 23, no. 4 (Winter 2015): 501; Judith L. Kovacs, “Divine Pedagogy and the Gnostic Teacher According to Clement of Alexandria,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, no. 1 (2001): 3; Kathleen Gibbons, *The Moral Psychology of Clement of Alexandria: Mosaic Philosophy*, Routledge Studies in Philosophy and Theology in Late Antiquity (New York: Routledge, 2016); Jonathan L. Zecher, “Clement of Alexandria: A Project of Christian Perfection,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 61, no. 1 (April 2010): 328–30; Judith L. Kovacs, *Clement of Alexandria and the Valentinian Gnostics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).

that we no longer are in the same state as before we were cleansed.”⁸⁴ In this section, I will turn to the transformation that occurs in the cataract surgery of baptism, highlighting the material nature of that transformation.

In describing the enlightenment that occurs when one removes the impediment from the eye, Clement writes, “This is an admixture of eternal sunlight, giving us the power to see the eternal light. Like indeed attracts like; so it is that what is holy attracts Him who is the source of holiness, who properly speaking is called Light.”⁸⁵ The second half of this quote, “Like indeed attracts like” echoes the Empedoclean expression *like by like*. The key here is the Empedoclean principle of *συμμετρία*: every object, as well as every percipient, is a mixture of the four elements, so when an object’s *effluence* enters a person’s pores, that *effluence* is perceived by the corresponding pore: dark by means of watery pores, bright by means of fiery pores, and so on.⁸⁶ This principle is most often described by the shorthand popularized by Theophrastus: “like by like,” meaning that one can only see something external by means of the corresponding element already contained within.⁸⁷

This is significant for Clement’s baptismal metaphor: “Like indeed attracts like; so it is that what is holy attracts Him who is the source of holiness, who properly speaking is called Light.”⁸⁸ Prior to baptism, according to Clement, a person did not contain internal divine light, and was therefore incapable of seeing or knowing the divine. It is only through this divine cataract surgery of baptism that the impediment is removed from the eye, allowing the external divine light to enter in. Baptism is literally “bathing the mind in light.”⁸⁹

84. Clement of Alexandria, *Christ the Educator*, 30. *paed.* 1.6.30. Μία χάρις αὐτῆ τοῦ φωτισματος τὸ μὴ τὸν αὐτὸν εἶναι τῷ πρὶν ἢ λούσασθαι τὸν τρόπον. νηπίους ἡμᾶς ὁ παιδαγωγὸς καὶ διδάσκαλος ἀποκαλῶν τοὺς τῶν ἐν κόσμῳ σοφῶν ἐπιτηδειστέροις εἰς σωτηρίαν, οἱ σοφοὺς σφᾶς ἡγούμενοι τετύφωνται. SC 1:166.

85. Clement of Alexandria, 28. *paed.* 1.6.28. κρᾶμα τοῦτο ἀγῆς αἰδοῦ το ἰδοῦν φῶς ἰδεῖν δυναμένης. ἐπεὶ τὸ ὅμοιον τῷ ὁμοίῳ φίλον, φίλον δὲ τὸ ἅγιον τῷ ἐξ οὗ τὸ ἅγιον, ὁ δὴ κυρίως κέκληται φῶς. SC 1:162.

86. W. J. Verdenius, “Empedocles’ Doctrine of Sight,” in *Studia varia Carolo Guilielmo Vollgraff a discipulis oblata* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1948), 155.

87. Cf. Theophrastus (DK A 86, 2). See also W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), i. 209; Verdenius, “Empedocles’ Doctrine of Sight,” 155 n. 2.

88. Clement of Alexandria, *Christ the Educator*, 28. *paed.* 1.6.28. ἐπεὶ τὸ ὅμοιον τῷ ὁμοίῳ φίλον, φίλον δὲ τὸ ἅγιον τῷ ἐξ οὗ τὸ ἅγιον, ὁ δὴ κυρίως κέκληται φῶς. SC 1:162.

89. Clement of Alexandria, 30. *paed.* 1.6.30. Ὅτι δὲ ἡ γνῶσις συνανατέλλει τῷ φωτισματι περιεστράπτουσα τὸν νοῦν, καὶ εὐθέως ἀκούομεν μαθηταὶ οἱ ἀμαθεῖς, πρότερόν ποτε τῆς μαθήσεως ἐκείνης προσγενομένης. SC 1:166, emphasis my own.

This divine light dispels the darkness of ignorance, but it also grants the percipient the power needed to see the divine light. Clement writes,

In the same way, those who are baptized are cleansed of the sins which like a mist overcloud their divine spirit, and then acquire a spiritual sight which is clear and unimpeded and lightsome, the sort of sight which alone enables us to behold divinity, with the help of the Holy Spirit who is poured forth from heaven upon us.⁹⁰

The external and eternal source of the divine light may now be seen by the means of the divine light now within: like by means of like, or divine light by means of divine light.

This process grants the percipient “spiritual sight which is clear and unimpeded and lightsome,” which means the fundamental nature of one’s sight has changed in baptism.⁹¹ Clement implies that baptism combines one’s natural vision of intromission with that of deified extramission: “How can we help desiring Him who has made clear the mind that lay buried in darkness, and sharpened the light-bearing eyes. . . Let us admit the light, that we may admit God. Let us admit the light, and become disciples of the Lord.”⁹² Through baptism, one admits the light, thereby admitting God. In doing so, the person also transforms her eyes into “light-bearing” eyes (φωσφόρα), a term also used by Plato to describe extramissive eyes.⁹³ Thus, according to Clement, a person originally had no internal light and could only receive minimal pieces of truth though the *eye of the soul* by intromission. After baptism, however, the cataract is removed, divine light enters in and grants the percipient the power to see by means of extramission. Thus, the very nature of vision is changed in this act, and the percipient becomes more like God through these deified eyes.⁹⁴ Once the person receives

90. Clement of Alexandria, 27–28. *paed.* 1.6.28. οὕτως καὶ οἱ βαπτιζόμενοι, τὰς ἐπισκοτούσας ἀμαρτίας τῷ θείῳ πνεύματι ἀγλῶς δίκην ἀποτριψάμενοι, ἐλεύθερον καὶ ἀνεμπόδιστον καὶ φωτεινὸν ὄμμα τοῦ πνεύματος ἴσχυμεν, ὃ δὴ μόνῳ τῷ θείῳ ἐποπτεύομεν, οὐρανόθεν ἐπεισρέοντος ἡμῖν τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος. SC 1:162.

91. Clement of Alexandria, 28. *paed.* 1.6.28. ἐλεύθερον καὶ ἀνεμπόδιστον καὶ φωτεινὸν ὄμμα τοῦ πνεύματος ἴσχυομεν. SC 1:162.

92. Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Greeks*, 241. *prot.* 11.113.2–4. Πῶς γὰρ οὐ ποθεινὸς ὁ τὸν ἐν σκότει καταρωρυγμένον νοῦν ἐναργῆ ποιησάμενος καὶ τὰ «φωσφόρα» τῆς ψυχῆς ἀποξύνων «ὄμματα»; . . . Χωρήσωμεν τὸ φῶς, ἵνα χωρήσωμεν τὸν θεόν· χωρήσωμεν τὸ φῶς καὶ μαθητεύσωμεν τῷ κυρίῳ. SC 1:181.

93. *Ti.* 45b. Plato, *Platonis opera*, trans. J. Burnet, 1st ed., vol. 4, Oxford Classical Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922), 555.

94. For more on deification in Clement, see M. David Litwa, “You Are Gods: Deification in the Naassene Writer and Clement of Alexandria,” *Harvard Theological Review*, no. 1 (2017): 125; Anita Strezova, “Apothaticism and Deification in the Alexandrian and Antiochene Tradition,” *Philotheos*

this power, she can then begin to contemplate truth: “So, let us who are the sons of the true light not shut out that light, but, turning within into ourselves, casting light upon the vision of the inner man, let us contemplate truth itself, welcome its rays and discover with clarity and insight what is the truth of dreams.”⁹⁵

The fact that Clement used the eyes to describe this deified transformation of baptism is significant beyond its link to epistemology. Antón Alvar Nuño has traced the physiognomical tradition and its relationship to the saying “the eyes are the mirror of the soul.”⁹⁶ He explains that the *evil eye* is often associated with a kind of double pupil, so physiognomists claimed to determine a person’s character by looking at the eyes: “[This] ocular irregularity is used as a device for social exclusion.”⁹⁷ In other words, the physiognomists used the eyes to mark a person as *other*. In a similar but inverted fashion, Clement also used an ocular irregularity (light-bearing eyes, *φωσφόρα*) to describe the baptized Christian as *other*. However, Clement used this *otherness* not as a tool of social exclusion, but as an identifier of deified inclusion. The baptized Christian is no longer like the rest of society, but she is now physically transformed through her light-bearing eyes. She is now included into an elite and deified group of baptized and transformed Christians.

Thus, for Clement, baptism is not a return to the initial state of communion with God, but is instead a transformation to a radically different state: a shift from being cut off from the divine light to communion and admixture with that light. Unlike amputation metaphors that may cut a person away from the Christian body,⁹⁸ Clement here describes a kind of surgical procedure necessary

14 (2014): 83–101; Henny Fiskå Hägg, “Deification in Clement of Alexandria with a Special Reference to His Use of Theatetus 176B,” *Studia Patristica* XLVI, no. 12 (2010): 169–73; Arkadi Choufrine, *Gnosis, Theophany, Theosis: Studies in Clement of Alexandria’s Appropriation of His Background*, Patristic Studies 5 (New York: Peter Lang, 2002); Paul E. Murphy, “The Impossible State of Deification in Clement of Alexandria,” *Journal of Theta Alpha Kappa* 3, no. 1 (1979): 29–35.

95. *Paed.* 2.9.80 SC 2:160. Τὸ οὖν φῶς τοῦτο οἱ τοῦ φωτὸς τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ υἱοὶ μὴ ἀποκλείσωμεν θύραζε, ἔνδον δὲ εἰς ἡμᾶς ἀποστρέψαντες, τοῦ κεκρυμμένου τὰς ὕψεις ἀνθρώπου φωτίσαντες τὴν τε ἀλήθειαν αὐτὴν ἐποπτεύσαντες καὶ τῶν ταύτης ῥευμάτων μεταλαμβάνοντες, τοὺς ἀληθεῖς τῶν ὄνειρων ἐναργῶς καὶ φρονίμως ἀποκαλυπτώμεθα.

96. Antón Alvar Nuño, “Ocular Pathologies and the Evil Eye in the Early Roman Principate,” *Numen* 59, no. 4 (2012): 303–4.

97. Nuño, “Ocular Pathologies,” 304–5.

98. For an exploration of amputation metaphors and exile, see Éric Fournier, “Amputation Metaphors and the Rhetoric of Exile: Purity and Pollution in Late Antique Christianity,” in *Clerical Exile in Late Antiquity*, Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity 17 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2016), 231–49.

to join the Christian body: the removal of a cataract that enables the person to see and to know God.⁹⁹

CONCLUSION

Medical metaphors, in general, allow authors to blur the lines between the corporeal and the spiritual, describing a process that brings together both the body and the soul. By combining the medical with the visual, Clement joins together the *eye of the body* with the *eye of the soul* to describe vision and knowledge of God that is transformed through baptism. Through the visual component of this metaphor, Clement links baptism to knowledge of God. Through the medical component, Clement describes the natural state of a person as one of blindness because the *eye of the soul* is innately covered by a cataract. In this state, one may receive only glimmers of true knowledge in the form of *divine effluences*. In order to receive true knowledge and have clear vision, however, one must remove the cataract from the *eye of the soul* in baptism. By utilizing an uncommon and dangerous surgery as his metaphor, Clement describes the baptized Christian as part of a small and elite group of people who are fundamentally and radically different than the rest of humanity through their deified eyes.

Clement is describing and defining Christians in terms of their medically modified eyes. Only the baptized Christian has the cataract removed, allowing the divine light to enter. Only the baptized Christian can fully use her modified vision to see and to know God. In this way, Clement can write, “Away then, away with our forgetfulness of the truth! Let us remove the ignorance and darkness that spreads like a mist over our sight; and let us and get a vision of the true God, first raising to Him this voice of praise, Hail, O Light.”¹⁰⁰ ■

99. In a technical sense, *couching* is not truly a removal or amputation, but a shifting of the cataract out of the line of sight. However, some ancient authors seemed to imply that breaking the cataract could cause it to drain from the eye. See, for example, Aelian, *On Animals* 7.14.

100. Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Greeks*, 2.43, *prot.* 11.114.1. Ἀφέλωμεν οὖν, ἀφέλωμεν τὴν λήβην τῆς ἀληθείας, τὴν ἄγνοιαν καὶ τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐμποδὸν ὡς ἀχλὺν ὄψεως καταγαγόντες τὸν ὄντως ὄντα θεὸν ἐποπτεύσωμεν, ταύτην αὐτῷ πρῶτον ἀννυμῆσαντες τὴν φωνήν «χαῖρε φῶς»· SC 1:182.